

NEVADA APPEAL

State funds Fire Safe Council

Appropriation improves chances the council will get federal funding

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State lawmakers bailed the Nevada Fire Safe Council out of a potential budget crunch with a \$1.5 million appropriation tacked onto a last-minute funding bill pushed through the Legislature's late-night special session.

Fire safety advocates have been looking to the state for help keeping the council afloat through expected cutbacks in federal spending.

For the past three years, the council has been funded to the tune of about \$1.2 million a year from the federal government but NFSC Director Elwood Miller senses there could soon be a drastic drop in that cash flow, with federal agencies looking to shore up budgets and stem a mushrooming national deficit.

The council had sought \$2.5 million from the state to fund its administration and a fire prevention grant program, but legislators carved out slightly more than \$1.5 million to be spread out over the next two years. One million dollars are earmarked for wildfire threat reduction projects and the rest will be spent on the council's operating costs.

While it's \$1 million less than the council had sought, Miller said, the appropriation will be enough.

"This will give us sufficient funding to support our small staff and operations, and also give us some for projects," he said.

The state money also improves the council's chance at federal funds, Miller added.

"The picture is kind of fluctuating but it looks more encouraging now. The state becoming a full partner has definitely helped our chances. The (federal government) feels more confident things are actually going to get done, and they're right."

The council's mission includes spreading information about living in fire country throughout the state, helping organize neighborhood chapters that address specific fire issues locally, and funding fire threat-reduction projects.

There are more than 30 local fire safe chapters scattered throughout Nevada.

In and around Carson City, neighbors in the Clear Creek, Lakeview, Mexican Dam, Kings Canyon and Timberline areas have either formed or are in the process of forming local chapters.

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