

DA files charges against El Dorado County supervisor

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting has been booked into jail on an arrest warrant alleging perjury and other charges.

A press release from the El Dorado County District Attorney's office today said Nutting was arrested Tuesday on two counts of filing false documents, perjury relating to failure to disclose income and having a financial interest in a county contract and failing to recuse himself from voting.

Nutting is scheduled to be arraigned June 10 in El Dorado County Superior Court in Placerville.

Nutting has been under fire after reports surfaced that he took state money for clearing brush on his 340-acre property.



El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting has been arrested. Photo/LTN file

Several local leaders have spoken out against Nutting, whom they accuse of subverting state funds for personal use.

At issue is whether Nutting legitimately obtained taxpayer dollars for fire prevention work he did on his own Happy

Valley Road property in Somerset.

Nutting has denied any wrongdoing.

The supervisor applied for the funds through the California Forest Improvement Program, which is administered by the state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection through local conservation agencies. Under the program, landowners with plots between 20 and 5,000 acres can seek reimbursement – usually 75 percent – for the cost of fire prevention work, such as brush clearing.

The invoices Nutting submitted show that the state paid a total of \$70,000 for two projects in 2003 and 2009. A third proposal is pending and will cost just under \$50,000.

CalFire spokesman Daniel Berlant noted that the program allows landowners to get paid for doing work themselves on their own property.

One controversy stems from the way Nutting applied for reimbursements. A May 2009 invoice appears to have been written by the supervisor himself, according to public records obtained by the Bee.

El Dorado County Auditor-Controller Joe Harn said he believes the invoice is invalid and violates the California False Claims Act.

As a part of the fallout from the controversy, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office launched its own investigation into the matter.

The state has reimbursed property owners for fire prevention work since the late 1970s, Berlant said.

Since 1999, the state has distributed about 1,000 grants for fire prevention work to various individuals. The funding source varies year to year, but most recently came from Proposition 40, a measure passed by voters in 2002 that

provides local grants to protect California's water and air.