

Fire districts losing tax votes point finger at state fee

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

Frank Treanor doesn't have exit polling to help explain why almost 38 percent of voters in the fire district he leads north of San Francisco voted against a November 2012 ballot measure to increase what property owners pay the district annually.

But Treanor, chief of the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District, said he is sure of the reason: Most of the district falls within the vast swath of the state where property owners pay a state fire prevention fee, in addition to any local charges.

In the four years since lawmakers approved it, a state fire prevention fee on properties in about a third of the state's rural areas had yielded more than \$300 million through June for prevention-related activities.

The money has gone to administration and statewide prevention, such as defensible space inspections and vegetation clearing, amid concern by some local officials that non-profit fire safe councils haven't received more money

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