

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
Gary Halbert, Interim City Manager
Shawn Hagerty, City Attorney

FROM: James Jeffries, City Clerk

DATE: June 12, 2025

SUBJ: Updated Council Meeting Materials – June 11, 2025

PUBLIC HEARING:

- (6) **Public Hearing for the Development of Fanita Ranch, to Consider Certifying Final Recirculated Revised Environmental Impact Report Including Second Recirculated Sections (ENV-2025-0003, AEIS 2022-4, AEIS 2017-11), and Approving the Fanita Ranch Development Plan and Development Review Permit (DR-2025-0001), Vesting Tentative Map (TM-2025-0001), and Conditional Use Permits for Public Parks (CUP2025-0001 and CUP-2025-0002), and a Fire Station (CUP-2025-0003). (Planning and Building – Sawa)**

The attached correspondence for above mentioned Item was received after 4:00p.m. on June 11, 2025, and was not included in the original memo.



From: [Janet Mc](#)
To: [Sandi Sawa](#)
Subject: Fanita Ranch Project and Second Recirculated Sections of the EIR Comments
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 4:37:09 PM

Dear Esteemed Mayor and Santee City Council,

Firstly, I am saddened that you are ignoring the Measure N VOTE results. This EIR appears to avoid the will of the voting majority and the many Santee signatures requiring a vote. Where is the General Plan Amendment? Is this informed decision making that CEQA mandates? I think not.

Second, You again skirt the intentions of the laws, ie CEQA, created to protect the sensitive habitat and the protected wildlife of the pristine Fanita Ranch land.

Third, We citizens have watched wildfires burn homes, property and endanger lives. The evacuation risks are real, exit routes are minimal, and the area schools will cause chaos with parents rushing to the area. Will gates be locked and barricaded keeping the big trailer rigs inside Santee Lakes Campground that would otherwise add to the traffic mayhem?

Finally, I have concerns for the senior citizens who may not be fully informed of the Very High Fire Hazard Zone that they may be risking their lives in. Many may be reliant on Uber type services for evacuation. Many may require frequent medications or visiting medical or daily services help that make sheltering in place not an option.

Please reject the Homefed Fanita Ranch Project. This pristine environment with all its entails and the voters of Santee deserve to have complete EIR, CEQA compliance, transparency, and safety from wildfires.

Thank You.

Sincerely,
Janet Mclees
Santee citizen, Santee voter, and Santee homeowner.

From: [Meredith Stevenson](#)
To: [Sandi Sawa](#)
Subject: RE: Comment Letter on FREIR for Fanita Ranch
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 5:40:47 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[2025-6-11 Written Public Testimony re Fanita Ranch.cleaned.pdf](#)

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Good evening,

I cannot attend the meeting this evening, so I have attached written testimony here.
Please confirm receipt when possible.

Best,

Meredith

Meredith Stevenson
Staff Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity
574-309-5620
mstevenson@biologicaldiversity.org

From: Sandi Sawa <SSawa@CityofSanteeCa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 6:50 AM
To: Meredith Stevenson <mstevenson@biologicaldiversity.org>
Subject: RE: Comment Letter on FREIR for Fanita Ranch

Ms. Stevenson,

I am in receipt of your email and was able to download the references.

Sandi

Sandi Sawa, MPL, AICP
Director of Planning and Building/City Planner
(619) 258-4100 x 167
ssawa@cityofsanteeca.gov



Please note my next regular day off is Friday, June 20th.

From: Meredith Stevenson <mstevenson@biologicaldiversity.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2025 4:59 PM
To: Sandi Sawa <ssawa@cityofsanteeca.gov>
Subject: Comment Letter on FREIR for Fanita Ranch

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Good afternoon,

Attached please find a letter from the Center for Biological Diversity regarding the FREIR for Fanita Ranch. We will also send the letter via FedEx. The references are available [here](#) and on a flash drive we will send tomorrow. Please confirm that you received the letter and were able to download the references.

Thank you,

Meredith Stevenson
Staff Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity
574-309-5620
mstevenson@biologicaldiversity.org

Public Testimony – Meredith Stevenson

City of Santee City Council Meeting, June 11, 2025

Re: Fanita Ranch, Agenda Item #6

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Fanita Ranch Project. I am unable to attend in person this evening and was disappointed to find that the City inexplicably will not accept comment from attendees who are participating remotely. So I am submitting my comments in writing instead.

I am a staff attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity (the “Center”), and I previously sent more extensive written comments to the City on the Second Recirculated Final Revised Environmental Impact Report (“2025 FREIR”) for the Fanita Ranch Project (the “Project”).

In short, the Center remains concerned that the 2025 FREIR fails to properly disclose, analyze, and mitigate the Project’s wildfire risks in light of new information from the recent 2025 Eaton and Palisades Fires (“LA Fires”). These fires started and quickly spread under similar conditions to those at the Project site, fueled by Santa Ana winds, steep topography, and dry vegetation. Despite confirming that a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone now covers the entire Project site, the FREIR overlooks new information brought to light by the recent LA Fires, as well as other recent fires, indicating heightened wildfire ignition and public safety risks and fails to adopt feasible mitigation measures to reduce or avoid the Project’s fire safety impacts.

In particular, the Center’s previous comments focused on the Project’s 445 age-restricted units, which will house an older population more vulnerable to these wildfire risks. The Center provided new information from the LA Fires regarding evacuation challenges for this population, including older residents’ unwillingness to evacuate the LA Fires, their difficulties due to physical constraints, logistical challenges for older residents, immediate health risks to older evacuees, and new information regarding health risks of wildfire smoke. Nevertheless, the City failed to respond to these concerns, let alone adequately assess and mitigate these reasonably foreseeable impacts, placing hundreds of residents at risk.

As we previously explained, the Project remains inconsistent with the applicable General Plan policies that guide development on the site. The Project’s inclusion of 445 so-called “Active Adult” units does not qualify the Project for the State Density Bonus Law, and, even if it did, the State Density Bonus Law does not require or authorize cities and counties to waive or ignore all applicable general plan policies with which a proposed project is inconsistent. If the City wishes to approve the Project as proposed, it should do so by way of an amendment to the General Plan, and should accordingly put the decision to a vote of the citizens of Santee, as required by Measure N. The City’s attempt to thwart the will of the voters by depriving them of this vote violates due process and the state constitutional right of initiative.

We ask the City Council not to approve the Project until it has taken into account pertinent new information from the LA Fires and other recent studies regarding fire behavior and mitigated accordingly. The Center would welcome an opportunity to meet with City representatives to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

Meredith Stevenson

From: [michele perchez](#)
To: [Sandi Sawa](#)
Subject: Re: second recirculated sections of final EIR Fanita Ranch project (SCH#200506118)
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 4:20:10 PM

Dear Director Sawa,

Please add my response to the comments found in the final EIR for the Fanita Ranch project to be voted on at tonight's meeting. Thank you.

The following are responses to my comment made April 2025: I110-1: The comment states that the Fanita Ranch Project (proposed project) would place senior housing in an elevated fire hazard severity zone. It also requests acknowledgment of Measure N and the Santee voters' right to control zoning of Fanita Ranch. Please refer to Thematic Response 1, Recirculation and Scope of Review Claims; Thematic Response 2, Wildfire Risk; and Thematic Response 3, No Public Vote Requirement. This comment does not raise a significant environmental issue regarding the adequacy or accuracy of the information provided in the Second Recirculated Sections of the Final Revised Environmental Impact Report for the proposed project. Therefore, no further response is required.

I believe a response is required for the fire risk not adequately addressed for all subpopulations that will inhabit the parcels of the Fanita Ranch project, specifically the special needs individuals that require assistance and/or extended time periods for successful evacuation (senior populations definitely, likely others that are unknown). In this case, the project fails to ensure adequate fire safety evacuation plans.

Additionally, it is reasonable to assume we are at far greater risk, as demonstrated by exacerbated effects of increased planet warming, that the recent fires in Los Angeles are a likely scenario for consideration when planning any project, whether in Santee or other area within the State of California. It is unwise to ignore these new circumstances.

I believe the City still should let the voter's decide whether the project goes forward or not (use of voter measures and referenda). The City's use of the EHP element represents a backdoor way of approving the project without complying to the will of the voter. Not all of the residents in Santee can just pick up and move to avoid the decades long impacts of this project, yet we will feel the pain and contend with our tax dollars going to support this huge project.

The community has pushed back on this project for many decades; it's time that the council listen to its constituents.

I thank you for your time!

Michele

On Wed, Apr 9, 2025 at 9:26 PM michele perchez [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Director Sawa and Santee City Council,

Please respect, as public servants, the court's decision and the Santee voters' right to control

zoning of Fanita Ranch. Recall that the voters of Santee decisively approved Measure N and as this very large project will have an inordinate impact to our daily lives, voters have earned the right to voice our approval/disapproval for the project. This is the fair thing to do - let the people speak.

It is my understanding that 445 units will be earmarked as Senior Housing for this project, a project that will be placed right in the middle of an extreme fire hazard severity zone. Common sense would dictate this site would not even be a consideration given the risk and given the real threat that Santee is sure to experience fires on the scale we have seen with the recent Los Angeles area fires. Knowing that the vast majority of fatalities in those fires were senior citizens, I don't understand why the city planners and council would even contemplate continuing to push forth with this project. Please choose another site for development.

Project approval shows obvious disregard for the will of voters and an ignoring of the court's legal opinion. Contrary to the Mayor's recent comments in East County Magazine, the judge has followed the law and made the right decisions and these should be abided by.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Michele Perchez

From: [Tim Deesen](#)
To: [Sandi Sawa](#); [CityClerk](#); mayorandcitycouncil@cityofsantee.ca.gov
Subject: Public Comment – Opposition to Fanita Ranch Housing Expansion Project -Fanita Ranch FINAL 2nd Recirculated Sections FREIR (SCH# 200506118) "FEIR" (Response To Comments, RTC)
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 6:19:41 PM

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the Santee City Council,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Fanita Ranch Housing Expansion project. As a resident of Santee for over 15 years, I have witnessed firsthand how each new housing development has worsened our traffic congestion. The Fanita Ranch project, which proposes 3,000 new homes, would bring an estimated 10,000 additional residents, exacerbating an already strained infrastructure.

This project has been rejected multiple times by the community, and yet it continues to resurface. The recent court ruling in August 2024 reaffirmed that the City Council failed to follow its own rules by bypassing a public vote, as required by Measure N. The residents of Santee deserve the right to vote on such a transformative project.

I urge you to respect the will of the people and reject this project once and for all.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the community.

Sincerely,

Tim Deesen (Santee resident since 2009)

From: [Save Fanita](#)
To: [Sandi Sawa](#)
Cc: [James Jeffries](#)
Subject: Fanita Ranch FRREIR - Item 6
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 4:50:38 PM
Attachments: [PWS Response to Fanita Response FB 06112025.cleaned.pdf](#)
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Dear Director Sawa & City Council,
Please consider Preserve Wild Santee comments opposing the Fanita Ranch project attached.
Thank you,
Van Collinsworth

PRESERVE WILD SANTEE

June 11, 2025

Sandi Sawa, AICP, Director of Planning & Building
Santee City Council
By Email: ssawa@cityofsanteeca.gov

**RE: Fanita Ranch FINAL 2nd Recirculated Sections FREIR
(SCH# 200506118) “FEIR” (Response To Comments, RTC)**

Dear Director Sawa and City Council,

The following statements respond to the Responses to Comments (RTC) for the Fanita Ranch project, specifically addressing wildfire risks, evacuation feasibility, senior housing vulnerabilities, and inconsistencies with the Santee General Plan, including requirement for a public vote. These issues pose significant public safety and environmental impacts that warrant further mitigation / project rejection or a public vote.

Please respect the democratic process and allow the citizens of Santee to make a final vote on the project. It is residents who should determine Santee’s future - not the speculation and campaign contributions of “HomeFed” / Jeffries Financial Group of NY.

Response to Responses in the Second Recirculated Sections of the Final EIR May 2025

Appendix U Wildfire Safety Memorandum

Response To Comment (RTC) Letter - Michael Huff, Dudek May 27, 2025:

Theoretical fire modeling utilizes variable inputs and its results are limited by those inputs. Chapter 7A, Ignition Resistant Construction has limitations. “Resistant” acknowledges a potential for ignition remains. Resistance has limitations.

Dudek places its faith (and the lives of thousands) upon unproven theory a “master-planned” subdivision is a magic bullet to allow continued building in severely hazardous topography, regardless of dynamic fuel loads, increasingly severe fire weather with fast moving incidents or post-fire mudslides. Firefighters with long careers are now speaking frequently about the increased severity of fire behavior experienced. Dudek alleges its theory was tested by the Silverado Fire in 2020.

The Silverado Fire burned in an area previously burned by the 2007 Santiago Fire, so the fuel intensity of the Silverado fire is not a worst case scenario test for projects built with higher standard building code.¹ Furthermore, the Silverado Fire burned only 12,466-acres. Comparisons with mega-fires burning hundreds of thousands of acres and destroying thousands of structures in California are limited. Still, CAL FIRE records indicate 5 structures were destroyed and another 11 were damaged by the Silverado Fire.²

The Silverado incident required the evacuation of approximately 90,000 people.³ Evacuations were required despite higher building standards. The City response does not acknowledge or address the inadequate and reduced feasibility of evacuating existing or future Fanita Ranch residents relative to evacuation routes available for the Silverado Fire. Furthermore, two firefighters were critically burned reflecting the strain placed upon emergency personnel when at risk development requires firefighter response.

Dudek fails to address a critical weakness in the proposed Fanita Ranch subdivision design: the close clustering of homes combined with reliance on fire-resistant rather than fireproof construction. If a single home ignites—whether due to design limitations, weather impacts, or human error—nearby structures are highly susceptible to ignition, especially under extreme, low-humidity wind conditions. This domino effect significantly increases the risk of widespread fire throughout the downwind subdivision. As seen in events like the Silverado Fire, such vulnerabilities often necessitate mass evacuations. However, Santee’s current circulation system is inadequate to support a timely evacuation of this scale.

My comments, along with those of others, do not dismiss the value of fire-resistant construction; rather, they appropriately highlight critical weaknesses that significantly impact public safety. Dudek claims that the remaining risk is at “acceptable levels.” However, this substantial residual risk can be avoided by building off-site and/or

¹ Gabbert, Bill. Orange County’s Silverado Fire similar to 2007 Santiago Fire. Wildfire Today, 10/29/2020. [https://wildfiretoday.com/orange-countys-silverado-fire-similar-to-2007-santiago-fire/#:~:text=Silverado and Santiago Fires,29, 2020\) vs.](https://wildfiretoday.com/orange-countys-silverado-fire-similar-to-2007-santiago-fire/#:~:text=Silverado and Santiago Fires,29, 2020) vs.)

² CAL FIRE. Silverado Fire <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2020/10/26/silverado-fire/>

³ Fausto, Alma. Silverado fire forces 90,000 to evacuate: 2 firefighters critically burned. Orange County Register, October 27, 2020. <https://www.ocregister.com/2020/10/26/vegetation-fire-erupts-in-canyon-hills-of-silverado-in-east-orange-county/>

mitigated by increasing the distance between structures, consistent with “Essential Element”/“Guiding Principle” 3 of the Santee General Plan. Adhering to the General Plan guidelines ensures that structures are separated sufficiently to lie outside each other’s Home Ignition Zones. Failure to provide this separation leaves residents vulnerable to structure-to-structure “urban conflagration” or “cluster burns.”

The statement by former CAL FIRE Director Ruben Grijalva cited by Dudek does not say there has not been or will not be any losses. The caveat of his statement, is that there has not yet been “extensive losses.” Data referenced by Director Grijalva documents at least 239 homes built after 2010 have been lost in eight different California wildfires.⁴

Former CAL FIRE Director Ken Pimlott, provided alternate guidance calling for new development “to make sure we’re not putting people in harm’s way”. Director Pimlott also stated, “There just may be areas in drainage or that are critical fire corridors that intensify winds that it will make it impossible to protect a structure,...We have to learn from past fires and continue to take a hard look at determining where houses can be built in the future.”^{5 6 7}

Furthermore, contrary to Fanita Ranch design, the Orchard Hill subdivision touted by Dudek has 200-foot fuel modification zones with perimeter roads in consideration of Santa Ana wind direction, orchards, fire walls and much superior ingress and egress.

Older Adults:

The Dudek letter uses a project euphemism “active adult community.” Dudek fails to provide evidence the 55+ residents would not have the same vulnerabilities as other 55+ residents identified by PWS April 2, 2025 comment letter. Comparisons are valid and relevant, in part, because the project has designed encroaching Home Ignition Zones between structures which are not fire proof.

⁴ CBIA. Office of the State Fire Marshal Property Loss Data Summary - Exhibit Attached

⁵ Tandy, Katie. Cal Fire’s Retiring Chief: ‘Firefighter face the impacts of climate change every day’. KQED The California Report, 12/14/2018. <https://www.kqed.org/news/11712563/cal-fires-retiring-chief-firefighters-face-the-impacts-of-climate-change-every-day>

⁶ Thompson, Don. Retiring Cal Fire Director: California Must Mull Home Ban in Fire-Prone Areas. Associated Press. CAPR 12/11/2018. <https://www.caprado.org/articles/2018/12/11/retiring-cal-fire-director-california-must-mull-home-ban-in-fire-prone-areas/>
#:~:text=Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott will,now routinely threaten large populations.

⁷ Peterson, Molly. One Potential Solution to Deadly Wildfires in the Wilderness: Don’t Build There. KQED, 6/12/2019.

CAL FIRE - Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map Updates:

Dudek misinterprets public comments regarding changes to “Fire Hazard Severity Zone” maps in Santee. Comments do not suggest changes to the site. The map changes confirm CAL FIRE most recent data recognizes greater vulnerability than data incorporated by prior maps, in part, due to the consistent trend for greater weather extremes.

Dudek downplays the significance of the greater hazard recognition for Santee and the Fanita Ranch site by stating the Santee City Council has not yet adopted the updated map. Santee City Council is predisposed not to consider significant new information released by Cal Fire. Reference the City Council meeting recording 4/9/25.

However, when the updated map was initially presented to City Council at hearing, Santee Fire Chief Justin Matsushita recommended adoption of Chapter 7A standards for any lot split by the new CAL FIRE Map and adoption of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone standards for the entire city.⁸

Santee Fire Chief Justin Matsushita:

“I can look at this through the lens of a fire agency standpoint. And it is not popular, but I would want the entire map red because that means that I’m going to have the most fire resilient structures on the planet. Right, but that’s unfortunately not, I don’t, I’m not the king. We also have to balance the impact that will have on construction and the viability of projects. So we know that there is this kind of tug of war and so apologies if you wanted that from us. That’s my bad.”⁹

The **risk** of the hazards identified by CAL FIRE map data remain significantly elevated due to lack of adequate spacing between structures and other factors identified in public comment, which Dudek does not address. The hazard map update is new and significant information.

⁸ Santee City Council Agenda Item 10, April 9, 2025. Presenting Santee Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map as Recommended by CAL FIRE... Exhibit attached.

⁹ Santee City Council 4/9/2025, **Item 10 recording at** <https://cityofsantee.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/show/2082?site=1>

Emergency Alert Failures:

Regardless of the significant potential for alert system failures, a “layered” alert system does not compensate for the inability of the project to be evacuated prior to the potential for fast moving wind driven ignitions and flame fronts to reach project structures and evacuation routes. Dudek confirms, for ‘short-notice wildfire events”, residents would be sheltered on-site and instructed to remain indoors, despite project vulnerability to structure-to-structure cluster burns. Dudek does not address data demonstrating increased vulnerability and destruction of homes with 10-20 feet of separation. And once again, the request to estimate evacuation times for specific evacuation zones or provide performance standards for evacuation has been ignored. Evacuation routes near chaparral and coastal sage habitats remain vulnerable to radiant heat, direct flame impingement and smoke. All routes are vulnerable to loss of visibility and smoke inhalation.

Educational Outreach:

The effectiveness of educational outreach is limited. There is not pre or post testing of individual residents to assess deficiencies or retention of concepts. Nor is there compulsory participation. Individuals have a wide range of interest and ability to participate in or grasp information. I know from first hand experience performing such educational outreach among thousands of at risk households in San Diego County. Furthermore, education without implementation/reinforced action has limited periods of retention. Contrary to Dudek’s claim of hardening, critical evacuation routes remain significantly exposed to chaparral and coastal sage vegetation fuels.

Increased frequency of extreme weather events and record breaking temperatures:

Dudek does not address the implications of increasing temperatures and extreme weather events. Nor does Dudek refute rising amounts energy are being trapped inside the earth’s atmosphere, all energy is conserved and the rising amounts of energy are distributed by higher velocity winds with greater duration. The implications for the project of significant new record breaking climatic data remain unconsidered.

Dudek did not address climatic factors resulting in the loss of over 7,000 structures outside of a Fire Hazard Severity Zone on the Eaton Fire.

Dudek did not address the lack of confidence demonstrated by insurance companies cancelling policies or the prospect for project homeowners to obtain and retain coverage in a Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

Dudek did not address or recognize the rising frequency of fast moving fires throughout the state and beyond.

Dudek did not address the potential for post fire mudslides on and below avoidable steep topography. Geologic studies identified numerous ancient landslides.

Thematic Response 2 - Wildfire Risk [P 1-8 - 1-11]

Senior Housing:

The RTC is inadequate. While prior Descriptions of the project evidently included some option or provision for what the RTC now describes as Senior Housing, the 2020 and 2022 documents did not reveal the extent to which a Senior Housing component would be relied upon to avoid General Plan consistency and Measure N public vote requirements. Review of Section 3.1 and Table 3.1 confirm the project description does **not** use the term “Senior Housing” nor does the description specifically state residents would be limited to age 55+. The specific “*age-restriction*” is not revealed. The project description veiled what is now identified as 55+ Senior Housing with the euphemism “Active Adult.”

In contrast, the first use of the term “...senior housing” is revealed in a “Density Bonus Law Revisions” discussion February 2025, pages 0-4, 0-5 of the Second Recirculated Sections of Final EIR.

CEQA requires full disclosure. The serious issues raised by public comments in regard to 445 units of Senior Housing must be addressed.

Recent Wildfires - RTC on wildfire comparisons:

Unless and until the applicant produces a fire proof project design where evacuation is not necessary, vulnerability comparisons of the proposed Fanita Ranch project with other wildfire losses are relevant and appropriate. There are no “acceptable levels” of destruction when occupied structures are spaced so close together that the ignition of just a single structure can ignite a chain reaction of destruction. The 150-mile separation from Santee to the LA fires is not significant. Weather, fuel and topography comparisons are relevant. California’s weather, vegetation and topography is diverse, yet mega-fire destruction stretches from north to south, a distance of approximately 770 miles border to border.

RTC cites the 2020 Silverado Fire in Irvine as evidence the Fanita Ranch project will withstand future firestorms. [P.1-9 FEIR] The argument is not convincing. Reference pages 2 and 3 of this letter.

RTC [P. 1-9] provides statements that would mislead the reader to conclude there would not be wildfire structure losses with Chapter 7A compliant construction.

In fact, new homes built with Chapter 7A, Ignition Resistant Construction have been destroyed by wildfire. State Fire Marshal data indicates, at least 239 homes built after 2010 have been lost in eight different California wildfires.¹⁰

¹⁰ CBIA. Office of the State Fire Marshal Property Loss Data Summary - Exhibit Attached

Thematic Response 3 - Issue of a Public Vote

Contrary to the RTC assertion, a public vote is required for project approval.

“Essential Element” / “Guiding Principle” #3 in the Land Use Element of the Santee General Plan establishes density limits (as recognized by Measure N) by establishing minimum lot sizes for developable acreage. The developer and City choose to ignore the letter and spirit of Measure N, which provides the residents of Santee veto power over project’s which increase density. The Fanita Ranch project proposes to more than double the number of units over what could be built consistent with “Essential Element” / “Guiding Principle” #3.

RTC 04-3 General Plan Inconsistency Issue:

RTC implies the purpose of “Essential Element” / “Guiding Principle” #3 did not include avoidance or mitigation of significant environmental impacts and thus the inconsistency is “less than significant.” PWS April 2, 2025 comment letter pages 23-25 specifically refutes the false assumption GP#3 was not adopted to avoid or mitigate for significant adverse environmental impacts.

“Essential Element” / “Guiding Principle” #3 was adopted by the Santee City Council after a 1984 Environmental Impact Report and later Ogden Environmental’s Biotechnical Report for Fanita Ranch circa 1993 were released to study large development proposals.

[Final Environmental Impact Report for Fanita Ranch Units 1-5 (City of Santee TM83-01, TM83-04, TM83-05, TM83-06, TM83-06, TM83-07, P83-01, P83-02, P83-03, R83-01, R83-03. RBR & Associates, Inc.. 1984 (tDAR id: 312247)]

Therefore, the project does cause a significant inconsistency with a plan or policy adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. The significant impact of inconsistency with GP#3 must be addressed.

Furthermore, RTC fails to address the inconsistency with Habitat Conservation Plans and Endangered Species Acts called out by our letter 4/2/25 on page 23.

Conclusion:

The Fanita Ranch project has significant adverse impacts to public safety and should be rejected. Wildfire vulnerabilities, evacuation challenges, senior housing concerns, General Plan and HCP inconsistencies were not adequately addressed by the public response to comments.

I urge the City to reject the project or require mitigations, including increased structure spacing, enhanced evacuation route capacity, compliance with Measure N public vote requirement and CEQA disclosure requirements. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

/s/

Van K. Collinsworth, Director/Physical Geographer/Fire Professional

Exhibits:

Orange County's Silverado fire similar to Santiago Fire

Silverado Fire - Cal Fire Incident Summary

Silverado fire forces 90,000 to evacuate: 2 firefighters critically burned

Office of the State Fire Marshal Property Loss Data Summary

Cal Fire's Retiring Chief: 'Firefighter face the impacts of climate change every day'

Retiring Cal Fire Director: California Must Mull Home Ban in Fire-Prone Areas

One Potential Solution to Deadly Wildfires in the Wilderness: Don't Build There

Santee City Council Agenda Item 10, April 9, 2025. Presenting Santee Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map as Recommended by CAL FIRE...

1984 Final Environmental Impact Report for Fanita Ranch Units 1-5...Citation

Orange County’s Silverado Fire similar to 2007 Santiago Fire

Bill Gabbert

October 29, 2020

Silverado and Santiago Fires



Silverado and Santiago Fires

There are similarities between the Silverado Fire that has been burning since Monday in Orange County, California, and the Santiago Fire of 2007.

- They started near the intersection of Santiago Canyon and Silverado Canyon roads.
- They both started in late October, the 21st and 26th.
- After spreading for two days, their footprints were similar.
- They burned with a Santa Ana wind during drought conditions.
- Firefighters were entrapped on both fires. Two ~~suffered serious burns~~ and are still hospitalized from the Silverado Fire. On the Santiago Fire twelve had to deploy fire shelters for protection from the flames, but there were no injuries.

While the Santiago Fire was burning there were nine other ongoing major fires which set up a competition for firefighting resources. The spread of this year's Silverado Fire was essentially stopped after two days, but in 2007 there were not enough hand crews, engines, air tankers, and helicopters to keep it from crossing Santiago Canyon Road on day three when the wind shifted to come out of the west. After that, it got into steeper slopes with heavier vegetation in the Cleveland National Forest, and eventually burned twice as much as the Silverado Fire, 28,517 acres (as of Oct. 29, 2020) vs. 13,390 acres.

Santiago Fire, October, 2007



Santiago Fire, October, 2007. From the After Action Report.

Silverado Fire map, October 28, 2020.



Silverado Fire map, October 28, 2020.

The causes appear to be very different. An arsonist used an accelerator to start the Santiago Fire in two places. In spite of an Investigation Task force consisting of 160 persons from the Orange County Fire Authority, FBI, ATF, and the Sheriff's Department, and a \$250,000 reward, an arrest was never made.

Southern California Edison said it is investigating whether electrical equipment may have caused the Silverado fire. The company reported to the state Public Utilities Commission that a “lashing wire” attached to a third-party telecommunications line may have struck a primary conductor.

The 136-page [After Action Report](#) for the Santiago Fire is available on Orange County's website.



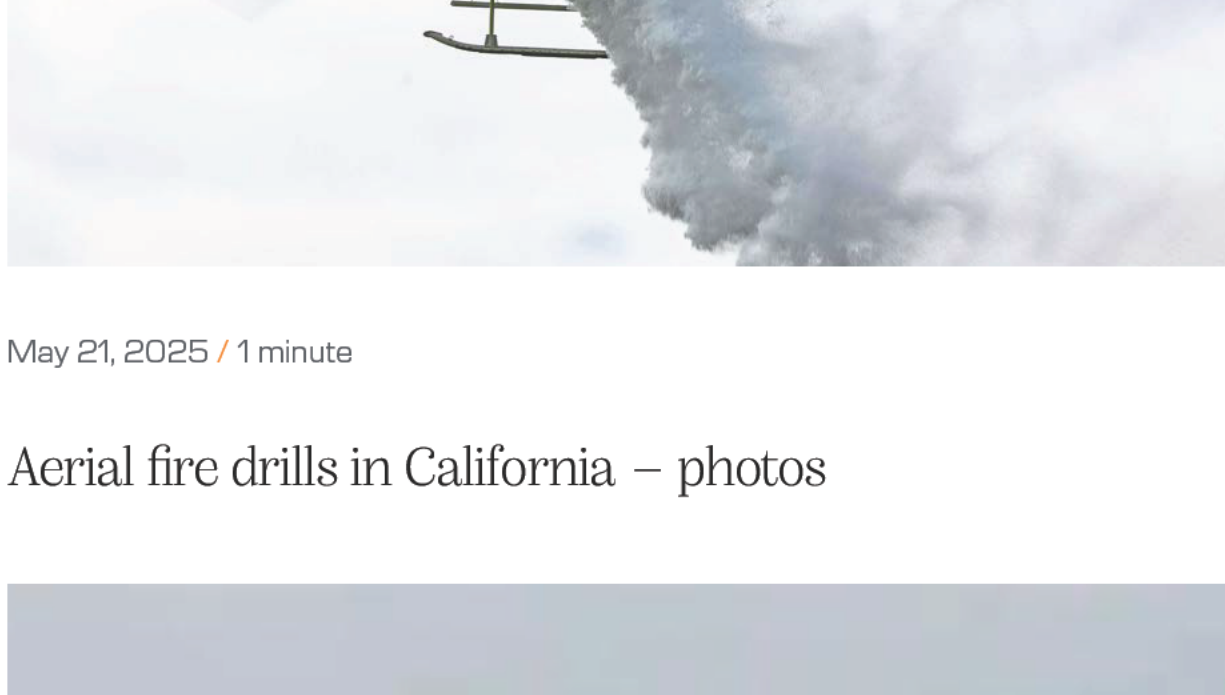
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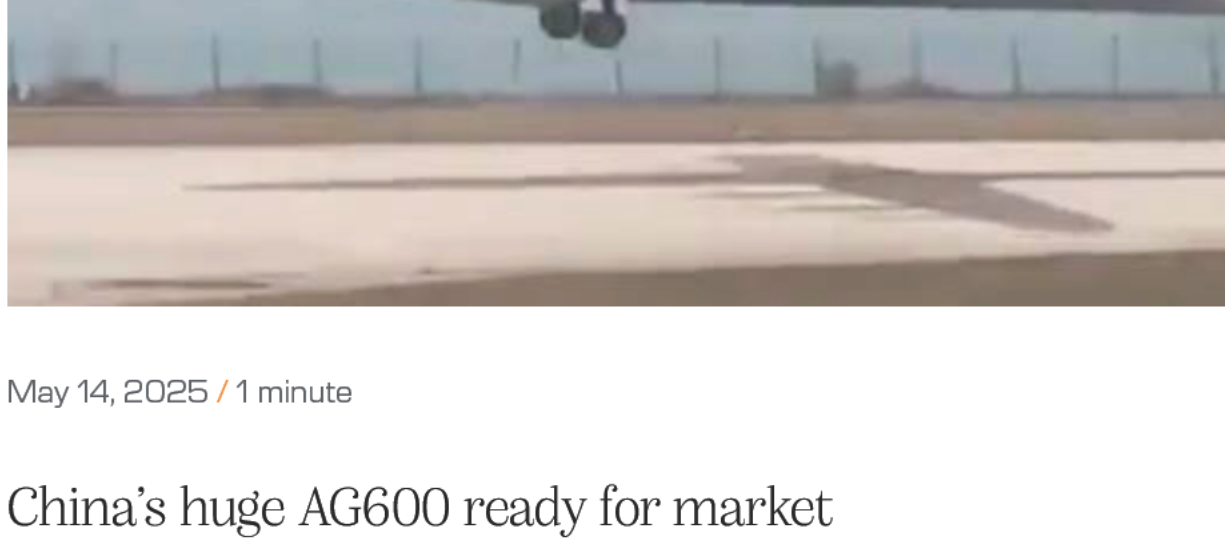
June 5, 2025 / 1 minute

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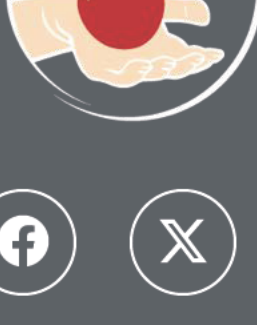
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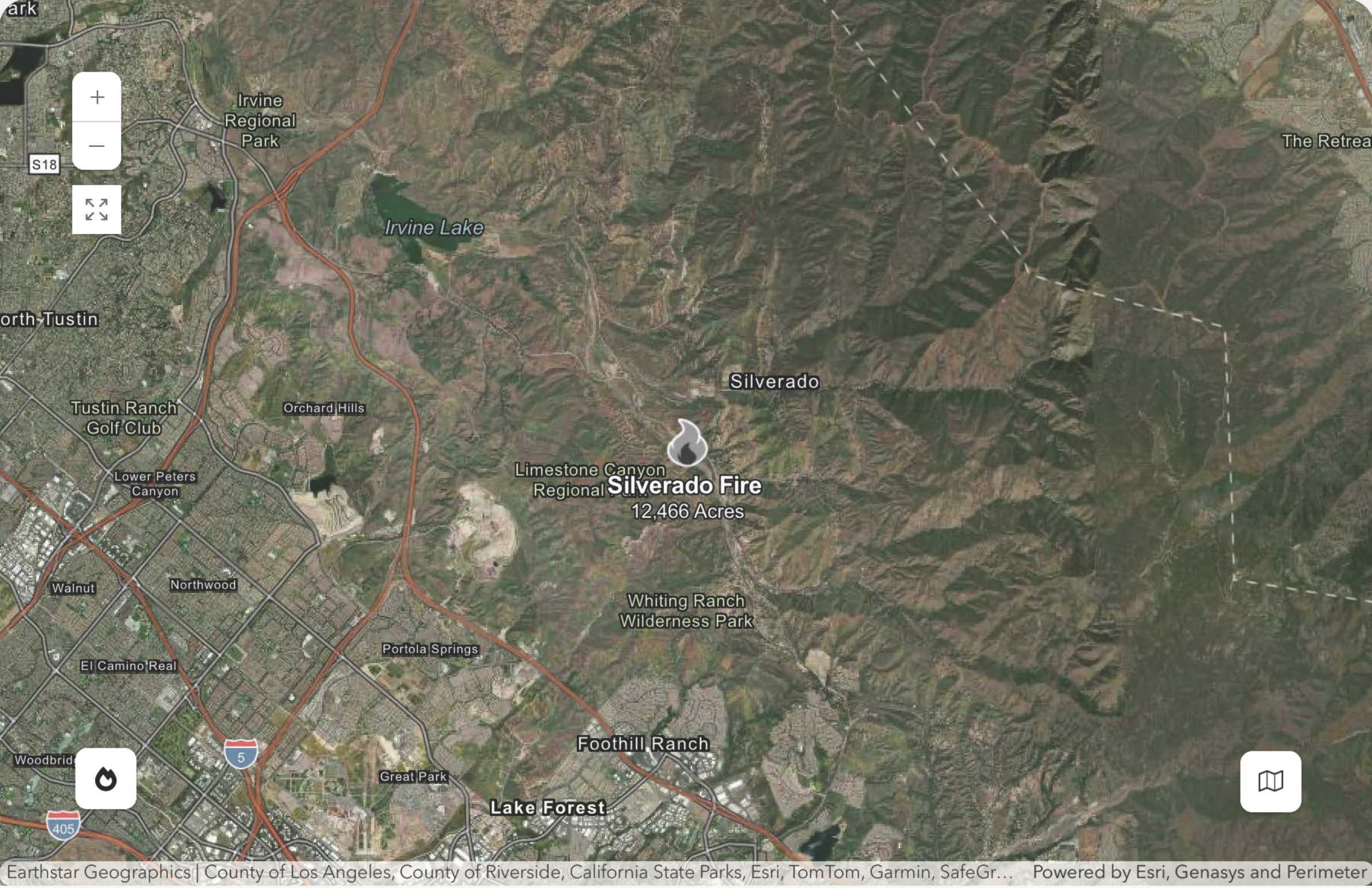
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LAYERS

☒ Air Assets

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Date Started

10/26/2020 7:54 AM

Last Updated

10/21/2022 1:16 PM

Date Contained

11/07/2020 7:07 AM

(Active for 12 days)

Incident Maps and Reports

3D Map

Admin Unit

CAL FIRE & Orange County Fire Authority and Orange County Sheriff

Location

Off the 241 in the Irvine area
[33.73614,-117.65719]

Reports

Status reports

Resources Assigned

784 Personnel	1 Helicopters	85 Engines	5 Dozers	3 Water Tenders	10 Crews
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Numerous firefighting air tankers from throughout the State are flying fire suppression missions as conditions allow.

Damage Assessment

Confirmed Damage to Property, Injuries, and Fatalities.

11 Structures Damaged Residential, Commercial and Other	5 Structures Destroyed Residential, Commercial and Other	2 Confirmed Civilian Injuries
---	--	--

Contact Information

Information Line
714-628-7085

Media Line
949-396-3998 & 949-573-5703

Email Updates (Sign up)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/CALFIREMEDIA>

Online Evacuation Map
<http://www.tinyurl.com/OCevac>

Agency Information

Orange County Fire Authority
https://twitter.com/OCFA_PIO

The map layers provided are powered by Esri, Genasys, Perimeter and other potential resources, and are based on their respective data sources. The accuracy and reliability of the information are subject to the data provided by these platforms.



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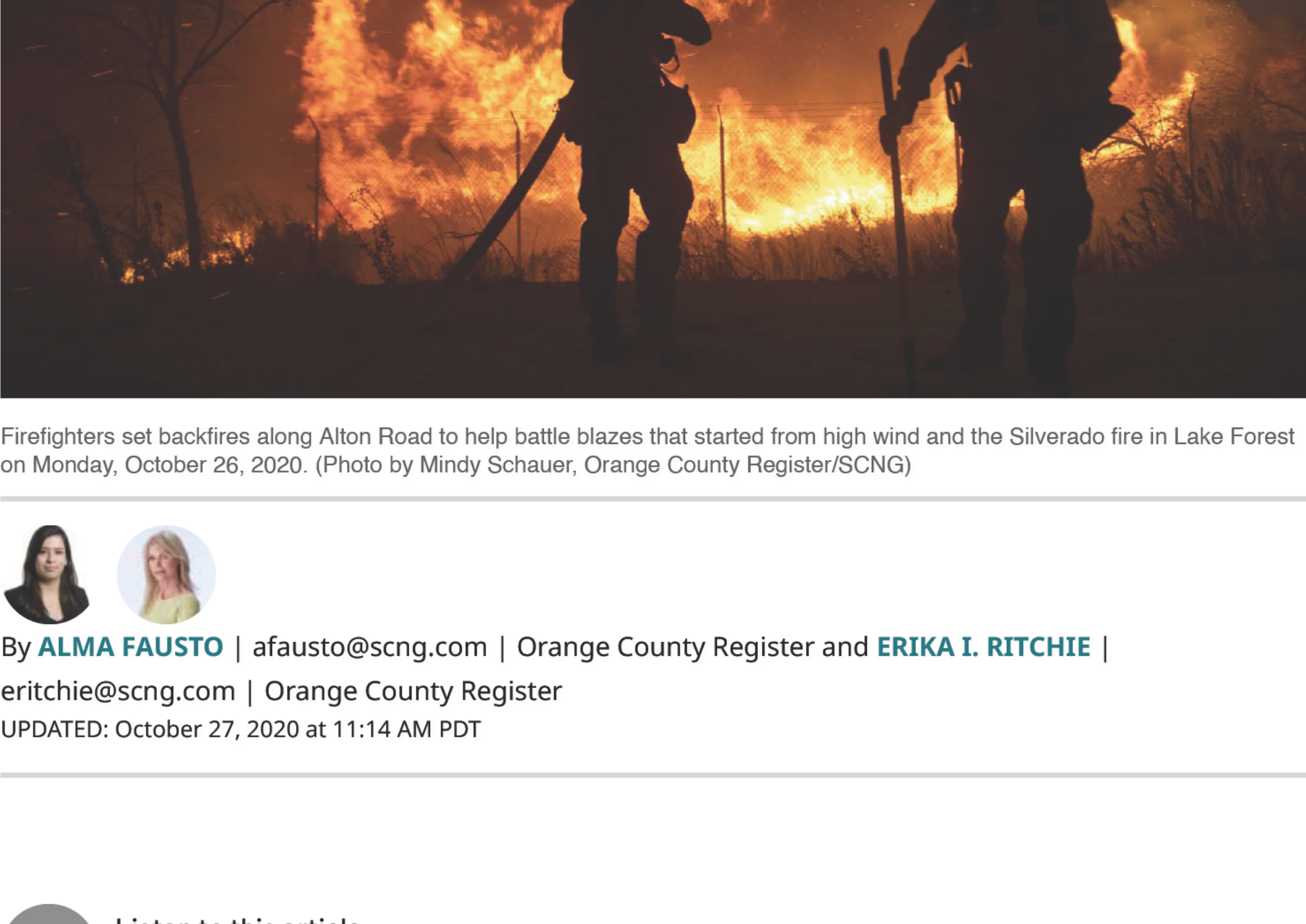
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NEWS > CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY • News

Silverado fire forces 90,000 to evacuate; 2 firefighters critically burned



Firefighters set backfires along Alton Road to help battle blazes that started from high wind and the Silverado fire in Lake Forest on Monday, October 26, 2020. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **ALMA FAUSTO** | afausto@scng.com | Orange County Register and **ERIKA I. RITCHIE** | eritchie@scng.com | Orange County Register
UPDATED: October 27, 2020 at 11:14 AM PDT

The wind-driven [Silverado fire](#) that ignited Monday, Oct. 26 near Silverado Canyon left two firefighters critically burned and forced more than 90,000 Irvine residents to evacuate.

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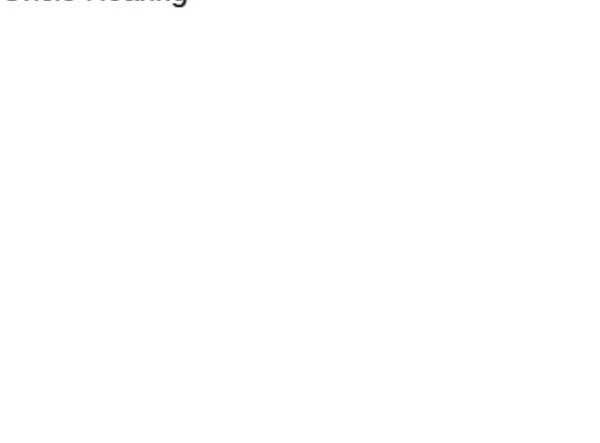
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LeafFilter Partner



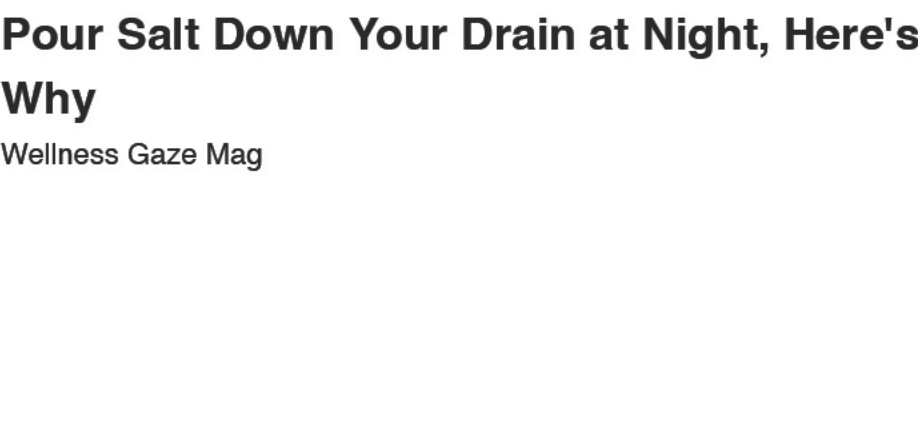
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Health-Review24



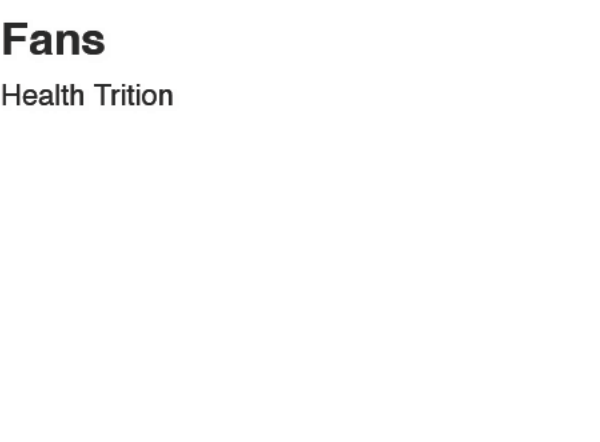
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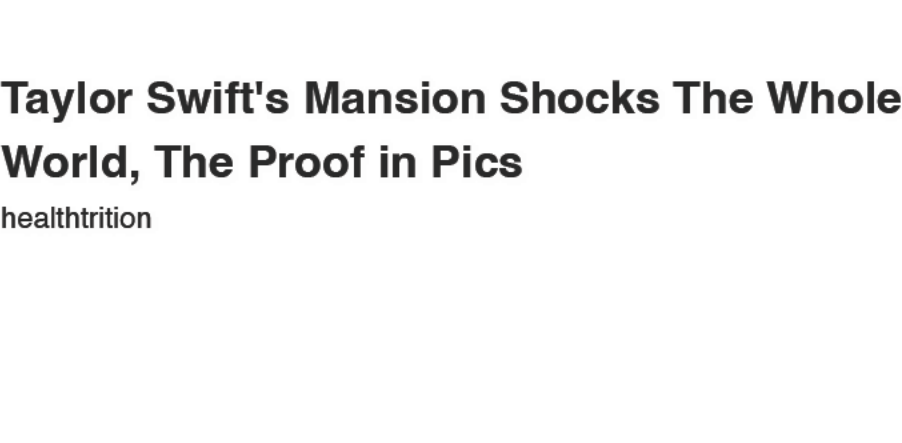
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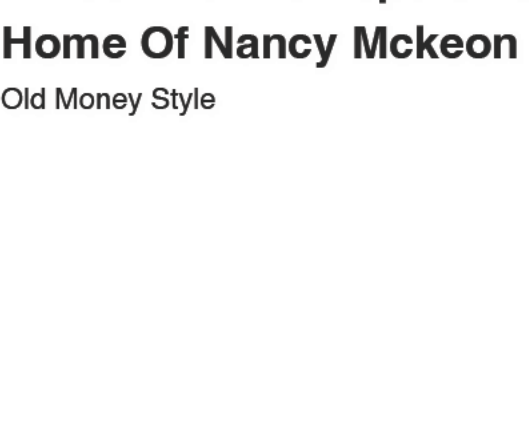
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Wellness Gaza Mag



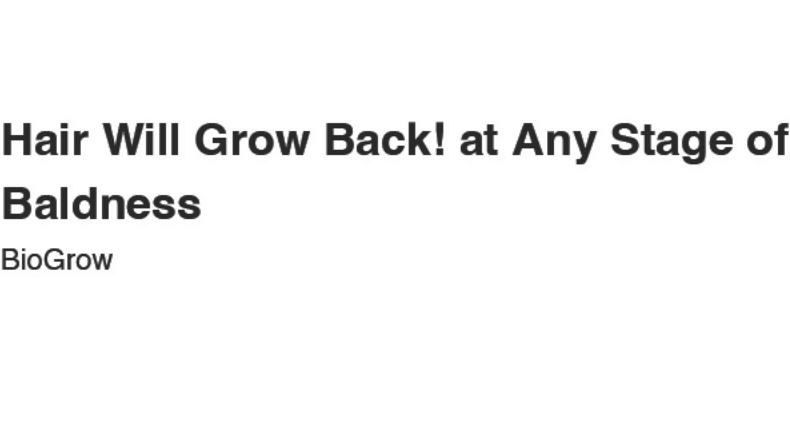
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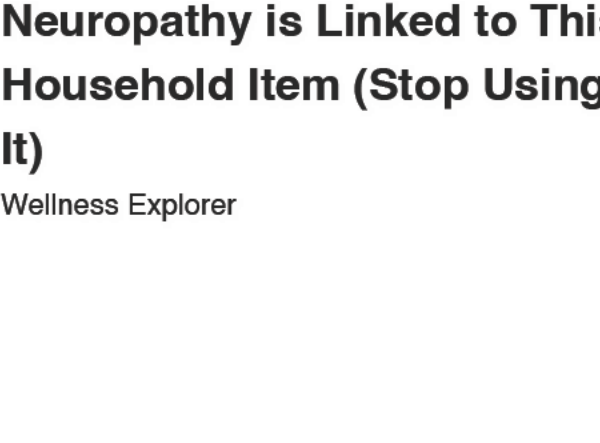
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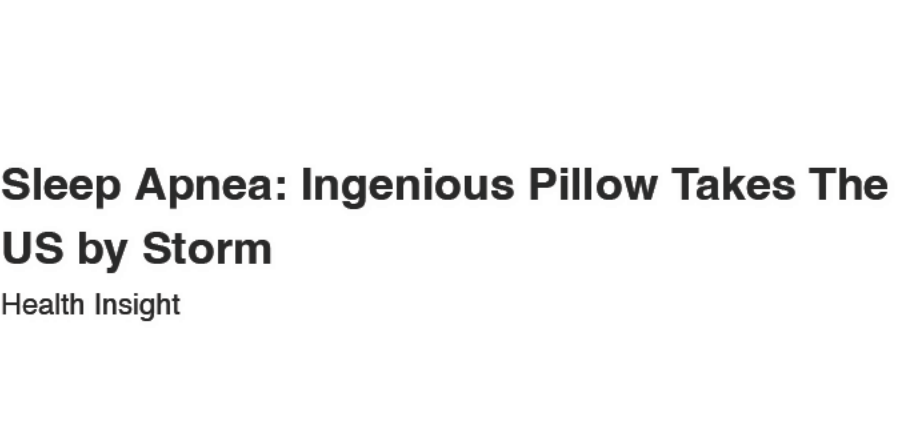
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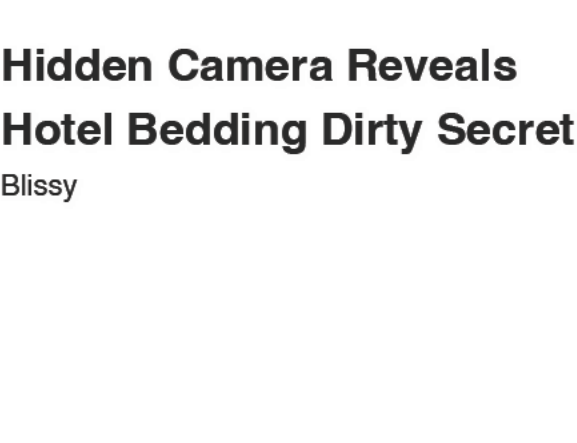
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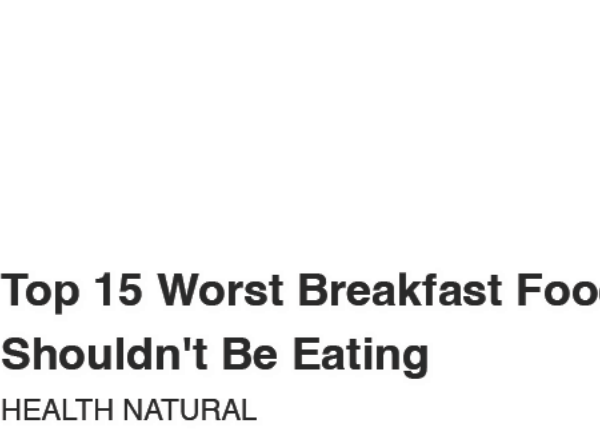
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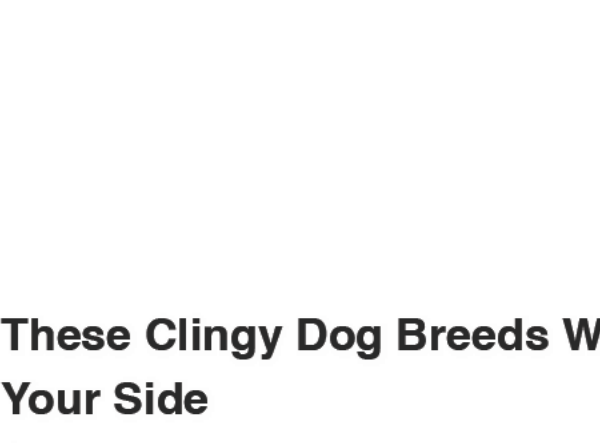
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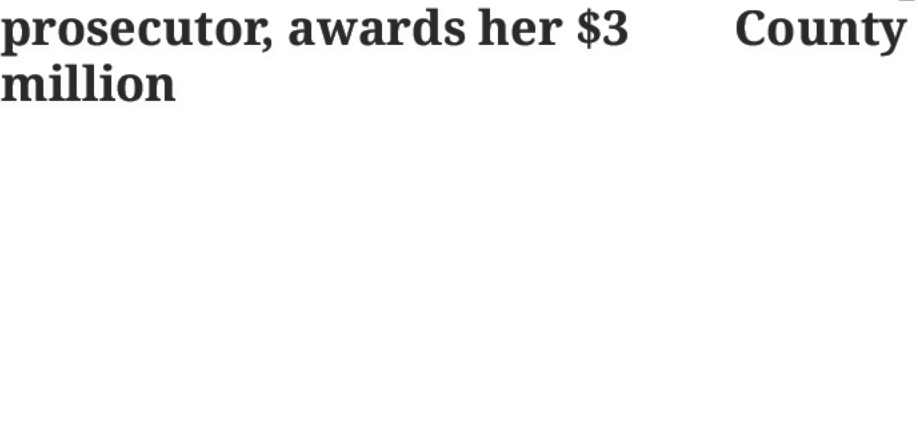
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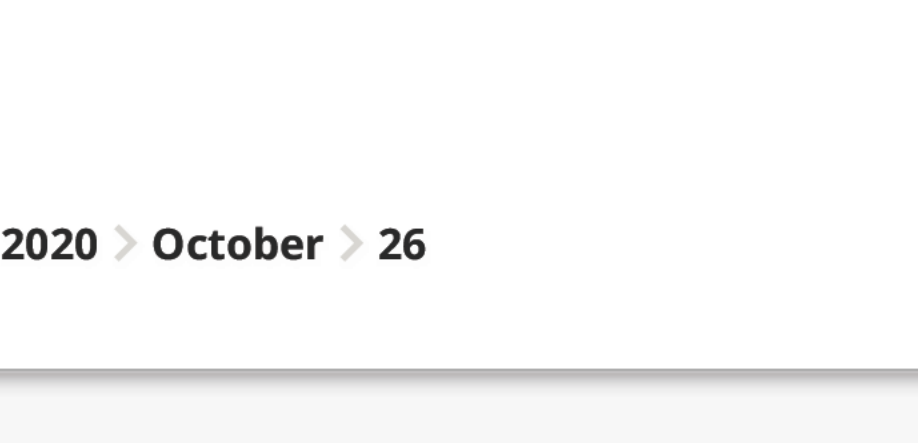
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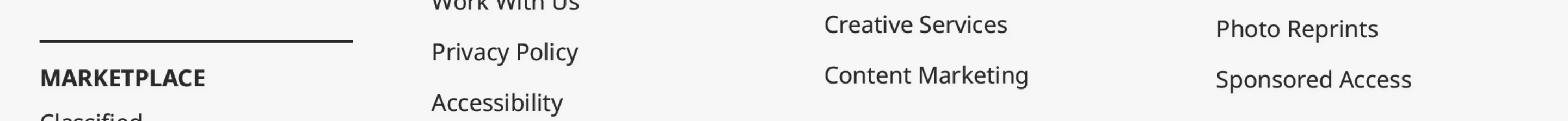


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Office of the State Fire Marshal Property Loss Data Summary

The Office of the State Fire Marshal maintains an extensive data retrieval service of fire incidents across the state, including those related to fires occurring in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

Regarding the ten worst property-loss fires dating back to 2017, CBIA requested residential data that identified:

- whether the dwelling was single-family or multifamily
- damage assessment (destroyed, major damage, affected, no damage)
- valuation of the structure
- **year the structure was built**

Among other things, we wanted to see whether the regulatory rules that applied to newer units and development were faring any better than older dwellings/development. These regulatory rules included:

- The State Fire Marshal's "fire hardening" building standards
- Defensible space mandates
- Cal Fire's Fire Safe Development Standards

We used a demarcation point of 1/1/10 as that is when all three of these rules were being consistently implemented in new construction in the WUI areas of California.

On average, only 1% of the homes and apartments which were destroyed, damaged, or affected were new dwellings (built after 1/1/10) even though new dwellings make up roughly 7% of the states total housing stock.

For all these fires, there is evidence that significant, initial residential development took place in the period of 1945-1980, decades before these critical rules were put in place.

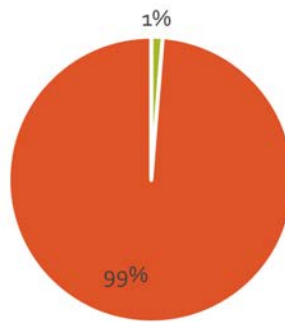
New, production-style development has fared extremely well compared with older neighborhoods. Of the 31,000 data points retrieved from the SFM, it was extremely rare to see more than two new homes on the same street destroyed or affected by the fires, while entire neighborhoods of older dwellings being destroyed was commonplace.

This seems to make the case that the state should place major focus on fire-hardening existing neighborhoods in ways similar to those required of all new construction.

Simply put: California's existing rules for new construction appear to be working very well.

Camp Fire

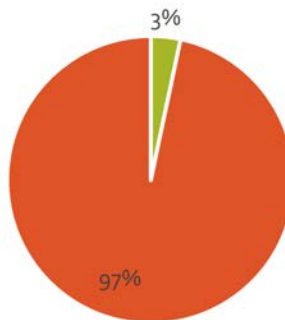
Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 10,582



■ Homes Built After 2010: 136 ■ Homes Built Before 2010: 10,446

Carr Fire

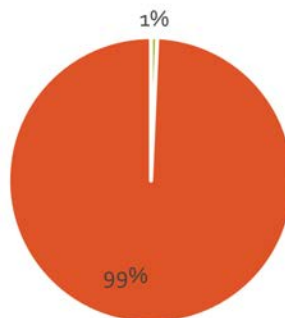
Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 1,082



■ Homes Built After 2010: 36 ■ Homes Built Before 2010: 1,046

CZU Lightning Fire

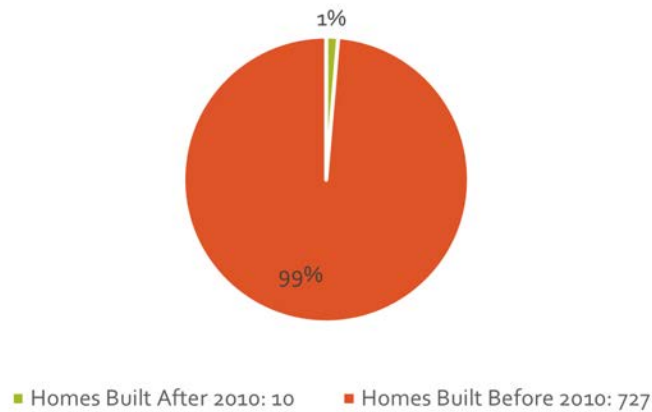
Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 998



■ Homes Built After 2010: 7 ■ Homes Built Before 2010: 992

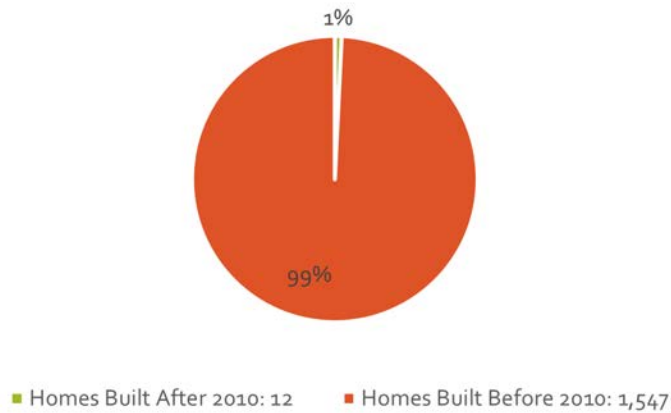
Glass Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 737



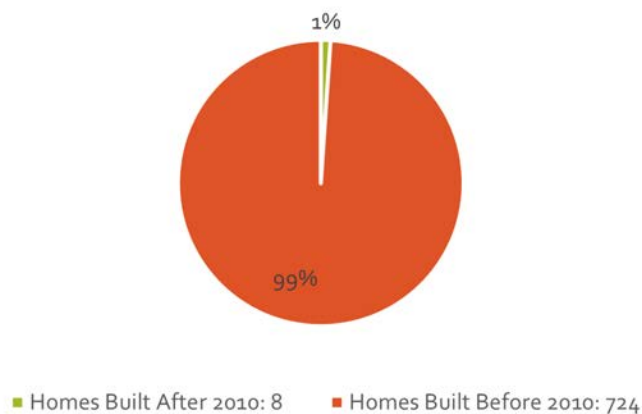
LNU Lightning Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 1,559



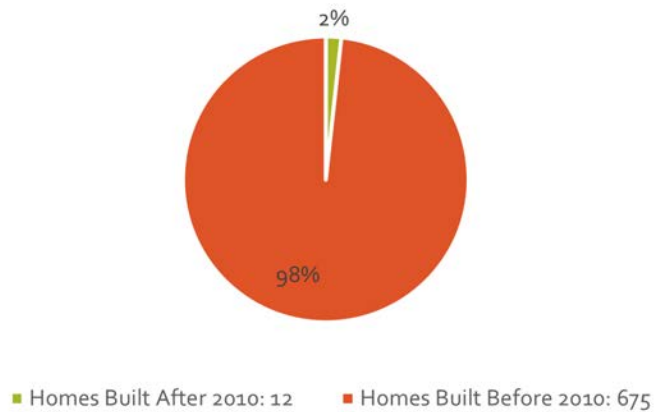
North Complex Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 732



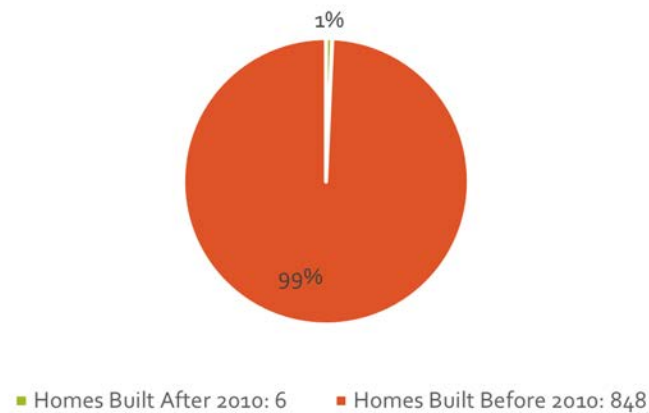
Nuns Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 687



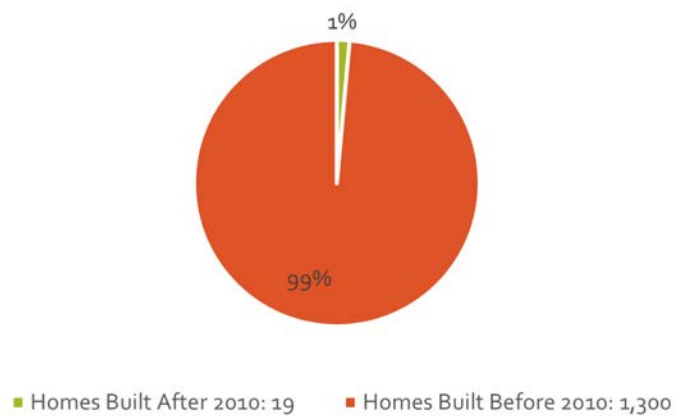
Thomas Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 855

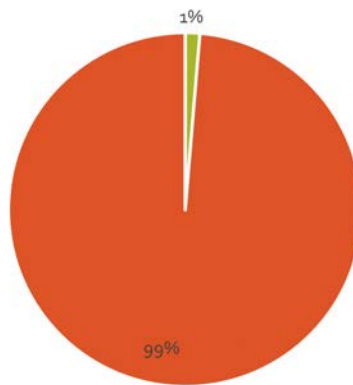


Woolsey Fire

Total Structures Affected or Destroyed: 1,319



Affected or Destroyed Homes That Were Built Before 2010 vs Built After 2010



■ Affected or Destroyed Homes Built After 2010 ■ Affected or Destroyed Homes Built Before 2010

THE CALIFORNIA REPORT

Cal Fire's Retiring Chief: 'Firefighters Face the Impacts of Climate Change Every Day'

LISTEN 04:08



By Katie Tandy Dec 14, 2018 Save Article



Ken Pimlott, chief of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, speaks following a joint wildland firefighting exercise with the U.S. Marine Corps in 2010. (Wikimedia Commons/United States Marine Corps)

After three decades of firefighting and managing some of the **worst blazes in California history**, Ken Pimlott, chief of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, is retiring today.

As Pimlott reflects on his 30 years of fire management, he says California currently finds itself with the “dubious distinction of breaking records” in terms of wildfire prevalence, intensity and deadliness.

In 2017, 1.2 million acres of land were destroyed by almost **9,000 wildfires**, including the massive **Thomas** and **Tubbs** infernos. By the time the Thomas Fire was 100 percent contained, it had set the record for the largest wildfire in modern California history. It took less than a year for another fire to break that record.

This year saw the **Woolsey Fire** and the **Camp Fire**.

The deadliest and most destructive blaze in modern California’s history, the Camp Fire destroyed almost 14,000 homes and claimed at least 86 lives.

Between those two blazes alone, plus the Hill Fire, insurance claims **have risen to \$9 billion**.

‘The reality of it is these fires are beyond the intensities of anything we have experienced.’

—Ken Pimlott, Cal Fire chief

The damage — physically and psychologically — is staggering.

While Cal Fire explains that there are **marked ecological benefits** to forest fires such as soil nourishment, the creation of new habitats for animals, the elimination of disease and seed regeneration, Pimlott says that in the past three of four years, the fires have far exceeded their natural cycles and are damaging, “not just the wildlife in the watershed, but are having significant impact on communities.”

Rep. Kevin McCarthy, Gov. Jerry Brown, Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom and President Trump listen to Cal Fire Chief Ken Pimlott during Trump’s visit to the Camp Fire in Chico on Nov. 17, 2018. (Paul Kitagaki Jr./Pool/Getty Images)

Despite President Trump’s accusations that California’s vulnerability to recent fire decimation is due to botched forest management, Pimlott says California has invested more as a state than any other over the next five years, committing \$1 billion in **cap-and-trade** funding specifically slated for forest health, fire prevention, fuels treatment and public education.

There is no reason for these massive, deadly and costly forest fires in California except that forest management is so poor. Billions of dollars are given each year, with so many lives lost, all because of gross mismanagement of the forests. Remedy now, or no more Fed payments!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) **November 10, 2018**

“We’ve been ramping up the state’s capabilities — along with our local government partners and the federal firefighting agencies — to respond,” says Pimlott. “We have been continuing to invest in [fire prevention], but understanding that just every year the intensities continue to increase.”

Despite rainfall and weather patterns in the past two years that have given California a respite of moisture, the vegetation remains “critically dry.” Cal Fire’s herculean financial and infrastructural efforts remain no match for the unprecedented fires caused by climate change.

“Firefighters are facing the impacts of climate change every day, literally,” Pimlott says.

“They’re the indicators, they’re the ones that are deployed for months at a time. They’re the ones that are experiencing these increased fire conditions and you can go out and talk to any experienced firefighter and they will tell you...things have significantly changed over the last several decades.”

As the ubiquity of these blazes isn’t likely to change, he says we have to learn from past fires and continue to take a hard look at determining where houses can be built in the future.

Pimlott says that the state will absolutely continue to build — there are, after all, 40 million people in California who need places to call home — and there is a commitment to rebuild Paradise. In the wake of these fires, newfound focus is being put on land use planning, identifying high fire hazard severity zones, building codes, construction, placement in the urban interface and even cluster development to maximize protection.

“There just may be areas in drainage or that are critical fire corridors that intensify winds that it will make it impossible to protect a structure,” he continues. “How do we build smartly to make sure we’re not putting people in harm’s way? There’s a lot to look at.”

Pimlott explains that the state is not interested in dictating ordinances or legislation down to local government, but “we’re going to be bringing everyone along and having those hard conversations.”

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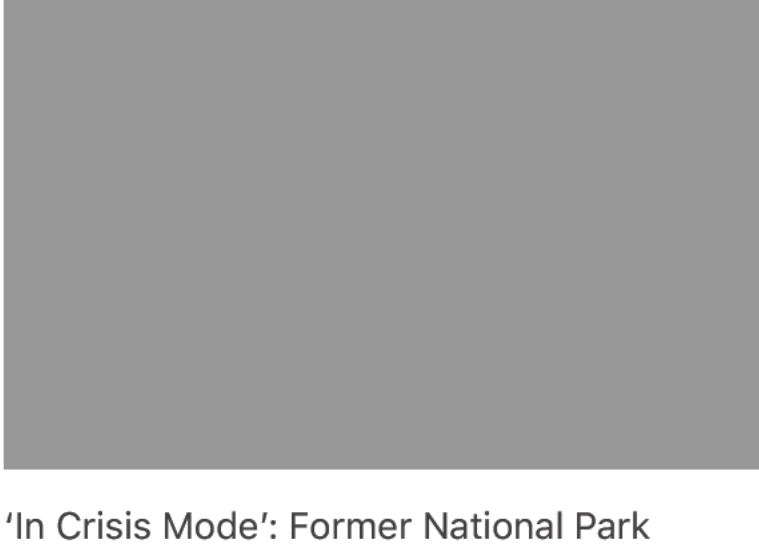


Gavin Newsom, governor-elect of California, has yet to name Pimlott’s successor, but whoever takes over will have a daunting task as California scrambles to combat our new normal amid threats of depleted federal funding.

“The reality of it is these fires are beyond the intensities of anything we have experienced,” Pimlott says. “We have to learn to live with fire in California.”

California News

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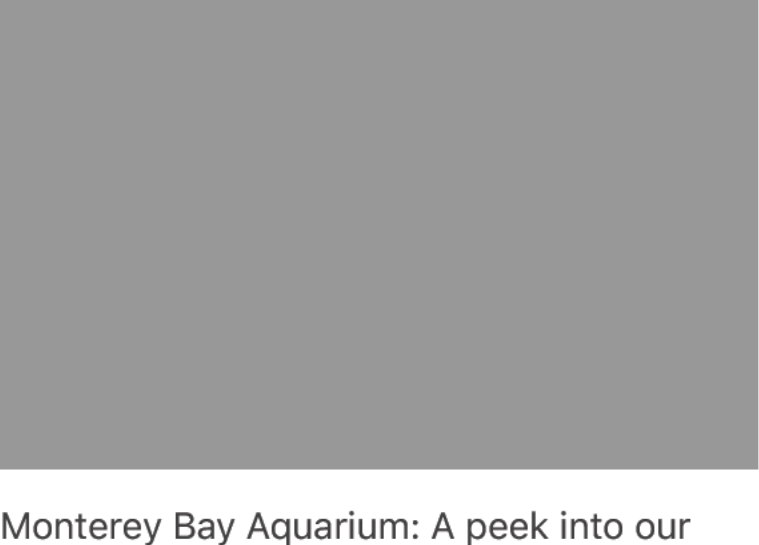
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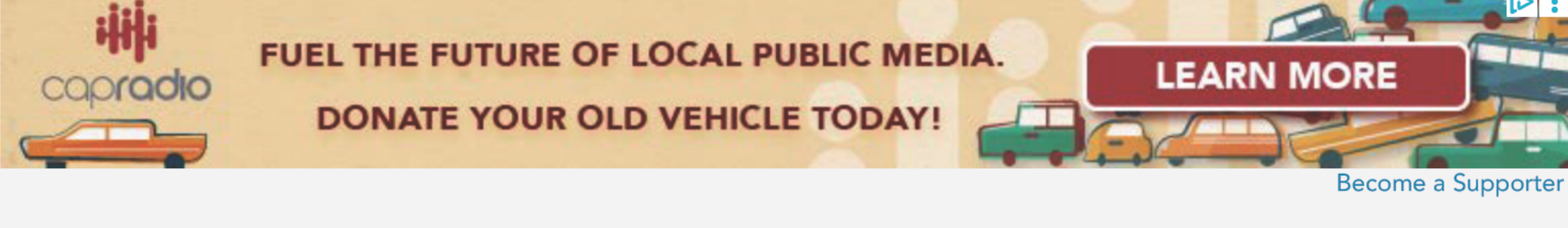
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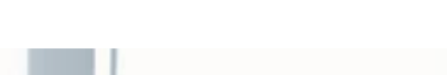
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State Government

Retiring Cal Fire Director: California Must Mull Home Ban In Fire-Prone Areas

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 | Sacramento, CA



In this photo taken Monday, Dec. 10, 2018, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott works at his desk in his office in Sacramento, Calif. Pimlott told The Associated Press he prepares to retire on Friday, Dec. 14.

Haven Daley / AP Photo

Don Thompson, Associated Press

(AP) — California's increasingly deadly and destructive wildfires have become so unpredictable that government officials should consider banning home construction in vulnerable areas, the state's top firefighter says.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott will leave his job Friday after 30 years with the agency. In an interview with The Associated Press, he said government and citizens must act differently to protect lives and property from fires that now routinely threaten large populations.

That may mean rethinking subdivisions in thickly forested mountainous areas or homes along Southern California canyons lined with tinder-dry chaparral. Los Angeles County supervisors on Tuesday were considering whether to allow a 19,000-home development in fire-prone mountains amid heavy criticism of the location's high fire danger.

California residents should also train themselves to respond more quickly to warnings and make preparations to shelter in place if they can't outrun the flames, Pimlott said.

Communities in fire zones need to harden key buildings with fireproof construction similar to the way cities prepare for earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes, and should prepare commercial or public buildings to withstand fires with the expectation hundreds may shelter there as they did in makeshift fashion when flames last month largely destroyed the Sierra Nevada foothills city of Paradise in Northern California.

California already has the nation's most robust building requirement programs for new homes in fire-prone areas, but recent fire seasons underscore more is needed. Officials must consider prohibiting construction in particularly vulnerable areas, said Pimlott, who has led the agency through the last eight years under termed-out Gov. Jerry Brown.

He said it's uncertain if those decisions should be made by local land managers or at the state level as legislative leaders have suggested. But Pimlott said "we owe it" to homeowners, firefighters and communities "so that they don't have to keep going through what we're going through."

"We've got to continue to raise the bar on what we're doing and local land-use planning decisions have to be part of that discussion," he said.

California's population has doubled since 1970 to nearly 40 million, pushing urban sprawl into mountain subdivisions, areas home to fast-burning grasslands and along scenic canyons and ridgetops that are susceptible to fires. After a crippling drought, the last two years have seen the worst fires in state history. November's fire in the northern California town of Paradise was the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century, killing at least 85 people and destroying nearly 14,000 homes.

A year earlier, a fire that ripped through the San Francisco Bay Area city of Santa Rosa killed 22 people and destroyed more than 5,000 homes and other structures.

Every year since at least 2013, firefighters did not anticipate California's wildfires could get worse, Pimlott said. But each year the fires have increased in intensity — driven by dry fuels, an estimated 129 million drought- and bark beetle-killed trees, and climate change.

In response, the state is doing more planned burning to eliminate brush and dead trees that serve as fuels for wildfires. The state will also add seven large firefighting aircraft, replace a dozen aging helicopters, provide firefighter counseling and ensure that firefighters have enough time off for medical checkups to help them manage the mental and physical stress from a fire season that now never ends.

He said California leads the nation in clearing away dead trees and thinning forested areas that are crowded with trees that can fuel fires, contrary to criticism by President Donald Trump who has blamed forest mismanagement for the fires.

"No other state, or even the federal government, are putting the amount of investment into this space as California," Pimlott said.

The department's philosophy for many years has been to stamp out fires quickly to protect people and property. Prescribed burns were previously used sparingly out of concern they could get out of control, but he said the department is making "a sea change" by recognizing that starting fires under optimum conditions is a good way to reduce dangerous fuels.

Recent fires that have burned into cities have made clear that those protections need to be centered around vulnerable communities, he said. Paradise, for example, was built on a ridge atop steep canyons that helped channel the wind-driven fire, while wildfires have repeated blown into Northern and Southern California subdivisions from neighboring wildlands thick with tinder-dry fuel.

Pimlott rose through the ranks from seasonal firefighter to deputy director of fire protection before his appointment as chief of the agency. In that role he doubles as the state's chief forester and oversees a department that includes nearly 8,000 firefighters, forest managers and support staff.

He said he has seen fire conditions worsen each passing year during his three decades with the agency, taking its toll on residents and firefighters alike.

"Folks can say what they want to say, but firefighters are living climate change. It's staring them in the face every day," he said.

To adapt, he advocates wildfire warning systems that not only use new technology like automated phone calling systems, but maybe restoring civil defense-style emergency sirens in some areas. City planners must prepare communities "unlike we ever have before" with easy evacuation routes and new evacuation centers.

And he said Californians must treat "red flag" extreme fire danger warnings the way Midwesterners treat tornado warnings — as imminent threats.

"The reality of it is, California has a fire-prone climate and it will continue to burn," he said. "Fire is a way of life in California and we have to learn how to live with it, we have to learn how to have more resilient communities."

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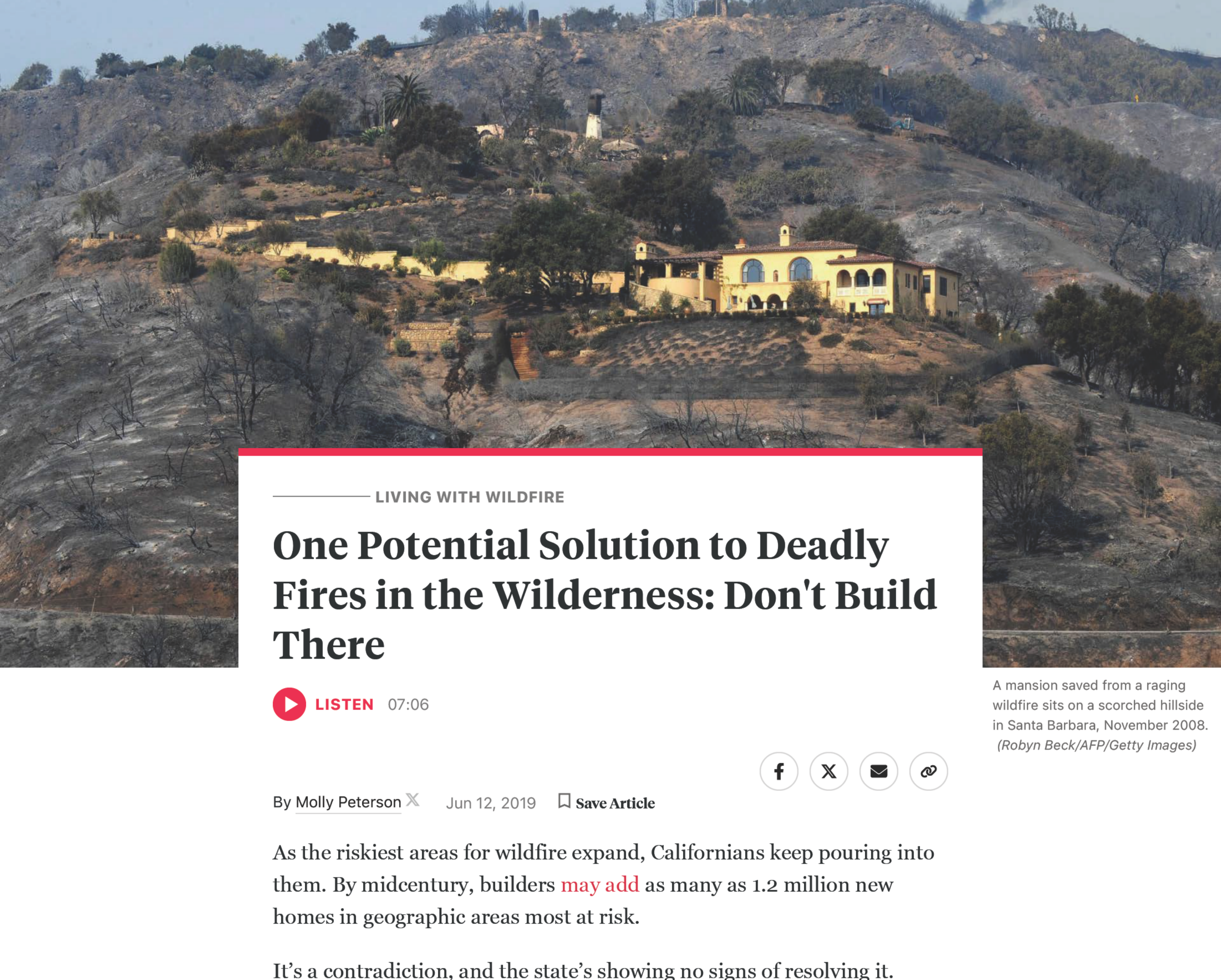
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— LIVING WITH WILDFIRE

One Potential Solution to Deadly Fires in the Wilderness: Don't Build There

🔊 LISTEN 07:06

By Molly Peterson 🔗 Jun 12, 2019 📄 Save Article

As the riskiest areas for wildfire expand, Californians keep pouring into them. By midcentury, builders **may add** as many as 1.2 million new homes in geographic areas most at risk.

It's a contradiction, and the state's showing no signs of resolving it. Almost as incendiary as wildfire itself is the idea that we shouldn't build — or in many cases rebuild — because of it.

Even as California demands **hardened homes** through tougher building codes, **struggles** with enforcing existing requirements for defensible space, **begins to consider** the role of evacuation routes in community safety, and **reconsiders** its relationship with the forests and grasslands where people spark fires, the hardest question remains unspoken.

Should California communities retreat from the growing risk of fire?

"Retreat seems to grate on the American psyche; we don't like to go backwards," said Nicholas Pinter, a geology professor at UC Davis who **studies** repeat flooding, another natural hazard whose frequency is affected by human behavior and climate change.

While California has **mapped** fire risk and boosted scrutiny of local fire response in **general plans**, the road maps for development that officials use, nothing prevents local communities from rebuilding in places that have burned over and over, like Paradise in Butte County, and Fountaingrove in the city of Santa Rosa.

Some experts say the state's land use and planning practices demand reconsideration.

"I think it's mature and it's a mark of intelligence that we can actually say ... let's do this better, let's do it radically different, different enough that this isn't actually that big a problem anymore," said Max Moritz, a cooperative extension fire specialist at UC Santa Barbara's Bren School.

Sponsored



Our Vulnerabilities Are Our Choices

Ninety percent of buildings in Paradise burned down. Established in the Sierra Nevada foothills in the 1800s, the town grew in the 20th century without much in the way of zoning or planning for fire risk.

That's normal for California. No codified guidance tells communities where and how to build to reduce the threat from natural disasters.

The state's recently updated building codes do minimize hazards in the "building envelope," the outer elements in the structure itself. To aid in fighting fires, the state also **requires** water supplies and certain features related to road access.

But some planners now say these mitigation efforts aren't enough to guarantee the safety of new development. Pete Parkinson, who lost a home in

Santa Rosa and has led planning departments in Napa, Sonoma and Santa Cruz counties before retiring, sounded an alarm last fall.

"I cannot recall any development project that was denied, or where the density was substantially reduced, because of known wildfire hazards," he **wrote** in a regional newsletter for the American Planning Association.

"The fire hazards in some areas of our state are simply too great to allow additional residential development."

Max Moritz has talked to local planners and fire officials who sign off on developments and recognize weaknesses in the current system.

"They don't have the authority to do what they know is right, and so they have to let some of these developments proceed without being able to say anything about how it could be done better," he said. "From the people I've talked to, I know that that's hard to sleep with really, when you play that out."

Since January, the state has made counties consult with fire officials on planning, but it's not clear how much that will affect decisions. Under a law passed last year, counties with very high risk fire severity

zones and state responsibility areas must submit the safety elements of their general plans to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection for review. If counties don't incorporate the fire marshal's

recommendations, they **must meet** with officials from the board, but the law provides no penalties or substantive requirements.

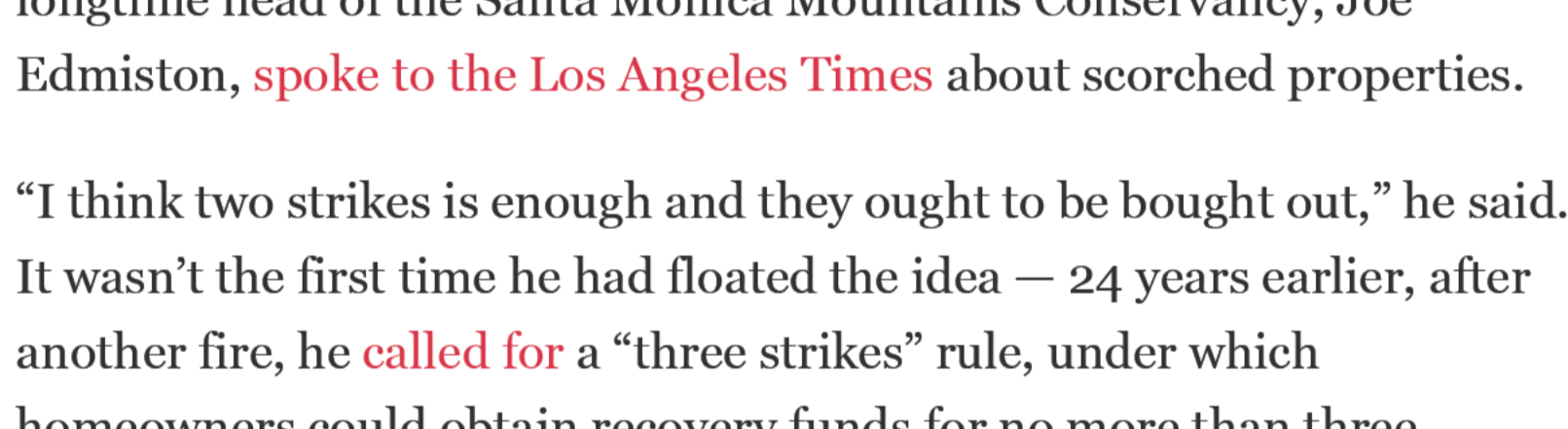
California produces several maps that include information potentially useful to planning, but none includes guidance about how planners might use them, says Moritz. Cal Fire has **maps** on fire hazard severity zones and has analyzed **fire probability**; the California Public Utilities Commission has created fire threat **maps**.

Moritz says these maps focus on just parts of what makes up fire risk. That risk, he says, is a calculation based both on hazards — the steepness of canyons and the dryness of vegetation — and on

vulnerabilities — the systems that communities build to cope with the hazards.

So whether San Diego County is waiving requirements for multiple roads in and out of a new development next to the steep canyons of **Harmony Grove**, or Los Angeles County is approving thousands of new homes in the fire-prone grasslands of **Centennial** at **Tejon Ranch**, our

vulnerabilities — our choices, really — aren't on any map.



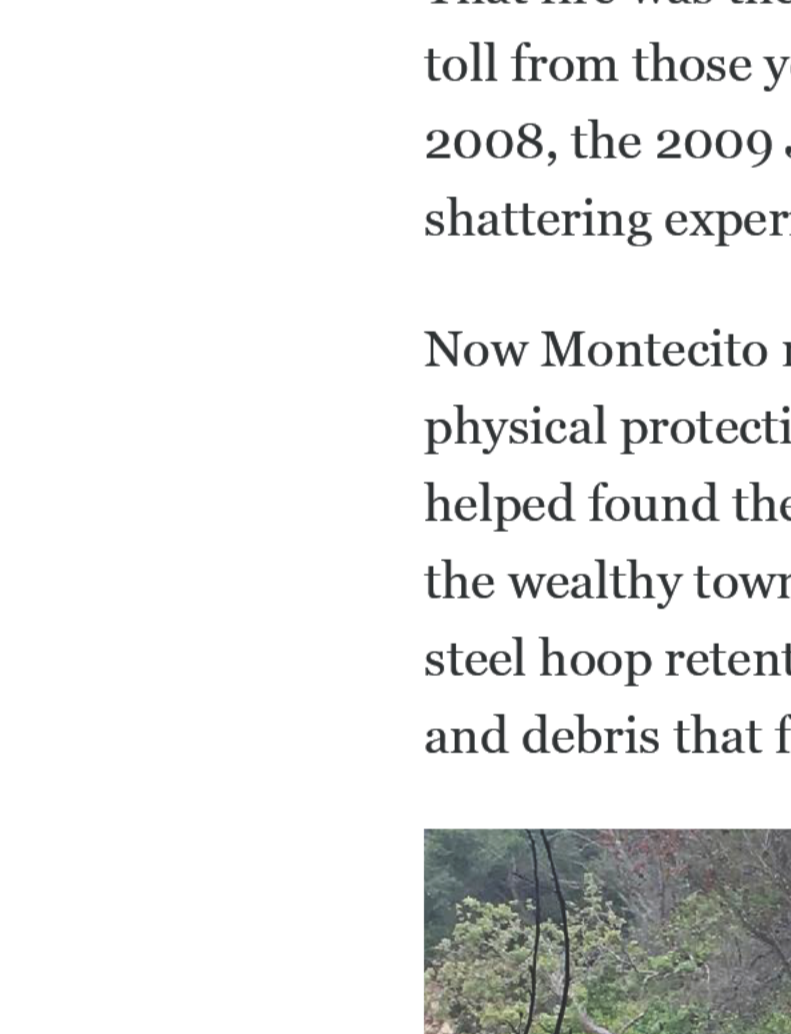
Limits on Rebuilding?

Politicians would have to act if counties are to set limits on where developers build, or the state is to set limits on what counties could permit. But elected officials are rarely caught talking about such limits in the wild. Instead, we rely on retired fire officials to speak truth.

"Are there areas that shouldn't be built? Absolutely," said Kurt Henke, who retired as chief from the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District after a 35-year career. "If the last two or three years doesn't change it, what more do they need to see?"

We Can Make California Wildfires Less Horrific. Will We?

Who's Checking Your Neighborhood for Flammable Brush? Maybe No One



Former city of Santa Barbara fire chief Pat McElroy. "Hoping it doesn't happen again isn't a strategy." (Molly Peterson/KQED)

Fire officials stress that public safety isn't just the work of first responders. In planning, though, safety concerns compete with the need for both housing and the local property taxes that fund essential services.

Local control over planning and development is sacrosanct in California. But one fire-safety argument is that the state could take some of that authority over land use back.

On his way into retirement last December, Cal Fire chief Ken Pimlott **told AP** that the state must consider prohibiting building in wildfire-prone areas.

Hours into his new job in January, Gov. Gavin Newsom was in Colfax, standing with Placer County supervisors and Auburn mayor Cheryl Maki, as he **was asked** about Pimlott's remarks.

Newsom turned to face the local officials as he said he recognized the stresses they face in permitting development in the wildland-urban interface.

"The last thing you want is, you know, some guy in Sacramento there telling you what to do in Auburn," Newsom said. "That said, if, you know, there's a point where common sense ... is not in evidence, maybe we can lean in a little, and encourage and incentivize better behavior."

In the U.S., the Constitution prevents government taking of private property without compensation. But natural hazards change the value of compensation all of the time, and limits on zoning or development can occur. While it's very rare that a public official will propose an outright ban on rebuilding after a fire, it does happen.

In 2017, a fire that sparked in a Los Angeles County homeless camp wrapped the hills around the 405 freeway in flames. After that blaze, called the Skirball Fire, and the neighboring Rye and Creek Fires, the longtime head of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Joe Edmiston, **spoke to the Los Angeles Times** about scorched properties.

"I think two strikes is enough and they ought to be bought out," he said. It wasn't the first time he had floated the idea — 24 years ago, after another fire, he **called for** a "three strikes" rule, under which homeowners could obtain recovery funds for no more than three disasters.

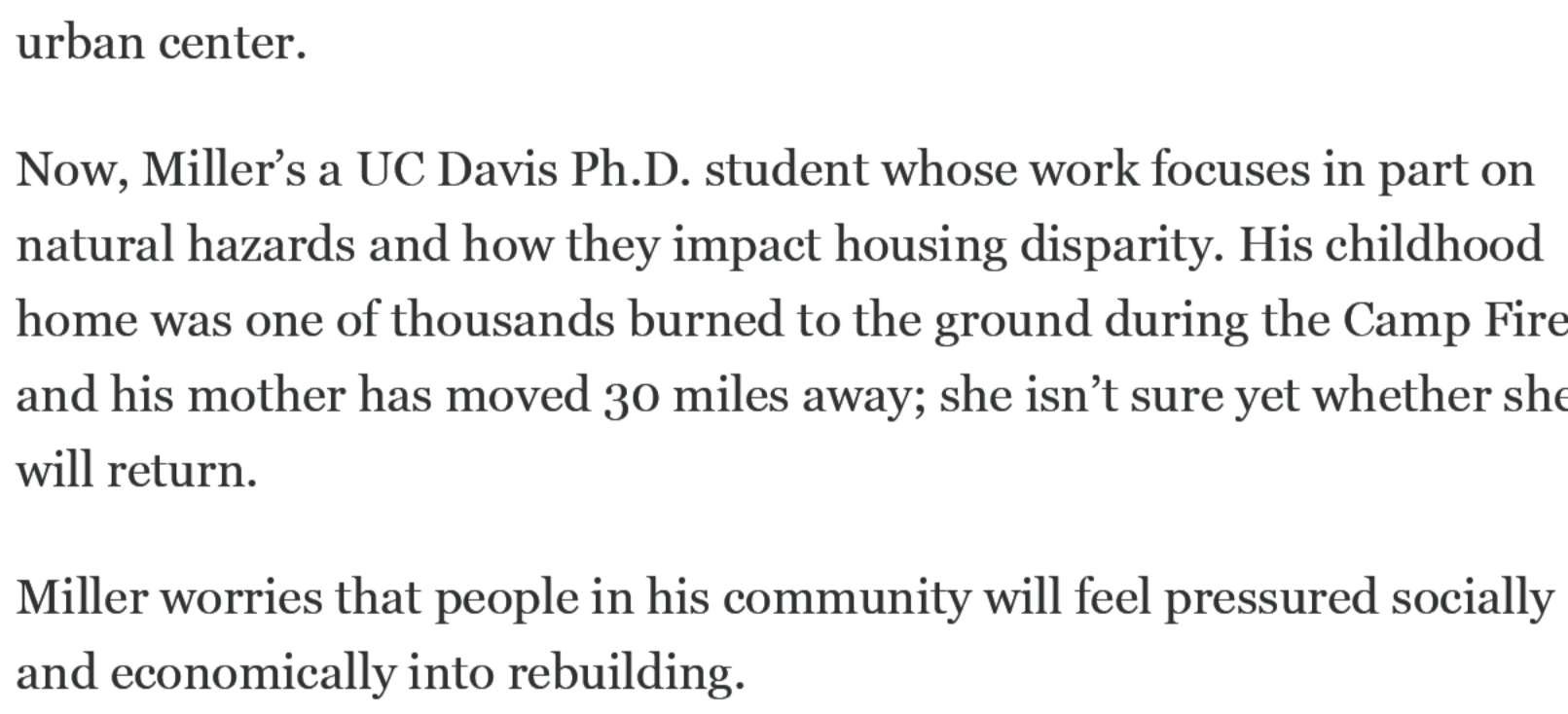
Edmiston is now part of a task force evaluating local response to the 2017 Woolsey Fire, which killed three people and destroyed 1,500 buildings. A spokeswoman for the conservancy said Edmiston wouldn't comment further on planning and rebuilding until that work is complete.

Montecito: Redefining Resilience

In January of last year, heavy rain let loose a punch: Mud and water poured down from the Santa Ynez mountains into Montecito, a town of about 9,000 people in Santa Barbara County. Former Santa Barbara City fire chief Pat McElroy says the debris flow slapped the bark off sycamore trees and bowled sandstone rocks the size of SUVs into houses. Twenty-three people died as the Thomas fire still burned in backcountry.

That fire was the county's fifth in a decade. McElroy counts a cumulative toll from those years, from the 2007 Zaca Fire, the Tea and Gap Fires in 2008, the 2009 Jesusita Fire, and the Thomas in 2017. "It was a really shattering experience," he said.

Now Montecito residents want to redefine resilience, by boosting physical protections against the cycle of fire, mud, repeat. McElroy helped found the Partnership for Resilient Communities, and people in the wealthy town have privately raised nearly \$5 million to pay for six steel hoop retention nets that could slow the destructive crush of mud and debris that fire can cause.



Crews stretch a mesh of steel hoops like chain mail across San Ysidro Creek in Montecito. The nets won't block all debris that rain after a fire can release, but will slow it down.

In early May, a helicopter hovered over San Ysidro Creek dangling a long mesh net of rings. Across the creek canyon, crews stood on wires stretched like tightropes, 70 feet across. The workers linked the net to the wires where they stood, then pulled the rings taut, like chainmail. These nets won't stop debris rolling down the creek, but they will slow it down.

"Hoping it doesn't happen again isn't a strategy," McElroy said, beaming as the operation unfolded.

Others in Montecito wonder whether county planning practices need an even more radical shift.

Ten years ago, Santa Barbara County's Tea Fire stole Claire Gottsdanker's home, burning it to the ground as she watched.

Gottsdanker, a landscape designer, says she was one of the first people in Montecito to pull a permit to rebuild.

She rebuilt quickly. But the trauma clung to her. Three years after the Tea Fire, she had a stroke.

All of that was on her mind a decade later, immediately after the Thomas Fire.

"I think it's a terrible time to make a decision," Gottsdanker said.

After seeing the impacts of the Thomas Fire, she says, she wouldn't want to rebuild again.

Santa Barbara County's flood control district made it clear that everyone who wanted to could rebuild. As a member of the Montecito Board of Architectural Review, Gottsdanker was one of the first to review plans for one property along Montecito Creek, another canyon creek pounded by mudflows. In a public hearing, she asked the homeowner why she would want to do that.

"Here she was getting her house reviewed and she can't even get to it," said Gottsdanker. "The county issued these ... permits really fast. And I'm going, slow down, having been there 10 years ago, you need to slow down."

The architectural review board and the planning board approved the project. No construction has begun; the once-verdant site remains brown and scrubby, with a canyon tucked under a massive tree.

A Window of Opportunity, But Short-Lived

When Ryan Miller was growing up in the heart of Paradise, he thought of fire as something that happened to other people, on the edge of town. His family hadn't moved to the Butte County town seeking a wildland experience. Rather, they were like a lot of his neighbors, wanting to be close to jobs in Chico: people who were "priced out," he said, of the urban center.

Now, Miller's a UC Davis Ph.D. student whose work focuses in part on natural hazards and how they impact housing disparity. His childhood home was one of thousands burned to the ground during the Camp Fire, and his mother has moved 30 miles away; she isn't sure yet whether she will return.

Miller worries that people in his community will feel pressured socially and economically into rebuilding.

"There's this growing sense that, you know, your duty is to go back and be resilient and go back to Paradise," he said. "So I think we need to be more comfortable with the word 'retreat.'"

Focusing on rebuilding is a narrow idea about community resilience after a wildfire. UC Davis geology professor Nicholas Pinter suggests a broader approach, with every question put on the table.

Pinter studies repeat flooding and how communities respond to it, including by "managed retreat" — a term used often in the context of flood and sea level rise to describe backing away from a natural hazard. But he says maybe retreat isn't the right word to encourage people to think differently about their risk, and to rely less on engineered mitigations that can often fail. Instead, California could think about heading toward a better understanding of resilience.

"What we're really talking about is fixing these old planning errors, moving people to a more appropriate location, and balancing human occupation of the landscape with the hazards that exist out there," he said.

Flood risk and fire risk are very different, but Pinter says in both contexts the time after the disaster is a crucial one.

"There really is this short-lived window of opportunity following a major natural disaster to have some sort of transformative change, to make things different afterwards," he said.

After California's fires last year, that window is open. But for how long is anybody's guess.

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MEETING DATE April 9, 2025

ITEM TITLE PRESENTING THE SANTEE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE MAP AS RECOMMENDED BY CAL FIRE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AND ASK CITY COUNCIL TO RECEIVE THE REPORT AND PROVIDE STAFF DIRECTION

DIRECTOR/DEPARTMENT Justin Matsushita, Fire Department

SUMMARY

Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs) are classified into Moderate, High, and Very High hazard levels based on scientific analysis of factors such as fuel loading, topography, fire weather, and historical fire patterns. These zones guide fire prevention efforts, building standards, defensible space requirements, and public safety planning. State law now requires local jurisdictions to adopt Moderate, High, and Very High FHSZs in Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs) within 120 days of receiving the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) recommendations. The City of Santee received these recommendations on March 24, 2025, and have until July 22, 2025, to adopt or expand said FHSZs. Upon Council direction, staff will return at a future date within the state's 120-day window with an ordinance for first and second reading prior to adoption. Additionally, the City of must publish these recommendations within 30 days of receiving them and allow for public comment. There is no timeframe or guidance on what this public comment period must or should be.

Staff seeks direction on three items as outlined in the attached staff report and will be presented during the Council Meeting.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT *HX*

The financial impacts of the adoption of FHSZs, as required by state law, are unknown at this time.

CITY ATTORNEY REVIEW ☐ N/A • ☒ Completed

RECOMMENDATION *MSB*

Staff recommends that the City Council receive the Fire Marshal's report, open a public comment period, provide staff direction, and schedule ordinance hearing and adoption to comply with the 120-day adoption window.

ATTACHMENT

Staff Report on FHSZ
Santee FHSZ Map March 24, 2025
Santee FHSZ Map June 11, 2009
LRA-Legislation-Factsheet



STAFF REPORT

PRESENTING THE SANTEE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE MAP AS RECOMMENDED BY CAL FIRE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AND ASK CITY COUNCIL TO RECEIVE REPORT AND PROVIDE STAFF DIRECTION

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

APRIL 9, 2025

BACKGROUND

Prompted by the devastating Oakland Hills fire of 1991, Assembly Bill 337 (Bates, 1992) called for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to evaluate fire hazard severity in local responsibility areas (LRA) and to make recommendations to local jurisdictions where Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) exist. (CA GOV 51175).

Between 2008 and 2011, CAL FIRE worked with local jurisdictions to make recommendations of the Very High FHSZ within the LRAs. CAL FIRE provided the City of Santee with their recommendations on June 11, 2009. The City adopted those recommendations into the Santee Very High FHSZ Map on October 28, 2009.

New legislation, Senate Bill 63 (Stern, 2021), now requires the adoption of all three (Moderate, High, and Very High) FHSZ classes in the LRA. Previously only Very High FHSZ were required for adoption in the LRA. These new zones are based on scientific analysis of factors such as fuel loading, topography, fire weather, and historical fire patterns. In the State Responsibility Area (generally unincorporated areas), CAL FIRE directly maps and designates FHSZ and provided each jurisdiction with a FHSZ map for their area on April 1, 2024. In 2025, CAL FIRE began to roll out customized maps to LRA jurisdictions, beginning with Northern California on February 10, 2025 and finishing with the jurisdictions located in San Diego, Riverside, Orange, Imperial, San Bernadino, Mono, Inyo, and Los Angeles on March 24, 2025.

The City of Santee received its LRA map on March 24, 2025.

DISCUSSION

What Are Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) are classified on their likelihood of experiencing wildfire and the potential severity of fire behavior. These zones help guide fire prevention efforts, building standards, defensible space requirements, and public safety planning. The three classifications are:

- **Moderate:** Areas with a lower likelihood or intensity of wildfire.
- **High:** Areas with a significant risk of wildfire occurrence.
- **Very High:** Areas with the highest likelihood of wildfire occurrence and severe fire behavior.

CAL FIRE's Role

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) plays a critical role in the identification and mapping of FHSZ. Using science-based models that consider vegetation, climate conditions, topography, wind patterns, and fire history, CAL FIRE develops FHSZ maps statewide that are updated periodically to reflect current conditions. CAL FIRE provides these recommendations to local jurisdictions for adoption.

Local Jurisdiction Responsibilities

State law requires local jurisdictions to take specific actions regarding the CAL FIRE recommended FHSZ:

1. The City must make the map available for public review and comment within 30 days of receiving CAL FIRE's recommendations (April 23rd).
2. The City must adopt (designate) the LRA FHSZ map within 120 days of receiving CAL FIRE's recommendations (July 22nd).
3. The City must transmit a copy of the ordinance to the Board of Forestry within 30 days of adoption.
4. The City must provide the adopted map to the county recorder, county assessor, and county planning agency.
5. The City may increase the geographical extent and hazard level of CAL FIRE's recommended zones.
6. The City may not decrease recommended zones.

By adopting these zones through an ordinance, local agencies ensure compliance with state law while enhancing community safety from wildfires.

Implications of FHSZ Designations

The adoption of the new FHSZ map has several important implications for property owners and the City:

1. **Building Standards:** The updated FHSZ map will be used by the Building Official to enforce wildfire-resistant construction standards for new buildings in the high and very high FHSZ starting on January 1, 2026.
2. **Property Disclosure Requirements:** Property owners in the Very High and High FHSZ must disclose this information during property sales as part of the Natural Hazard Disclosure Statement as soon as the map is adopted.
3. **Defensible Space Requirements:** Properties now within the Very High (VH) FHSZ zone must comply with defensible space clearance requirements (typically 100 feet around structures).
4. **Safety Element Updates:** FHSZ maps will inform updates to the Safety Element of General Plans to address wildfire risks comprehensively.
5. **Fire Safe Regulations:** New projects in the VHFHSZ must comply with the California Code of Regulations, Title 14 (Natural Resources) fire safe regulations for access and water supply.
6. **Subdivision Map Act:** Projects in the VHFHSZ must have their tentative map reviewed by the Board of Forestry.
7. **Subdivision Review (AB-2911):** Developments with 30 or more homes in the VHFHSZ must be routinely reviewed by CAL FIRE when there is only one way out of the development.
8. **CEQA:** There are additional CEQA requirements for projects in the VHFHSZ.

Discussion Items

Item 1: Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) and Local Jurisdiction's Authority to Expand FHSZ

While local jurisdictions cannot exempt properties from zone-specific requirements, they can expand zones within their City boundary. The intent of CAL FIRE's recommendations is to inform local jurisdictions of the hazards present in their community. If local jurisdictions would like to enhance the safety requirements, they are encouraged to do so. For instance, some jurisdictions in forested areas have designated their entire area as High, even when CAL FIRE only recommended Moderate. In such cases, all new structures in the City would be built to California Building Code Chapter 7A standards, with increased wildfire exposure protection.

To expand the VHFHSZ, the City must demonstrate substantial evidence the expansion is needed. State law does not specify how this could be justified, but CAL FIRE has indicated that fire modeling could be considered such evidence.

To expand the High and Moderate FHSZ, no evidence is required and may be done at the City's discretion. A new map from the City could accomplish this.

Item 1 Discussion

Does the City of Santee want to expand any of the three zones within the City or adopt the Santee FHSZ Map that was recommended by CAL FIRE?

Item 2: Parcels that are Split Between Zones

CAL FIRE's broad recommendations have resulted in parcels being split between multiple zones, complicating compliance determination. For example, if a parcel is split between the Moderate and High zones, neither state law nor CAL FIRE provide any guidance on how to apply the differing requirements to the structure or parcel. Does part of the structure need to be complied with CBC Chapter 7A while another part doesn't? In the event of a wildfire, the entire structure will likely be exposed to embers. Current code administration practices are when there are two differing requirements, the most restrictive shall apply. Notably, 7,800 structures that burned in the Eaton fire in Altadena were not in any FHSZ.

Other jurisdictions have drafted ordinances to clarify that the most severe zone apply to the entire parcel.

If directed, City staff could create a map that extends the most severe zone to cover the entire parcel and provide clarity about what regulations are applicable.

Item 2 Discussion

How does the City of Santee want to address requirements for parcels that span multiple zones?

Item 3: Public Comment Period

Within 30 days of receiving CAL FIRE's recommendations, local jurisdictions must make the information available for public review and comment. The information must be presented in a format that is understandable and accessible to the general public, including but not limited maps. (CA GOV Section 51178.5)

There is no time period requirement for the public comment period. Some jurisdictions are limiting this to the Council Meetings while others have created surveys on their websites.

Staff can easily and quickly create a webpage dedicated to this and allow for comments for a set period of time.

Item 3 Discussion

How does the City of Santee want to address the public comment requirement of CA GOV Section 51178.5.

FISCAL IMPACT

The adoption of FHSZs is required by state law. Financial impacts for the City are unknown at this time. However, implementation may require additional staff time for enforcement activities such as building code reviews, new construction inspections, and defensible space inspections. These costs can generally be absorbed within existing departmental budgets or offset through permit fees.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The adoption of FHSZs is exempt from environmental review as it is an administrative action mandated by state law.

CONCLUSION

To ensure compliance with state wildfire safety regulations and enhance community protection, staff recommends the following steps:

1. **Receive the Fire Marshal's Report** – Formal acceptance of CAL FIRE's Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) recommendations specific to Santee, including the official FHSZ map.
2. **Open Public Comment Period** – Allow community input on the proposed FHSZ designations per standard municipal procedures.
3. **Provide Staff Direction** – Council guidance for drafting an ordinance aligning with CAL FIRE's hazard classifications (Moderate/High/Very High).
4. **Schedule Ordinance Adoption** – Upon Council direction, staff will return at a future date within the state's 120-day window with an ordinance for first and second reading prior to adoption.

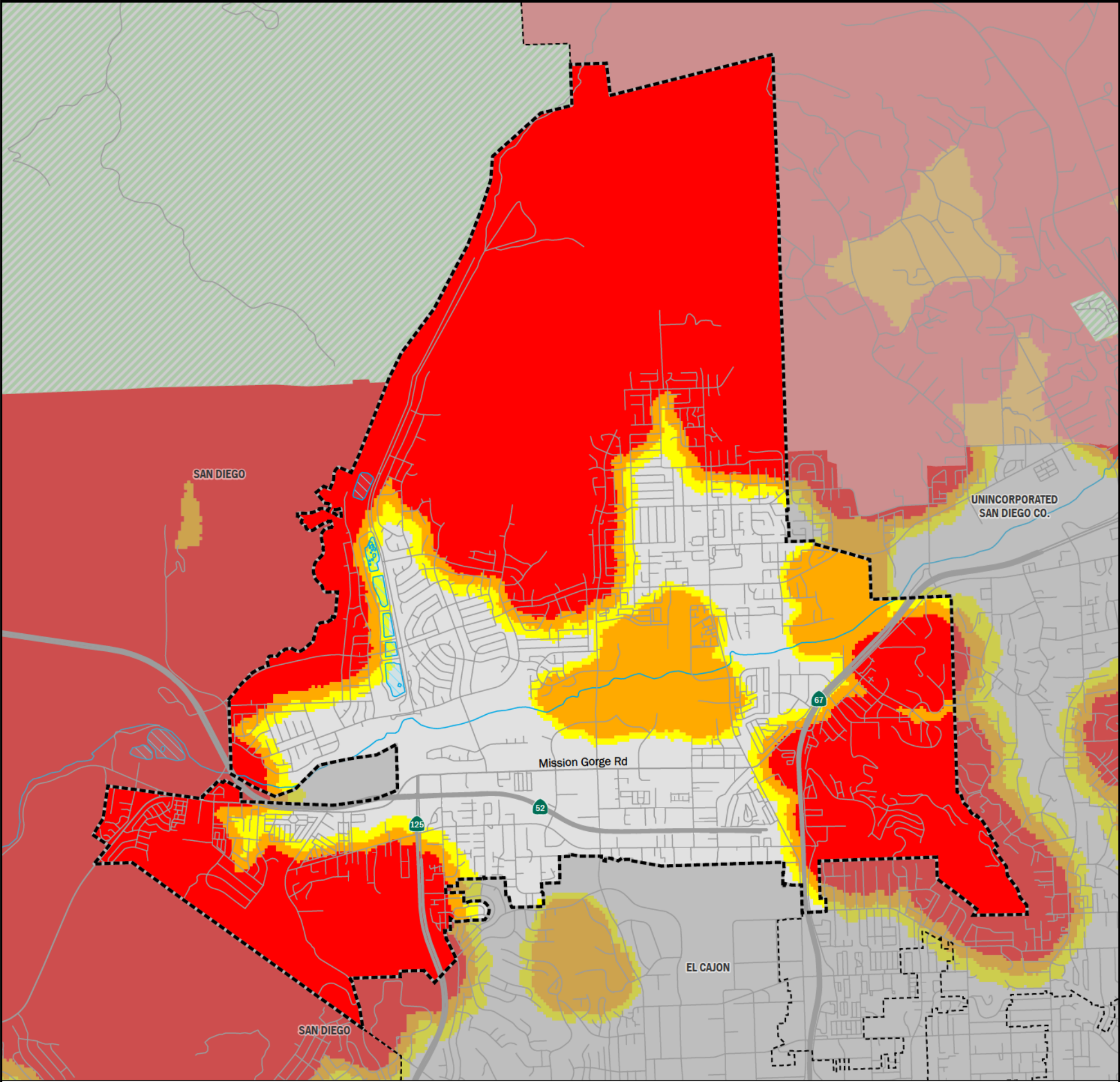
ATTACHMENTS

1. Previously adopted Santee VHFHSZ Map
2. New Santee FHSZ Map
3. CAL FIRE's Fire Hazard Severity Zones Local Responsibility Area FAQ sheet with applicable state laws



Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones

As Identified by the
State Fire Marshal
March 24, 2025

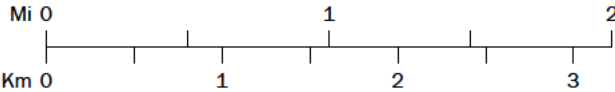


Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in Local Responsibility Area (LRA), as Identified by the State Fire Marshal

Very High High Moderate

Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area (SRA), Effective April 1, 2024

Very High High



Projection: NAD 83 California Teale Albers
Scale: 1:43,000 at 11" x 17"

- Incorporated City
- Waterbody
- Unzoned LRA
- Federal Responsibility Area (FRA)

Government Code section 51178 requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent

statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather,

and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.

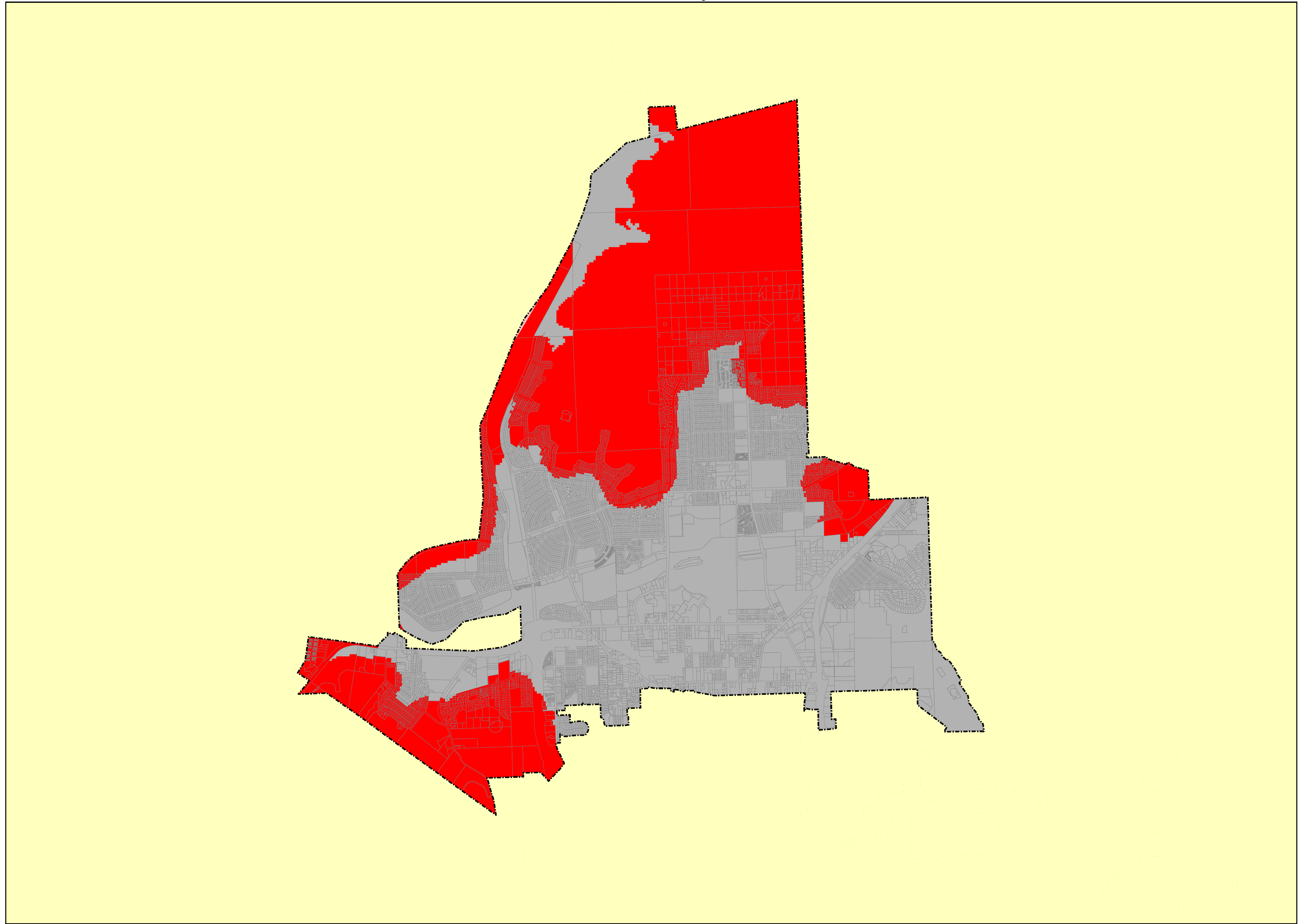
The State of California and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy of data or maps. Neither the State nor the Department shall be liable under any circumstances for any direct, special, incidental, or consequential damages with respect to any claim by any user or third party on account of, or arising from, the use of data or maps.

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources, CA Natural Resources Agency
Joe Tyler, Director/Fire Chief, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Daniel Berlant, State Fire Marshal, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection





Data Sources:
CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZSRA23_3, FHSZLRA_25_1)
CAL FIRE State Responsibility Areas (SRA25_1)
City and County boundaries as of 10/22/24 (CA Board of Equalization)

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA

As Recommended by CAL FIRE



Fire Hazard Severity Zones

Local Responsibility Area	State or Federal Responsibility Areas
 VHFHSZ	 VHFHSZ
 Non-VHFHSZ	 Non-VHFHSZ

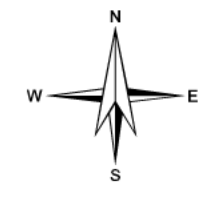


--- City Boundary
--- Parcels
--- County Boundary

Government Code 51175.89 directs the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to identify areas of very high fire hazard severity zones within Local Responsibility Areas (LRA). Mapping of the areas, referred to as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ), is based on data and models of potential fuels over a 30-50 year time horizon and their associated expected fire behavior, and expected burn probabilities to quantify the likelihood and nature of vegetation fire exposure (including firebrands) to buildings. Details on the project and specific modeling methodology can be found at <http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/projects/hazard/methods.htm>. Local Responsibility Area VHFHSZ maps were initially developed in the mid-1990s and are now being updated based on improved science, mapping techniques, and data.

In late 2005 to be effective in 2008, the California Building Commission adopted California Building Code Chapter 7A requiring new buildings in VH FHSZs to use ignition resistant construction methods and materials. These new codes include provisions to improve the ignition resistance of buildings, especially from firebrands. The updated very high fire hazard severity zones will be used by building officials for new building permits in LRA. The updated zones will also be used to identify property whose owners must comply with natural hazards disclosure requirements at time of property sale and 100 foot defensible space clearance. It is likely that the fire hazard severity zones will be used for updates to the safety element of general plans.

This specific map is based on a geographic information system dataset that depicts final CAL FIRE recommendations for Very High FHSZs within the local jurisdiction. The process of finalizing these boundaries involved an extensive local review process, the details of which are available at <http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/projects/hazard/stimul> (click on "Continue as guest without logging in"). Local government has 100 days to designate, by ordinance, very high fire hazard severity zones within its jurisdiction after receiving the recommendation. Local government can add additional VHFHSZs. There is no requirement for local government to report their final action to CAL FIRE when the recommended zones are adopted. Consequently, users are directed to the appropriate local entity (county, city, fire department, or Fire Protection District) to determine the status of the local fire hazard severity zone ordinance.

This map was developed using data products such as parcel and city boundaries provided by local government agencies. In certain cases, this includes copyrighted geographic information. The maps are for display purposes only - questions and requests related to parcel or city boundary data should be directed to the appropriate local government entity.




Projection Albers, NAD 1983
Scale 1: 20,000
at 36" x 36"
June 11, 2009



Fire Hazard Severity Zones Local Responsibility Area

Fire Hazard Severity Zones

What is a Fire Hazard Severity Zone?

The State Fire Marshal shall identify areas in the State as Moderate, High, and Very High Hazard Severity Zones based on consistent statewide criteria and the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. – [CA GOV 51178](#)

When did Fire Hazard Severity Zones begin in Local Responsibility Area?

Assembly Bill 337 (Bates 1992), prompted by the devastating Oakland Hills fire of 1991, calls for CAL FIRE to evaluate fire hazard severity in local responsibility area and to make a recommendation to the local jurisdiction where Very High FHSZ exist. – [CA GOV 51175](#)

What do Fire Hazard Severity Zones measure?

The maps evaluate "Hazard", not "Risk". Hazard is based on physical conditions that create expected fire behavior over a 50-year period without considering short-term modifications. Risk is the potential damage a fire can do to the area under existing conditions, including fuel reduction projects, defensible space, and ignition resistant building construction. – osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz

Will the new Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps affect my insurance?

Insurance companies use risk models, which differ from hazard models, because they consider the susceptibility of a structure to damage from fire and other short-term factors that are not included in hazard modeling. Insurance risk models incorporate additional factors that change more frequently than those the CAL FIRE includes in its hazard mapping, which is built to remain steady.

– [California Department of Insurance](#)

What are the requirements within Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

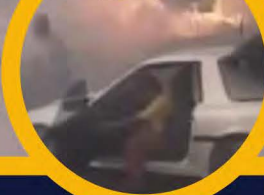
- Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure – [CBC Chapter 7A](#)
- Natural hazard real estate disclosure at the time of sale – [CA CIV 1102.19 \(AB 38 2019\)](#)
- 100-foot defensible space clearance requirements – [CA GOV 51182](#)
- Property development standards such as road widths, water supply, and signage – [CA PRC 4290](#)
- Consideration during future development of Cities and Counties General Plan – [CA GOV 65302](#)

1980



Panorama Fire burns 28,800 acres, destroying 325 structures and resulting in 4 fatalities in San Bernardino.

1991



Tunnel Fire burns 1,600 acres, destroying 2,900 structures and resulting in 25 fatalities in the Oakland Hills.

PRC 4201 mandates that CAL FIRE develop Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

1982

Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps are created.

1985

The "Bates Bill" calls for CAL FIRE to identify Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA.

1992

Frequently Asked Questions



Is there an easy way to determine the Fire Hazard Severity Zone of my property?

You can search by address to find your current designation on the website: osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz

Why are Fire Hazard Severity Zones being updated?

The hazard maps are being updated to more accurately reflect the zones in California that are susceptible to wildfire. The process will incorporate new science in local climate data and improved fire assessment modeling in determining hazard ratings. – [PRC 4125](#) and [GC 51178](#)

What are the key elements of the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Model?

The model has two key elements: probability of an area burning and expected fire behavior under extreme fuel and weather conditions. The factors considered in determining fire hazard within wildland areas is fire history, flame length, terrain, local weather, and potential fuel over a 50-year period. Outside of wildlands, the model considers factors that might lead to buildings being threatened, including terrain, weather, urban vegetation cover, blowing embers, proximity to wildland, fire history, and fire hazard in nearby wildlands. This is not a structure loss model, as key information regarding structure ignition is not included. – osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz

Why does the model place an emphasis on the spread of embers?

Embers spread wildfire because they can travel long distances in the wind and ignite vegetation, roofs, attics (by getting into vents), and decks. – osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz

What is the difference between SRA and LRA?

State Responsibility Area (SRA) is a legal term defining the area where the State has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection and prevention. – [CA PRC 4102](#)

Local Responsibility Area (LRA) includes incorporated cities, urban regions, agriculture lands, and portions of the desert where the local government is responsible for wildfire protection. – [CA PRC 4125](#)

How are Fire Hazard Severity Zones determined in Local Responsibility Areas?

CAL FIRE uses an extension of the state responsibility area Fire Hazard Severity Zone model as the basis for evaluating fire hazard in Local Responsibility Area. The Local Responsibility Area hazard rating reflects flame and ember intrusion from adjacent wildlands and from flammable vegetation in the urban area.

– [PRC 4202](#) and [GC 51178](#)

2017



Tubbs Fire burns 36,810 acres, destroying 5,643 structures and resulting in 22 fatalities in Santa Rosa.

2018



Camp Fire burns 153,336 acres, destroying 18,804 structures and resulting in 85 fatalities in Paradise.

CAL FIRE finalizes the Statewide FHSZ Model to include Very High FHSZ in LRA.

2007

AB 642 and SB 63 require CAL FIRE to identify Moderate and High FHSZ in LRA.

2021

AB 211 requires local agency to designate by ordinance Moderate and High FHSZ in LRA.

2022

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



General

What is a Fire Hazard Severity Zone or FHSZ?

[Public Resource Code 4202](#); The State Fire Marshal shall classify lands within State Responsibility Areas into Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Each zone shall embrace relatively homogeneous lands and shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors present, including areas where winds have been identified by the department as a major cause of wildfire spread.

[Government Code 51178](#); The State Fire Marshal shall identify areas in the state as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.

Will the new Fire Hazard Severity Zones affect my ability to get or maintain insurance?

Insurance companies use risk models, which differ from hazard models, because they consider the susceptibility of a structure to damage from fire and other short-term factors that are not included in hazard modeling. It is unlikely that insurance risk models would utilize CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones as a factor, but much of the same data that is used in the Fire Hazard Severity Zone model are likely included in the insurance companies' risk models. However, insurance risk models incorporate many additional factors and that change more frequently than those that CAL FIRE includes in its hazard mapping, which is built to remain steady for the next 10+ years.

What do Fire Hazard Severity Zones measure?

The Fire Hazard Severity Zone map reflects "hazard," not "risk". The map is like flood zone maps, where lands are described in terms of the probability level of a particular area being inundated by floodwaters, and not specifically prescriptive of impacts.

"Hazard" is based on the physical conditions that create a likelihood and expected fire behavior over a 30 to 50-year period without considering mitigation measures such as home hardening, recent wildfire, or fuel reduction efforts.

"Risk" is the potential damage a fire can do to the area under existing conditions, accounting for any modifications such as fuel reduction projects, defensible space, and ignition resistant building construction.

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



General

What are the key elements of the Fire Hazard Severity Zone model?

The fire hazard severity model for wildland fire has two key elements: probability of an area burning and expected fire behavior under extreme fuel and weather conditions. The zones reflect areas that have similar burn probabilities and fire behavior characteristics. The factors considered in determining fire hazard within wildland areas are fire history, flame length, terrain, local weather, and potential fuel over a 50-year period. Outside of wildlands, the model considers factors that might lead to buildings being threatened, including terrain, weather, urban vegetation cover, blowing embers, proximity to wildland, fire history, and fire hazard in nearby wildlands. FHSZs are not a structure loss model, as key information regarding structure ignition (such as roof type, etc.) is not included.

Where do Fire Hazard Severity Zones apply?

Fire Hazard Severity Zones are found in areas where the state has financial responsibility for wildfire protection and prevention, called the State Responsibility Area. More than 31 million acres are in this area. Under [Senate Bill 63 \(Stern, 2021\)](#), [Government Code 51178](#) was amended to also identify the Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones with the Very High in Local Responsibility Area (LRA).

What are the uses of Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

The zones are used for several purposes including to designate areas where California's defensible space standards and wildland urban interface building codes are required. They can be a factor in real estate disclosure, and local governments may consider them in their general plan.

When were the maps last updated?

In 2007, CAL FIRE updated the FHSZs for the entire State Responsibility Area (SRA). Between 2008-2011 the department worked with local governments to make recommendations of the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones within Local Responsibility Area (LRA).

Why are fire hazard severity maps being updated?

The hazard maps are being updated to more accurately reflect the zones in California that are susceptible to wildfire. The hazard mapping process will incorporate new science in local climate data and improved fire assessment modeling in determining hazard ratings.

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



General

How do the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps differ from California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) High Fire Threat District Maps?

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) sponsored map, known as "CPUC High Fire Threat District Map" (HFTD), includes similar factors as those in the FHSZ maps, however the CPUC HFTD Map is designed specifically for identifying areas where there is an increased risk for utility associated wildfires. As such, the CPUC map includes fire hazards associated with historical powerline-caused wildfires, current fuel conditions, and scores areas based on where fires start, as opposed to where potential fires may cause impacts.

How are Fire Hazard Severity Zones determined?

CAL FIRE used the best available science and data to develop, and field test a model that served as the basis of zone assignments. The model evaluated the probability of the area burning and potential fire behavior in the area. Many factors were included such as fire history, vegetation, flame length, blowing embers, proximity to wildland, terrain, and weather.

What new data will be included in the new model, and how does this differ from the previous model?

A 2 km grid of climate data covering the years 2003-2018 is being used in the update. The previous model used stock weather inputs across the state to calculate wildland fire intensity scores. The updated model will adjust fire intensity scores based on the most extreme fire weather at a given location, considering temperature, humidity, and wind speed. In addition, ember transport is being modeled based on local distributions of observed wind speed and direction values instead of using a generic buffer distance for urban areas adjacent to wildlands.

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



General

Why does the model place an emphasis on the spread of embers?

Embers spread wildfire because they can travel long distances in the wind and ignite vegetation, roofs, attics (by getting into vents), and decks.

Why do waterbodies have a Fire Hazard Severity Zone Classification?

All areas in State Responsibility Area, including water bodies, require a Fire Hazard Severity Zone designation. The 2007 FHSZ maps zoned all water as Moderate by default. In the 2023 FHSZ model we added a buffer of FHSZ from the surrounding wildland into water bodies to account for potential threat of embers to buildings on docks and house boats, as well as variation in reservoir height that occurs with drought.

How does CAL FIRE assist Local Governments in Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

CAL FIRE's Land Use Planning Program is a specialized unit that provides support to local governments by providing fire safety expertise on the State's wildland urban interface building codes, wildfire safety codes, as well as helping in the development of the safety elements in general plans. Currently there are 189 cities and 56 counties with FHSZ.

How can I search the Fire Hazard Severity Zone of a property?

You can search by address to find your current designation on the web at:

<https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/> osfm.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ



SRA Questions

What is State Responsibility Area or SRA?

SRA is a legal term defining the area where the state has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection and prevention. Incorporated cities and federal ownership are not included. Within the SRA, CAL FIRE is responsible for fire prevention and suppression. There are more than 31 million acres in SRA, with an estimated 1.7 million people and 800,000 existing homes.

How is State Responsibility Area determined?

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) classifies land as State Responsibility Area. The legal definition of SRA is found in the [Public Resources Code Section 4125](#). The Board has developed detailed procedures to classify lands as State Responsibility Area. Lands are removed from SRA when they become incorporated by a city, change in ownership to the federal government, become more densely populated, or are converted to intensive agriculture that minimizes the risk of wildfire. While some lands are removed from SRA automatically, the Board typically reviews changes every five years.

What Fire Hazard Severity Zones are in State Responsibility Area?

All of the State Responsibility Area is in a Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Lands are either ranked as Moderate, High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

What are the wildland urban interface (WUI) building codes in State Responsibility Area?

The WUI building codes ([California Building Code \(CBC\) Chapter 7A](#)) reduce the risk of embers fanned by wind-blown wildfires from igniting buildings. The codes for roofing, siding, decking, windows, and vents apply throughout all State Responsibility Area regardless of the fire hazard severity ranking. Ember-resistant building materials can be found at: <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/fire-engineering-and-investigations/building-materials-listing/>

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



SRA Questions

Why is my property in a different zone than the adjacent area, which looks similar?

In wildland areas, zone edges are a result of the way zones are delineated. Specifically, zones represent areas of similar slope and fuel potential. Zone boundaries divide zones based on geographic and vegetation features that align with fire hazard potential; although, at a local scale, it may appear that the immediate area is similar on both sides of the edge. The class value within a zone is based on the average hazard score across the whole zone, so areas that are in the same zone but not immediately adjacent to a local area can have an influence on the final zone classification.

What is the difference between the various Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

Classification of a wildland zone as Moderate, High or Very High Fire Hazard is based on the average hazard across the area included in the zone, which have a minimum size of 200 acres. In wildlands, hazard is a function of modeled flame length under the worst conditions and annual burn probability. Both these factors generally increase with increasing hazard level, but there may be instances where one value is Very High and the other is low, pushing the overall hazard into a more intermediate ranking. On average, both modeled flame length and burn probability increase by roughly 40-60% between hazard classes.

Is the GIS data for Fire Hazard Severity Zones available for download?

The data inputs used to develop the Fire Hazard Severity Zones are identified in the Initial Statement of Reasons (ISOR) Title 19 Development (ca.gov). CAL FIRE has developed an additional data package which consists of sequential modeling steps, including any data inputs that were not already publicly available and referenced in the ISOR. The data package encompasses 34 spatial datasets and 8 tables, provided in raster, polygon, and table format. These datasets are formatted for Esri ArcGIS software, except for four tables provided in Excel. Ten of the datasets are updated versions used to produce an edited SRA FHSZ map following the public comment period that ended April 4, 2023. Upon formal adoption of the FHSZ map, the final SRA FHSZ geospatial data file will become available. The data package is available on the FHSZ website Fire Hazard Severity Zones (ca.gov) under the science and methods banner.



LRA Questions

What is Local Responsibility Area or LRA?

Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) are incorporated cities, urban regions, agriculture lands, and portions of the desert where the local government is responsible for wildfire protection. This is typically provided by city fire departments, fire protection districts, counties, and by CAL FIRE under contract.

When did Fire Hazard Severity Zones begin in Local Responsibility Area?

Assembly Bill 337 (Bates, 1992) prompted by the devastating Oakland Hills Fire of 1991, calls for CAL FIRE to evaluate fire hazard severity in Local Responsibility Area and to make a recommendation to the local jurisdiction where Very High FHSZ exist. [Government Code 51175](#) then provides direction for the local jurisdiction to take appropriate action.

How are Fire Hazard Severity Zones determined in Local Responsibility Areas?

CAL FIRE uses an extension of the State Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone model as the basis for evaluating fire hazard in Local Responsibility Area. The Local Responsibility Area hazard rating reflects flame and ember intrusion from adjacent wildlands and from flammable vegetation in the urban area.

What are the requirements for landowners in Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Local Responsibility Areas?

California's WUI building codes ([CBC Chapter 7A](#)) apply to the design and construction of new buildings located in High and Very High FHSZs in Local Responsibility Areas. Local ordinances may require ignition resistant construction for remodel projects. Check with your local building department to determine which ignition resistant building codes apply to your project. In addition, Government Code Section 51182 calls for defensible space clearance and other wildland fire safety practices for buildings. Owners are also required to make a natural hazard disclosure as part of a real estate transfer. For information regarding home hardening and defensible space clearance, visit www.readyforwildfire.org.

Does the designation of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area trigger the 100-foot clearance requirement?

Yes, per [Government Code 51182](#) unless a local government has passed a more stringent requirement, the 100-foot defensible space clearance applies. For information regarding home hardening and defensible space clearance, visit www.readyforwildfire.org.

FHSZ Frequently Asked Questions



LRA Questions

What is the process for developing Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area?

CAL FIRE uses the same modeling data that is used to map the State Responsibility Area. The department works with local jurisdictions for validation of the mapping. The map, along with a model ordinance, are then sent to the governing body for adoption.

How are the new Fire Hazard Severity Zones impacting development?

Many of the changes expanding Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Local Responsibility Areas have been supported by the building industry. CAL FIRE works closely with the building industry when setting various building codes and defensible space requirements, so we are working together to not affect development itself but to make sure development matches the hazards of that area.

When will the Local Responsibility Area Map be released?

The Local Responsibility Area map process will happen after the State Responsibility Area process has been completed, which is estimated to occur in winter of 2024/25.

Why haven't Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zone classes been classified before in the Local Responsibility Area?

New legislation, [Senate Bill 63 \(Stern, 2021\)](#), now requires the adoption of all three Fire Hazard Severity Zone classes in the Local Responsibility Area. Previously only Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones were required for adoption in Local Responsibility Areas.

What is the difference between the various Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

Classification outside of wildland areas is based on the fire hazard of the adjacent wildland and the probability of flames and embers threatening buildings.

Why is my property in a different zone than the adjacent area, which looks similar?

In non-wildland areas, zone edges occur based on distance to the wildland edge. Because hazard in these areas is largely determined by incoming embers from adjacent wildland, urban areas that are similar in vegetation type and housing density may have a change in FHSZ class as the distance to the wildland edge increases. Areas immediately adjacent to wildland receive the same FHSZ score as that wildland where fire originates, and the model then produces lower scores as the distance to wildland edge increases.

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Assembly Bill No.337

An act to add Chapter 6.8 (commencing with Section 51175) to Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 5 of the Government Code, and to amend Section 13108.5 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to fire protection.

[Enrolled, January 28, 1991]

AB 337, Bates. Very high fire hazard severity zones.

- (1) Under existing law, the State Board of Forestry is required to classify all lands within the state, in accordance with prescribed criteria, for the purpose of determining areas in which the financial responsibility of preventing and suppressing fires is primarily the responsibility of the state.

This bill would declare that the prevention of fires is not a municipal affair but is instead, a matter of statewide concern, and would make a finding and declaration of the Legislature that its provisions apply to all local agencies, including, but not limited to, charter cities, charter counties, and charter cities and counties. The bill would prohibit that finding from limiting the authority of a local agency, as defined, from imposing more restrictive fire and panic safety requirements, as otherwise authorized by law.

The bill would state that it is not the intent of the Legislature to limit or restrict the authority of a local agency to impose more restrictive fire and panic safety requirements, as otherwise authorized by law.

This bill would require the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection to identify areas in the state as very high fire hazard severity zones within all counties pursuant to a prescribed schedule. The bill would require local agencies, as defined, to designate, by ordinance, very high fire hazard severity zones in their jurisdiction after receiving recommendations from the director, except as prescribed. The bill would authorize local agencies to include or exclude areas following certain findings and would require changes made by local agencies to be final and not rebuttable by the director. By requiring local agencies to designate very high fire hazard severity zones within their jurisdictions, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would require the State Fire Marshal to prepare and adopt a model ordinance that provides for the establishment of any high fire hazard security zones.

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Assembly Bill No.337 (Continued)

- (2) Under existing law, any person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains any building or structure in, upon, or adjoining any mountainous area or forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, or grass-covered lands, or any land that is covered with flammable material, is required to undertake specified fire protection measures, including the maintenance of specified firebreaks.

The bill would enact requirements of this nature for any person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains, any occupied dwelling or occupied structure in, upon, or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered land, brush-covered land, grass-covered land, or land covered with flammable material, which area or land is within a very high fire hazard severity zone, as described in (1).

The bill would authorize local agencies to exempt certain structures and would exempt certain land or water areas.

The bill would make violation of these requirements an infraction or misdemeanor, as specified, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program by creating a new crime, and would specify related matters.

This bill would require local agencies to notify owners of property of violation and would authorize local agencies to correct the conditions and make a lien upon the property, as prescribed. By creating these requirements, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The bill would permit a violation of these requirements to be considered a public nuisance, as specified.

- (3) Existing law requires the State Fire Marshal to adopt, amend, and repeal regulations for roof coverings and openings into the attic areas of buildings in those fire hazard severity zones in state responsibility lands as designated by the director. Existing law requires the director to classify lands within state responsibility areas into fire hazard severity zones.

This bill would instead require the State Fire Marshal to propose, and would require the State Building Standards Commission to adopt, amend, and repeal those regulations. The bill would also require the State Fire Marshal to propose, and would require the State Building Standards Commission to adopt, amend, and repeal, those regulations for buildings in very high fire hazard severity zones in state responsibility lands, designated by the director, and in very high fire hazard severity zones as described in (1). The bill would require roofs on all new buildings and certain existing buildings in both of those zones to be at least a class B roof that complies with Standard 32-7 of the Uniform Building Code, as adopted in the California Building Standards Code. The bill would impose requirements on installers and roofing materials and make other related changes. The bill would exempt historic buildings, as defined, from these provisions.

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Senate Bill No.63

CHAPTER 382

An act to amend Sections 51177, **51178, 51178.5**, 51182, and 51189 of the **Government Code**, to amend Section 13108.5 of the Health and Safety Code, and to amend Sections 4124.5 and 4291 of, and to add and repeal Sections 4123.8, 4291.5, and 4291.6 of, the Public Resources Code, relating to fire prevention.

[Approved by Governor September 28, 2021. Filed with Secretary of State September 28, 2021.]

SB 63, Stern. Fire prevention: vegetation management: public education: grants: defensible space: fire hazard severity zones.

- (1) Existing law requires the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection to identify areas of the state as very high fire hazard severity zones based on specified criteria. Existing law requires a local agency, within 30 days after receiving a transmittal from the director that identifies very high fire hazard severity zones, to make the information available for public review, as provided. This bill, among other things, would also require the director to identify areas of the state as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones. The bill would modify the factors the director is required to use to identify areas into fire hazard severity zones, as provided. The bill would require a local agency to make this information available for public review and comment, as provided. By expanding the responsibility of a local agency, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would also make conforming changes.

- (2) Existing law requires a person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains an occupied dwelling or structure in, upon, or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered land, brush-covered land, grass-covered land, or land that is covered with flammable material that is within a very high fire hazard severity zone, as designated by a local agency, or a building or structure in, upon, or adjoining those areas or lands within a state responsibility area, to maintain a defensible space of 100 feet from each side and from the front and rear of the structure, as specified. Existing law authorizes a greater distance than specified above on the specified land in a very high fire hazard severity zone. Existing law specifies that clearance beyond the property line may only be required if state law, local ordinance, rule, or regulation includes certain findings and specifies that clearance on adjacent property shall only be conducted following written consent by the adjacent landowner.

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Amended by Senate Bill No.63

Government Code 51178

The State Fire Marshal shall identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 382, Sec. 2.5. (SB 63) Effective January 1, 2022.)

Government Code 51178.5

Within 30 days after receiving a transmittal from the State Fire Marshal that identifies fire hazard severity zones pursuant to Section 51178, a local agency shall make the information available for public review and comment. The information shall be presented in a format that is understandable and accessible to the general public, including, but not limited to, maps.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 382, Sec. 3.5. (SB 63) Effective January 1, 2022.)

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Assembly Bill No. 211

CHAPTER 574

An act to amend Sections 11891, 11893, 12581, 12996, 12998, 12999.4, and 12999.5 of, and to add Sections 12999.6 and 13001 to, the Food and Agricultural Code, **to amend Section 51179 of the Government Code**, to amend Sections 44274.10, 44274.11, 44274.12, 44274.13, and 44274.14 of the Health and Safety Code, to amend Sections 3113, 4799.05, 14503.5.1, 14538, 14549.2, 14581, 42052, and 42060 of, to add Sections 14537.5, 14548, 14555, and 21166.3 to, to add Part 5 (commencing with Section 75250) to Division 44 of, and to repeal Section 75250.1 of, the Public Resources Code, to amend Section 43152.6 of, and to amend and repeal Section 43152.10 of, the Revenue and Taxation Code, to amend Section 13198 of the Water Code, to amend the Budget Act of 2021 (Chapters 21, 69, and 240 of the Statutes of 2021) by amending Item 8570-002-0001 of Section 2.00 of that act, and to amend the Budget Act of 2021 (Chapter 44 of the Statutes of 2022) by amending Items 3540-101-0001 of Section 2.00 of that act, relating to public resources, and making an appropriation therefor, to take effect immediately, bill related to the budget.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State September 27, 2022.]

AB 211, Committee on Budget. Public resources trailer bill.

- (2) Existing law requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas of the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on specified criteria. Existing law requires a local agency to designate, by ordinance, very high fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal. Existing law authorizes a local agency, at its discretion, to include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as very high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as very high fire hazard severity zones following a finding supported by substantial evidence, as provided.

This bill would additionally require a local agency to designate, by ordinance, moderate and high fire hazard severity zones within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal. By expanding the responsibility of a local agency, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would additionally authorize a local agency, at its discretion, to include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones, respectively. The bill would prohibit the local agency from decreasing the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency, as provided.

LRA Legislation Factsheet



Amended by Assembly Bill No. 211

Government Code 51179

- (a) A local agency shall designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178.
- (b) (1) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as very high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as very high fire hazard severity zones following a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Section 51182 are necessary for effective fire protection within the area.

(2) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones, respectively.

(3) A local agency shall not decrease the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency, and, in exercising its discretion pursuant to paragraph (2), may only increase the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency.
- (c) The local agency shall transmit a copy of an ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days of adoption.
- (d) Changes made by a local agency to the recommendations made by the State Fire Marshal shall be final and shall not be rebuttable by the State Fire Marshal.
- (e) The State Fire Marshal shall prepare and adopt a model ordinance that provides for the establishment of very high fire hazard severity zones.
- (f) Any ordinance adopted by a local agency pursuant to this section that substantially conforms to the model ordinance of the State Fire Marshal shall be presumed to be in compliance with the requirements of this section.
- (g) A local agency shall post a notice at the office of the county recorder, county assessor, and county planning agency identifying the location of the map provided by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178. If the agency amends the map, pursuant to subdivision (b) or (c) of this section, the notice shall instead identify the location of the amended map.

(Amended by Stats. 2022, Ch. 574, Sec. 10. (AB 211) Effective September 27, 2022.)



Increasing Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Area and Designation

Government Code section 51179 requires a local agency to designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high FHSZ within 120 days of receiving the identified FHSZ's from the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178.

The law does not allow for a local jurisdiction to request changes or provide comments to the State Fire Marshal on the FHSZ designations. However, a local agency may choose to increase the designation of a FHSZ from the FHSZ identified by the State Fire Marshal, or designate areas as having a FHSZ that were not designated in a FHSZ by the State Fire Marshal. This may occur because FHSZ zone edges in the maps and data from the State Fire Marshal are not aligned with parcel boundaries or roads that some may consider for lines of convenience when adopting ordinances. A local agency is not allowed to reduce the designation of a FHSZ classification from the State Fire Marshal (i.e. a local agency cannot make an area designated as High by the State Fire Marshal, Moderate in its adopted ordinance).

However, a local jurisdiction can increase the designation from the one identified by the State Fire Marshal. If a local agency decides to increase the designation of a FHSZ, it may do so if it does the following:

1. If increasing the designation to Very High, a local agency must make a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Government Code section 51182 are necessary for effective fire protection.
2. If increasing the designation to Moderate or High, a local agency may do this at its discretion.

If a local agency decides to include areas in its FHSZ adopted ordinance not identified as being in a FHSZ by the State Fire Marshal, it may include those areas if it does the following:

1. If including areas not identified as being in a FHSZ and designating it as Very High, a local agency must make a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Government Code section 51182 are necessary for effective fire protection.
2. If including areas not identified as being in a FHSZ and designating it as Moderate or High, a local agency may do this at its discretion.



Land Use Planning Program

CAL FIRE's Land Use Planning Program is a specialized unit that provides support to local governments by providing fire safety expertise on the State's wildland urban interface building codes, as well as collaborating in the development of Safety Elements in General Plans.



For More Information
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Final Environmental Impact Report for Fanita Ranch Units 1-5 (City of Santee TM83-01, TM83-04, TM83-05, TM83-06, TM83-06, TM83-07, P83-01, P83-02, P83-03, R83-01, R83-03

Author(s): RBR & Associates, Inc.

Year: 1984

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Prepared By(s): RBR & Associates

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