



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/17/2025

File #: 25-771

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Title III, Division 11, Chapter 1 of the Humboldt County Code to add Section 3111-14 - Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Board of Supervisors has determined that the adoption of the State recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Fire Safe Regulations is not a project and therefore CEQA does not apply; and
 - b. Finds the proposed adoption of State recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zones via ordinance modifying the Fire Safe Regulations is in the public interest; and
 - c. Finds that the County's adoption of Fire Hazard Severity Zones at the recommended tiers is consistent with the purpose of the ordinance.
2. Adopt the ordinance amending Title III, Division 11, Chapter 1 of Humboldt County Code to add Section 3111-14 - Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones; and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish a post-adoption summary of the Fire Safe Regulations Ordinance Amendment within 15 days after adoption by the Board, and to post in the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors a certified copy of the full text of the adopted ordinances along with the names of those supervisors voting for and against the ordinances.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

The requested actions are: 1) Adopt the Fire Hazard Severity Zones as mapped by the Fire Marshal; and 2) Amend the Fire Safe Regulations by ordinance to reference the adoption of the mapped zones.

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to adopt an ordinance introduced on June 10, 2025 identifying the Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the county and including within the Local Responsibility Areas.

The State Fire Marshal categorizes land as Moderate, High, or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones based on terrain, vegetation, fire history, and climate conditions that each contribute to expected fire behavior over a 50-year period. These zones evaluate hazard, not risk, and do not account for mitigation efforts in the short-term, such as defensible space or fire-resistant construction. New construction in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones is subject to Chapter 7A of the California Building Code.

The mapped zones affect up to 7,900 parcels within the unincorporated County jurisdiction, across an area of over 28.1 square miles (over 18,005 acres); approximately 5,800 of these parcels' areas are covered by an updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone by at least 90%. Approximately 97% of the affected parcels within unincorporated Humboldt County are recommended to be Moderate Fire Hazard Severity and the remaining percentage is recommended to be High Fire Hazard Severity. The average parcel size of the affected parcels in the proposed High Fire Hazard Severity zones is higher, however, so approximately 7% of the total affected area is proposed to be High Fire Hazard Severity.

To adopt Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Map and Fire Safe Regulations text amendment, the following findings in Attachment 1 must be made:

- The proposed amendment is in the public interest; and
- The proposed amendment is consistent with the Fire Safe Regulations; and
- The proposed amendment is consistent with the purpose of the ordinance.

Effect of Ordinance:

The proposed amendment to the Fire Safe Regulations will present the adopted map, reference an online location where the map may be reviewed at a larger scale, and state that the areas depicted by the map are designated as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. It will also state that High and Very High Severity Zones are subject to Chapter 7A of the California Building Code.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The salary funding for research, staff tasks, and preparing the draft ordinance and staff report is included in the General Fund contribution to the Long-Range Planning unit (1100-282).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff costs and other expenses related to research, staff tasks, and preparing the draft ordinance and staff report total approximately \$10,000.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Staff time related to implementation has been accomplished with current staff resources.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The action item was referred to County Counsel. CAL FIRE was consulted to clarify appropriate procedure for the program.

ALTERNATIVES TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Board of Supervisors could choose to amend the language of the ordinance or add additional restrictions or requirements. This alternative should be implemented if the Board is unable to make all the required findings. Staff believes that the required findings can be made and does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.
2. The Board of Supervisors could choose to adopt Fire Hazard Severity Zones at greater severities or more broadly apply Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Local Responsibility Area. This alternative should be implemented if the Board determines there is evidence justifying greater Hazard Severities. The additional environmental review required to justify an increase has not been performed, so Staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Draft Ordinance No. ____ adding Section 3111-14 to HCC.
 - A. LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zones as Identified by the State Fire Marshal Map
3. Post-Adoption Summary

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: June 10, 2025

File No.: 25-733