



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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June 16, 2020

The Honorable Laura Friedman, Chair
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 3074 (Friedman) Ember-resistant zones

Dear Assembly Member Friedman:

We are writing to notify you that the County of Humboldt strongly supports AB 3074, which will protect Californians and North Coast residents who live in high fire hazard areas by modernizing defensible space protections through the creation of a third defensible space zone called an ember-resistant zone.

During 2017 and 2018 California experienced the largest fires ever recorded in its history. In 2017, over 1.3 million acres burned in high-severity wildfires and over 10,000 structures were destroyed. In 2018, over 1.8 million acres burned and over 22,700 structures were destroyed. Over one hundred Californians have died from wildfires over those two years. Over 95% of the structures lost in those two years were residences. CAL FIRE keeps records of the largest and most destructive wildfires in the state's history. Each year those records continue to be broken.

Current defensible space requirements have a two-zone defensible space strategy. Zone one is within 30 feet of the home, and Zone two extends outward from 30-100 feet of the home. These traditional zones are important for reducing ignition from direct flame contact. However, ember ignitions are responsible for the majority of wildland fire home ignitions. An ember-resistant zone will reduce ember ignitions protecting homes and lives.

Defensible space, or the reduction and maintenance of vegetation around the home, is vital for protecting homes and communities from wildfire. There have been advances in home hardening guidance only for the construction of new home in the wildland urban interface, however, these homes would have the highest level of protection if they had this new defensible space guidance.

We believe it is time to modernize California's defensible space laws by requiring an ember resistant zone. For these reasons County of Humboldt strongly supports AB 3074 and urges your favorable consideration of the measure.

Sincerely,

Estelle Fennell, Chair
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources