



Board Agenda Item 33

DATE: June 24, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Nerland, County Administrative Officer/Emergency Services Director
Steven E. White, Director, Department of Public Works and Planning

SUBJECT: Fresno County Ordinance Code Amendment to Include Fire Hazard Severity Zones

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Conduct second hearing to retitle and amend Chapter 15.60 - State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations of the County of the Ordinance Code of Fresno County to include the Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the County as adopted by the State Fire Marshal; waive the reading of the Ordinance in its entirety; and adopt the proposed Ordinance.

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. Approval of the recommended action will conduct the second hearing to revise Chapter 15.60 - State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations of the County to adopt the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) map identified by the State Fire Marshal and in accordance with Government Code section 51179. Additionally, since Government Code section 51179 requires local agencies to adopt an ordinance reflecting the “moderate,” “high” and “very high” FHSZs within its jurisdiction, the recommended action proposes to retitle Chapter 15.60 from “State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations of the County” to “State Responsibility Area and Local Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations of the County” to summarize the additional language staff are proposing to add to this Chapter.

The first hearing was conducted by your Board on June 10, 2025. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Under Government Code section 51179(b)(3), the County does not have the authority to decrease the level of FHSZs identified by the State Fire Marshal; however, pursuant to Government Code sections 51179(b)(1) and 51179(b)(2), your Board may also choose to:

- Include areas within the County not identified as “very high” FHSZs by the State Fire Marshal, as “very high” FHSZs following a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Government Code section 51182 are necessary for effective fire prevention within the area; and
- Include areas within the County, not identified as “moderate” or “high” FHSZs by the State Fire Marshal, as “moderate” or “high” FHSZs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost or cost associated with the recommended actions.

DISCUSSION:

Government Code section 51178 requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas in the state as “moderate,” “high” or “very high” FHSZ wildfire risk based on consistent statewide criteria and the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas, which are illustrated using FHSZ maps published by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). Some considerations include fire history, vegetation, flame length, blowing embers, proximity to wildland, terrain and weather.

On March 12, 2025, the County Administrative Office received a letter from the State Fire Marshal notifying the County that Cal Fire released the updated FHSZ map for Fresno County on March 10, 2025 (Exhibit A). The statewide maps designate FHSZs by State Responsibility Area, where the state has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection and prevention, and Local Responsibility Area, which are incorporated cities, urban regions, agricultural lands and portions of the desert where the local government is responsible for wildfire protection. The maps were last revised in 2007 and only identified “very high” FHSZs in the Local Responsibility Areas, which do not exist within the County’s jurisdiction. The maps released this year now include “moderate” and “high” risk areas within the Local Responsibility Areas.

Government Code, Section 51179(a) states local agencies shall designate the “moderate,” “high” and “very high” FHSZs in its jurisdiction through Ordinance. The recommended action before your Board allows the County to comply with this requirement.

In compliance with Government Code section 51178.5, the updated FHSZ map was published on the County’s Office of Emergency Services website on April 10, 2025. The site included a section for submitting public comments, and the information was also linked from the County’s homepage. On April 11, 2025, the update was shared via the County’s social media channels. Furthermore, in accordance with Government Code section 51179(g), public notices were posted at the offices of the Recorder, Assessor, and Public Works & Planning. As of June 5, 2025, no public comments have been received through the County Administrative Office.

A summary of the proposed Ordinance amendment was published in The Business Journal in accordance with Government Code section 25124(b)(1).

OTHER REVIEWING AGENCIES:

As the agency with the largest fire protection and prevention service area within the County’s jurisdiction, the Fresno County Fire Protection District provided guidance and reviewed the proposed Ordinance before your Board for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Ordinance
Exhibit A - County of Fresno Fire Hazard Severity Zones

CAO ANALYST:

Amy Ryals