

# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 9, 2023

Office of the State Fire Marshall  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460  
Attn: Scott Witt, Deputy Chief

*Submitted via email: [fhszcomments@fire.ca.gov](mailto:fhszcomments@fire.ca.gov)*

**RE: PLUMAS COUNTY COMMENTS  
ADDITIONAL COMMENT PERIOD  
NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING ACTION  
REGULATORY ADOPTION PROCESS OF STATE RESPONSIBILITY AREA  
FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES MAP**

Dear Office of the State Fire Marshall:

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors recognizes the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on December 16, 2022, concerning the regulations relating to Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in the State Responsibility Area (SRA), with a public comment period from December 16, 2022, to April 4, 2023.

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors at the March 21, 2023, regular meeting of the Board, approved sending a comment letter (dated March 30, 2023) to the OSFM, with eight items addressing Plumas County's concerns, many of which are reiterated herein.

Plumas understands that after receiving more than 1,000 public comments, the OSFM opened an additional public comment period, through August 9, 2023, for the regulatory adoption process of the FHSZ map, as adjustments were made to the November 21, 2022, draft map which resulted in just over 100,000 acres statewide receiving an updated FHSZ designation.

The most recent Plumas County SRA FHSZ draft map is dated June 15, 2023 (Enclosure).

In reviewing the FHSZ statewide and county acres comparison table provided by the OSFM, the Plumas FHSZ amended map reflects a minor reduction in the overall 'Very High' (-405 acres) FHSZ designation, shifting those acres to 'High' (+142 acres) and 'Moderate' (+263 acres). The total acres in the SRA in Plumas County remained the same at 437,502.

**PLUMAS COUNTY**  
**ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**  
**PROPOSED FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES MAP UPDATED JUNE 15, 2023**  
**NOTICE PUBLISHED DECEMBER 16, 2022, AND FEBRUARY 3, 2023**

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors appreciates the continued opportunity to respond to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and submits the following comments for the record:

- 1. Provide for Additional Outreach Under Extended Comment Period.** Plumas is again disappointed in the outreach by the OSFM, as an additional public meeting was not scheduled in the County to communicate directly with those most affected by the FHSZ map changes. While the CAL FIRE online public toolkit is available, it's not the same as representatives from the CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit taking the time to meet and answer questions from the public. Not hosting an additional outreach meeting during the extended comment period in the counties affected is a missed local public service opportunity by the state.
- 2. Continued Lack of State and Local Government Communication, Collaboration, and Cooperation is Frustrating.** Imperative to the specific Plumas County SRA FHSZ map update process is state and local government communication, collaboration, and cooperation. Plumas County is likely not the only county in California that is frustrated that locals were not made a part of the original drafting and development, and now the further amendment process, of the SRA FHSZ map update. Plumas staff would have been very willing, especially with the County's in-house Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and planning expertise, to collaborate with CAL FIRE in local government data gathering and ground-truthing.
- 3. Data Files Made Available.** Plumas recognizes the data sets that were posted online for review and comment, available at <https://osfmfhsz.blob.core.windows.net/public/index.html>, which consists of additional technical data, including intermediate modeling steps and approximately 22 spatial datasets, and several associated tables.
- 4. Recent Fire History Still Not Included Yet Essential for Plumas.** Plumas understands, specifically, that the fire history data included in the model is CAL FIRE FRAP 2020 fire history, which does not include the 2021 wildfires, those being the most significant and pervasive in generations. Statewide, a total of 2,569,386 acres burned in 2021 in nearly every corner and county in California. In Plumas County, the Dixie Fire burned 768,130 acres and destroyed countless homes, businesses, and left a scar on the environment. Plumas County cannot stress enough that the 2021 wildfires recent fire history should be included in the model to account for the existing conditions and lack of vegetation cover for much of Plumas, thereby likely changing the outputs when it comes to the fire hazard severity zone assignments.
- 5. Where is the Change Map for Plumas.** While Plumas' FHSZ map amendments accounted for less of a change in acres (405) than the 15 counties that received change maps, Plumas would have appreciated a change map all the same highlighting the nature and extent of the changes and locations. It is highly difficult, if not impossible, to determine small specific locational changes from the online viewer tool, although from what can be ascertained, it seems the primary changes occurred around Chester and Mohawk Valley. Posting change maps for all 52 counties affected, including Plumas County, would be appreciated for clear communication and transparency to the public and local government.

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- 6. Update FHSZ Map Every 10 Years.** With the dynamic fire environment and science in California, Plumas does not believe it's appropriate to utilize an expected fire behavior over a 30 to 50-year period without considering mitigation measures such as home hardening, recent wildfire, or fuel reduction efforts. Much shorter time periods must be established to analyze, review, and revise the FHSZ map. Wildfire impacts, fuel reduction efforts, and home hardening mitigation will impact future fire behavior and should be accounted for in closer to a 10-year timeframe. Legislation should be written to amend Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4204 that requires the SFM to "periodically review" the FHSZ designations in the SRA.
- 7. Insurance Issues Persist.** For those in Plumas County affected by the 2021 wildfires, many could not afford insurance, were underinsured, or had their insurance canceled due to the effects on the insurance industry from the 2020 North Complex wildfires. It is devastating that families in Plumas County continue to have their homeowners insurance canceled, making it even more of a financial burden to rebuild and afford to live in Plumas. As part of the FHSZ map update process, CAL FIRE explains 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. CAL FIRE goes on to state it is unlikely that insurance risk models specifically call out the 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. Plumas is skeptical that insurance companies won't be looking to the updated FHSZ map as a tool in evaluating and underwriting fire insurance, which will likely affect Plumas County residents' ability to obtain and/or maintain insurance. Plumas highly encourages CAL FIRE to work with Ricardo Lara, State Insurance Commissioner, to bring relief to the insurance market.
- 8. AB 38 Real Estate Disclosure Defensible Space Inspections Create Additional Regulatory Burdens.** Statutory mandates require that all property in High or Very High FHSZs comply with Civil Code 1102.6f, real estate disclosures Assembly Bill 38 (Wood, Chapter 391, Statutes of 2019). These disclosures are known as "AB 38 Defensible Space Inspections," and are not required for property in Moderate FHSZs. As a result of the proposed regulations, the boundaries of Moderate FHSZs shifted for some Plumas County parcels, altering which properties are now required to comply with AB 38. With a change in parcel zone designations from Moderate to High or Very High, Plumas knows the expansion and reclassification of those FHSZ mapped areas will cause additional burden and regulatory requirements under the AB 38 real estate disclosures.

## **In Closing**

Plumas County recognizes the efforts by the OSFM to respond to public comment, which resulted in amending FHSZ maps in 52 of the 58 counties; however, the total overall acres that changed only represents 0.34% (106,543 acres receiving an updated designation) of the total SRA acres statewide. Plumas County urges the OSFM to continue to genuinely consider the comments of Plumas, other affected counties, and the public.

**PLUMAS COUNTY**  
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**NOTICE PUBLISHED DECEMBER 16, 2022, AND FEBRUARY 3, 2023**

Please direct all correspondence to Planning Director, Tracey Ferguson, AICP, at [traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com](mailto:traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com) or (530) 283-6214. Thank you for your continued consideration of Plumas County's comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Hagwood".

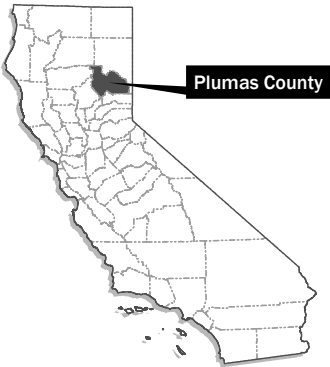
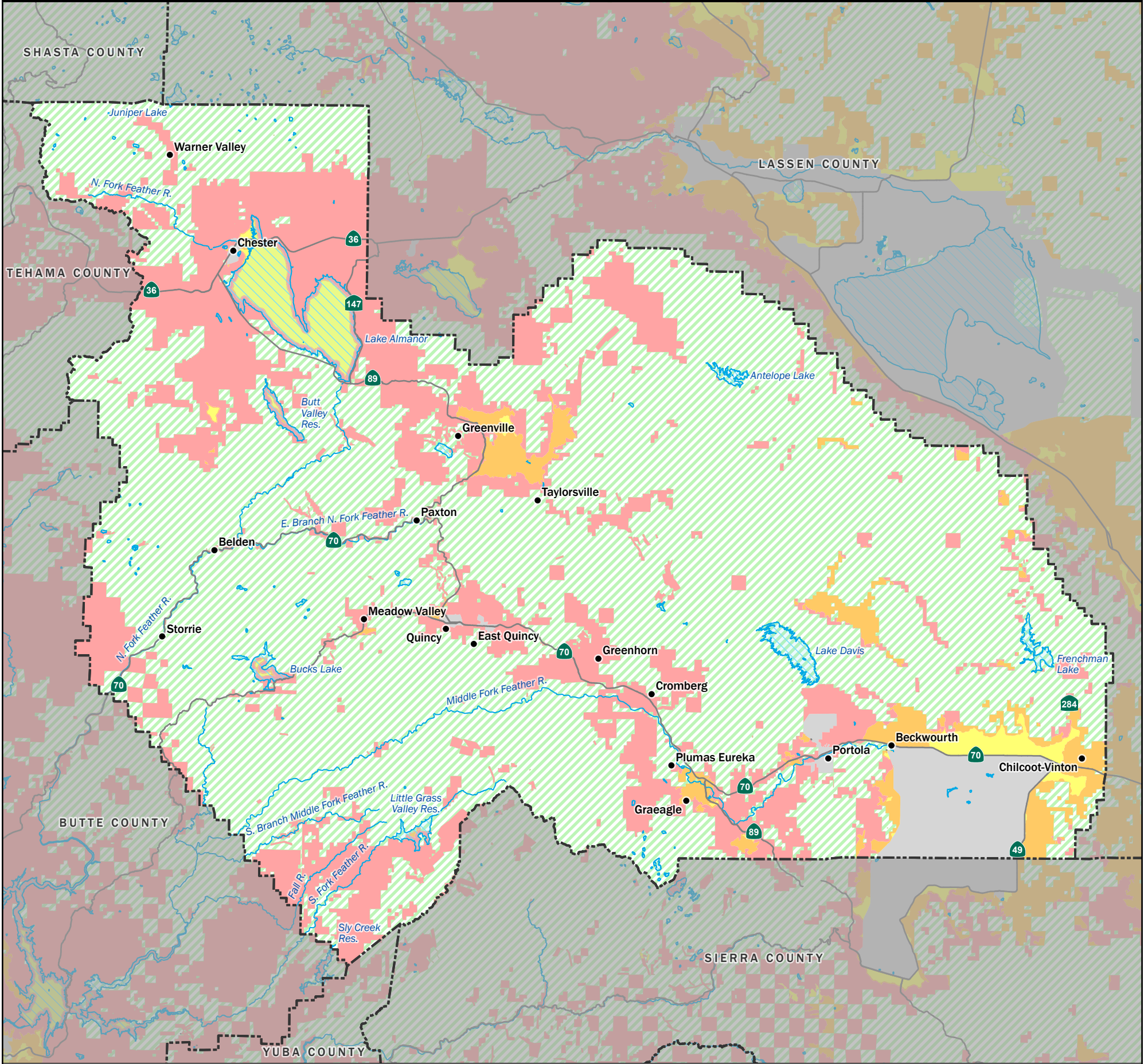
Greg Hagwood, Chair  
Plumas County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure: Plumas County SRA FHSZ Map (Updated June 15, 2023)

Cc: Kevin Kiley, Congressional District 3  
Brian Dahle, Senate District 1  
Megan Dahle, Assembly District 1  
Board of Supervisors, Plumas  
Board Clerk, Plumas  
Debra Lucero, County Administrative Officer  
Sheriff Todd Johns  
Sara James, Interim County Counsel  
Tracey Ferguson, Director of Planning  
Chuck White, Director of Building Services  
John Mannle, Director of Public Works  
Scott Packwood, CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit  
Mark Rotlisberger, CAL FIRE Lassen Modoc Unit  
Jonathan Pangburn, CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit  
Adam Mattos, CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit

# State Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones

June 15, 2023

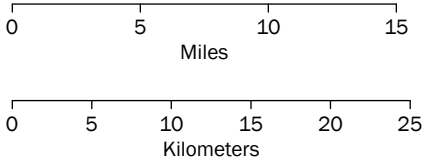


**Fire Hazard Severity Zones in  
State Responsibility Area (SRA)**

Very High	354,227 Acres
High	52,774 Acres
Moderate	30,501 Acres

**Fire Protection Responsibility  
Areas (non-SRA)**

Federal Responsibility Area (FRA)
Local Responsibility Area (LRA)
Waterbody



Projection: NAD 83 California Teale Albers  
Scale: 1:475,000 at 11" x 17"

Public Resources Code 4201-4204 directs the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to map fire hazard within State Responsibility Areas (SRA) 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. These zones, referred to as Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ), classify a wildland zone as Moderate, High, or Very High fire hazard based on the average hazard across the area included in the zone.

Access PDF versions of the maps at <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz-maps>. For more information, please visit the Frequently Asked Questions document for the 2023 Fire Hazard Severity Zones at <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/fhsz> or scan the QR code at right. If you have further questions, please call 916-633-7655 or email [FHSZcomments@fire.ca.gov](mailto:FHSZcomments@fire.ca.gov).



Scan or click the QR code for more information and to visit the interactive FHSZ viewer.

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. Obtain FRAP maps, data, metadata, and publications at <https://frap.fire.ca.gov>. For more information, please call 916-633-7655 or email [FHSZcomments@fire.ca.gov](mailto:FHSZcomments@fire.ca.gov).

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California  
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources,  
California Natural Resources Agency  
Daniel Berlant, Acting State Fire Marshal,  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Data Sources:  
CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZSRA\_23\_2)  
CAL FIRE State Responsibility Areas (SRA22\_2)