



PLUMAS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chair and Board of Supervisors

FROM: Tracey Ferguson, Director of Planning

MEETING DATE: June 3, 2025

SUBJECT: **11:00AM PUBLIC HEARING.** Introduce and waive the first reading of an **ORDINANCE**, adding Chapter 9.5 Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones to Plumas County Code Title 9 Planning and Zoning; approved as to form by County Counsel; Roll call vote

Recommendation:

1. Receive staff report; and
2. Introduce and waive the first reading of the Ordinance; and
3. Open the properly noticed public hearing (notice of public hearing posted on May 23, 2025, pursuant to CA Government Code Section 65090) and receive public comment; and
4. Continue the public hearing to the next regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting on June 10, 2025, for consideration of adoption by Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 25-_____ and Ordinance No. 25-_____.

Background and Discussion:

Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ)

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is mandated by Government Code Sec. 51178 to identify levels of fire hazard in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) based on consistent statewide criteria and the expected severity of fire hazards, and Government Code Sec. 51179 requires the State Fire Marshal to make recommendations of fire hazard severity zones to local agencies (Sec. 51177(e)), for city and county designation and adoption by ordinance.

On February 10, 2025, Plumas County received the 2025 updated official hazard map entitled "Plumas County – Unincorporated LRA Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones as Identified by the State Fire Marshall" (dated January 22, 2025), which evaluates "hazard," not "risk" to include areas or zones of Very High, High, and Moderate fire hazard based on consistent statewide criteria and the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas (Government Code Sec. 51178). The zones must be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the State Fire Marshall as a major cause of wildfire spread. This 2025 map update is intended to enhance California's approach to wildfire preparedness.

LRA Areas in Unincorporated Plumas County

LRA areas in Plumas County are those where the local agency is responsible for wildfire protection, which in the case of Plumas, is the responsibility of the local fire protection special districts. Specifically, the areas of LRA in unincorporated Plumas County are within the Town of Chester, Town of Quincy, Town of East Quincy, and Sierra Valley. Local fire protection special districts affected include Peninsula Fire Protection District (Chester), Quincy Fire Protection District (Quincy/East Quincy), and Beckwourth Peak Fire Protection District (Sierra Valley).

ORDINANCE ADOPTION AND OFFICIAL HAZARD MAP INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51179(a), Plumas County must adopt the 2025 LRA Moderate, High, and Very High FHSZs in the unincorporated area of the County by ordinance, with an associated map incorporated by reference, no later than June 10, 2025. Then, Plumas County must transmit a copy of the ordinance/map adopted by the Board of Supervisors to the State Fire Marshall no later than July 10, 2025.

A model ordinance was made available by the State Fire Marshall (Government Code Sec. 51179(e)) and the proposed Plumas County Code Title 9 Planning and Zoning, Chapter 9.5 Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones Ordinance is substantially in conformance with the model ordinance. As such, the Ordinance will be presumed by the State to be compliant with the requirements of the Government Code.

Government Code Sec. 51179(b)(1) allows for Plumas County, at its discretion, to include areas not identified as Very High FHSZs, as Very High following a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Government Code Sec. 51182 (i.e., defensible space) are necessary for effective fire protection within the area. Further Government Code Sec. 51179(b)(2) allows for Plumas County, at its discretion, include areas not identified as Moderate and High FHSZs, as Moderate and High. Furthermore, Government Code Sec. 51179(b)(3) directs that Plumas County cannot decrease the level of fire hazard severity zones for any area and may only increase the level. Pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51179(d) any changes made by Plumas County to the 2025 LRA FHZS maps provided by the State Fire Marshall are final and are not rebuttable by the State.

The official hazard map entitled “Plumas County – Unincorporated LRA Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones as Identified by the State Fire Marshall” (dated January 22, 2025) is not being recommended to be modified by the Board of Supervisors and is for the purpose of evaluating local wildfire hazard planning decisions and not insurance wildfire risk underwriting decisions. The proposed Ordinance, as recommended by the State Fire Marshall model ordinance and pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51178, provides an electronic link to where the official hazard map is located on the County website: <https://www.plumascounty.us/3354/LRA-Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones-FHSZ-Map>.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMENT

Pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51178.5, Plumas County made the LRA information available for public review and comment through establishing a website, as follows: <https://www.plumascounty.us/3354/LRA-Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones-FHSZ-Map> in addition to posting a notice (Government Code Sec. 51179(g)) at the office of the County Clerk/Recorder, County Assessor, and County Planning Department identifying the location of the map provided by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Government Code Sec. 51178.

Hard copy maps for viewing and further information can also be obtained from the Planning Department at 555 Main Street, Quincy, or by calling or emailing Tracey Ferguson, Planning Director, at traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com or 530-283-6214.

Since March 11, 2025, Planning Director Ferguson has participated in the following state and public meetings to obtain and provide 2025 LRA FHSZ information:

1. March 24, 2025, Chester Town Hall Public Meeting
2. March 29, 2025, Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association Meeting
3. April 1, 2025, CAL FIRE Office of the State Fire Marshall (Land Use Planning staff Bryan Carter, Battalion Chief; Shelley Redden, Battalion Chief; Kevin Lindo, Battalion Chief; and Kevin Merkh, Battalion Chief of the Subdivision Review Program)
4. April 2, 2025, Beckwourth Peak Fire Protection District Board Meeting
5. April 10, 2025, Plumas County Fire Safe Council Public Meeting
6. May 14, 2025, Firewise Lead Virtual Meeting

Public comments received during the outreach meetings, in person at the Planning Department counter, written emails, and by telephone primarily included the following concerns:

- Whether the hazard maps will be used by insurance companies to evaluate wildfire risk when underwriting fire insurance coverage?
- Will property tax values be affected?
- Will the cost of residential construction be increased for areas designated as LRA Very High and High with the requirement to build to California Building Code Standards, Chapter 7A, Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure?
- Questioning the inputs and methodology the Office of the State Fire Marshall utilized in modeling the hazard zones.
- How did the Office of the State Fire Marshall come up with the LRA boundaries, that is, does it correlate to the local town boundaries or something else?

POSTCARD NOTIFICATION TO PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN THE LRA

Additionally, on April 15, 2025, the Board of Supervisors directed a standard postcard direct mailing to be sent to property owners within in the LRA, which was entitled “Public Notice & Request for Comment—Fire Hazard Severity Zones” and read:

The Office of the State Fire Marshall has recommended new levels of Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs) within Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) affecting unincorporated Plumas County in the Town of Chester, Town of Quincy, Town of East Quincy, and Sierra Valley. You have been identified as a property owner of a parcel(s) within the LRA and may be impacted by the proposed FHSZ map amendments. Prior to adopting an ordinance that designates 2025 LRA Moderate, High, and Very High FHSZs map, information is available for public review and comment on the Plumas County Planning Department website under “LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) Map.” <https://www.plumascounty.us/3354/LRA-Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones-FHSZ-Map>. County Board of Supervisor public hearings will be held on June 3, 2025, and June 10, 2025, at 11AM (time certain) in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 520 Main Street, Room 308, Quincy to receive public comment in person, virtually by live streaming, or by phone. To make a public comment prior to the public hearings, obtain hard copy maps for viewing, and for further information please visit the Planning Department at 555 Main Street, Quincy, or call or email Tracey Ferguson, Planning Director, at traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com or 530-283-6214.

A total of 2,052 postcards were mailed on May 9, 2025, at a cost of \$1,217.26 (\$19.28 paper, \$18.08 labels, \$30.78 copies, and \$1,149.12 postage) paid by the FY24/25 Board of Supervisors (20010) Office Expense (521800) and Postage/Ship, Mail Cost (520210) budgets.

Action:

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Fiscal Impact:

Planning Department staff time regular wages in FY24/25 General Fund department budget.

Attachments:

1. LRA FHSZ Ordinance_Exhibit A_DRAFT BOS 6.3.25
2. FHSZ_County_LRA Hazard Map_Plumas_1.22.25
3. FHSZ_County_PlumasCo_Chester_LRA
4. FHSZ_County_PlumasCo_Quincy_EastQuincy_LRA
5. FHSZ_County_PlumasCo_Sierra_Valley_LRA

6. Fire Hazard Severity Zone_Rqrmnts_OSFM Webinar_12-19-24
7. LRA Public Comment