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BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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August 31, 2007

Humboldt County
Department of Community Development Services
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Humboldt County General Plan Fire Safety Element Recommendations

Dear Mr. Kirk Girard:

The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) is required to review and provide recommendations to the safety element of county and local government general plans when such plans are being updated. This review is in accordance with Government Code (GC) §65302.5 which requires the Board to review the fire safety element when the general plan update contains State Responsibility Areas or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Enclosed is a list of standard recommendations titled "*General Plan Fire Safety Elements Standard Recommendations*" which should be incorporated into the General Plan. Each entity should evaluate their general plan and include the appropriate recommendations from the list.

Please note requirements for response pursuant to GC §65302.5(b). Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your planning process. We hope this input leads to greater protection and reduced cost and losses from wildfires to the County and adjacent wildlands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan Dixon".

Stan Dixon
Chair, State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Bill Hoehman, Northern Region Chief
Ralph Minnich, Humboldt Del Norte Unit Chief
Wayne Mitchell, State Fire Marshal Office
Allan Robertson, Chief Environmental Coordinator

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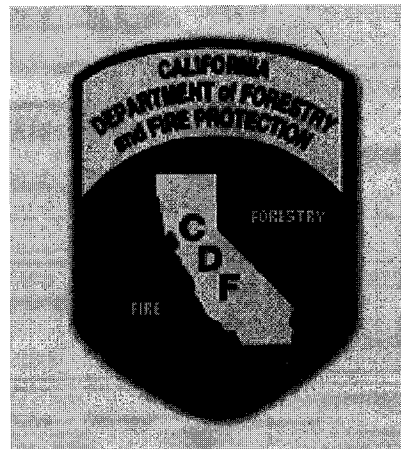
**HUMBOLDT COUNTY
PLANNING DIVISION**

General Plan Fire Safety Element

Standard Recommendations

August 29, 2007

State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection



Contents

Purpose and Background

Methodology for Review and Recommendations

Standard List of Recommendations

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**HUMBOLDT COUNTY
PLANNING DIVISION**

Purpose and Background: The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF/Board) is required to review and make recommendations to the fire safety element of general plan updates in accordance with Government Code (GC) §65302.5. The review and recommendations apply to those general plans with State Responsibility Area (SRA) (Public Resources Code 4125) or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) (GC 51175).

The statutory requirements for the Board review and recommendations pursuant to GC 65302.5 (a)(1) and (2), and (b) are as follows:

- *“The draft elements...to the fire safety element of a county’s or a city’s general plan...shall be submitted to the Board at least 90 days prior to... the adoption or amendment to the safety element of its general plan [for each county or city with SRA or VHFHSZ].”*
- *“The Board shall... review the draft or an existing safety element and report its written recommendations to the planning agency within 60 days of its receipt of the draft or existing safety element....”*
- *“Prior to adoption of the draft element..., the Board of Supervisors... shall consider the recommendations made by the Board... If the Board of Supervisors...determines not to accept all or some of the recommendations...,” the Board of Supervisors... shall communicate in writing to the Board its reasons for not accepting the recommendations.*

Methodology for Review and Recommendations: The Board has created a standard list of fire protection evaluation factors and recommendations related to these factors. The factors and recommendations provide civic planners general plan goals and policies for mitigation of fire hazard and risks. The factors and recommendations were developed using CAL FIRE technical documents and input from local fire departments.

The recommendations on the attached list are the Board’s general recommendations for any entity. Each entity should evaluate their general plan using the factors and include the appropriate recommendations from the list.

Standard List of General Plan Safety Element Recommendations

1. **General Plan References and Incorporates County or Unit Fire Plan:** Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Identify, reference or create (if necessary) a fire plan for the entity. Plan should incorporate the general concepts and standards from any county fire plan, fire protection agency (federal or state) fire plan, and local hazard mitigation plan.

Recommendation: Ensure fire plans incorporated by reference into the GP contain evaluations of fire hazards, assessment of assets at risk, prioritization of hazard mitigation actions, and implementation and monitoring components.

2. **Land Use Planning:**

- 2.1 Goals and policies include mitigation of fire hazard for future development. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure the fire safe development codes used as standards for fire protection for new development in the VHFHSZ portions of the entity's jurisdiction meet or exceed statewide standards used for State Responsibility Area in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 1270 et seq.

Recommendation: Include policies and recommendations that incorporate fire safe buffers and greenbelts as part of the development planning. Ensure that land uses designated near high or very fire hazard severity zones are compatible with wildland fire protection strategies/capabilities.

- 2.2 Disclosure of wildland urban interface hazards including Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones designations and Communities at Risk designations: Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Specify whether the entity has a VHFHSZ designation and include a map of the zones. Clearly indicate any area designated VHFHSZ pursuant GC 51175. Adopt CAL FIRE proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zones including model ordinance terms and conditions developed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal for establishing VHFHSZ areas.

3. **Housing:**

- 3.1 Incorporation of current fire safe building codes. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Adopt the International Fire Code Council Urban Interface Model Code for new development in wildland urban interface areas in State Responsibility Areas or local Very

High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Adopt newly proposed Title 24 CCR Wildland Urban Interface Building Codes.

- 3.2 Identification of substandard fire safe housing relative to fire hazard area. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Identify plans and actions to improve substandard housing structure conformance with contemporary fire standards in VHFHSZ or SRA. Plans and actions should include structural rehabilitation, occupancy reduction, demolition, reconstruction, community education, and community based solutions.

- 3.3 Compatibility of development, construction and building standards relative to access, flammability and fire flow. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure existing residential structures, and other "legacy" substandard residential structures, meet current fire safe ordinances pertaining to access, water flow, signing, and vegetation clearing.

- 3.4 Consideration of occupancy category effects on wildfire protection. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure risks to uniquely occupied structures, such as seasonally occupied homes, multiple dwelling structures, or other structures with unique occupancy characteristics, are considered for appropriate and unique wildfire protection needs.

- 3.5 Urban development and wildfire encroachment resistance features. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure residential housing zoning provides minimum fire safe standards, particularly in VHSZ or SRA. For example, zone designations that allow less expensive housing should conform to contemporary fire safe building and development standards.

- 3.6 Fire engineering structures (sprinklers/alarms). Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure new development proposals contain specific fire protection plans, actions or referenced codes for fire engineering features for structures in VHFHSZ. Examples include codes requiring automatic sprinklers in VHFHSZ.

4. Conservation and Open Space:

- 4.1 Identification of critical natural resource values relative to fire hazard areas.
 Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Determine maximum acceptable wildfire size and initial attack suppression success rates for protection of critical natural resources.

- 4.2 Inclusion of resource management activities to enhance protection of open space (prescribed burning, fuel breaks, vegetation thinning and removal). Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Provide vegetation management fire mitigation measures that provide protection of open space natural resources, reduce fire hazards to adjacent assets, and allow for safe fire suppression tactics.

- 4.3 Mitigation for unique pest, disease and other forest health issues leading to hazardous situations. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies that address unique pest, disease, exotic species and other forest health issues in open space areas relative to reducing fire hazard.

- 4.4 Integration of open space into fire safety effectiveness. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for reducing the wildland fire hazards within the entity's boundaries and on adjacent private wildlands, federal lands, vacant residential lots, and greenbelts. Wildland fuels should be treated in those areas to reduce the intensity of fires. Identify goals and policies for engaging adjacent wildland owners regarding hazard mitigation plans on lands with fire hazards that threaten the entity.

- 4.5 Policies for dedication, construction and maintenance of systematic fire protection improvements in open space. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for incorporating, systematic fire protection improvements for open space. Specifics should include standards for adequate access for firefighting, fuel modifications for open space within and on the perimeter of the entity, mitigation planning with agencies managing open space, water sources for fire suppression, and other fire prevention and suppression needs.

- 4.6 Urban forestry plans relative to fire protection: Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Ensure residential areas have appropriate fire resistant landscapes and discontinuous vegetation adjacent to open space or wildland areas.

Recommendation: Evaluate and resolve existing laws and local ordinances which conflict with fire protection requirements. Examples include conflicts with vegetation hazard reduction ordinances and listed species habitat protection requirements.

5. Circulation and Access:

- 5.1 Existing and planned transportation system incorporates requirements for designs that minimize wildfire damage to natural resources and minimizes hazards to human life.
 Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Incorporate adequate access for firefighting, especially for existing "legacy" neighborhoods in VHFHSZ, SRA. Goals for standards for access should be consistent to those in 14 CCR 1270.

- 5.2 Adequacy of existing and future transportation system to incorporate fire infrastructure elements such as turnouts, helispots and safety zones. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for transportation system fire infrastructure elements or otherwise reference appropriate supporting documents where these topics are addressed.

- 5.3 Adequate access to high hazard areas. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies that delineate high hazard areas, establish adequate access that meets or exceeds standards in 14 CCR 1270 for lands with no structures, and maintaining conditions of access in a suitable fashion for suppression access or public evacuation.

- 5.4 Standards for evacuation of residential areas in high hazard areas. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Goals and policies should be established to delineate residential evacuation routes and evacuation plans in high fire hazard residential areas.

6. Hazard Mapping and Fire Safe Regulations:

- 6.1 Fire Hazard Mapping Designations Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Specify whether the entity has an official VHFHSZ designation and include a map of the zones. Clearly indicate any VHFHSZ pursuant GC 51175. Adopt CAL FIRE proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

- 6.2 Adopt or incorporate local fire safe ordinances which meet or exceed standards similar to those in 14 CCR § 1270 for State Responsibility Area. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for specific ordinances addressing evacuation and emergency vehicle access; water supplies and fire flow; fuel modification for defensible space; and home addressing and signing.

- 6.3 Geographic specific mitigation measures for fuel modification and fire risk reduction. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies that identify structures that have adequate fuel modification or other features that provide adequate fire fighter safety when tactics call for protection of a specific asset (i.e. which houses are safe to protect).

6.4 Fuel Modification around homes. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish ordinances in VHFHSZ for vegetation fire hazard reduction around structures that meet or exceed the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's Defensible Space Guidelines, (http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/Copyof4291finalguidelines9_29_06.pdf) for SRA.

6.5 Adequacy of defense zones. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for wildfire defense zones for emergency services including fuel breaks, back fire areas, or other staging areas that support safe fire suppression activities.

7. Emergency Services:

7.1 Map/description of existing emergency service facilities and areas lacking services:

Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Include descriptions, maps, and standards for levels of emergency services. Review, develop or incorporate Local Agency Formation municipal services reviews for evaluating level of service, response times, equipments condition levels and other relevant emergency service information.

Recommendation: Incorporate goals and policies that establish emergency services consistent with state or national standards.

Recommendation: Ensure new development includes appropriate facilities to assist and support wildfire suppression.

7.2 Assessment and projection future emergency service needs: Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for new development emergency service needs and ensure appropriate levels of service are established consistent with state or national standards.

7.3 Adequacy of training. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for emergency service training that meets or exceeds state or national standards.

7.4 Inter-fire service coordination preparedness/mutual aid and multi-jurisdictional fire service agreements. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Adopt the Standardized Emergency Management Systems for responding to large scale disasters requiring a multi-agency response. Ensure and review mutual aid and cooperative agreements with adjoining emergency service providers.

8. **Post Recovery and Maintenance:** The Recovery and Maintenance recommendations address an opportunity for the community and landowners to re-evaluate land uses and practices that affect future wildfire hazards and risk.

8.1 Reevaluate hazard conditions. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Incorporate goals and policies that provide for reassessment of fire hazards following wildfire events. Adjust fire prevention and suppression needs commensurate for both short and long term fire protection needs. Develop burn area recovery plans that incorporate comprehensive recovery and fire safe maintenance.

8.2 Incorporate wildlife habitat//endangered species considerations. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies for consideration of wildlife habitat//endangered species into long term fire area recovery and protection plans.

8.3 Native species reintroduction. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Incorporate native species habitat needs as part of long term fire protection and fire restoration plans.

8.4 Evaluation of redevelopment. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: In High and Very hazardous areas, ensure redevelopment utilizes state of the art fire resistant building standards with 100 foot set backs (when possible) to ensure adequate defensible space is maintained around structures.

8.5 Long term maintenance of fire hazard reduction mitigation projects Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Provide polices and goals for maintenance of fire hazard reduction projects, activities, or infrastructure.

9. **Flood and Landslides:** Recommendations for flood and landslides hazards, risks and vulnerabilities relative to past wildfire should be developed to mitigate potential losses to life, human assets and critical natural resources.

9.1 Establish flood and landslide vulnerability areas related to post wildfire conditions.

Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies that address the intersection of flood /landslide/post fire burn areas into long term public safety protection plans. These should include treatment assessment of fire related flood risk to life, methods to control storm runoff in burn areas, revegetation of burn areas, and drainage crossing debris maintenance.

10. Terrorist Preparedness and homeland security impacts on wildfire protection:

These recommendations are included to ensure that terrorist preparedness actions do not substantially increase fire risk or unduly restrict emergency response.

10.1 Communication channels during incidences. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Establish goals and policies consistent with the Governor's Blue Ribbon Fire Commission of 2005 for communications and interoperability. Example goals and policies should address fire personnel capability to communicate effectively across multiple frequency bands and update and expansion of current handheld and mobile radios used on major mutual aid incidents.

10.2 Fire prevention barriers. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Identify goals and policies that address vital access routes that if removed would prevent fire fighter access (bridges, dams, etc.). Develop an alternative emergency access plan for these areas.

10.3 Prioritizing asset protection from fire with lack of suppression forces. Yes Partial No

Recommendation: Identify and prioritize protection needs for assets at risk in the absence of response forces.

Recommendation: Establish fire defense zones that provide adequate fire protection without dependency on air attack.

End Standard Recommendations (version 8/29/07)