



Angeles Chapter
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October 13, 2020

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 383
Los Angeles, California 90012

RE: Agenda Item #8, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones County Legislative Priority

Dear Supervisors Barger, Solis, Kuehl, Hahn, and Ridley-Thomas:

The Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Wildland Urban Wildfire Committee, writes in strong support of Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl's motion, "**Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones County Legislative Priority**" (October 13, 2020) to "support legislation to limit new development within areas of extreme fire risk and oppose new proposals that would increase housing density in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs)."

Kuehl's motion allows for Los Angeles County, the most populous county in the United States, with 10 million people, to take a leadership role in reducing damage to life and property from wildfires.

This aligns with other recently passed resolutions by Sierra Club California and the Los Angeles County Democratic Party:

Sierra Club California: "supports policies that prohibit new building in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, consistent with established Sierra Club infill policy, to respond to increasing intensity and frequency of devastating wildfires on lives, habitat, property, infrastructure, and the environment." (Adopted: August 22, 2020)

The Los Angeles County Democratic Party: "calls on our state leaders to reconsider the approval of increased developments in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones near or in wildland-urban interface areas, and seek strong regulations and limits on new structures, as these buildings have been found to increase the size and destructive nature of our states worst fires." (Adopted: September 22, 2020)

According to the text description, Kuehl's motion advances Governor Newsom's recommendation that local governments begin to deprioritize new development in areas of the most extreme fire risk (April 2019, "[Wildfires and Climate Change: California's Energy Future](#),"), and to address the growing number of legislative bills that would have allowed increased density in VHFHSZs.

Other Elected officials have also recognized the dangers associated with continuing to build in VHFHSZs:

- [San Diego supervisors reject Lilac Hills Ranch over wildfire concerns](#) (2020);
- Los Angeles City Councilmember [Monica Rodriguez](#) denies a large development project in the Los Angeles foothills due to the risk of fire danger (2019);
- Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul [Koretz halts a 99-room hotel](#) on land strictly zoned residential in the Santa Monica Mountains citing its impact on fire safety (2018).

The cost of wildfires takes a devastating toll on:

- Humans: loss of life, property and pets, displacement, competition for affordable housing, trauma to communities, and unequal vulnerability for communities of color;
- The Economy: strain on resources, insurance, clean up, destruction of infrastructure including utility lines, water storage systems, and roads;
- Ecosystems: impacts wildlife, wildlands, and habitat and significantly undercuts climate goals: increases greenhouse gases, releases toxic particles, carbon dioxide, black carbon, methane, and diminishes air and water quality.

Kuehl's motion is timely, underscoring the urgency and need to address land-use planning in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Former Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director, Ken Pimlott, warns, "California's increasingly deadly and destructive wildfires have become so unpredictable that government officials should consider banning home construction in vulnerable areas." ([Associated Press](#), "Official: California must mull home ban in fire-prone areas" 12/11/2018)

Therefore, the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Wildland Urban Wildfire Committee urges the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors to adopt Supervisor Sheila Kuehl's important motion to limit new development within areas of extreme fire risk and oppose new proposals that would increase housing density in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs).

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Wendy-Sue Rosen

Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter
Wildland Urban Wildfire Committee