



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

2021 MAR -2 PM 2:42

CLERK OF THE BOARD
OF SUPERVISORS

DATE: March 16, 2021

01

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ENHANCING WILDFIRE SAFETY ON COUNTY ROADS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Fire hazards represent a high-level threat to individuals and property located in the unincorporated areas of the County. More than half of the County's unincorporated communities are located within very high or high fire severity zones. Fire safety, including the ability to evacuate, is of the utmost importance to the residents living in rural areas.

The County Defensible Space Ordinance (Section 68.404(c)) requires property owners to clear ten feet of combustible vegetation along the sides of roadways. The County Consolidated Fire Code (Section 4907.2.1) provides fire districts the option to clear combustible vegetation located within twenty feet of the roadway shoulder. Certain County roads would benefit from the additional ten feet of clearing, which would also reduce the risk of "burn overs" and traffic impediments during an emergency evacuation event.

Today's action would direct the Chief Administrative Officer to identify public roads where twenty feet of vegetation clearing should occur to enhance public safety.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND AND SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:
 - a. Provide an update to the Board of Supervisors on increased roadway clearance efforts undertaken as a result of the 2019 Fire Resiliency Report.
 - b. Determine options for alignment of the Defensible Space Ordinance, State Fire Safe Regulations and County Consolidated Fire Code to allow for twenty feet of clearance.
 - c. Identify public roads that would most benefit from additional vegetation clearing of up to twenty (20) feet on each side of the road.
 - d. Identify a per mile cost to perform the proposed vegetation clearing.
 - e. Determine the frequency of the proposed vegetation clearing.

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2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a program to increase the level of vegetation clearing along the identified roads and return to the Board of Supervisors with options to implement within 120 days.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the actions included in this letter. Future costs associated with this action may require County staff to return to the Board for additional appropriations based on specific funding sources.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

San Diego has a history of destructive wildfires that have threatened the lives and property of residents within San Diego County. Unfortunately, the question is not “if” San Diego will have another wildfire event, but rather “when.” The Board of Supervisors should do everything within our power to ensure our constituents are safe and can evacuate quickly in the event of a wildfire.

The County of San Diego maintains 2,000 miles of public roadway, much of which is located within rural areas prone to fire danger. The County Defensible Space Ordinance (Section 68.404(c)) requires property owners to clear ten feet of combustible vegetation along the sides of roadways. The County Consolidated Fire Code (Section 4907.2.1) provides fire districts the option to clear combustible vegetation within twenty feet on both sides of roadways. While ten feet may be suitable for some areas, more can be done to ensure primary evacuation routes are as safe as possible. Increased vegetation clearing reduces risk of “burn over” on roads and reduces the risk that traffic will become bottlenecked during an emergency evacuation event. Proposed changes to the State Fire Safe Regulations (Title 14) and compliance with AB 2911 (2018) and AB 747 (2019) will require the County to take additional measures to ensure fire safety on evacuation corridors. The FY 2021-22 state budget proposes \$1 billion to implement the wildfire and forest resilience strategy which in part proposes to increase the pace and scale of projects that decrease the fire risk.

County staff should identify changes to the Defensible Space Ordinance and County Consolidated Fire Code to accomplish greater fuels reduction along the public and private roads in the unincorporated communities that would most benefit from increased vegetation to twenty feet on each side of the road and develop a plan to clear the vegetation.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed actions to implement additional vegetation clearing along public roads supports the Thriving Initiative in the County of San Diego’s 2021-2026 Strategic Plan by promoting safe communities.

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Respectfully submitted,



JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District



JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION
NUMBER(S):**
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Board of Supervisors – Second and Fifth District

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

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