

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PAUL LOWENTHAL, DIVISION CHIEF FIRE MARSHAL
FIRE DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: ORDINANCE ADDING CHAPTER 9-30 TO THE SANTA ROSA
CITY CODE PERTAINING TO HAZARDOUS VEGETATION AND
FUELS MANAGEMENT

AGENDA ACTION: INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Fire Department that Council introduce an Ordinance adding Chapter 9-30 to the Santa Rosa City Code pertaining to Hazardous Vegetation and Fuels Management that would require property owners to maintain defensible space throughout the entire Wildland Urban Interface Fire Area, remove dead trees, hazardous vegetation and limit certain mulch under specific conditions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Santa Rosa has experienced devastating fire loss because of the severity of fires which have occurred both in and around the wildland urban interface fire areas (WUIFA). In these areas, the risk of conflagration is increased due to hazardous vegetation and fuels. The risk is further increased by the changes to the environment as a result of damaging wildfires and by property owners who do not maintain landscaping on their properties.

Structures are threatened by fire every year in California largely because of heavy vegetation fuel load in close proximity to structures. Locally, the threat is compounded by hazardous fuel loading on parcels in the WUIFA and along city owned and maintained streets and evacuation routes in and around the WUIFA.

In addition to the locally adopted WUIFA, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) have been identified within the City of Santa Rosa by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. As specified by State Law AB 337, property owners within the VHFHSZ must take special precautions with their property to reduce the risk of fire. All Santa Rosa property owners in the WUIFA or that meet specified criteria within this ordinance must comply with the Santa Rosa Hazardous Vegetation and Fuels Management Ordinance.

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This chapter requires private landowners within the City's Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area maintain defensible space and limit certain mulch under specific conditions. It also requires both the removal of dead trees within a burn scar and the removal of identified hazardous vegetation under specific conditions.

BACKGROUND

On August 25, 2020, the Council of the City of Santa Rosa approved the CWPP, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Wildfire Annex, by resolution. Objectives of the CWPP includes the need to improve enforcement of defensible space standards, treating vegetation to reduce wildfire risk and improving evacuation routes. These objectives can reduce the risk of loss and damage from wildfire. The greatest responsibility for the protection of improvements in the community rests not with the City but with the individual property-owner through the development of adequate defensible space and reducing hazardous fuels.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not Applicable

ANALYSIS

The LHMP was updated with a wildfire annex to specifically assess and respond to the City's vulnerability to wildfires. The CWPP in compliance with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act was approved by the Council of the City of Santa Rosa on August 25, 2020.

As outlined in the CWPP, fuel treatments typically fall into four treatment categories – mechanical, manual, prescribed fire (pile burning), and biological. The fuel treatment strategy for the City may involve all of these treatment types.

There are 9,482 parcels in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and no further environmental review is required.

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BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Ordinance

PRESENTER

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