

ENFORCEMENT

PROBLEM

The Coalition of Firewise Communities (Coalition) recognizes that enforcement of state law and local county ordinances that are designed to help achieve protection of life and property from the devastation of wildland/urban interface fires are not being implemented effectively and to the degree necessary to meet these regulations' intended community protection goals. This includes enforcement of California Public Resource Codes (PRC) 4290 and 4291 along with Nevada County's Hazardous Vegetation Abatement Ordinance (HVAO). Simply put, these regulations need to be updated to incorporate the latest science and numerous recommendations previously identified by multiple experts following previous catastrophic fires in California and elsewhere in the west. These regulations also need to be more broadly enforced. Following the catastrophic fires of 2003, the Chairman of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Fire Commission stated, "Unless and until public policymakers at all levels of government muster the political will to put the protection of life and property ahead of competing political agendas, these tragedies are certain to repeat." The Coalition, which represents 45 Firewise Communities and nearly 50,000 Nevada County residents, insist that it is time to muster the political will and the resources needed to make Nevada County significantly less vulnerable to the repeated disasters that have occurred since that Blue Ribbon Report was commissioned. The catastrophic fires of 2017, including two significant fires in Nevada County following the October 8th wind storm, have created greater awareness and a sense of urgency to take action within our community. Accordingly, the Coalition's Enforcement Subcommittee intends to work with multiple stakeholders in Nevada County including the Fire Safe Council, the Board of Supervisors (BOS), the Office of Emergency Services (OES), and our fire chiefs to provide recommendations and support to improve pre-fire management programs. To be successful, we will need the cooperation of federal, state and local agencies, and most importantly, the buy-in and support by local government, the communities it serves and by individual property owners.

PLAN OF ACTION

Through engagement with both local and state government and fire agencies, the Enforcement Subcommittee intends to compile and communicate what actions and best practices need to be taken to:

1. Improve the effectiveness of local building, planning and land use regulations, including but not limited to, those related to brush clearing and fuel modification.
2. Improve and expand the County's fire prevention inspection program with the goal of significantly increasing its effectiveness beyond what is currently considered compliance with PRCs 4290 and 4291 and the County's current HVAO.
3. Expand public/private partnerships that help drive increased homeowner awareness and compliance.
4. Increase the level of resources needed to mitigate hazardous vegetation around communities, homes, other structures and along our roadsides.

Our initial focus will be to work with the BOS, OES and our local fire districts to improve Nevada County's Hazardous Vegetation Abatement Ordinance. As that effort begins to take shape, we will also take steps to similarly engage 1st District Assembly Leader Brian Dahle to seek his support for also improving the effectiveness of PRCs 4290 and 4291.