



## Information and General Services Department

**Office of Emergency Services**  
950 Maidu Avenue  
Nevada City, CA 95959  
Phone: 530-265-1515  
Fax: 530-265-7087

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## **NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

### **Board Agenda Memo**

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**MEETING DATE:** December 6, 2022

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** **Craig Griesbach – Office of Emergency Services**

**SUBJECT:** An informational presentation regarding potential updates to Nevada County Ordinance #2477 - Hazardous Vegetation and Combustible Material Abatement

**RECOMMENDATION:** Provide feedback and direction to staff on desired updates to the Hazardous Vegetation and Combustible Material Abatement Ordinance to bring back to the Board of Supervisors for review and adoption.

**FUNDING:** N/A

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors wildfire objective states: lead the community in all hazards planning, preparedness, response, and recovery with a focus on wildfire. Do this by focusing on improving countywide evacuation routes and safety, continuing to strengthen early alert and critical communication systems, partnering closely with residents in emergency preparedness, defensible space, home hardening, green waste disposal, and fire-safe land stewardship.

Wildfire continues to be one of the greatest threats to residents in Nevada County. From 2020 to 2021, 6,873,327 acres, 14,745 structures, and 36 lives were lost to wildfire in California. Dozens of residents in Nevada County have lost their homes in fires such as the Lobo, Jones, River, Rice, and Still Fires.

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors has requested information regarding the Hazardous Vegetation and Combustible Material Abatement Ordinance. Over the past two years the Office of Emergency Services has solicited feedback from a variety of sources including fire districts, community groups, municipalities, other counties, and the public.

This presentation will provide recommendations to the Board on potential solutions to enhance the Nevada County Hazardous Vegetation and Combustible Material Abatement Ordinance. Currently the Defensible Space Program has a 95% compliance rate however staff continually examine new methods and ideas to improve defensible space throughout Nevada County.

These enhancement opportunities for discussion are:

- **50/50 Cost Share Provision.** - The 50/50 cost share states if a property owner's 100' defensible space cannot be achieved without encroaching on

their neighbor's property, the neighbor has the right to request the property owner to pay for 50% of the cost. This ordinance is one of the few in the State of California which allows a property owner to achieve their defensible space by mitigating hazards over their own property lines which can lead to frustration on both sides of the issue.

- Fuel on Open Lands – Nevada County has over 423,000 acres of unimproved lands. Some property owners are out of the area or the lands may be neglected allowing them to become overgrown. Treating every acre of vacant land in Nevada County is not possible due to cost, lack of workforce, and green waste that would greatly overwhelm local resources. The Defensible Space team are reviewing reasonable alternatives such as 30' shaded fuel breaks along property lines and treating parcels less than 1 acre.
- Ember Resistant Zone - Experts agree the most important zone for defensible space is 0-5 feet from a structure. The Defensible Space team is examining the possibility of adding a requirement for property owners to maintain a 5' ember resistant zone around structures.
- Prioritization of an educational approach to defensible space versus enforcement.

**Item Initiated by:** Paul Cummings, Program Manager, OES

**Item Approved:** Craig Griesbach, Director, OES

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