



Agenda Item: 14.E  
Date of Meeting: June 9, 2025  
Department: Fire

## STAFF REPORT

To: City Council  
From: Robin Picken  
Subject: **Second Reading and Adoption of an Ordinance to Adopt the State Fire Marshal's Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map**  
Prepared On: June 2, 2025  
Attachments: Ordinance - Adopting the State Fire Marshal's Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map

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### Background/History:

On March 24, 2025, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), through the Office of the State Fire Marshal, issued updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps for Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs) pursuant to Government Code section 51178. These maps classify land in LRAs into Moderate, High, or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors.

The LRA map for the City of Bishop for adoption is attached to this report and can be found on the City's Website on the Fire Department's webpage at:  
<https://cityofbishop.ca.gov/departments/fire/index.php>

### Analysis/Discussion:

Under Government Code section 51179, cities and other local agencies are required to adopt the State's FHSZ recommendations for LRAs within 120 days of receiving them. Government Code section 51179(b)(3) prohibits any local agency from decreasing the severity of the zones as identified by the State Fire Marshal. The City cannot, for example, re-designate a very high severity zone to a high or moderate severity zone. However, the City may designate a more severe classification if the Council makes findings supported by substantial evidence justifying the upward redesignation.

Designation as a "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone" (VHFHSZ) imposes requirements on property owners within those zones. Key requirements include:

- **Defensible Space:** Property owners must maintain 100 feet of defensible space around occupied structures (Government Code § 51182).
- **Building Code Compliance:** New construction in VHFHSZ must meet ignition-resistant

building standards, including ember-resistant vents, non-combustible roofs, and tempered glass windows (California Building Code Chapter 7A).

- Notice to Buyers: Sellers must disclose to potential buyers when a property lies within a designated VHFHSZ (Government Code § 51183.5).

On May 12, 2025, Council held a public hearing and approved the first reading and introduction of an ordinance designating Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the City of Bishop in accordance with Government Code section 51179, incorporating the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Map issued by the State Fire Marshal entitled “City of Bishop – Inyo County Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones as Identified by the State Fire Marshal March 24, 2025” by title only, and directed staff to draft a letter to state representatives and State Fire Marshall, requesting for local consideration for map designations in the future.

Economic Impacts:

There is currently no known economic impact associated with the adoption of this ordinance.

Budget Impacts:

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with adoption of this ordinance. However, designation of fire hazard severity zones will result in increased enforcement burden. Being a volunteer agency, our Fire Department has limited personnel to proactively enforce defensible space requirements. The Fire Chief is currently working with CAL FIRE for assistance in addressing compliance and enforcement challenges.

Legal Review:

City Attorney Pucci has reviewed this item and finds that the recommended action complies with the law.

Recommended Action:

Council consideration to approve the second reading and adoption of an ordinance designating Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the City of Bishop in accordance with Government Code section 51179, incorporating the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Map issued by the State Fire Marshal entitled “City of Bishop – Inyo County Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones as Identified by the State Fire Marshal March 24, 2025” by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BISHOP, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES MAP AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

Approved By: Ethan Aukee 6/3/2025

Approved By: Robin Picken 6/3/2025

Approved By: Dean Pucci 6/5/2025

Approved By: Deston Dishion 6/5/2025