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Land Use Planning and Development

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Wildfire Program Advisory Council

Chair Hunnicutt, Vice Chair McCurdy, Council Members,

Thousands of property owners have worked diligently for the repeal of the Wildfire Map required by SB 762 and modified by SB 80. Hopefully current SB 83 will accomplish the repeal of the map. This new bill will also remove the mandatory standards for Defeasible Space and Home Hardening. SB 83 was unanimously adopted by the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee. I support the final adoption and signing the bill into law even though there are some provisions in the original SB 762 bill that I still oppose. I am a member of a Facebook group of over 6,5000 members that have opposed the original Wildfire Map and have called for a full repeal of the original legislation. There are some parts of the original bill that I can support but the egregious requirements of the map and mandates have energized these thousands of people to action.

I have been an advocate of incentivizing property owners to mitigate Wildfire concerns. The mandates have been opposed since the adoption of the original SB 762 bill. I remain committed to supporting incentive programs for property owners as opposed to any mandates. A concern I have in listening to many of the discussions for mitigation is the requirement that this be done in groups, and there is no consideration or opportunity for an individual property owner to qualify for incentives. This was reenforced in the discussion regarding SB 85 that proposes a study to attempt to lower insurance costs. A concern is that if programs are limited to only be available to groups, this will further divide the property owners for those that cannot afford required improvements to their property, or that are isolated and cannot join any group and would feel pressured to the point of creating animosity where it not might already exist.

Simply stated, if the state only provides incentives for groups and makes no accommodation for individuals, many rural residents will be disenfranchised and any good will from the repeal of the map and mandates will be lost. A prevailing sense is “Big Brother” is forcing the loss of individual freedom and self determination. This attitude will prevail if the single property owners are excluded. This is especially true when property owners think that the governments’ role should first be to manage the government forests to reduce Wildfire hazard and not lay most responsibility on private property owners. Please consider my remarks as the Wildfire Program progresses.

Sincerely,

Bob Hart, Planning Consultant
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