

October 13, 2023

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Re: 2023 Regulations and Priority Review

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on several issues in the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations. I am a property owner in Sonoma County along Spring Mountain Road and lost my residence in the 2020 Glass Fires. I have a use permit to build a winery and tasting room and have yet to rebuild the residence that was lost. I am very concerned that the illogical and inconsistency within this regulations will cause unnecessary financial burden to my small business and that the proposed regulations will not do anything to make future structures more safe from fire.

On the night of September 27th when the Glass Fire tore through the region, Cal Fire used my 12 foot driveway and had ample room to get through to fight the fire. And sadly after the fire burned through, they left and then 36 hours later the fire was still burning and took the house out. A larger driveway would not have served any purpose in saving my residence. If I am required to increase my driveway to rebuild the residence that was lost or the planned commercial winery, it will potentially put my small business out of business and will force me to sell the property. This same scenario will run rampant through the rural regions of our state. If these regulations are adopted, the Board of Forestry will be effectively opening up Pandora's Box with homeowners and businesses in rural areas throughout the state without properly thinking through all of the ramifications.

The Board of Forestry has not provided clear guidance on how to alleviate the financial burden of road construction requirements when such improvements benefit multiple properties.

The issue of managing multiple users of a road while only requiring one property owner to bring the road up to new standards has been disregarded by the Board of Forestry, which is concerning. This problem likely extends beyond this case and should have been addressed before implementing these regulations, especially in rural areas.

It appears that the Board of Forestry's road standards may be legally questionable because they seem to be applied unequally. Napa County was compelled to adopt the new Road and Street standards, but Sonoma County's Board of Supervisors has not enforced these standards, which raises concerns about their consistency.

Lastly, it might be advisable for CalFire to reconsider the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations. Instead of constructing extensive roads in mountainous regions that may never be used, they could consider mandating brush and fuel reduction corridors along access roads to buildings. Establishing a statewide standard for brush and fuel reduction along roads could be a more cost-effective and safer approach, aligning with CalFire's community outreach programs for fuel reduction. A 22-foot or wider firebreak

on both sides of a road may have a more significant overall impact on safety compared to an unused 22-foot wide road.

For the sake of the taxpayers and landowners in Sonoma County, I urge the BOF to postpone adoption of these regulations without further review and expert collaboration.

Sincerely,

Sam Baxter

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