



Coastside Fire Protection District

STAFF REPORT

TO: Honorable Board of Directors

FROM: Jed Wilson, Fire Chief

DATE: April 23, 2025

SUBJECT: Introduction of Ordinance No. 2025-01 - Local Response Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board introduce and waive the reading of Ordinance No. 2025-01, "AN ORDINANCE OF COASTSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY TO DESIGNATE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES AND DETERMINING THE ORDINANCE EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT".

Background

On February 24, 2025 the Coastside Fire Protection District received the updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps from the State Fire Marshal's Office. These maps were developed pursuant to Government Code Section 51178, which mandates the identification and classification of areas in California based on their relative fire hazard severity. The designation is a crucial step in implementing fire prevention strategies and ensuring the safety of residents in high-hazard areas.

The maps do not limit or restrict the District's authority to impose more restrictive fire and public safety requirements, as otherwise authorized by law.

It is important to remember that these maps measure hazard and not risk.

- Fire "hazard" is based on physical conditions that create a likelihood and expected fire behavior over a 30 to 50-year period without considering mitigation measures such as home hardening, recent wildfires, or fuel reduction.
- Fire "risk" is the potential damage a fire can do to the area under existing conditions, accounting for any modifications such as fuel reduction projects, defensible space, and ignition-resistant building construction.

Though the hazard has been reduced in much of the District, this does not mean properties are less at risk. The maps do not incorporate structure density and limited evacuation routes.

The Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps, created by the state, are developed using scientific models that assess factors such as vegetation, topography, and weather patterns that contribute to fire behavior. These maps are instrumental in guiding building standards, defensible space requirements in new developments and application of fire safe regulations.

History of Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps

The State of California has long recognized the need for fire hazard classification. Government Code Section 51179(a) outlines the State Fire Marshal's responsibility to periodically update and provide FHSZ maps to local agencies. These maps serve as a key resource for local governments in planning and implementing fire prevention measures. Additionally these maps are used for land use planning for future development and new construction.

Requirements for Public Review and Comment

Government Code Section 51178.5 mandates that local agencies must make the proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps available for public review and comment before adoption. To comply with this requirement, the Coastside Fire Protection District has taken the following steps:

- The FHSZ maps have been published on our official website for public access
- Public comments are being solicited, and community members are encouraged to provide feedback on the proposed designations.

Next Steps

Following the review period, the Coastside Fire Protection District will evaluate public input and finalize the adoption of the designated Fire Hazard Severity Zones at the June 25, 2025 regular meeting of the Board of Directors. The updated designations will assist in guiding future fire mitigation strategies, regulator enforcement, and emergency response planning within our jurisdiction.

By law, the District cannot decrease the level of fire hazard severity zones identified on the State Fire Marshal maps.

The District intends to adopt the fire hazard severity zone maps recommended by the State Fire Marshal without any additional or increased designations.

CEQA

The District is required by law to designate, by ordinance, the fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving the recommendations from the State Fire Marshal.

The proposed ordinance adopting the fire hazard severity zones as recommended by the State Fire Marshal is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a ministerial action, required by law.

Summary

Staff recommends that the Board introduce and waive the reading of Ordinance 2025-01, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE COASTSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES AND DETERMINING THE ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT".

At the June 25, 2025 Board meeting, the board will then consider formally adopting the Fire Hazard Severity Zone designations as provided by the State Fire Marshal's Office, following the conclusion of the public comment period. This adoption will enhance fire safety efforts and ensure compliance with state regulations.

Attachments

1. Ordinance No. 2025-01; An Ordinance of the Coastsides Fire Protection District of San Mateo County to Designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Determining the Ordinance Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-01

AN ORDINANCE OF COASTSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY TO DESIGNATE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES AND DETERMINING THE ORDINANCE EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The Board of Directors of the Coastsides Fire District of San Mateo County (Fire District) does hereby ordain as follows:

SECTION 1. Designation of Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

(a) The Fire District is a local agency as defined in Government Code section 51177(e).

(b) In accordance with Government Code section 51179(a) the Fire District hereby designates the Fire Hazard Severity Zones in its jurisdiction as recommended by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to Government Code Section 51178

(c) The Fire Hazards Severity Zones recommended by the State Fire Marshall were received by the Fire District on February 24, 2025 and in accordance with Government Code section 51178.5 within 30 days after receiving the Fire Hazard Severity Zones as recommended by the State Fire Marshall, the Fire District made the information available for public review and comment and presented the information in a format that was understandable and accessible to the general public including, but not limited to, maps.

(d) the Official Map of Fire Hazard Severity Zones designated by the Fire District is hereby attached as Exhibit A, incorporated by this reference and entitled, The Official Map of the Coastsides Fire Protection District Fire Hazard Severity Zones dated 2025 (The Map).

The Map showing the fire zone designations, includes the City of Half Moon Bay and unincorporated portions of San Mateo County within the Fire District's jurisdiction s." The map is also located and can be accessed electronically on the Fire District's official website at CoastsidesFire.org

SECTION 2. California Environmental Quality Act Determination.

(a) The Board of Directors finds that this ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080(b)(1) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(i), as a ministerial action required by Government Code section 51179(a).

SECTION 3. Severability

If any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence or clause of this ordinance is determined in a final ruling by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unenforceable, such finding shall not invalidate any remaining portions of the ordinance. The Board hereby declares that it would have adopted the ordinance, and each section, subsection, sentence or clause thereof, irrespective of the fact that any portion of the ordinance is declared invalid.

SECTION 4. Date of Effect

This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force and effect 30 days after passage. The Secretary of the Board is directed to cause this ordinance to be published as required by State law.

Passed, Approved and Adopted this 25th day of June 2025 at the regular meeting of the Board of Directors, with the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

Gary Burke, President
Board of Directors

ATTEST:

Jed Wilson, Fire Chief