

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

El Dorado County Community Development Agency  
Long Range Planning  
Attention: Shawna Purvines  
2850 Fairlane Court  
Placerville, CA 9566

July 17, 2014

RE: Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update; SCH #2012052074

Dear Ms. Purvines:

The California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) would like to issue comment on the scope and contents of the Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update, specifically the Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element, and its accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Report.

S-5-1

This updated Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element is missing key information mandated in Government Code §65302(g)(1) and 65302(g)(3). See bolded/italicized language below.

§65302(g)(1) reads:

A safety element for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence; liquefaction; and other seismic hazards identified pursuant to Chapter 7.8 (commencing with Section 2690) of Division 2 of the Public Resources Code, and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wildland and urban fires. ***The safety element shall include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. It shall also address evacuation routes, military installations, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures, as those items relate to identified fire and geologic hazards.***

S-5-2

§65302(g)(3):

Upon the next revision of the housing element on or after January 1, 2014, the safety element shall be reviewed and updated as necessary to address the risk of fire for land classified as state responsibility areas, as defined in Section 4102 of the Public Resources Code, and land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, as defined in Section 51177. This review shall consider the advice included in the Office of Planning and Research's most recent publication of "Fire Hazard Planning, General Technical Advice Series" and shall also include all of the following:

S-5-3

**(A) Information regarding fire hazards, including, but not limited to, all of the following:**

- (i) Fire hazard severity zone maps available from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.**
- (ii) Any historical data on wildfires available from local agencies or a reference to where the data can be found.**
- (iii) Information about wildfire hazard areas that may be available from the United States Geological Survey.**
- (iv) General location and distribution of existing and planned uses of land in very high fire hazard severity zones and in state responsibility areas...**
- (v) Local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for fire protection, including special districts and local offices of emergency services.**

**(B) A set of goals, policies, and objectives based on the information identified pursuant to subparagraph (A) for the protection of the community from the unreasonable risk of wildfire.**

**(C) A set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out the goals, policies, and objectives based on the information identified pursuant to subparagraph (B) including, but not limited to, all of the following:**

- (i) Avoiding or minimizing the wildfire hazards associated with new uses of land.**
- (ii) Locating, when feasible, new essential public facilities outside of high fire risk areas...**
- (iii) Designing adequate infrastructure if a new development is located in a state responsibility area or in a very high fire hazard severity zone, including safe access for emergency response vehicles, visible street signs, and water supplies for structural fire suppression.**
- (iv) Working cooperatively with public agencies with responsibility for fire protection.**

**(D) If a city or county has adopted a fire safety plan or document separate from the general plan, an attachment of, or reference to, a city or county's adopted fire safety plan or document that fulfills commensurate goals and objectives and contains information required pursuant to this paragraph.**

This updated Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element should include:

- Fire hazard severity maps
- Historical information about wildfires in the planning area
- A discussion of planned and existing land uses in or near very high fire hazard severity zones and/or state responsibility areas (SRA)
- Implementation measures as described above in §65302(g)(3)(C)

In particular, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is concerned about plans to provide for adequate ingress and egress to developed land in high or very high fire hazard severity zones (H/VHFHSZ), as

well as changes in land use designations that may support population growth in those zones. The expansion of Commercial uses into Community Regions and Rural Centers, the increase in density in residential or mix-use land use designations, and the overall emphasis on expanded development and more intense residential use in the Targeted General Plan will put more residents into high or very high fire hazard severity zones.

S-5-5  
Cont.

Although the DEIR states, on page 3-2 "...none of the proposed changes in the General Plan policy or Zoning Ordinance regulations would substantively change projected population, change the amount of housing designated in the General Plan, or expand areas to be developed..." the Board would like to express concern that fire safety is not addressed adequately for the proposed increase in allowable densities. Without updating the Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element to meet the above Government Code sections and to include fire safe mitigations for communities affected by this update, this proposed TGPA-ZOU exposes people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from wildland fires. This is contrary to the DEIR, page 2-19 "less than significant impacts" finding on question VIII (h).

S-5-6

The Board encourages El Dorado County to continue collaboration and cooperation with the Board and CAL FIRE Amador-El Dorado Unit through the Draft EIR and TGPA-ZOU adoption process. Thank you for your work to reduce the fire risk to residential and commercial development in the County.

S-5-7

Sincerely,



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(916) 653-2928

CC: Unit Forester, Amador-El Dorado Unit  
Chris Browder, Deputy Environmental Coordinator  
State Clearinghouse

## Responses to Letter S-5

### S-5-1

The Department notes that the TGPA does not include information required under Government Code Section 65302 as part of the General Plan Safety Element. The TGPA is a targeted amendment to the County's General Plan. It is not intended to include all possible amendments, even those intended to bring the General Plan into compliance with the Government Code. The County will undertake future amendments to the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the requirements of the Government Code. However, these are not part of the project.

### S-5-2

Please see the response to comment S-5-1.

### S-5-3

The General Plan includes standards intended to minimize the risk of wildfire. They are found under Objective 6.2.3 and include the following policies:

Policy 6.2.2.1 Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps shall be consulted in the review of all projects so that standards and mitigation measures appropriate to each hazard classification can be applied. Land use densities and intensities shall be determined by mitigation measures in areas designated as high or very high fire hazard.

Policy 6.2.2.2 The County shall preclude development in areas of high and very high wildland fire hazard or in areas identified as "urban wildland interface communities within the vicinity of Federal lands that are a high risk for wildfire," as listed in the Federal Register of August 17, 2001, unless such development can be adequately protected from wildland fire hazard, as demonstrated in a Fire Safe Plan prepared by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and approved by the local Fire Protection District and/or California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Policy 6.2.3.1 As a requirement for approving new development, the County must find, based on information provided by the applicant and the responsible fire protection district that, concurrent with development, adequate emergency water flow, fire access, and fire fighting personnel and equipment will be available in accordance with applicable State and local fire district standards.

Policy 6.2.3.2 As a requirement of new development, the applicant must demonstrate that adequate access exists, or can be provided to ensure that emergency vehicles can access the site and private vehicles can evacuate the area.

Policy 6.2.3.4 All new development and public works projects shall be consistent with applicable State Wildland Fire Standards and other relevant State and federal fire requirements.

Policy 6.2.4.1 Discretionary development within high and very high fire hazard areas shall be conditioned to designate fuel break zones that comply with fire safe requirements to benefit the new and, where possible, existing development.

Policy 6.2.4.2 The County shall cooperate with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and local fire protection districts to identify opportunities for fuel breaks in zones of high and very high fire hazard either prior to or as a component of project review.

Policy 6.2.5.1 The County shall cooperate with the U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and local fire districts in fire prevention education programs.

General Plan Implementation Measure HS-B states that the County will “[w]ork with the local Fire Safe Councils, fire protection districts, U.S. Forest Service, and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop and implement a countywide Wildfire Safety Plan.” The County is drafting, publicly vetting, and adopting the General Plan’s implementation measures as time, staffing, and budget permit. The County has no authority to enact plans or regulations without first completing the public review process. However, it has not yet completed this implementation measure.

**S-5-4**

Please see the response to comment S-5-1.

**S-5-5**

The existing General Plan provides for substantial growth within the county over the next 20 years. By itself, the TGPA will not substantially increase the existing growth potential (please see Master Response 5: Future Development Levels under the TGPA/ZOU regarding the practical constraints that limit development potential). The ZOU includes zone changes that will bring zoning into consistency with the existing General Plan designations, as required by State law. This does not substantially increase the number of residents or future residents that are within or would be within high or very high fire hazard severity zones relative to projected growth under the existing General Plan. In other words, the level of risk based on future development is largely a function of the existing General Plan, not the TGPA/ZOU project.

Please see the response to comment S-5-3 enumerating County policies that limit the potential exposure of future development to wildland fire hazard. In particular, Policies 6.2.2.1 and 6.2.2.2 require the County to consider new projects’ risk and to preclude development that cannot demonstrate that the risk is lowered to an acceptable level.

**S-5-6**

Please see the response to comment S-5-5.

**S-5-7**

CalFire encourages the County to work with the Department and the Board of Forestry through the TGPA/ZOU and CEQA process. The County will cooperate with the Department and the Board in the future as it refines its General Plan policies and works on Implementation Measure HS-B. However, the changes requested by the commenter are outside the scope of the project being evaluated in the TGPA/ZOU EIR.