



**COUNTY OF LAKE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Courthouse - 255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453
TELEPHONE (707) 263-2368
FAX (707) 263-2207

Moke Simon – District 1
Bruno Sabatier – District 2
Eddie Crandell – District 3
Tina Scott – District 4
Rob Brown – District 5

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Senator Henry Stern
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 474 (Stern) – OPPOSE As Amended June 19, 2020

Dear Senator Stern:

On behalf of the County of Lake, we wish to submit our strong opposition to your Senate Bill 474. As presently written, SB 474 would prohibit all retail, commercial, industrial and/or residential development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) and State Responsibility Areas (SRA), as determined by the Director and State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Since 2015, destructive wildfires have consumed greater than 60% of Lake County's total landmass, leading to large scale evacuations, significant loss of property, and even loss of life. Local residents and our Board are more aware than many of the need to responsibly and sustainably develop housing and commercial spaces in California, and do so in earnest consideration of fire and other risks associated with areas proposed for development.

A sizeable share of the potentially developable land in unincorporated Lake County is located in SRA's as evidenced from the map that is viewable at <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>. Such a blanket prohibition of development would significantly frustrate efforts to stimulate our local economy.

We are not alone. 56 California Counties have SRA lands within their borders, and fire risk in these areas is widely variable, from moderate to very high. Using the SRA designation, alone, to prohibit development is unacceptable.

Some of the most promising projects under consideration in Lake County would not be possible, were SB 474 current law. Just last week, our Board considered the Guenoc Valley Mixed Use Planned Development Project, an innovative commercial resort set on 16,000 acres of privately-owned SRA land. This development will be a game changer for Lake County.

What if SB 474 were law today? Instead of the genuine and realistic excitement that is mounting in South County, Lake County would be facing yet another public policy-driven setback.

Passage of SB 474 will invite a shift toward even greater population density and concentration of industrial activity in California's urban centers. Should this occur, rural jurisdictions seeking to fulfill essential functions and deliver critical human services, many of which are funded by Property and Sales Tax revenues, would face deepening challenges.

Many rural Californians have deep and abiding ties to the communities in which we live and work and raise our families. Revitalization of communities and businesses often requires smart development. If a historically Lake County-based business were to need a larger facility to take the next steps in its growth, for example, why should they be required to move to a different locale, simply because development in State Responsibility Areas was prohibited? Similarly, why should a young member of a long-time Lake County family be forced to look for property elsewhere, rather than developing a home on land once owned by a beloved grandmother?

For the reasons detailed above, we cannot, in good conscience support SB 474, as presently written.

Instead, let's work to build smarter, with Firewise practices informed at the local level. SB 182 offers one set of alternatives, and perhaps that bill serves as a better starting place to resolve our real need to mitigate and prevent further devastation in California's wildfire-prone communities, and do so with the involvement and engagement of local residents.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact County Administrative Officer Carol J. Huchingson at (707) 263-2580.

Respectfully,

COUNTY OF LAKE

Moke Simon, Chair

cc: Honorable Senator Mike McGuire, Senate District 2
Honorable Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Chair, Local Government Committee
Members of the Assembly Local Government Committee
Angela Mapp, Chief Consultant, Assembly Local Government Committee
William Weber, Chief Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus