

Opinion: El Dorado County not happy with fire fee

By Ray Nutting

With over 51,000 property owners in the El Dorado County expected to receive bills from the state for fire prevention, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors wants to know how the county can help.

The public should know what's coming. This "fee" is nothing but a scheme allowing the state of California to pick the pockets of rural residents.



Ray Nutting

The State Fire Prevention Fee was authorized last year by the governor and Legislature as part of the state budget package. The fee will be \$150 for each habitable structure located within CalFire's jurisdiction known as the State Responsibility Area. A \$35 dollar credit applies to structures that are also located within a local fire district.

Last year the Board of Supervisors attempted to appeal the fire fee on behalf of all affected property owners in El Dorado County. The appeal was rejected by CalFire because the law does not allow appeals until an actual bill has been received.

Concerns have been expressed about the accuracy of the maps and information the state used to determine to generate the fire fee bills. The state has set up a website,

www.firepreventionfee.org with additional information about the fee and the appeal process. Although it remains unclear at this point, it is likely that residents will require documentation from the county in order to file an appeal.

We'll want to position the county government to help residents through their appeal process as best we can.

Nutting also suggested that the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association will likely initiate litigation over the state fire fee. Personally I think the county should explore filing a friend-of-the-court brief once litigation is under way.

The governor and Legislature have overspent for years, and are now forcing us to write personal checks to cover their recklessness. Next we'll be required to feed and house the King's army.

The Board of Supervisors will discuss the new fire fee at the Aug. 14 Board meeting which begins at 9am at 330 Fair Lane, Placerville.

Ray Nutting represents District 2 on the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.