

Placer County supes concentrate on fire issues

Fire safety was a predominant theme at this week's Placer County Board of Supervisors meeting.

In the first action, supervisors approved the permanent expansion of the county's hazardous vegetation abatement ordinance to all county unincorporated areas. In the second action, the board OK'd an update to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. And the third action was approving an agreement with CalFire for fire protection and other emergency services.

The pilot vegetation management program started in 2007 in select areas in the Lake Tahoe Basin. It expanded to communities in unincorporated areas on the western side of the county.

With the ordinance now permanently in place, owners of unimproved parcels that have no structures can be required to remove untreated fire fuels that create a hazard to adjacent improved parcels.

The ordinance's goals are to encourage property owners to meet state and county requirements through the use of inspections, public education and cooperation. Before compulsory abatement is ordered and billed to a property owner, the ordinance has a process involving inspections and cooperative efforts. The ordinance provides for a formal action to ensure removal of the fire hazard.

"The board's action to approve the HVA ordinance countywide gives our unincorporated fire chiefs a tool to encourage the elimination of hazardous fuels from unimproved parcels when these fuels pose a significant risk to a neighbor's home," said Rui Cunha, Placer County Office of Emergency Services

program manager, said in a press release.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a collaborative effort between Placer County and federal, state and local partners in fire prevention and mitigation. The plan lists 46 defense zones or urban lot fuel reduction projects, community preparedness and education projects.

The plan defines specific fire hazards in designated areas, assesses the risk and identifies and prioritizes specific projects.

The CalFire contract covers approximately 475 square miles, or nearly one-third of unincorporated Placer County. The contract pays for the equivalent of 66 full-time firefighters operating from eight fire stations around the clock.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report