



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 3
File #: 21-295

Board Meeting Date: 4/20/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisor Don Horsley, District 3
Subject: CZU Lightning complex Fire Remediation Efforts on Timberland

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct the President of the Board of Supervisors to write a letter of support to the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to enter into emergency rulemaking to provide temporary relief from Special County Rules regarding weekend timber operations and hauling of forest products in order to assist in clean-up efforts associated with the CZU Lightning Complex fire.

BACKGROUND:

The CZU Lightning Complex fire that began on August 16th, 2020, and was fully contained on September 22nd, 2020, touched 22,755 acres of San Mateo County causing damage including damage to trees. As clean-up and recovery efforts continue, local timberland owners are utilizing several CAL FIRE permits under the Forest Practice Rules for removing fire-killed or damaged trees. The Special County Rules limit weekend timber operations and hauling of forest products. These regulations are designed to reduce the potential for timber harvesting to impact residential, recreational, and traffic resources within the County of San Mateo.

DISCUSSION:

The prohibition of weekend timber operations and weekend log hauling within San Mateo County significantly limits the ability to remove damaged trees from the areas affected by the CZU Lightning Complex fires. With the endorsement of CAL FIRE and the San Mateo County Department of Public Works, timber operators working within the fire-impact zones have requested support for the temporary suspension of prohibitions on weekend operations until the removal of fire-killed and damaged trees is complete. This would provide more capacity to remove debris in the fire-impacted area and therefore reduce debris flow and future fire threats.

The existing harvest infrastructure in San Mateo County is currently not sufficient to adequately address the magnitude of dead or damaged timber resulting from the CZU Lightning Complex fire. The localized scarcity of Licensed Timber Operators, log truck drivers, timber fallers, and sawmills

available to handle the volume of material is problematic. Allowing timber operations and log hauling on weekends would enable better utilization of the limited available personnel and infrastructure, and reduce the delays and expense incurred by conforming to the Special County Rules. Two additional days per each work week in the CZU Lightning Complex fire impact area until no later than the Winter Operating period that begins on November 15, 2021, would result in an overall shorter timeline for post-fire remediation that can be accomplished by our regionally limited pool of operators.

This memo asks that the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County write a letter of support to the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to enter into emergency rulemaking to provide temporary relief from Special County Rules regarding weekend timber operations and hauling of forest products. This letter of support would limit the suspension of these rules to a date certain of November 15, 2021, which is the beginning of the Winter Operations Period, and to restrict operations to the hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekend days and federal holidays.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.