



The Lone Star Chapter of Sierra Club Supports HB 1034 (Goodwin): Giving authority to counties to deal with wildfires and adopt modern codes will save lives, protect insurance rates and help prevent devastating ecological damage

HB 1034 by Goodwin would finally allow all counties – not just those with more than a certain population – to adopt and enforce fire codes to protect homeowners and small businesses, but also allow them to adopt and enforce the wildland-urban interface code, as approved as part of the International Code Council process.

With recent devastating fires in Bastrop, the Hill Country and West Texas, we are seeing thousands and potentially millions of Texans facing the potential for devastating wildfires, and loss of life. This has a devastating public health and air quality impact as well – fires as far away as Central America directly impact our air quality in Texas, and fires near our urban core can impact ozone levels in our major cities. With a changing climate, wildfires are increasing and we must be more resilient.

As growth occurs outside our urban core, we can put pressure on habitats outside our cities, and without proper code compliance this can lead to destruction of important habitat, like that found in the Balcones Canyonland Preserves just West of Austin.

A wildland-urban interface (WUI) code is specifically designed to mitigate the risks from wildfire to life and property. The standards within a WUI code will vary according to the scope that a community adopts and enforces. Typically, however, a WUI code includes the following topics:

- **Structure density and location:** number of structures allowed in areas at risk from wildfire, plus setbacks (distance between structures and distance between other features such as slopes).
- **Building materials and construction:** roof assembly and covering, eaves, vents, gutters, exterior walls, windows, non-combustible building materials, and non-combustible surface.
- **Vegetation management:** tree thinning, spacing, limbing, and trimming; removal of any vegetation growing under tree canopies (typically referred to as “ladder fuels”), and landscaping.
- **Emergency vehicle access:** driveways, turnarounds, emergency access roads, marking of roads, and property address markers.
- **Water supply:** approved water sources and adequate water supply.
- **Fire protection:** automatic sprinkler system, spark arresters, and propane tank storage.

For More Information:

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