



## Folsom City Council Staff Report

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	7/27/2021
<b>AGENDA SECTION:</b>	New Business
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Resolution No. 10674 – A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Folsom Proclaiming Existence of a Local Emergency Due to Extreme Fire Danger
<b>FROM:</b>	Fire Department

### **RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

The Fire Department recommends that the City Council pass and approve Resolution No. 10674 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Folsom Proclaiming Existence of a Local Emergency Due to Extreme Fire Danger.

### **BACKGROUND / ISSUE**

Warmer spring and summer temperatures, reduced snowpack, and little rain create longer and more intense dry seasons that decrease vegetation fuel moisture, making the open spaces much more susceptible to severe fire. After another dry year on record for California following a devastating 2020 fire season for the state, the fire risks this summer are extreme. Wildfires can be the result of both human and natural activity, but the vast majority of the fires in open spaces are human caused. With approximately 1,000 acres of city-owned open space, it becomes even more dire to restrict human access to open space areas. Activities such as discarded cigarettes, unattended campfires, the burning of trash, and any use of open flame in a dry environment are some of the common causes that lead to fires. Open space vegetation fires very rarely happen due to natural causes, with the exception of lightning, without some type of associated human element.

There are 5,371 wildfire incidents with 233,405 acres burned, and 135 structures destroyed that have been reported in California this year so far. Some of the large and intense wildfires currently burning and threatening life and property near the Sacramento Region include the 8,000-acre Dixie Fire that prompted evacuation orders in parts of Plumas County as well as parts of Butte County that were ravaged by the Camp Fire in 2018, the Beckwourth Complex

fire that has burned more than 105,000 acres in the Plumas National Forest and destroyed more than 30 homes in the town of Doyle where fire officials observed and described “extreme fire behavior” with difficulty of containment, the River Fire along the Mariposa-Madera county line that has burned more than 9,500 acres, and the Tamarack Fire that has exploded to over 39,045 acres and threatening the town of Markleeville.

Over the past year, the Folsom Fire Department has responded to 47 fires in the City’s open space areas. Many of these fires require the assistance of partnering agencies within our region due to the magnitude and involvement to mitigate.

### **POLICY / RULE**

Section 2.28.040(A) of the Folsom Municipal Code provides that the City Council may proclaim the existence of a local emergency.

### **ANALYSIS**

According to San Jose State University’s Wildfire Interdisciplinary Research Center, the only wildfire research center in California, noted that fuel moisture content (moisture in plant life), which is normally at its peak in April, is far below both its annual average and previous record lows. Average fuel moisture content during April is 137% and a low fuel moisture content is 115%. The findings this year were at 97%, an all-time low.

The fuel moisture index is a tool that is widely used to understand the fire potential for locations across the country. Fuel moisture is a measure of the amount of water in a fuel (vegetation) available to a fire and is expressed as a percent of the dry weight of that specific fuel. For example, if a fuel were totally dry, the fuel moisture content would be zero percent. Fuel moisture is dependent upon both environmental conditions (such as weather, local topography, and length of day) and vegetation characteristics. When fuel moisture content is high, fires do not ignite readily, or at all, because heat energy must be used to evaporate and drive water from the plant before it can burn. When the fuel moisture content is low, fires start easily and will spread rapidly - all the heat energy goes directly into the burning flame itself. When the fuel moisture content is less than 30 percent, that fuel is essentially considered to be dead. Dead fuels respond solely to current environmental conditions and are critical in determining fire potential. Throughout the City of Folsom’s open space, there are dry grasses, downed limbs, and tree litter that are all considered dead fuels which exacerbate the potential for intense fire conditions.

City staff utilizes a “Fire Hazard Rating System” to prioritize ladder fuel and weed abatement projects. The methodology is a rating system comprised of six indicators, threat to structures, fire history, emergency vehicle access, fire spread potential, population use, and proximity to homes or businesses, to determine an overall hazard rating. Three phases were created for the City of Folsom based on the hazards and geographical locations (see Attachment 2).

As part of the proposed Proclamation of a Local Emergency, the City Council is asked to leverage subsection 105.6.52 of the Folsom Fire Code, under Section 8.36.080 of the Folsom Municipal Code, which provides that an operational permit is required to conduct activities in hazardous fire areas when, in the opinion of the Fire Chief, it is necessary to preserve the public health, safety, or welfare. "Hazardous fire area" is defined in the Folsom Fire Code as land covered with grass, grain, brush, or forest, whether privately or publicly owned which is so situated or is of such inaccessible location that a fire originating upon such land would present an abnormally difficult job or suppression or would result in great and unusual damage through fire or resulting erosion.

The Fire Chief respectfully requests that the City Council designate all City-owned open space areas as "Hazardous Fire Areas" under the Folsom Fire Code so that some or all City-owned off-trail open space areas may be closed as determined by the Fire Chief, in consultation with the City Manager, and the individuals accessing closed open space areas can be directed to vacate immediately in order to reduce and minimize fire danger and the spread of potentially catastrophic wildfire throughout the City. Existing City trails and bicycle paths may remain open for normal use; however, entrance into closed open space areas require an operational permit from the Fire Chief under the Folsom Fire Code.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Costs associated with implementing this resolution are nominal, including posting signs, fire prevention public outreach, and staff costs in enforcement, all of which may be reimbursable if the County or the State declare a similar state of emergency. Savings to the City's General Fund may be realized from reduced firefighting in the City open space areas.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This action is not considered a project under Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, and as such is exempt from environmental review.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Resolution No. 10674 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Folsom Proclaiming Existence of a Local Emergency Due to Extreme Fire Danger
2. Ladder Fuel Phase Map

Submitted,

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Ken Cusano, Fire Chief

Attachment 1

Resolution 10674 – A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Folsom Proclaiming  
Existence of a Local Emergency Due to Extreme Fire Danger

**RESOLUTION NO. 10674**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FOLSOM  
PROCLAIMING EXISTENCE OF A LOCAL EMERGENCY DUE TO  
EXTREME FIRE DANGER**

**WHEREAS**, the Governor of the State of California proclaimed on May 10, 2021, a State of Emergency to exist in the Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and Tulare Lake Watershed Counties due to extreme drought conditions caused by high temperatures, low precipitation, and extremely dry conditions that, among other perils, pose an increased risk of wildfire; and

**WHEREAS**, prior to the start of the summer season and since the beginning of July, the western United States has been experiencing unprecedented major heat waves with daily temperatures breaking records and commonly exceeding 100 degrees, resulting in the death of many as reported by the news media; and

**WHEREAS**, the Sacramento region registered temperatures above 110 degrees on July 10 and 11, with no measurable relief overnight and no precipitation projected in the near future, posing extreme danger to the elderly and other vulnerable populations without access to adequate cooling; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of the extreme fire danger, the City's Director of Emergency Services issued Emergency Order DES-06-20 on March 8, 2021 (ratified by the City Council on March 23, 2021 in Resolution No. 10600), and directed weed abatement and ladder-fuel clearing in open space areas for the purpose of protecting the public's health, life and safety by preventing the start and spread of wildfire to surrounding residential homes and structures; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of the extreme fire danger, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1313 on May 25, 2021 and imposed social host liability for illegal fireworks that posed clear threat to the public health, safety, and general welfare of the City's residents and businesses and have resulted in fire to structures and open space areas; and

**WHEREAS**, extreme fire dangers are currently existing throughout Northern California in nearby counties such as, for example, the 8,000-acre Dixie Fire that prompted evacuation orders in parts of Plumas County as well as parts of Butte County that were ravaged by the Camp Fire in 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, as of July 19, 2021, the Beckwourth Complex fire has burned more than 100,000 acres in the Plumas National Forest, the Sugar Fire has burned more than 104,000 acres and destroyed more than 30 homes in the town of Doyle where fire officials observed and described "extreme fire behavior" with difficulty of containment, more than 9,500 acres are burning in the River Fire along the Mariposa-Madera county line, and the Tamarack Fire has exploded to over 18,000 acres and threatening the town of Markleeville; and

**WHEREAS**, over the past year the Folsom Fire Department had responded to and extinguished 47 fires in the City's open space areas, sometimes requiring mutual aid support from other fire agencies due to the scale and the intensity of those fires; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 16, 2021, a grass fire along Humbug Willow Creek at Blue Ravine Road and East Bidwell Street posed imminent threat to life and numerous structures due to its intensity and extreme dry conditions in the open space area; and

**WHEREAS**, subsection 105.6.52 of the Folsom Fire Code, under Section 8.36.080 of the Folsom Municipal Code, provides that an operational permit is required to conduct activities in hazardous fire areas when, in the opinion of the Fire Chief, it is necessary to preserve the public health, safety, or welfare. "Hazardous fire area" is defined in the Folsom Fire Code as land covered with grass, grain, brush, or forest, whether privately or publicly owned which is so situated or is of such inaccessible location that a fire originating upon such land would present an abnormally difficult job or suppression or would result in great and unusual damage through fire or resulting erosion; and

**WHEREAS**, local authorities are inadequate to cope with unprecedented heat waves, extremely dry conditions, and extreme fire dangers over a wide region under Section 8558 of the Government Code that, by reason of their magnitude, are potentially beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the City of Folsom and requires the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to contain, control, combat, treat and mitigate; and

**WHEREAS**, the California Emergency Services Act empowers the City Council to proclaim the existence or threatened existence of a local emergency when the City is affected or likely to be affected by a public calamity; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has been requested by the Fire Chief and the City's Director of Emergency Services to proclaim the existence of a local emergency due to the existence of extreme fire danger; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council does hereby find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property have arisen within the City of Folsom, caused by the unprecedented heat, lack of precipitation, and occurrences of wildfire in open space areas throughout the City, commencing the 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2021, and that the aforesaid conditions of extreme peril warrant and necessitate the proclamation of the existence of a local emergency.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Folsom proclaiming the existence of a local emergency due to extreme fire danger to life and property, as evidenced by the latest fast and intense grass fire on July 16, 2021 along Humbug Willow Creek at Blue Ravine Road and East Bidwell Street that posed imminent threat to life and numerous structures, and that said local emergency continues to exist throughout the City of Folsom.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that during the existence of this local emergency, all City-owned open space areas are hereby designated as "Hazardous Fire Areas" under the Folsom



Fire Code.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that during the existence of this local emergency, some or all City-owned off-trail open space areas shall be closed as determined by the Fire Chief, in consultation with the City Manager, and any individuals accessing said closed open space areas are directed to immediately vacate to reduce and minimize fire danger and the spread of potentially catastrophic wildfire throughout the City. Existing City trails and bicycle paths may remain open for normal use. Entrance into said closed open space areas shall require issuance of an operational permit by the Fire Chief under the Folsom Fire Code.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that during the existence of said local emergency the powers, functions and duties of the Director of Emergency Services and the emergency organization of this City shall be those prescribed by state law, by charter, ordinances and resolutions of the City of Folsom.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that said local emergency shall be deemed to continue to exist until its termination is proclaimed by the City Council of the City of Folsom.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** this 27<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2021, by the following roll-call vote:

**AYES:** Councilmember(s):  
**NOES:** Councilmember(s):  
**ABSENT:** Councilmember(s):  
**ABSTAIN:** Councilmember(s):

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Michael D. Kozlowski, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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Christa Freemantle, CITY CLERK

Attachment 2

Ladder Fuel Phase Map



# Ladder Fuel Phase Map



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