

MANDEVILLE CANYON ASSOCIATION

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MCA

since 1939



Board of Forestry Board Members and Staff
State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Via: PublicComments@bof.ca.gov

March 2, 2021

Dear Board of Forestry and Staff,

Mandeville Canyon is a community of over 4,000 residents carved into a canyon crevice in the Santa Monica Mountains in West Los Angeles. We are comprised of 3 HOA's and situated in a five mile long boxed-in canyon with only one-way in and one-way out—Mandeville Canyon Road. This is a 2 lane narrow, winding road and all 4,000 of us would have to evacuate our neighborhood should there be a wildfire in our canyon. This is a monumental challenge given our topography and narrow roads.

In the past two years our entire community has been evacuated on two perilous occasions due to wildfires in our mountainous neighborhood. Both the Skirball and Getty fires which burned east to west were only one short jump over our eastern canyon wall and gravely threatened our homes and lives. Other private-property homes were lost in each of those wildfires. **Should restrictions on development and road width be relaxed, our perilous situation would become that much more dangerous. We all live with the knowledge that one good Santa Ana condition could wipe out our homes and change our lives forever.** It is worthy to note that our homeowner's association, the **Mandeville Canyon Association (MCA)**, has been a community leading organization in conducting evacuation drills and actively promotes fire-safe practices. MCA is currently working with Councilman Bonin, the City of Los Angeles and the LAFD to improve out fire roads and identify all other points of egress, even those on private property, for possible swift evacuation in a fire.

The Mandeville Canyon Association represents 525 households which would be endangered from poor decisions that could allow our existing roads to be narrowed. MCA respectfully and strongly requests the Board of Forestry to retain the current July 2020 regulations and expand these to the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) rather than approve the proposed changes in the February 2021 draft. This enormous regression in public and environmental safety will foster new development in fire-prone communities on narrow and substandard and/or long dead-end roads. Concurrent fire equipment ingress and civilian egress that is required in the current July 2020 regulations will no longer be required.

Although the state Attorney General has confirmed that the regulations apply to both existing and new roads, the proposed draft essentially excludes existing roads from most regulation. Most development in fire-prone communities occurs on existing roads. Existing access roads to new development would no longer have to be at least 20-feet wide, and no longer must enable fire apparatus (8-9 feet wide) to pass vehicles (6 feet wide). This would block homeowners' safe evacuation and could be deadly. There would be virtually no restrictions on the length of dead-end access roads, which are currently limited to one mile. The proposal provides vast exceptions to new residential, commercial and industrial development on existing roads via thresholds. New development "over the threshold" would only require a minimum width of 14 ft. (previously 20 ft.) and no dead-end road limitation. For new development "below the threshold" would allow new development on narrow 8-10 ft. wide roads with occasional widening to 14 ft. for only 22 ft. long that does not even meet the current turnout standards or provide any meaningful concurrent egress during an evacuation. All standards for turning radius on existing roads would be removed.

There has been no specific analysis on the potential to increase the risk of wildfire ignition and spread, evacuation times or road capacity studies in the event of wildfire. The draft February 2021 regulations undermine the existing July 2020 regulations and the BOF must prepare an EIR if they proceed in weakening the current regulations. In conclusion, MCA is strongly opposed to any BOF changes that would imperil our safety. Please add my comments on behalf of MCA and the homeowners we represent into the record and add Mandeville Canyon Association to the notification list for future workshops, hearings, determinations and/or other alerts regarding these regulations.

Thank you and sincere regards,

Kathleen Durbin, President
Mandeville Canyon Association



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