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RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

## **Firewise USA™ Recognition Program Community Wildfire Risk Assessment – Saddleback Estates HOA**

### 1) Introduction

The Firewise USA™ program teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent damage and losses. Participation in the program can be attained by any community and/or neighborhood committed to reducing risks from wildland fire. The following risk assessment will help identify threats and hazards and guide the priorities and actions for Saddleback Estates HOA. The risk assessment will be the board/committee's primary tool in determining the risk reduction priorities within your site's boundaries. Assessments need to be **updated every five years**.

*The Saddleback Estates Firewise Community has worked diligently with CALFIRE, and the Placer Firewise Communities Coordinator to complete this assessment.*

### 2) Definition of the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ)

Saddleback Estates HOA is located in a wildfire environment. The variables in a fire scenario are when the fire will occur, and where. This assessment addresses the wildfire-related characteristics of Saddleback Estates HOA. It examines the area's exposure to wildfire as it relates to ignition potential. The assessment does not focus on specific homes, but examines the community as a whole.

A house burns because of its interrelationship with everything in its surrounding home ignition zone----the house and its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must prepare their home to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. This can be accomplished using hardscaping and landscaping techniques that create breaks in the vegetation in the HIZ, helping to influence and decrease fire behavior. Maintenance activities such as removing dead vegetation from the area immediately around the structure, reducing the amount of vegetation on the ground, and pruning trees are simple and easy steps that will affect the intensity of the wildfire within the HIZ.

Included in this assessment are observations made while visiting Saddleback Estates HOA. The assessment addresses the ease with which home ignitions can occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the home ignition zones of affected residents. Saddleback Estates HOA residents can reduce their risk of destruction during a wildfire by taking actions within their home ignition zones, which includes the home and everything around it, up to 200 feet from the foundation.

The result of the assessment is that wildfire behavior will be dominated by the residential characteristics of this area. The good news is that by addressing community



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vulnerabilities, residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss. Relatively small investments of time and effort will reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

### 3) DESCRIPTION OF [SIZE AND NATURE OF] THE SEVERE CASE WILDLAND FIRE CHARACTERISTICS THAT COULD THREATEN THE AREA

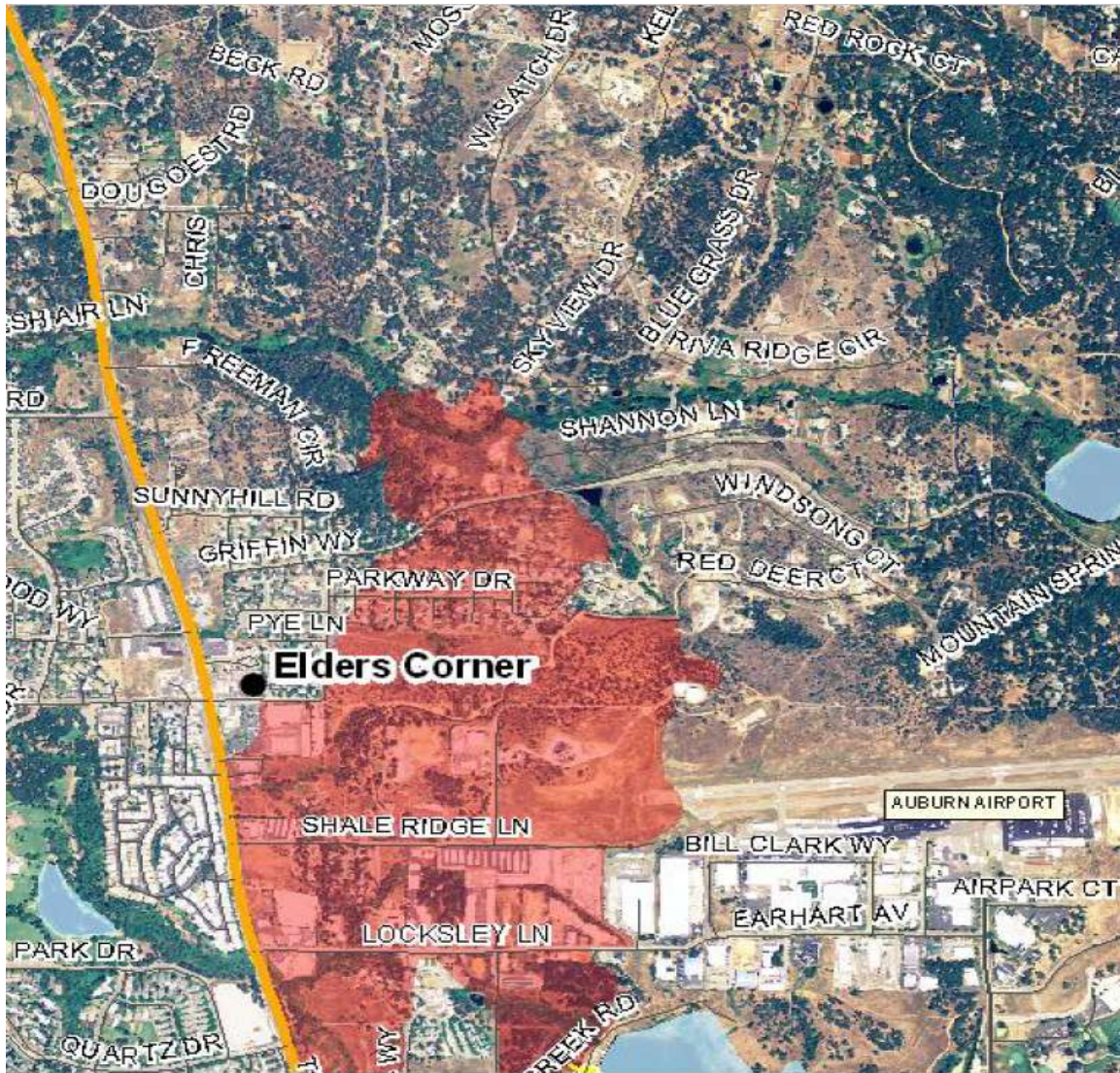
Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and condition (live/dead), the weather conditions prior and during ignition, and the topography. Generally the following relationships hold between the fire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels ignite more easily and spread faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels. For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the higher the intensities. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moistures produce higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind speed, the greater the spread rate and intensity.
- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

*Statistics show that fire events in the local area have come from vehicle fires along HWY 49. The 49 fire in the Rock Creek, and Dry Creek road areas on August 30, 2009, burning 343 acres, 63 residences & 3 commercial structures destroyed, and 3 residences & 6 commercial properties with major damage, is a prime example of what could be anticipated in a local fire event in the Deer Ridge area*

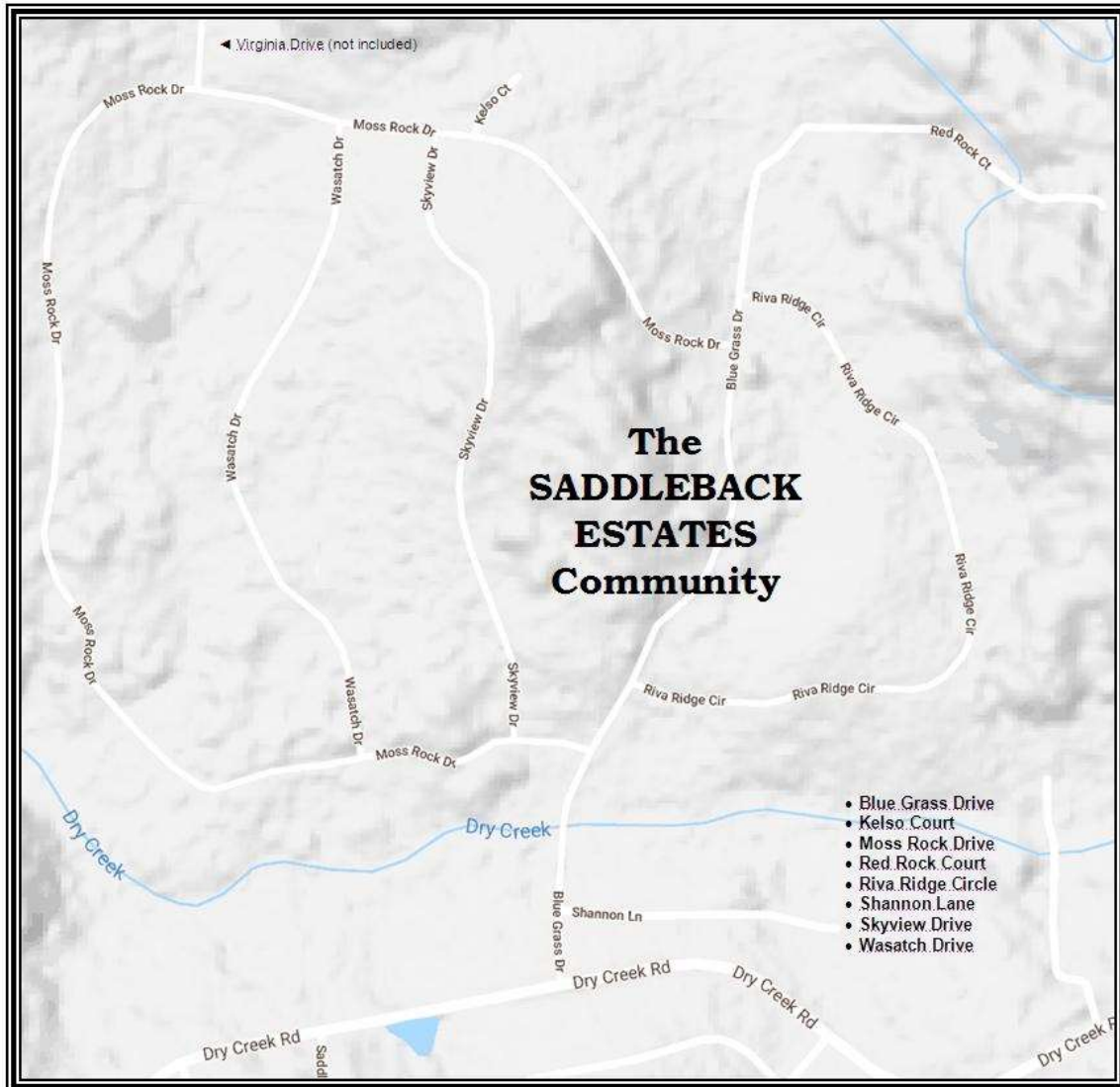


Forty Nine (49) Fire Perimeter Map September 2, 2009



#### 4) SITE DESCRIPTION

The Saddleback Estates Community was started in 1979 and includes 100 lots that average 3½ acres in size. Entrance to the area is off of Dry Creek Rd. from Hwy 49 in Auburn, Ca. Roads in the community include Blue Grass Dr, Moss Rock Dr, Wasatch Dr, Skyview Dr, Shannon Ln, Riva Ridge Cir, Red Rock Ct, and Kelso Ct. The Saddleback Estates Community is located on a gentle rolling hill area of North Auburn. Most of this area was ranch land prior to development. The vegetation varies from well-kept landscape yards to thick oak woodlands, blackberry patches tall wild grasses and heavy brush..



## 5) ASSESSMENT PROCESS

*Day One: Placer Firewise Coordinator Luana Dowling, was invited to speak to the Saddleback Estates HOA and community members to explain the Firewise Communities program, Ms. Dowling presented the Firewise Program and handed out information on how to become a Firewise Community. The Board voted to become a Firewise Community and move on to the assessment phase of the process.*

*Day Two; Placer Firewise Coordinator met with the Saddleback Estates Community Firewise Committee to visit the community and assess the vulnerabilities to wildfire ignition, as well as view the mitigation steps already being implemented within the community.*



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#### 6) IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

The Firewise USA™ program acknowledges that there are many reasons and values that lead a person to live in the WUI and that there may be a desire for certain flammable components to exist on their property. It is important for residents to understand the implications of the choices they are making. These choices directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire.

*Upon entering the community the assessment team observed several areas of concern.*



*Dense flammable vegetation adjacent to evacuation routes.*



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*Heavy vegetation surrounding powerlines.*



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*Dense flammable vegetation within several home ignition zones*



*Extremely flammable landscape plants near homes and lining exit routes*



## 7) OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Entry to the community off of Dry Creek Rd. has dense flammable vegetation right up to the edge of the road. In the event of a wildland fire this area could block any evacuation efforts and hinder fire personnel from entering the community. Recommend clearing back all roads within the community at least 25' to allow good ingress and egress.*
2. *Dense vegetation under powerlines and around power poles: Recommend contacting PG&E and asked them to remove vegetation within 30' of poles.*



3. ***Flammable landscape plants: Junipers and related plants** are among the least fire-resistant plants you can use in your landscape, according to the Pacific Northwest Extension. **Junipers** have lacy, evergreen foliage which burns quickly because of its texture. They also contain **flammable** volatile oils, identifiable by their strong odor and sticky sap. Recommend contacting the Local Native Plant Society, Redbud Chapter, CA Native Plant Society [redbudchapter@gmail.com](mailto:redbudchapter@gmail.com) and ask what the best nonflammable plants are for this area. Many are also drought resistant.*





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4. *A house burns because of its interrelationship with everything in its surrounding home ignition zone---the house and its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must prepare their home to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. Visit [www.readyforwildfire.org](http://www.readyforwildfire.org) for information on how to prepare your home for wildfire. Removing flammable vegetation from within the first 150' of your home and keeping pine needles and dry grass raked and removed is very important.*



5. *Keeping roofs clear of any flammable vegetation like leaves and pine needles will also help keep a structure from burning.*



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#### 8) SUCCESSFUL FIREWISE MODIFICATIONS –

When adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be both ignition resistant and compatible with the area’s ecosystem. The Firewise USA™ program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against WUI fire loss even as a sustainable ecosystem balance is maintained.

A homeowner/community must focus attention on the home ignition zone and eliminate the fire’s potential relationship with the house. This can be accomplished by disconnecting the house from high and/or low-intensity fire that could occur around it. The following photographs were taken in Saddleback Estates HOA and are examples of good wildfire risk reduction practices.



1. *Well maintained low profile landscaping along driveways*



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2. *Good defensible space clean roofs and green lawns*



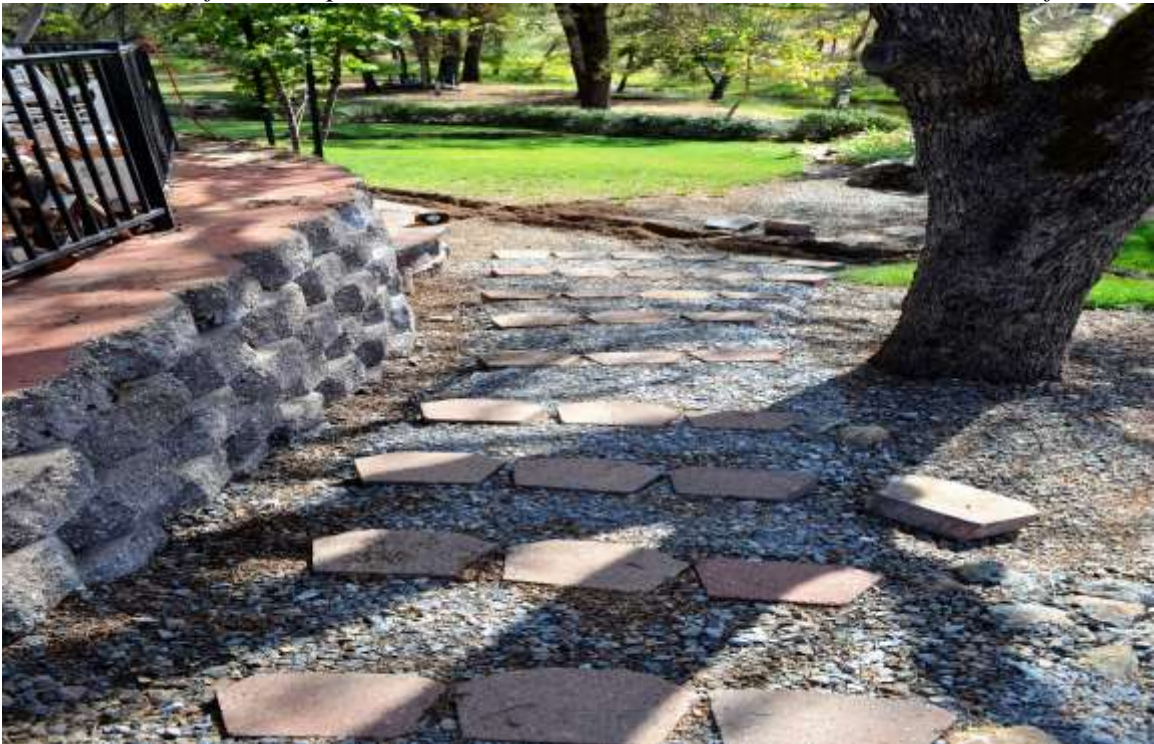
3. *Screened vents to prevent embers from entering the home*



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4. *Clear defensible space around the home with trees limbed to resist crown fires*



5. *Use of nonflammable materials for landscaping within the home ignition zone.*



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#### 9) NEXT STEPS –

After reviewing the contents of this assessment and its recommendations, the board/committee for Saddleback Estates HOA in cooperation with CalFire will determine whether or not it wishes to continue seeking Firewise USA™ recognition. The Firewise USA™ representative will contact the board/committee representative by 1/31/2019 to receive its decision.

If the site assessment and recommendations are accepted and recognition will be sought, the Saddleback Estates HOA board will create agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to the wildfire risk reduction recommendations and create an action plan in cooperation with CalFire and the Placer Firewise Communities Coordinator.

Assuming the assessment area seeks to achieve national Firewise USA™ recognition status, it will integrate the following standards into its plan of action:

- Form a board/committee that's comprised of residents and other applicable wildfire stakeholders. This group will collaborate on developing the site's risk reduction priorities, develop a multi-year action plan based on the risk assessment and oversee the completion of the annual renewal requirements needed to retain an "in good standing" status.
  - Action plans are a prioritized list of risk reduction projects/investments for the participating site, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually, or over a period of multiple years. Action plans are developed by the board/committee and need updating at least every three years.
- At a minimum, each site is required to invest the equivalent of **\$24.14 per dwelling unit\*** in wildfire risk reduction actions annually (the rate is based on the 2017 annual National Hourly Volunteer Rate; which is updated every year in April when the new amount is published). Qualifying expenditures include contractor costs, rental equipment, volunteer activities, grants, etc. Residents completing select home modifications, along with any qualifying work performed at their home and in the adjacent home ignition zones can contribute related hours and/or costs towards meeting the sites collective investment amount.
- Each participating site is required to have a **minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event**, or related activity annually.
- Every year participating sites must **submit an annual renewal** to maintain their "In Good Standing" status. The annual renewal application can be accessed through the Firewise USA™ online management portal (<http://portal.firewise.org/>).

**Saddleback Estates HOA** residents are reminded to be conscious of keeping high-intensity fire more than 100 feet from their homes. It is important for them to avoid fire



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contact with their structures, including firebrands or embers. Science tells us that the home itself and 0-5 feet from the furthest attached exterior point of the home are most vulnerable to ember attacks. Residents should focus on making this a non-combustible area by removing any flammable vegetation or materials from wall exteriors; cleaning debris from roofs and gutters; and addressing home construction issues. Remember that, while wildfire cannot be eliminated from a property, it can be reduced in intensity.

Homeowners are reminded that street signs, addresses, road widths and fire hydrants do not keep a house from igniting. Proper attention to their home ignition zones does. They should identify the things that will ignite their homes and address those.

Weather is, of course, of great concern during wildfire season. At such time as fire weather is severe, homeowners should remember not to leave flammable items outside. This includes rattan doormats, flammable patio furniture, firewood stacked next to the house, or other flammables.