



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Wildland-urban interface and statewide wildfire risk map

### **When will the map be available?**

The map was made available through the [Oregon Explorer](#) by June 30, 2022 as required by Senate Bill 762.

### **How often will the map be updated?**

ODF's administrative rules outline that the map will be updated within 12 months of an update to the [Pacific Northwest Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment](#) (QWRA). The QWRA is the basis for assessing risk classes on individual properties.

### **Is fire risk assessed at the tax lot level?**

Yes. Senate Bill 762 requires risk classification be assigned to each of the 1.8 million tax lots in Oregon.

### **There seems to be limits on spatial data for amounts of ground fuels on some properties. Will there be site visits to assess the wildfire risk on properties to augment aerial view data?**

No. There will not be site visits as part of the wildfire risk classification process. The bill requires risk classes be based on weather, climate, topography, and vegetation. Aerial view data on vegetation is sufficient for determining wildfire risk under the criteria established in SB762. A property owner may appeal the classification if they believe there is an error in the assessment, or they have pertinent facts that may justify a change.

### **Will information be provided on the algorithm used to assess fire risk at the property-tax lot level?**

As defined in ODF's rules, wildfire risk classes are established based on risk values determined in the Pacific Northwest Qualitative Wildfire Risk Assessment. The methodology for development of the map and wildland-urban interface identification is posted on the Department's website.

### **Doesn't Senate Bill 762 require defensible space and home hardening requirements be applied to all properties in the wildland-urban interface regardless of the risk class of the property?**

No. Defensible space and home hardening regulations are only required in areas designated within the wildland-urban interface, **and** in extreme or high-risk classifications.



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### **Are you using historic fire regimes or as wildfire behaves today?**

Oregon State University is a national leader in modeling wildfire risk. They have recently reduced the historical period they look back in historical fire behavior to model future fire behavior. The model being utilized will reflect today's wildfire risk.

### **Will risk classifications be assigned to tax lots or is it more of an overlay zone/risk assigned to an area of land? If tax lot, what happens to the risk classification when the tax lot boundaries change?**

Senate Bill 762 requires that risk classification be assigned at the property ownership level. ODF's rules require the map to be updated within 12 months of a new Pacific Northwest Qualitative Wildfire Risk Assessment. Updated tax lot data will be gathered from county tax assessors at each map update.

### **How often will the map be updated and what will the requirements be to have properties reclassified? Additionally, will some properties not qualify to be classified below a certain risk criteria regardless of any remediation?**

The map will be updated within 12 months of a new Qualitative Wildfire Risk Assessment being issued. That's where burn probability data and wildfire intensity data are gathered for the risk map. SB762 requires risk classes be based on weather, climate, topography, and vegetation. It is possible that reduced vegetation will not significantly change a risk class due to the weather, climate, and topography of an area.

### **Can appeals to the classification come in from a community or group of tax lots or should they come by tax lot separately**

Property owners must appeal their property's designation individually. Local governments may also appeal the risk classification of publicly owned tax lots.

### **Would prior fire in a particular area in the prior 5 years decrease or increase the fire rating? (As in fuel consumed, so lower risk?)**

Unknown. Since the risk classification is based on weather, climate, topography, and vegetation a change in one factor may not cause a change in overall risk classification.

### **Are human ignition sources like power lines being considered in the burn probability map or just natural sources like lightning?**

Since most wildfires are human caused, all ignition sources are included in probability modeling. Human caused fire and lightning are both being considered.



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### **What will appeals be based on if they do not involve a site visit to verify the truth of the map pixels?**

Senate Bill 762 is specific about what may be appealed. Appeals may be based on misapplication of the rules to a particular tax lot, an error in the data led to an assignment that would be changed based on correction of the error, or any pertinent facts that may justify a change in the assignment. Please provide pertinent facts or indicate what data may be erroneous in your appeal.

### **Can a property owner appeal their property being mapped inside the wildland-urban interface boundary?**

No. The law does not allow appeals of inclusion in the wildland-urban interface, only appeals of which risk classification a property is assigned.

### **When does the 60-day appeal window start?**

The 60 days starts on the effective date, or receipt of the written notice notifying a property owner of risk classification. Property owners may appeal risk classification after future updates to the map, which will also cause notification of change in risk classification.

### **Is there a fee to appeal a property owner's risk classification?**

There is no fee to appeal risk classification to the Department.

### **What percentage of my property is being evaluated for vegetative cover for inclusion into the WUI designation?**

The WUI identification is a relationship between structures and vegetation, regardless of property boundaries. The WUI boundary will be drawn and tax lots may be included or partially included. Your homeowner report in the Explorer will show whether structures are included in the WUI.

### **Will my property's risk classification be changed by reducing wildland fuels on my tax lot, or by adding defensible space around my home?**

Unknown. Defensible space is intended to help protect your home from ignition if wildfire is on or near your property. It is possible that reducing fuel loads would change the vegetation portion of the risk assessment. However, it would not change the weather, climate, or topography of your tax lot. Wildfire risk classification is based on a combination of weather, climate, topography, and vegetation.



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**Are the current Oregon Explorer fuels models going to be the same ones used for the new risk map?**

Yes, those layers will be used in the updated Oregon Explorer product.

**If the current Oregon Explorer shows something as low risk, is there a chance of significant change in classification in the new map?**

The current Explorer shows two separate layers, one for burn probability and one for wildfire intensity. The new product will combine those to assess and assign one of five risk classifications. If a current tax lot is labeled as “moderate” on both maps, it is likely the updated assessment will be similar.

**Will individual lots be reviewed?**

There will not be physical inspections of lots at the ground level. The map will use statewide data sets including aerial imagery LiDAR, and DOGAMI building data footprint to establish wildland interface boundaries and geographic portions of the risk map.

**What data will be used to create the burn probability map, historical fire parameters or other fire data?**

Burn probability map is being used to model fire behavior. The time period previously looked back 20 years. Since fire behavior has significantly changed, the lookback period has been shortened to five to ten years and fuel and ignition models have been reviewed.

**Will Community Wildfire Protection Plans need to be updated based on the new map?**

Senate Bill 762 designates this new map as the official wildfire planning and risk classification mapping tool for Oregon. ODF’s rules allow for local wildfire plans to be included in updated Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

**Can you give an example of how the tax lots might be different than their immediate neighbor?**

Risk is assessed at the pixel level (100’x100’). Pixel-level risk will be averaged per tax lot to determine the risk level of the whole tax lot. As this is done tax lot by tax lot, there may be differences between neighboring tax lots.



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**When putting this together, were you taking into account natural hazard mitigation plans. Risk levels for the county. Coordination with local fire officials? Or is the work done by folks within the counties?**

Wildfire elements of recently updated community risk plans are based on the QWRA, which is the backbone of the Oregon Explorer, so risk zones should correlate. Those local plans are not invalidated by establishment of the new map.

**Will recent wildfire increase or diminish the risk assessment for a particular geography?**

Indeterminate. A recent fire could affect both the state of vegetative fuels and the burn probability. Other factors may not be affected by a recent fire.

**How will the map be adjusted for future development?**

There is an update schedule for both the WUI and risk classes. Developed areas may be included as data sources are updated.

**Are human-caused fires included in the burn probability as ignition sources, or only natural causes?**

Both are used in the burn probability map as over half of Oregon's wildfires are caused by humans in some fashion. The remainder are lightning caused.

**Will my property being inside the wildland-urban interface boundary affect my insurance rates, or affect my ability to get fire insurance? Will the risk classification impact insurance?**

Senate Bill 762 does not include guidance or measures related to insurance rates. The potential for impacts to homeowner insurance rates based on the wildland-urban interface and risk classification have been elevated to Oregon's Insurance Commissioner.

**Will this map affect Firewise Communities?**

Firewise communities will be maintaining their alignment with the Firewise program and will not necessarily be altered by the new mapping. As this is its own program and has not really been dictated by any mapping, as most any community can apply, that will probably not be affected much. Priorities for focus on certain communities within a district may change, but that would be up to the district to decide if they wanted to use this new mapping in that way.

**If I clean up some of the fire hazard on my property, will my risk designation drop to a lower level or go away? If so, how do I request the change?**

No. Updates to a risk classification occur when the map is revised. There are no interim modifications. Property owners may appeal within 60 days after each update to the map.



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### **Is there money available to help me treat my property to reduce the fire hazard?**

Potentially. ODF has mitigation funds in designated project areas. OSFM has received Community Protection funds for focus in high and extreme areas. High and extreme and in the WUI are the only areas required to perform actions.

### **What kind of enforcement action could be taken on my property?**

This will be determined by the Oregon State Fire Marshal. They are working on the defensible space standards and establishing the enforcement criteria. The defensible space codes are required to be completed by December 31, 2022. They will take effect later. See [OSFM's website](#) for more information.

### **Will there be a specific timeframe to get in compliance with the standards that are developed?**

This will be determined by the Oregon State Fire Marshal. They are working on the defensible space standards and establishing the enforcement criteria.

### **What is the appeal process if I don't agree with the risk designation for my property?**

The appeals process will also be included with notices that are mailed to landowners. ODF has an [appeals webpage](#) describing the appeals process. It also provides an appeal form and instructions on how to request information is mailed to you.