

From: Bill Hocker bill@wmhocker.org
Subject: Fwd: Regarding Mountain Development
Date: June 2, 2021 at 12:05 PM
To:



From: Dan Mufson
Subject: Regarding Mountain Development
Date: May 31, 2021 at 8:09:12 PM PDT

I sent the following letter to the Supervisors tonight.

"WHEREAS, Napa County has experienced unprecedented wildfires in the last several years that have damaged or destroyed thousands of structures, including hundreds of dwellings and hundreds of accessory structures in the rural hillside areas of the County;..."

The county must confront how much development can safely be added to the hills of Napa County. The answer from those who insure for losses from fire is, "No more." We can no longer even pretend that it is okay to cut down 28,000 mature trees to build vineyard or that it is okay to place a mega winery at the top of a canyon on a skinny road. Climate change is upon us, the state and counties surrounding us are facing an exceptional drought, existing wine-related business are consolidating. Let's not build a winery at the top of Soda Canyon Road-more such development brings enhanced risks.

I've lived on Atlas Peak Road (APR) for almost 25 years now; first in a room at the base, then a rented house 5 miles up and 0.5 mile off into the trees and scrub and finally on a ridge about 2 miles up. Literally within minutes of establishing phone service in the rental home I received my first call, from a neighbor, dear Elizabeth Achilles, who maintained a list of phone numbers of residents as the volunteer fire watch/warden. She and her husband Al had lost their nearby home in the 1980 Atlas fire and were still greatly sensitized to the constant fire danger. She made sure I understood the danger, wouldn't do anything stupid and would alert her at the first signs of a fire.

I've lived close to the base of the hill for a long time and remember watching a fire burning behind Silverado in the chapparal which was "put out" by the airtankers only to suddenly reignite across the hills when the wind picked up later that night. We packed our bags.

Over the years we joined the local Fire Wise Group and learned to keep our property defensible, passed inspections...but on the night of October 8, 2017 we were still vulnerable. We were forced to evacuate our home ["Where's the dog?"] into an smoky, red ember storm. We got out quickly, if not chaotically, being at the bottom of the hill. Many neighbors further up were trapped behind fallen trees on narrow APR. Some were helicoptered out. Along with 600 other families, we lost our home to that *new* Atlas Fire.

As the reality of our situation hit us, Naoko and I thought we'd buy a home off the hill and sell the land. We soon found that many of the houses for sale up, down and around the county were on narrow roads and in the "woods." There was no way we could consider living under those potentially dangerous conditions and that our only option financially was to rebuild, not a prospect I relished at my age.

So I got an assessment letter from the Fire Marshal that our driveway was considered "acceptable" for us to rebuild. Then I got an electrician to bring power back so that we could check the well-*our precious well*. The water tank had burned during the fire.

We're now back on our ridge in a fortress of stucco and steel siding, not an ounce of wood on the exterior structure, with sprinklers on the roof and an 8000 gallon concrete water tank, electric generator, and a garden of rocks that won't burn and don't need watering.

Those of us who have directly experienced forest fire will never forget it. Elizabeth Achilles never did, I haven't, friends on Soda Canyon won't, neighbors in Deer Park won't. Let's not build a winery at the top of Soda Canyon Road-more such development brings enhanced risks.

Daniel Mufson,

Napa

