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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Landmark wildfire protection bill headed to Governor's desk
Legislation will make communities safer, homes easier to insure

SANTA FE – A bill establishing the New Mexico Wildfire Prepared Program is headed to the Governor's desk that develops property protection standards and certification guidelines to make communities safer from wildfires.

[Senate Bill 33](#), the Wildfire Prepared Act, was sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth Stefanics and Rep. Harlan Vincent.

The measure requires the state Fire Planning Task Force to develop standards for defensible space and the five-foot zone closest to and surrounding structures, and to develop guidelines for certifying properties as "wildfire prepared." Senate Bill 33 also supports technical assistance, training, and support to help local governments build their capacity to prepare for wildfires.

The wildfire prepared certification is expected to make it easier for property owners to secure and maintain insurance coverage.

"The 2,500-plus structures lost to wildfires between 2022 and 2024 alone underscore the need for this critical legislation," said **EMNRD Sec. Melanie Kenderdine**. "It will give homeowners resources to make their properties safer and maintain insurance coverage, while, at the same time, helping to protect our neighborhoods and communities."

SB 33 also allows for the expansion of the state's Fire Planning Task Force to include the State Superintendent of Insurance as well as insurance industry representatives, emergency management officials and wildfire science experts. The panel will rely on research about homes

that survived wildfires in Lahaina, Hawaii and southern California to develop guidelines for the wildfire prepared certification.

"New Mexico is no stranger to wildfire, but the increasing loss of homes is heart breaking," said **State Forester Laura McCarthy**. "Having 80% or more homes in a neighborhood meet the protection standards outlined in this bill will significantly reduce the risk of catastrophic loss."



A home and landscape after the South Fork Fire in Ruidoso. (Photo by Laura Doth)

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