



Understanding WUI Zone vs. Forestry, Fire and State Lands's High-Risk WUI Boundary

1. What is a Wildland-urban Interface (WUI) Zone?¹

WUI Zone is defined in Utah code as: The line, area or zone where structures or other human development (including critical infrastructure that if destroyed would result in hardship to communities) meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuel.

Declaring WUI Zones is required by the Utah WUI Code in Chapter 3. This is where the WUI Code is applicable and enforceable by Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). Typically designed by the local agency and determined by analyzing findings of fact like distance to wildlands, presence and density of flammable vegetation, weather, slope, road access, density of structures etc.-

- Forestry, Fire and State Land (FFSL) recommendations for developing your WUI Zone
 - Review risk levels and map layers in the "Themes" section of Utah's Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (UWRAP)
 - Theme layers include: Wildfire Hazard Potential, Risk to Drinking Watershed and Population, Burn Probability, Damage Potential, Structure Exposure Score (SES), Conditional Risk to Potential Structures, and Risk to Potential Structures
 - UWRAP Structure Exposure Score (SES) theme layer where the SES is categorized as 5 or higher is recommended to reference when determining a WUI Zone.
 - SES score takes into account burn probability, damage potential and includes ember loading.

2. What is FFSL's High-Risk WUI Boundary?

The Division of Forestry, Fire & State Land's (FFSL) high-risk WUI boundary specifically identifies WUI areas that present an elevated risk of wildfire. This high-risk boundary is a more refined assessment and is determined by:

- Areas where there is an SES of 7+ combined with structure density and refined by local subject matter experts, as determined by the division.

Identifying the high-risk WUI boundary is required of the division by 2025's House Bill 48. Properties with structures within the high-risk WUI boundary will be assessed an annual fee and encouraged to have a certified WUI lot assessment. These assessments identify ways in which the property owner can reduce their wildfire risk through improving their defensible space and ignition resistant construction.

3. Why are these distinctions important?

- A WUI zone is created by the AHJ where the WUI Code is applicable and enforceable.
- The High-Risk WUI boundary is created by the state, determining where properties with structures will be classified and assessed a fee.

¹AHJ's have their own criteria and methodologies for defining their WUI Zones, which can lead to variations in mapping.



Key Differences

	WUI Zone	High-Risk WUI Boundary
Owner	Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), i.e. Counties & Municipalities	Utah DNR, Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL)
Purpose	WUI code applies and is enforceable within this zone. Enforcement of building standards found in the currently adopted Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code.	High-Risk WUI property classifications and fee applies. - Properties with structures will be assessed a state fee. - Lot assessments will provide property owner education on their individual wildfire risk and classification level. - Insurance companies are required to utilize this boundary to identify high-risk WUI.
Criteria for Zone/Boundary Line	Determined by the local AHJ. Collaborate with FFSL, who recommends SES 5+ as a starting point.	Determined by FFSL using wildfire risk layer themes including, but not limited to, SES 7+ and Structure Density and refined by local subject matter experts.
Impact to Property Owner	New construction will comply with all the requirements in the Utah WUI Code. Existing construction will comply with the defensible space requirements in the Utah WUI Code.	Property owners will be assessed a fee based on the square footage of taxable structures on their property. Fees may be adjusted according to the classification level assigned.
Impact to AHJ	County: Must determine WUI Zone, adopt and enforce the Utah WUI Code. Municipality: Must determine WUI Zone, adopt and enforce the Utah WUI Code. Fire Departments: May assist in determination of WUI Zone.	County: Collect fees. They may retain a portion of the fees needed to cover their implementation costs. AHJ: May assist FFSL with lot assessments.

*WUI - Wildland-urban Interface, SES - Structure Exposure Score.