

# White Oak Mountain Association, Inc.

PO Box 1106

Columbus, NC 28722-1106

Policy Effective Date: March 25, 2025

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IMPLEMENTATION OF FIRE PIT AND BURNING POLICY FOR THE ASSOCIATION.

**POLICY:** The association discourages the use of exterior “live fire” firepits with and without ember screens and the general burning of forest waste. The Architectural Committee will not approve plans for “live fire” firepits for future construction. There is no grandfather clause for the use of firepits built prior to the date of issuance of this policy.

**FACTS:** As to “fire” the Covenants and Restrictions state:

property from the date said payment is requested.

2.12 **Trash.** No trash, rubbish, debris, waste material or other refuse shall be deposited or allowed to accumulate or remain on any part of any Numbered Lot except in a utility area. No fires for the burning of trash, leaves, clippings or other debris or refuse shall be permitted on any Numbered Lot.

2.13 **Tents and Shacks.** No shed, shack, trailer, tent or other temporary or movable building or structure of any nature or kind shall be erected, placed or permitted to remain on the real

(c) No water skiing shall be permitted in the lake.

3.3 **Recreation Areas.** A non-exclusive and perpetual right to utilize and enjoy any area shown on the Plats as a Recreation Area is granted to all owners of Numbered Lots subject to the following:

(a) No trees, shrubs, undergrowth, or flowers shall be cut or removed from such property.

(b) No fires or littering shall be allowed.

(c) Care shall be exercised to assure the preservation of such property in its natural state.

(d) The right of the Association to dedicate or transfer all or any part of, or any interest in the Recreation Areas and streets and roads to any public agency, authority, or utility for such purposes and subject to such conditions as may be agreed to by two-thirds of the members of the Association.

## DISCUSSION:

- “My greatest concern, for lack of fire protection in Polk County, is White Oak Mountain.” Chief Tony Priester, Sep 2023 Columbus Fire Department.
- The association property is situated on the face of the blue wall escarpment of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The 1,900 ft escarpment holds over 107 years of unspent fuels. It has been that long since a conflagration of the mountain.
- The closest fire hydrant to our community is at the intersection of Houston and WOM Rd. The closest dry hydrant is at pond #3 near the top of the mountain and Skyuka dry hydrant.
- Our association advocates the Best Practices by the [FireWise Communities USA](#) recommended for fire prevention for protection of lives and property.
- Most recent two log home fires were caused by human error. For one it was the improper handling of fire embers seen on YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/fDAouDo3KsA>. The other home fire was a human mistake in the home; however, the embers of the house fire were blown into the surrounding forest causing the firefighters to divert their attention from the structure fire to the multiple small ember fires.

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- The escarpment is a fire ladder. A fire ladder is fuels arrayed vertically and horizontally across the escarpment which will burn in vertical steps much like a step ladder. The burning fuels cause updrafts of wind. The updrafts carry more embers up the escarpment (fire ladder) over very rugged and indefensible lands of your neighbors.
- About 97% of the other property owners who have built homes (96 homes) agree there is no place for open wood fires and fire pits on White Oak Mountain. That unscientific data point has been gathered from 15 years of advocacy for Responsible Fire Safety.
- Over the past 15 years Western NC has experienced prolonged droughts, some up to 3 years, which make the accumulated fuels in our forests far more susceptible to ignition. Hurricane Helene brought down large swaths of hardwood forest. The Deep Woods Fire, March 2025, came within 1.2 miles of our association boundary.
- Owing to the Covenants and Restrictions and the above points and more unlisted, it is not responsible nor prudent for property owners to have/use fire pits and open fires within the boundaries of the association.
- The association welcomes property owners installing LP Gas powered firepits permanent and/or portable. LP Gas still provides the enjoyment of a fire without the liability incurred of embers going astray onto someone else's property, ultimately causing them harm.

Board of Directors Approved and Promulgated this date: March 25, 2025