H.B. 48 “Wildland Urban Interface Modifications”

Summary

UTAH DNR
FORESTRY, FIRE & STATE LANDS

H.B. 48’s primary intent is to increase awareness of wildfire risk and encourage property owners to share the responsibility of reducing that risk in the wildland urban interface (WUI). The bill implements individual lot assessments in the high-risk WUI area that will provide risk mitigation strategies to property owners. A property fee will help support these assessments.

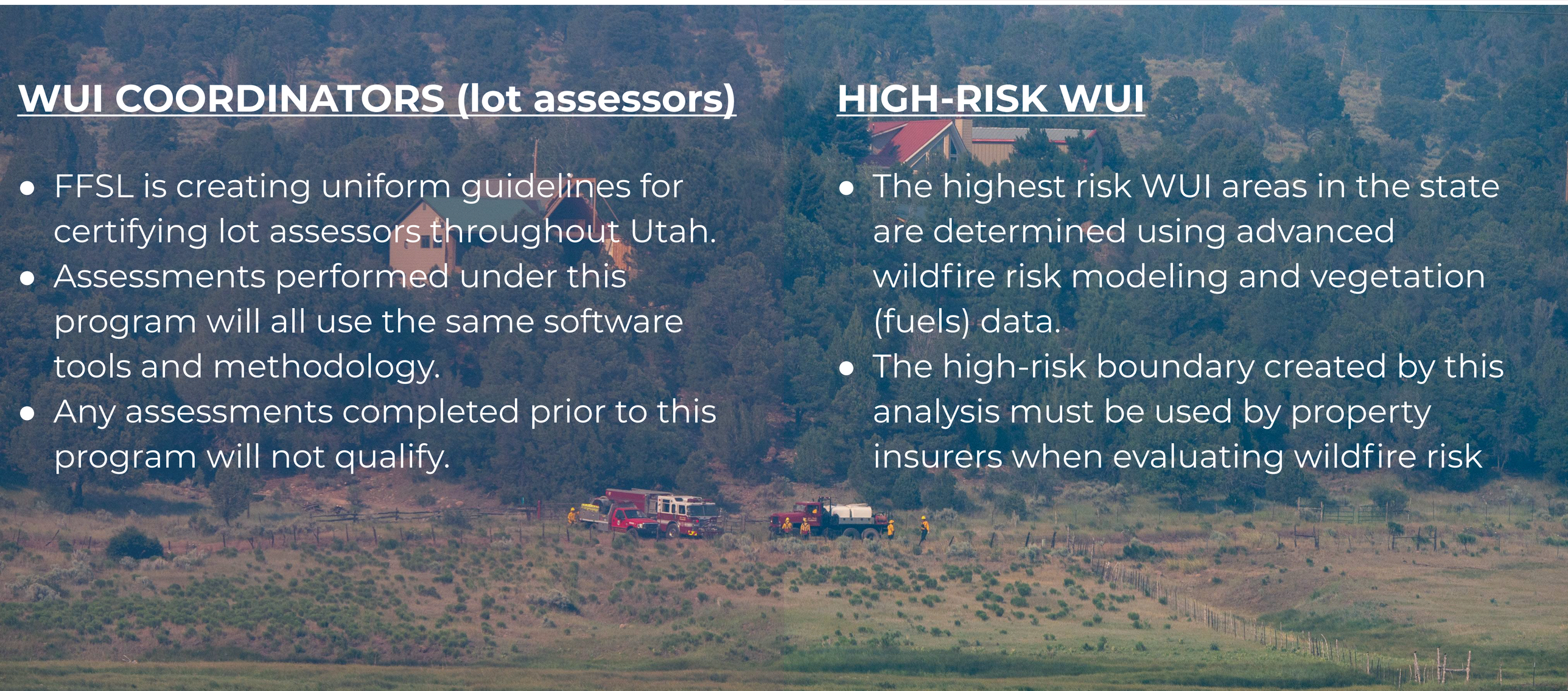
This bill also mandates property insurers to use the State's high-risk boundary when evaluating a property for wildfire risk and if raising rates by 20% or more or dropping coverage, to provide justification, if the adjustment is appealed by the property owner.

LOT ASSESSMENTS

- Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL) is tasked with creating a program that “evaluates and classifies high risk wildland urban interface property using a triage scale” (65A-8-402).
- This work will be coordinated by FFSL.
- Property owners in lower triage levels must annually certify that they still meet the requirements of a lower level.
- Homeowners must submit evidence of compliance to stay at or lower their triage level.
- Lot assessments will be prioritized at the state level.
- This bill does not mandate county, municipal, or fire district involvement in lot assessments, but FFSL or the local jurisdictions may request support through an agreement.

FEES

- Property owners within the high-risk WUI boundary will be assessed a fee based on the square footage of the structure.
- Fee amounts will be determined annually by FFSL, based on the costs of implementing the program.
- The fee will be collected by the county.
- The fees will vary by triage level, as determined by a lot assessment.
- The county will keep a portion of the fees needed to cover their implementation costs, determined by an agreement, with the remainder passed on to FFSL to cover their implementation costs.
- The bill does not allow for municipal or fire district fee collection.



WUI COORDINATORS (lot assessors)

- FFSL is creating uniform guidelines for certifying lot assessors throughout Utah.
- Assessments performed under this program will all use the same software tools and methodology.
- Any assessments completed prior to this program will not qualify.

HIGH-RISK WUI

- The highest risk WUI areas in the state are determined using advanced wildfire risk modeling and vegetation (fuels) data.
- The high-risk boundary created by this analysis must be used by property insurers when evaluating wildfire risk