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### **Marin Water increases fines for smoking, campfires & fireworks on watershed**

**Corte Madera** – The Marin Water Board of Directors on Tuesday voted to increase fines for fire-related offenses on the District’s Mount Tamalpais Watershed. The fine increases – for smoking, operating campfires or portable barbecues and lighting fireworks – are meant to supplement other, ongoing efforts to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire on the watershed, as well as protect water quality, watershed visitors and surrounding communities. The Mt. Tam Watershed is the source of about 75% of the water produced for the District’s 191,000 customers in central and southern Marin County, making protection of the watershed key to the District’s ability to deliver clean, reliable water each day.

“Our beautiful Mt. Tam Watershed has avoided destructive wildfires for decades, but we also know, with the effects of climate change, the risks have never been greater,” said Board President Larry Russell. “We must proactively protect this gem of the North Bay.”

The new fine framework, which will go into effect upon Marin County Superior Court approval, moves the penalty for smoking on the watershed to \$75 for first offenses and \$250 for subsequent offenses from a previous fine of \$35. Those who are caught setting fires or lighting fireworks on the watershed now face a \$500 fine, up from \$185. Raising the base fine triggers corresponding increases to associated penalties such as bail and court administrative fees, according to the Marin County Bail schedule. Total penalties will now range from \$273 for an initial smoking violation to \$1,158 for operating campfires, stoves or portable barbecues, as well as lighting fireworks on the Mt. Tam Watershed. The total penalty for a second smoking violation is now \$945. In a region prone to natural wildfires, Russell said any attempt to curb human-caused fires is worthwhile.

“One errant spark or lit cigarette butt can have drastic consequences, not only for those visiting the watershed and our Mt. Tam neighbors, but for the water quality in our reservoirs and our water treatment and delivery infrastructure,” Russell said. “Anything we can do to cut down on those risks, particularly human-caused fire, is important.”

The District’s decision to bolster its fire-related fines framework for the first time since 2017 comes amid elevated risks for wildfires throughout California, where the impacts of climate change are felt through extended drought and extreme fire behavior. The newly adjusted fine structure is one piece of the District’s holistic approach to reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire on its 22,000 acres of watershed lands. Marin Water employs a robust vegetation management program, including invasive plant management, fuel break maintenance and construction, forest restoration, and fuels reduction work to help reduce hazardous fuel conditions and bolster watershed resiliency. For more information about the District’s watershed resiliency efforts, go to [marinwater.org/watershedresiliency](http://marinwater.org/watershedresiliency).

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