

Avery County needs a plan to prevent forest fires, Shoupe says

Written by Lauren Ohnesorge
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N.C. Forest Service's Joe Shoupe has closely monitored wildfires in other areas- and fears Avery County's continued growth may complicate firefighters' efforts to fight a potential wildfire.

The narrow accesses and heavily wooded subdivisions could complicate things.

Shoupe says ladder trucks need room to move around in the event of a fire. Some of these subdivisions, with their steep, narrow accesses, are not making the cut, he says.

Some towns have regulations in place where new subdivisions have to take into consideration slopes and street widths.

Shoupe has been in touch with area firefighters who share his concerns, and is developing a plan on how to approach proper authorities. Regulations in place in other areas include ordinances where brush must be raked away from houses. Green spaces, or clear areas without potential kindling, are vital in protecting houses in the event of an aggressive wildfire, he says. With more and more homes surrounding by scenic forests, Avery County could face property loss in the event of a wildfire. It's not just in California, according to Shoupe, and he hopes planning board members and others will keep such incidents in mind when considering new developments.