



Kootenai Environmental Alliance is the oldest non-profit conservation group in Idaho. Our mission is to conserve, protect and restore our local environment. We advocate for the Adoption of Updated Building Codes, Option 3, supported by Commissioner Fillios. The adoption of Options 1, 2 or 4 would be very detrimental to our county for many reasons, but they would have environmental impacts as well.

Buildings consume vast amounts of natural resources. Idaho's homes consume 21% of the energy we use in our state. Based on model codes updated every three years, modern codes can reduce energy use by 10 to 15%. The Department of Energy estimates that in all climate zones, costs associated with the energy efficiency improvements required can have paybacks between one and two years. Comparing 2012 to 2006 codes there is a savings of 50% in heating, lighting and cooling of homes.

Codes set standards for insulation, window quality and air sealing. Improvements in energy and water efficiency lead to lower lifetime costs for the building owner. Strong codes address a classic issue called the "split incentive": the builder does not benefit from more insulation while the homeowner does — yet the homeowner cannot easily control or inspect the insulation levels in a new home. Yes, efficiency has greater upfront costs, but homebuyers appear willing to support those costs to reap lower energy bills. A National Association of Homebuilders poll found that 9 out of 10 Americans will pay 2-3 percent more for homes with permanent efficiency features. Low-income housing advocates support stronger energy efficient codes. Their data finds that inability to pay energy bills is the leading reason for foreclosure after loss of income.

Regardless of what building code option is chosen, a builder would have to get a site disturbance permit to build a home in Kootenai county. There is concern that people will be more likely to build without attaining a site disturbance permit. This could have some huge environmental impacts on our watershed. Site disturbance permits ensure any earthwork done is up to code and not adversely affecting the environment. If grading is done to prep the site for building, proper stormwater management is needed to offer erosion and sediment controls. Additionally we may see more building in riparian buffers and flood plains.

Kootenai Environmental Alliance would like you to consider all of the environmental impacts associated with not having building codes applied to construction. Ensuring that Idaho continues to enact strong codes is important so that our rapidly growing population enjoys safe, efficient home. Updated model codes benefit the communities that use them.

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We endorse Commissioner Fillios's Option #3 with the adoption of updated building codes.

Sincerely,
Sharon Bosley
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