

# NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION



CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH  
505 Forest Avenue  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
PHONE: (949) 497-0712  
FAX: (949) 497-0771

Pursuant to the State of California Public Resources Code and the "Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970" as amended to date, this is to advise you that the City of Laguna Beach has prepared an Initial Study for the following project.

**PROJECT:** Fuel Breaks in Fuel Modification Zone 23 – Canyon Acres and Fuel Modification Zone 24 – Laguna Canyon: Laguna Canyon Unified Fuel Modification and Habitat Restoration Project

**LOCATION/ADDRESS:** The proposed project consists of fuel modification zone (FMZ) 23 and FMZ 24. FMZ 23 would start immediately east of Laguna Beach Parking Lot 10 proceeding behind (southeast) the Sawdust Art Festival and Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach and along both sides of Canyon Acres Drive. FMZ 24 would proceed from Canyon Acres Drive north to just past the Anneliese School near El Toro Road, remaining generally on the east side of Laguna Canyon Road (State Highway [SR] 133) behind homes and businesses, with a short portion on the west side around Laguna College of Art and Design.

**APPLICATION NUMBERS:** Zoning Plan Check Number ZPC-19-4643

**APN(s):** Various

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING:** General Plan: FMZ 23 would traverse the following General Plan Designations: CBD (Central Business District), POS (Permanent Open Space), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection). FMZ 24 would traverse the following General Plan Designations: POS (Permanent Open Space) and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection Zone).

Zoning: FMZ 23 would traverse the following Land Use Zones: CA (Civic Arts Zone), OSC (Open Space Conservation Zone), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection Zone). FMZ 24 would traverse the following Land Use Zones: OSC (Open Space Conservation Zone), OSP (Open Space Passive Zone), Open Space Reserve (in unincorporated Orange County west of Laguna Canyon Road), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection Zone).

**PROJECT APPLICANT:** Laguna Beach Fire Department, 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

**DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:** The City of Laguna Beach Fire Department proposes to conduct vegetation removal in FMZ 23 and FMZ 24 (project site) to reduce fire hazards in the Laguna Canyon area within the City of Laguna Beach and unincorporated areas of Orange County. Fuel modification would provide a defensible space adjacent to homes, commercial development, and schools and along Laguna Canyon Road (SR 133) to enhance residents' ability to evacuate and survive a severe fire event. All fuel modification activities would be conducted in accordance with the approved Treatment Protocols for Fuel Modification Zones Subject to Coastal Development Permitting (Treatment Protocol) prepared by the Laguna Beach Fire Department.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:** FMZ 23 is on the lower flanks of Canyon Acres Drive surrounding Canyon Acres residential neighborhood. The lower flanks ascend terrain on the order of 500 to 700 feet in total height. The majority of the slopes in this area are moderate to severe, inclined from 3:1 to 2:1 (horizontal: vertical) ratios. Dense development occupies the lower flanks of the slopes and accommodates sparse open space separated with residential properties. All of the properties flank the ascending natural terrain.

FMZ 24 is on the lower eastern hillside flanks of approximately 2.5 miles of Laguna Canyon Road, south of El Toro Road, and a portion of the western hillside slope behind Laguna College of Art and Design. The area is located on a lower edge of natural slopes with ascending terrain on the order of 500 to 800 feet in total height. Overall, the majority of the slopes in this area are moderate to severe, inclined from 3:1 to 2:1 (horizontal: vertical) ratios. Predominantly commercial development here is limited and relatively narrow, occupying 500-foot wide portions of land adjacent to Laguna Canyon Road and including Arroyo Drive. FMZ 24 accommodates some open space separated with schools, commercial buildings, residential properties, City park, and other public facilities.

Vegetation in both zones is similar to most of the hillsides in Laguna Beach. On properties and at the bottom of canyons, most mature vegetation is over five feet in height. Vegetation on the interface of the flanks of the canyons is a mix of sparse brush with many mature trees, typically 20 feet or more in height. Sparse grasses, cactus, and brush on ridgetops and trail areas are typically under 3 feet in height. Accumulations of dead vegetation and dry woody materials are scattered throughout the area.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** From September 10, 2019 to October 9, 2019 (30-days), the public and all affected agencies are hereby invited to review the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study with mitigation measures, and submit written comments. Such comments may be submitted prior to or during the public hearing(s).

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE:** Thursday, November 14, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach.

**DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY:** The Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study and other supporting environmental documents are available for public review on the City website at [www.lagunabeachcity.net/cityhall/cd/planning/ceqa.htm](http://www.lagunabeachcity.net/cityhall/cd/planning/ceqa.htm) and at the City of Laguna Beach, Community Development Department, located at 505 Forest Avenue, City Hall. Please note our City Hall hours: Mon – Thurs: 7:30am – 5:30pm; every other Friday: 7:30am – 4:30pm; closed alternating Fridays.

**DECLARATION**

Based on the Initial Study dated September 2019, staff has determined:

- X This project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment; substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered rare or threatened species; or eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.
- X This project does not have the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- X This project does not have possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of the individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of current projects and the effects of probable future projects.)
- X This project will not have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

The aforementioned findings are contingent upon the following mitigation measures (if indicated) which have been incorporated into this project:

See attached mitigation measures.

**MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION PREPARED BY**

City of Laguna Beach  
Laguna Beach Fire Department  
505 Forest Avenue  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Contact: Aspen Environmental Group  
Lisa Blewitt, CEQA Project Manager  
Telephone: (818) 338-6759

Signature



Date

9-5-19

**COMMENTS DUE BY October 9, 2019**

The attached Mitigated Negative Declaration dated September 2019 is being referred to your agency/City department for review and comment. Your written comments should be received prior to, or be submitted verbally during the Public Hearing. If you have any questions, please contact the Contact Person above.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study

**SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS:** See Source References within the attached Initial Study.

## DISTRIBUTION LIST

### CITY DEPARTMENTS

- Community Development
- Fire
- Marine Safety
- Police
- Public Works
- Recreation
- Water Quality

### FEDERAL

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

### STATE

- Air Resources Board
- California Coastal Commission
- California Coastal Conservancy
- Department of Conservation
- Department of Fish and Game – Region 5
- Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- Department of Health and Drinking Water
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Transportation District 12 (Caltrans)
- Department of Toxic Substances Control
- Department of Water Resources
- Governor's Office of Planning and Research
- Integrated Waste Management Board
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Office of Emergency Services
- Office of Historic Preservation
- Resources Agency
- Seismic Safety Commission
- State Clearinghouse
- State Lands Commission
- State Water Resources Control Board

### REGIONAL

- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Southern California Association of Governments

### COUNTY

- Orange County Clerk-Recorder
- Orange County Environmental Health Department
- Orange County Fire Department
- Orange County Flood Control District
- Orange County Harbors Beaches and Parks
- Orange County Integrated Waste Management Department
- Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission
- Orange County Planning & Development Services Department
- Orange County Public Facilities & Resources Department

### LOCAL

- Aliso Water Management Agency
- City of Aliso Viejo
- City of Dana Point
- City of Irvine
- City of Laguna Hills
- City of Laguna Niguel
- City of Laguna Woods
- City of Newport Beach
- Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce
- Laguna Beach County Water District
- Laguna Beach Independent
- Laguna Beach Unified School District
- Laguna Beach Visitor's Bureau
- Laguna Beach Coastline Pilot
- Laguna News-Post
- Moulton Niguel Water District
- South Coast Water District
- South Orange County Wastewater Authority

### UTILITIES

- Cox Digital Cable
- San Diego Gas & Electric
- Southern California Edison
- Southern California Gas Company
- Verizon

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

SEP 10 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A  
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**  
California Environmental Quality Act

**TO EXPEDITE SUBMITTAL OF YOUR COMMENTS, YOU MAY RESPOND BY FACSIMILE TO (949) 497-0771**

---

This Agency/City Department has comments, see attached.

This Agency/City Department has  
no comments.

NAME OF AGENCY/CITY  
DEPARTMENT \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF  
REPRESENTATIVE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_