



State of California  
 The Natural Resources Agency  
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

2019090293

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction (3100-2019-FPL-006)		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	APN's: 563020021, 563020023, 559030006, 559310008, 559030002, 559030008, 559030005, 559030003, 563020022, 559310006, 563020030, 563020032. Portions of Sections 1 and 2, T5S, R2E and Sections 6 and 7, T5S, R3E, SBB&M, San Jacinto Peak USGS 7.5' Quadrangle	<b>COUNTY</b>	Riverside
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
<b>CONTACT</b>	Gregg Bratcher, Unit Forester	<b>PHONE</b>	(951)-659-3335
<b>ADDRESS</b>	P.O. Box 2097, Idyllwild CA, 92549		

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR) project is designed to reduce fuel loadings and modify the fuel arrangement around the north/northeastern perimeter of Pine Cove and Idyllwild, California by creating and maintaining a continuous fuel break. This project in conjunction with other projects in the area aims to improve the ability of firefighting agencies to prevent a major conflagration from moving into the communities from off site, and prevent fire originating within the communities, from moving into the surrounding wildlands. The proposed fuel reduction work will improve fire suppression effectiveness, reduce the intensity and duration of wildfires, reduce the rate of fire spread, and minimize the amount of work and disturbance necessary to maintain the fuel break in the future. The project area consists of ~ 350 acres of thick chaparral and mixed conifer with oak woodland components. The shrub component is thick, and contains a substantial amount of dead and dying vegetation throughout. This combined with a thick understory and hazardous ladder fuels within the timber stands has resulted in significantly hazardous fuel loadings and arrangements with in the project area. Elevation ranges from 5,680 to 6,800 feet. The slope is variable throughout the project area ranging from 10-40% with the steepest being around 50-60%. The project will consist of creating and maintaining a ~ 500 foot wide fuelbreak, the majority of which will be adjacent to existing roads and trails. Work will include cutting, removing, chipping on site, piling and burning, broadcast burning, and/or masticating resprouting or overgrown vegetation and dead surface fuels. Tree removal will be limited to trees less than 12 inches DBH or those that are dead, dying, or diseased. Retained trees will be limbed to a height of 8 feet or no more than 1/2 the height of the tree. Heavy equipment will be limited to rubber tired and/or tracked equipment. No new roads are to be constructed.

**EXEMPTION STATUS**

- Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4 §15304 Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

**REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT**


This project fits under portions of 4 Categorical Exemption "15304 Minor Alterations to Land" - "Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the conditions of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature and scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes". Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of a notice of exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland or timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation or traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at the CAL FIRE, Riverside Unit, 25380 Franklin Dr. Idyllwild CA, 92549.

**DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING**

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

SEP 11 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

 9/5/19  
 Matthew Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director Date  
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



# California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Environmental Review Report for an Exempt Project

**Note:** This report form is intended for use by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) staff to document a limited environmental impact analysis supporting the filing of a notice of exemption document for a proposed CAL FIRE project. Although the project appears to fit within the descriptions for allowable categorical exemptions, this report presents CAL FIRE's review for possible exceptions that would preclude finding the project to be categorically exempt as discussed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. This report will be filed with the CEQA administrative record for this project to document the environmental impact analysis conducted by CAL FIRE.

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<b>Project Name:</b>	Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reductions
<b>Project Number:</b>	3100-2019-FPL-006
<b>Program Type:</b>	Unit allocated CCI grant funding
<b>CAL FIRE Unit:</b>	RRU
<b>County:</b>	Riverside
<b>Acres:</b>	~350 acres
<b>Legal Location:</b>	Portions of Sections 1 and 2, T5S, R2E and Sections 6 and 7, T5S, R3E, SBB&M
<b>Name of USGS 7.5' Quad Map(s):</b>	San Jacinto Peak
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Vicinity Map Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Location Map Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos Attached	

<b>Other Public Agency Review or Permit Required:</b>		
Would the project result in:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Alterations to a watercourse (DFW - Lake and Stream Alteration Agreement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conversion of timberland (CAL FIRE - Conversion Permit or Exemption)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Demolition (Local Air District - Demolition Permit)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Soil disturbance over 1 acre (RWQCB - SWPPP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fill of possible wetlands (404 Permit - USACE)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Discuss any above-listed topic item checked Yes and consultation with agencies:</b>		

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR) project is designed to reduce fuel loadings and modify the fuel arrangement around the north/northeastern perimeter of Pine Cove and Idyllwild, California by creating and maintaining a continuous fuel break. This project in conjunction with other projects in the area aims to improve the ability of firefighting agencies to prevent a major conflagration from moving into the communities from off site, and prevent fire originating within the communities, from moving into the surrounding wildlands. The proposed fuel reduction work will improve fire suppression effectiveness, reduce the intensity and duration of wildfires, reduce the rate of fire spread, and minimize the amount of work and disturbance necessary to maintain the fuel break in the future. The project area consists of ~ 350 acres of thick chaparral and mixed conifer with oak woodland components. The shrub component is thick, and contains a substantial amount of dead and dying vegetation throughout. This combined with a thick understory and hazardous ladder fuels within the timber stands has resulted in significantly hazardous fuel loadings and arrangements with in the project area. Elevation ranges from 5,680 to 6,800 feet. The slope is variable throughout the project area ranging from 10-40% with the steepest being around 50-60%. The project will consist of creating and maintaining a ~ 500 foot wide fuelbreak, the majority of which will be adjacent to existing roads and trails. Work will include cutting, removing, chipping on site, piling and burning, broadcast burning, and/or masticating resprouting or overgrown vegetation and dead surface fuels. Tree removal will be limited to trees less than 12 inches DBH or those that are dead, dying, or diseased. Retained trees will be limbed to a height of 8 feet or no more than 1/2 the height of the tree. Heavy equipment will be limited to rubber tired and/or tracked equipment. No new roads are to be constructed.

**Aesthetics**

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 The overall aesthetics will be improved by the treatment. The project will remove overgrown fuels and overstocked or dead, dying, or diseased trees. The retained vegetation will be the most healthy and vigorous specimens which will allow it to respond to the increased growing space as a result of the treatment. This will create a more open, fire safe, and visually appealing landscape adjacent to roads and residences within the project area. The fuel break activities will also be completed in a mosaic manner so that the edges are feathered into the landscape.  
 The fuels reduction work will not only increase the fire safety and health of the landscape but will also improve the aesthetics for landowners that utilize the roads in the project area.

**Agriculture and Forest Resources**

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 Yes  No Would any trees be felled? If yes, discuss protection of nesting birds, if necessary.  
 Yes  No Would the project convert any prime or unique farmland?  
 Yes  No Would the project result in the conversion of forest land or timberland to non-forest use?  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 The objective of the project is to reduce fuel loadings not to harvest trees for the conversion of agricultural or timberland. Trees will be felled where necessary to reduce fuel continuity and will be limited to trees less than 12 inches DBH or those that are dead, dying, or diseased. Nesting bird surveys will be completed prior to operations and all removed trees will be inspected for nests prior to felling. Trees with active nests will be retained, and protected with a 100' buffer around the tree until nesting season is complete. Once operations may commence, trees within the buffer will be directionally felled away from the nesting site. Potential habitat for cavity nesting birds in the form of snags will also be retained. No significant adverse impacts to Agriculture or Forest Resources will occur as a result of project operations.

**Air Quality**

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 Yes  No The local Air Quality Management District guidelines for dust abatement and other air quality concerns were reviewed for this project.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 Mechanized equipment such as chainsaws, pole saws, chippers, skid steer, and masticator will be utilized to complete this project. All equipment types are permitted by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, and the project is relatively small in size. No significant adverse impacts to Air Quality will occur as a result of project operations.

**Biological Resources**

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 Yes  No Will the project potentially effect biological resources?  
 Yes  No Was a current California Natural Diversity Database review completed? Results discussed below:  
 Yes  No Was a biological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

One mile search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) was conducted on March 11, 2019, with a special focus on species that are on the Federal or State Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate lists. The list was evaluated for likelihood of sensitive species occurring within the project area. Species evaluations are documented below.

Species and Listing Status	Habitat	Analysis
<i>Charina umbratica</i> , Southern rubber boa State: Threatened Federal: None	Meadow & seep, Riparian forest, Riparian woodland, Upper montane coniferous forest, Wetland	The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the southern rubber boa in proximity to the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.

<p><i>Rana muscosa</i>, Southern mountain yellow-legged frog State: Endangered Federal: Endangered</p>	<p>Aquatic: Wet meadow, meadow streams, lakes, rocky streams, riparian woodland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the southern mountain yellow-legged frog within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. Watercourses and riparian areas will be avoided during project operations, no negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Uma inornata</i>, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard State: Endangered Federal: Threatened</p>	<p>Desert dunes Desert wash</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of Coachella fringe-toed lizard within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. The required desert habitat types do not exist within the project area, therefore the presence of the lizard is unlikely. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Ovis Canadensis nelson pop. 2</i>, Peninsular bighorn sheep DPS State: Threatened Federal: Endangered</p>	<p>Alpine Alpine dwarf scrub Chaparral Chenopod scrub Great basin scrub Mojavean desert scrub Montane dwarf scrub Pinon &amp; juniper woodlands Riparian woodland Sonoran desert scrub</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Peninsular bighorn sheep DPS within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. This population inhabits Eastern slopes of the Peninsular Ranges below 4,600 feet elevation from the San Jacinto Mountains south to the US-Mexico International Border. The project area is outside of this range, and no negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Dinacoma caseyi</i>, Casey's June Beetle State: None Federal: Endangered</p>	<p>Desert wash Mojavean desert scrub</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Casey's June Beetle within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. The beetle is only found in two populations in a small area of southern Palm Springs which is not part of the project area. Soil disturbance will be minimal, and no negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Deinandra mohavensis</i>, Mojave tarplant State: Endangered Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.3</p>	<p>Chaparral Coastal scrub Riparian scrub</p>	<p>Mojave tarplant is an annual herb that typically blooms between June and October (in rare cases May-January). While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Ivesia callida</i> Tahquitz ivesia State: Rare Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.3</p>	<p>Upper montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>Tahquitz ivesia is a perennial herb that typically blooms between July and September. It inhabits steep slopes of decomposed granitic outcrops, often in crevices around 7,800-8,000 feet in elevation. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations, and rock outcroppings will be avoided. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>

<p><i>Antrozous pallidus</i>, pallid bat                  State: None                  Federal: None                  Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Chaparral                  Coastal scrub                  Desert wash                  Great Basin grassland                  Great Basin scrub                  Mojavean desert scrub                  Riparian woodland                  Sonoran desert scrub                  Upper montane coniferous forest                  Valley &amp; foothill grassland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the pallid bat within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits, rock out-crops will be avoided during project operations, and no alteration to rooting habitat will occur. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>, golden eagle                  State: None                  Federal: None                  Other: CDFW Fully Protected</p>	<p>Broadleaved upland forest                  Cismontane woodland                  Coastal prairie                  Great Basin grassland                  Great Basin scrub                  Lower montane coniferous forest                  Pinon &amp; juniper woodlands                  Upper montane coniferous forest                  Valley &amp; foothill grassland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the pallid bat within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits, rock out-crops will be avoided during project operations, and no alteration to nesting habitat will occur as large trees will not be targeted for removal. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Chaetodipus fallax pallidus</i>, pallid San Diego pocket mouse                  State: None                  Federal: None                  Other: Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Desert wash                  Pinon &amp; juniper woodlands                  Sonoran desert scrub</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the pallid San Diego pocket mouse within 1 mile of the project area which primarily inhabits Desert border areas in eastern San Diego County in desert wash, desert scrub, desert succulent scrub, and pinyon-juniper. They prefer sandy, herbaceous areas, usually in association with rocks or coarse gravel, areas of which are limited within the project area. Project operations will cause minimal ground disturbance, and no negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>, Townsend's big-eared bat                  State: None                  Federal: None                  Other: Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Broadleaved upland forest                  Chaparral                  Chenopod scrub                  Great Basin grassland                  Great Basin scrub                  Joshua tree woodland                  Lower montane coniferous forest                  Meadow &amp; seep                  Mojavean desert scrub                  Riparian forest                  Riparian woodland                  Sonoran desert scrub                  Sonoran thorn woodland                  Upper montane coniferous forest                  Valley &amp; foothill grassland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Townsend's big-eared bat within 1 mile of the project area, however no viable reosting habitat was located during field visits. Large trees with cavities, building, and rock cavities will not be impacted by project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>

<p><i>Cypseloides niger</i>, black swift State: None Federal: None Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Coastal belt of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties; central &amp; southern Sierra Nevada; San Bernardino &amp; San Jacinto mountains.</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Black Swift within 1 mile of the project area. They breed in small colonies on cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in deep canyons and sea-bluffs above the surf, and forages widely. Riparian areas will be protected and avoided during project operations which will minimize the threat of impacting the species. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Dinacoma caseyi</i>, Casey's June beetle State: None Federal: Endangered</p>	<p>Desert wash Mojavean desert scrub</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Casey's June beetle within 1 mile of the project area, however no detections have been made during field visits. Additionally, the project area does not contain required habitat. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Glaucomys oregonensis californicus</i>, San Bernardino flying squirrel State: None Federal: None Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Broadleaved upland forest Lower montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the San Bernardino flying squirrel within 1 mile of the project area which primarily inhabits black oak or white fir dominated woodlands between 5200 - 8500 feet elevation in the San Bernardino and San Jacinto ranges. Needs cavities in trees/snags for nests and cover, and nearby water. Both riparian areas and trees with cavities or nesting potential will be avoided during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i>, coast horned lizard State: None Federal: None Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Chaparral Cismontane woodland Coastal bluff scrub Coastal scrub Desert wash Pinon &amp; juniper woodlands Riparian scrub Riparian woodland Valley &amp; foothill grassland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the coast horned lizard in proximity to the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. The coast horned lizard frequents a variety of habitats, most common in lowlands along sandy washes with scattered low bushes, which is a habitat type that is not present in the project area. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Setophaga petechia</i>, yellow warbler State: None Federal: None Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Riparian forest Riparian scrub Riparian woodland</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the yellow warbler within 1 mile of the project area which inhabits riparian forest, scrub, and woodlands. Riparian areas will be protected and avoided during project operations which will minimize the threat of impacting the species. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus</i>, Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel State: None Federal: None Other: CDFW Species of Special Concern</p>	<p>Chenopod scrub Sonoran desert scrub</p>	<p>The CNDDDB indicates the presence of the Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel in proximity to the project area, however no detections have occurred in the proposed project area during field visits. The required habitat is not present in the project area. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Boechea johnstonii</i>, Johnston's rockcress State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Chaparral Lower montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>Johnston's rockcress is a perennial herb that typically blooms between February and March. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during field visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>

<p><i>Calochortus palmeri</i> var. <i>munzii</i>, San Jacinto mariposa-lily State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Chaparral Lower montane coniferous forest Meadow &amp; seep</p>	<p>San Jacinto mariposa-lily is a perennial herb (bulb) that typically blooms between May and July. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Castilleja lasiorhyncha</i>, San Bernardino Mountains owl's-clover State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Chaparral Meadow &amp; seep Pavement plain Riparian woodland Upper montane coniferous forest Wetland</p>	<p>San Bernardino Mountains owl's-clover is a annual herb (bulb) that typically blooms between May and August. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Lilium parryi</i>, lemon lily State: None Federal: None CA Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Lower montane coniferous forest Meadow &amp; seep Riparian forest Upper montane coniferous forest Wetland</p>	<p>Lemon lily is a fern (rhizomatous) that typically blooms between June and September. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Linanthus jaegeri</i>, San Jacinto linanthus State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Subalpine coniferous forest Upper montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>San Jacinto linanthus is a perennial herb that typically blooms between July and September. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. San Jacinto lithanthus grows in dry rocky granitic outcrops and in sheer, vertical habitat, areas of which will not need vegetation removal during project operations. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Malaxis monophyllos</i> var. <i>brachypoda</i>, white bog adder's-mouth State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 2B.1</p>	<p>Bog &amp; fen Meadow &amp; seep Upper montane coniferous forest Wetland</p>	<p>White bog adder's mouth is a perennial herb (bulb) that typically blooms between June and August. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. Riparian and wet areas will be avoided during project operations, and no herbaceous species will be removed. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Meesia uliginosa</i>, broad-nerved hump moss State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 2B.2</p>	<p>Bog &amp; fen Meadow &amp; seep Subalpine coniferous forest Upper montane coniferous forest Wetland</p>	<p>Broad-nerved hump moss is a moss that typically blooms in October. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. Riparian and wet areas will be avoided during project operations, and no herbaceous species will be removed. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>

<p><i>Monardella nana ssp. Leptosiphon</i>, San Felipe monardella State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Chaparral Lower montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>San Felipe monardella is a perennial herb that typically blooms between June and July. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. Micro habitat includes disturbed or cleared areas like fuel breaks, so project operations have the potential to improve habitat conditions. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Saltugilia latimerid</i>, Latimer's woodland-gilia State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Chaparral Limestone Mojavean desert scrub Pinon &amp; juniper woodlands</p>	<p>Latimer's woodland-gilia is an annual herb (bulb) that typically blooms between March and June. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Symphyotrichum defoliatum</i>, San Bernardino aster State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.2</p>	<p>Cismontane woodland Coastal scrub Lower montane coniferous forest Marsh &amp; swamp Meadow &amp; seep Valley &amp; foothill grassland</p>	<p>San Bernardino aster is a perennial herb that typically blooms between July and November. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>
<p><i>Trichostema austromontanum ssp. Compactum</i>, Hidden Lake bluecurls State: None Federal: None Rare Plant Rank: 1B.1</p>	<p>Upper montane coniferous forest</p>	<p>San Bernardino aster is an annual herb that typically blooms between July and September. While the CNDDDB indicates the presence of the species within 1 mile of the project area, no detections have been made during filed visits. No herbaceous species will be removed during project operations. No negative impacts will occur as a result of project operations.</p>

No detections of threatened, rare, or endangered species or nesting bird activity occurred during field visits. The area will be surveyed prior to commencement of operations. If any sensitive species are observed in or around the project area, project activities will cease, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) will be consulted. The project will not resume until protection measures have been agreed upon and implemented.

**Cultural Resources**

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

Yes  No Was a current archaeological records check completed? Results discussed below:

One records check was requested from the EIC on September 20, 2018 for the entire project area and surrounding wildlands. The results were returned on October 12, 2018 identifying that there were numerous previous survey and recorded resources in the records check area. Only a fraction of the recorded resources and previous investigations lay within the State Responsibility Area (SRA) project boundary.

The EIC records check identified that the records check area has been the subject of 21 cultural resource studies, 8 of which lie within the SRA Project Boundary. These previous studies encompass approximately 50 percent of the project area. A variety of survey strategies were utilized for a wide range of project types.

The EIC records check identified thirty-one recorded resources within the records search area. Nine of the identified resources were located within the proposed project boundary including five sites and four prehistoric isolates. Of the identified sites, three are historic, one is prehistoric, and one is both historic and prehistoric.

No National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), Archaeological Determinations of Eligibility (ADOE), or Historic Property Directory (HPD) properties are listed within the project footprint.

Yes  No Was a CAL FIRE staff or contract archaeologist consulted? Results discussed below:



The project scope and map was provided to CALFIRE Senior State Archaeologist during project preparation. It was determined that a full archaeological review was needed including Native American notification and field survey.

Yes  No Was an archaeological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:

Surveys were conducted by CAL FIRE Forester I, Nochella Funes on: 1/9/2019 (Northridge Unit), 1/21/2019 (Rocky Point, Marion Ridge, and Thousand Trails Units), 1/22/2019 (Valley View, Thousand Trails, and Deer Springs Units), 1/30/2019 (Deer Springs Unit), 4/11/2019 (Deer Springs Unit), 5/29/2019 (Northridge Unit), and 5/30/2019 (Northridge Unit) as described in the *An Archaeological Survey Report for the Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction Riverside County, California* (Point of Rocks HFR ASR).

Time spent conducting archaeological field survey: A total of 38 person hours were spent conducting field surveys on 313 acres of the 350 total project acres. 37 acres were not surveyed due to steep (19 acres) or extremely brushy (18 acres) conditions. The surveys resulted in the discovery of three additional historic resources, and updates to two previously recorded sites. Areas inaccessible to survey efforts will be surveyed and monitored during project operations.

Yes  No Will the project effect any historic, archaeological or tribal cultural resources?

Project operations are not expected to cause significant damage to recorded or unknown cultural resources if the preventative measures outlined in the *Point of Rocks HFR ASR* are implemented during project operations. Operations are unlikely to cause soil disturbance, as operations will primarily be done by hand cutting, and piling or chipping of brush. Pile construction will be excluded from rock outcrops and within known site boundaries to prevent harm to known and potential unknown cultural resources. Tracked equipment and mastication will be limited to gentle slopes, unsaturated soil conditions, and locations outside of the riparian areas. Operations in riparian areas will also have cutting limitations which will further prevent inadvertent harm to unknown cultural resources.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Native American consultation letters were sent on September 20, 2018 to the Native American Contacts on CAL FIRE's Riverside County Central list. A response letter was received from the Native American Heritage Commission on October 1, 2018 reporting that there is potentially a sacred site within the project area, and advising further consultation with the Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians. Contact information was provided. The Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians were contacted via telephone on October 2, 2018. They reported that they were unaware of the project at that point, and would call back once they had more information, and if there were any concerns. No return phone call has been received to date in regard to the initial letter. Responses were received from both the Agua Caliente and Augustine Bands of the Cahuilla Indians in response to the second consultation letter that was sent on February 4, 2019 to contacts on the updated (as of January 2, 2019) CAL FIRE Central Riverside County List. The letter was a site notification letter that discussed the presence of and protection measures for the six prehistoric cultural resources identified within the project boundary.

A response email was received on February 8, 2019 from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requesting "...the presence of an approved Cultural Resource Monitor(s) during any ground disturbing activities (including archaeological testing and surveys). Should buried cultural deposits be encountered, the Monitor may request that destructive construction halt and the Monitor shall notify a Qualified Archaeologist (Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines) to investigate and, if necessary, prepare a mitigation plan for submission to the State Historic Preservation Officer." It was not requested that the monitor be from the Agua Caliente tribe. Additionally, shapefiles of the project areas were requested. After approval from CAL FIRE Senior State Archeologist, Larrynn Carver, shapefiles were provided on February 26, 2019 via email, after which no additional consultations or requests were made. A response letter was also received from the Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians on February 21, 2019. The Augustine Band stated that they have no concerns with regard to cultural resources in the proposed project area.

Additionally, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Travis Armstrong, for the Morongo Band of Mission Indians reached out via telephone on February 15, 2019 to request the site records listed in the Site Notification consultation letter. He followed up with an email to confirm the request, which was granted on February 26, 2019 with the approval of CAL FIRE Senior State Archaeologist, Larrynn Carver. No additional communication or requests were expressed once the shapefiles were presented.

The records check, pre-field research, and field surveys resulted in the identification of eight sites (five previously recorded and three that were identified during survey efforts) and four previously recorded isolates within the project area. Preventative measures are outlined in the *Point of Rocks HFR ASR* to prevent any potential impact to cultural resources during project operations.

Should project activities reveal cultural resources, CAL FIRE's standard post-review discovery procedures shall be enacted: work shall cease within 100 feet of the discovery and the unit archaeologist will be contacted; work will not resume until further

contact from the archaeologist. Per California Health and Safety Code (HSC 7050.5(b)), in the event human remains or burials are encountered, all work shall cease and the Riverside County Coroner's office and the CAL FIRE archaeologist shall be contacted; work will not resume until clearance is granted.

#### Geology and Soils

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

CAL FIRE Foresters determined that there will likely be no significant impacts to geological or soil resources as a result of the project activities. Slopes are generally less than 30%, and heavy equipment use will be limited to mastication and/or mobilization of cut material for processing or transport. Equipment will not be utilized within 50 feet of any watercourse, or on slopes greater than 50%. The proposed operations will minimize soil compaction or disturbance. Residual vegetation will be left onsite providing soil stabilization and ground cover. Additionally, the existing duff layer will be retained after operations to provide for erosion control and provide nutrient stores. No significant adverse impacts to geology or soils will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 Yes  No Would the project generate significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?  
 Yes  No Would these GHG emissions result in a significant impact on the environment? Discuss below:  
 Yes  No Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? Discuss below:

No significant impacts from Green House Gas (GHG) emission are expected to occur as a result of project activities. Emissions of GHGs will occur during equipment operation through the burning of gas & diesel fuel in internal combustion engines. The total quantity of GHGs released during equipment operation is estimated at 22.639 metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e. A detailed GHG calculation is presented at the end of this document. CAL FIRE Foresters have determined that the volume of GHG emissions generated by equipment operations will be below a level which would be considered significant. The pick-ups, crew buses, chainsaws, pull-saws, chipper, and skid-steer all meet state and federal emissions requirements, and will not generate significant GHG emissions. Where burning operations are used, the quantity of burn piles/broadcast burning will be minimal and provide an insignificant amount of GHG emissions. No significant adverse impact to greenhouse gas emission levels will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

There are no known hazardous materials within the project site. Crews will be working with equipment including but not limited to: chainsaws, pole saws, masticators, and chippers to remove and process designated material. All crew members shall be supervised and will wear the proper Personal Protective Equipment. The rubber tracked skid steer will be used following all safety protocols, and by personnel with proper training. Refueling of the chainsaws will be conducted following strict refueling protocols to eliminate the potential to contaminate soil and/or watercourses. The following fueling protocols will be utilized: approved containers shall be used for transporting fuel, fuel shall be dispensed at least 10 feet away from any sources of ignition when performing construction activities, smoking will be prohibited while fueling, a funnel or a flexible hose shall be used when pouring fuel into the saw, and fueling shall never be attempted while the saw is running. With proper safety procedures in place, no significant adverse impacts as a result of hazardous materials will occur.

#### Noise

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 This project will utilize chainsaws, pole saws, skidsteer, masticator, and chippers to accomplish the fuel reduction project. Operations are planned to be conducted between working hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Noise thresholds will remain below levels of concern, and will only occur during business hours when neighboring residents are less likely to be home. No significant adverse impacts to current noise levels will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Hydrology and Water Quality

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 Yes  No Will the project potentially affect any watercourse or body of water?  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Operations will be excluded from watercourses and riparian areas. Canopy/vegetative cover will be retained near streams to provide protection for all watercourses within the project area. Scattering of chips shall not occur into watercourses and all burn piles/broadcast burning will be located at least 50 feet from any watercourse. Through avoidance of watercourses and riparian areas, no significant adverse impacts to Hydrology or Water Quality will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Land Use and Planning

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 No significant adverse impacts to current land use or planning will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Mineral Resources

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 Project operations will be restricted to vegetation removal and processing. Use of heavy equipment will be limited to slopes under 50% and all operations will minimize impacts to soil and duff layers. No road construction or excavation will occur. Due to the low impact nature of the operations, no significant adverse impacts to current mineral resources will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Population and Housing

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 Project activities are restricted to vegetation removal and processing. No significant adverse impacts to population or housing will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Public Services

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 The removal of hazardous fuels along access roads and adjacent to homes will aid in a safe and timely response of emergency equipment into areas of concern enhancing the protection of the communities in the area, and improving the public service potential in the area.

#### Recreation

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 The removal of hazardous fuels will improve the fire safety and aesthetics of the landscape. Where project operations will occur near homes and camp grounds, the more open landscape and improved health of residual vegetation will improve the recreational potential of the locations.

#### Transportation and Traffic

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 A minimal increase of traffic will occur as a result of the transportation of labor and equipment to the work locations. However, the number of vehicles will be very few in number, and operations will be conducted during time periods when traffic is low, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. No significant adverse impacts to transportation or traffic will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Utilities and Service Systems

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.  
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:  
 Project operations are restricted to vegetation removal and will have no impact on existing utility or service systems. No significant adverse impacts to Utilities or Service Systems will occur as a result of project operations.

#### Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:

Best management practices consistent with hazardous fuel treatment activities have been incorporated in this project. Protection of soil, retention of healthy and mature scenic trees, complete avoidance of archaeological sites, watercourse protection measures

(no chips and woods in watercourse channels; no fueling in the WLPZ), compliance with air quality, wildlife protection (nest protection) has been developed to protect and maintain environmental resources and to further avoid any potential negative impact to the environment. Hazardous fuel reduction activities will take place away from any culturally sensitive areas through avoidance, monitoring and use of preexisting roads.

**Mandatory Findings of Significance:**

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

(a) Does the project have the potential to 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, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probably future projects.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Justification for Use of a Categorical Exemption (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):**

This project meets the requirements of a Class 4 Categorical Exemption "15304 Minor Alterations to Land" - "Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the conditions of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature and scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes". The project is small in size, will increase safety, aesthetics, and public service values, will result in minimal ground disturbance and will not result in significant impacts to biological or archeological resources. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply, which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems.

**Conclusion:**

After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of categorical exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project fits within one or more of the exemption classes and no exceptions exist at the project site which would preclude the use of this exemption. CAL FIRE considered the possibility of (a) sensitive location, (b) cumulative impact, (c) significant impact due to unusual circumstances, (d) impacts to scenic highways, (e) activities within a hazardous waste site, and (f) significant adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. A notice of exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse.

After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of categorical exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project does not fit within the description for the various exemption classes or has found that exceptions exist at the project site that precludes the use of a categorical exemption for this project. Additional environmental review will be conducted and the appropriate CEQA document used may be a negative declaration or a mitigated negative declaration.

Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction Estimative Green House Gas (GHG) Emission Calculation Table Number of estimated crew days for project : 175 days	
<b>A. Staff vehicle</b>	
	175 days X 20 miles/day = 3,500 miles; 15 miles/gal = 235 gal gas
<b>B. Equipment operations</b>	
1. Crew bus	total of 20 miles/day; 10 miles/gal=2 gal/day; 175 days X 2 gal/day = 350 gal diesel
2. Truck (pulling chipper)	total of 20 miles/day; 5 miles/gal =4 gal/day; 75 days X 4 gal/day = 300 gal diesel
3. Chipper	1 gal/hr/chipper = 5 gal/day; 75 days X 5 gal/day = 375 gal diesel
4. Skidsteer/Masticator	5 gal/hr/skidsteer = 25 gal/day; 35 days X 25 gal/day = 875 gal diesel
5. Chainsaws/Polesaws	2 saws/crew X 0.5 gal/saw/day = 1 gal/day; 175 days X 1 gal/day = 175 gal gas
Total gasoline: 235 + 175 = 410 gallons of gasoline	
Total diesel: 350+300+375+875 = 1,900 gallons of diesel	
Gasoline GHG: 410 X 8.18 = 3,354 kg/gal/1000 = 3.354 metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e	
Diesel GHG: 1,900 X 10.15 = 19,285 kg/gal/1000 = 19.285 metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e	
Total estimated GHG emissions/project : 3.354 + 19.285 = 22.639 metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e	

Figure 1. Estimative Green House Gas (GHG) Emission Calculation Table

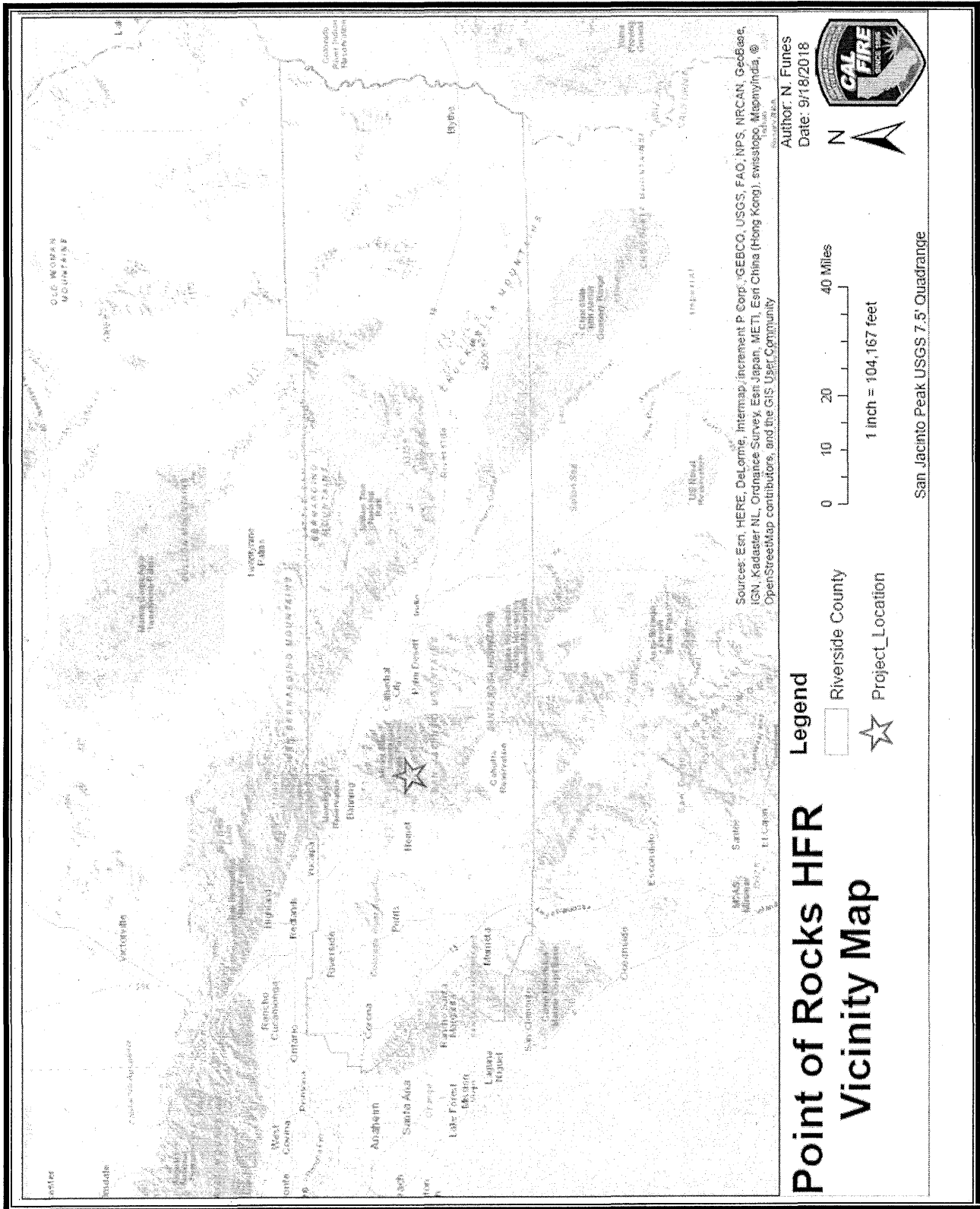


Figure 2. Project Vicinity Map

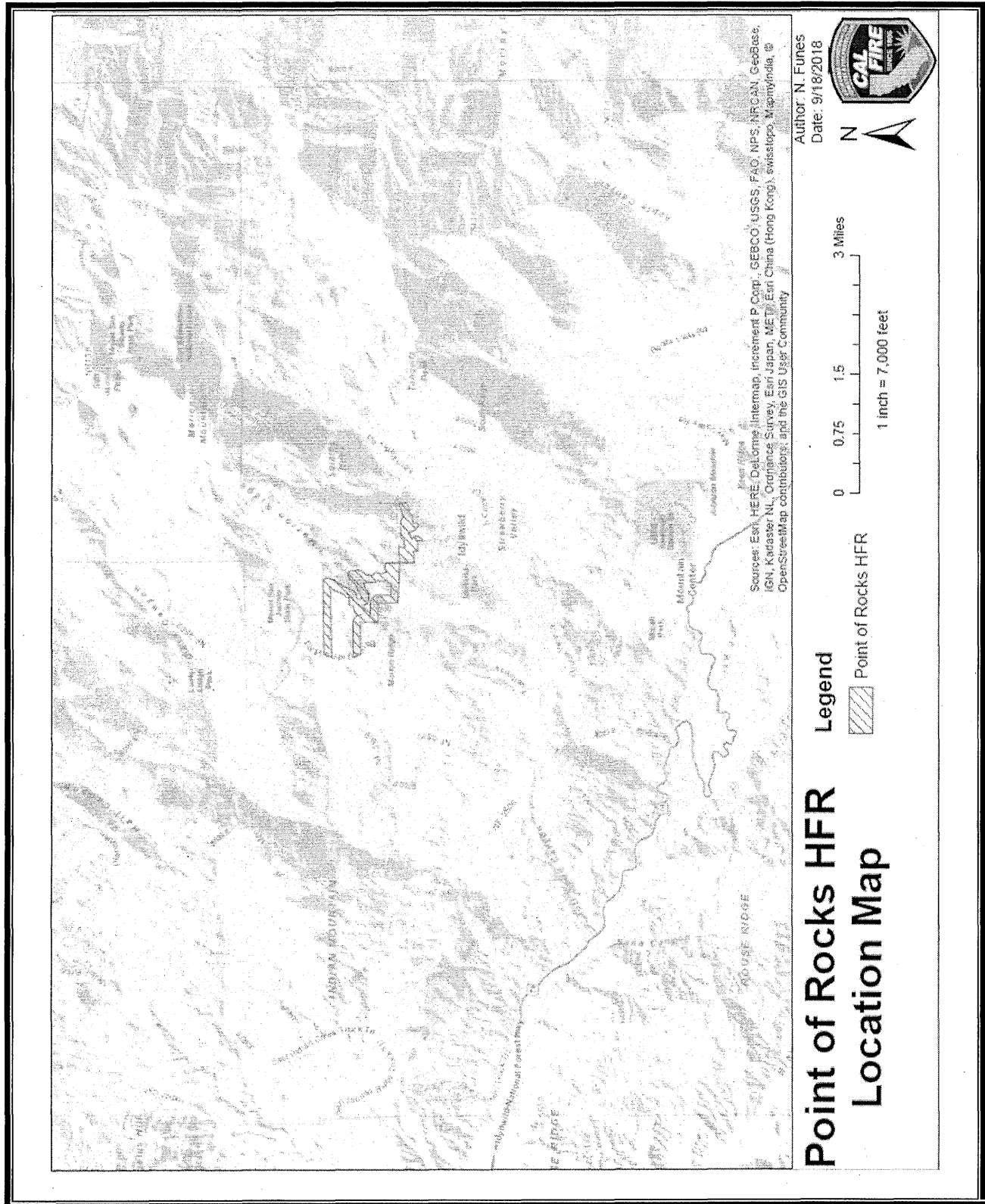


Figure 3. Project Location Map

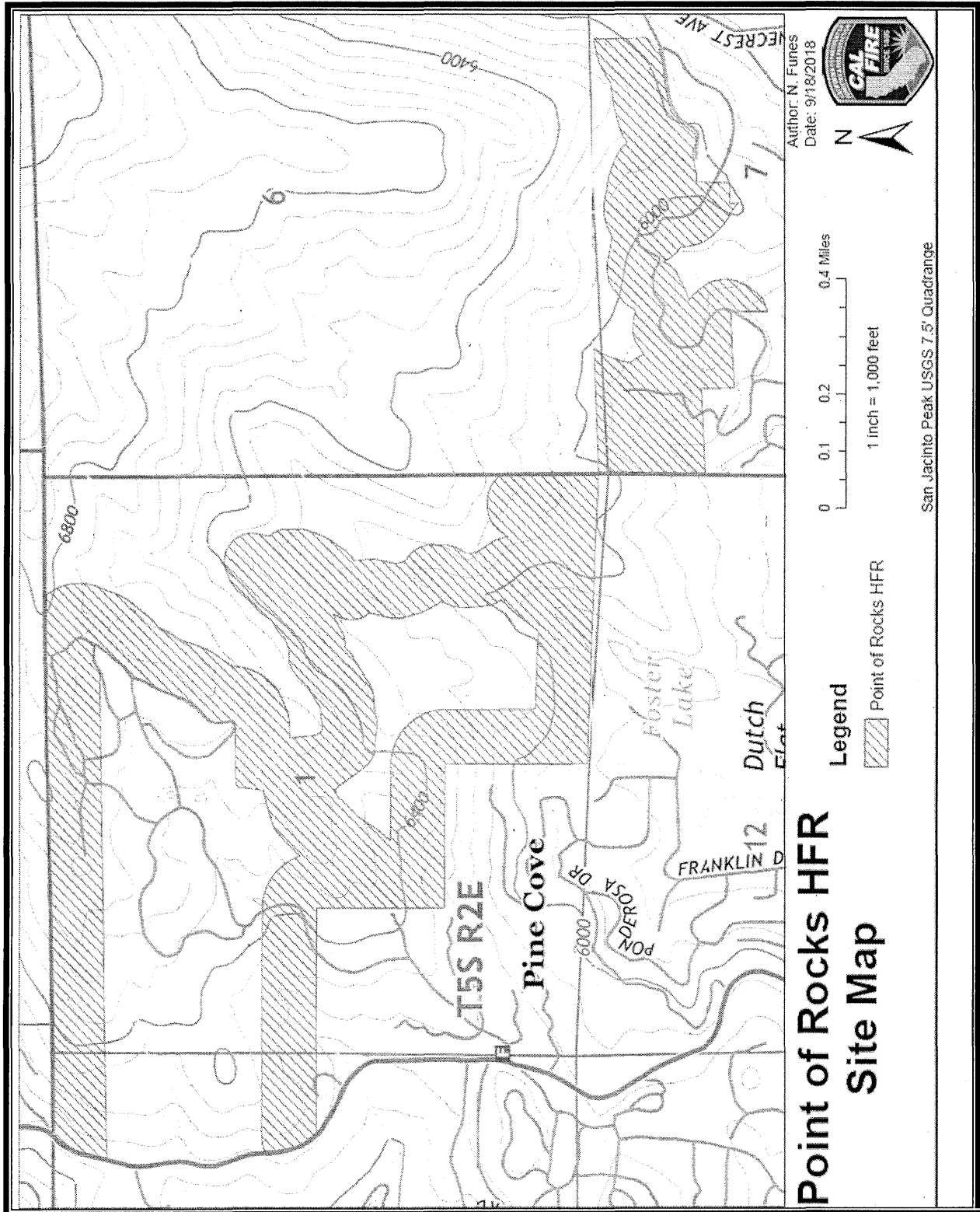


Figure 4. Project Site Map





Figure 5. Example of hazardous fuel loadings throughout the project area.

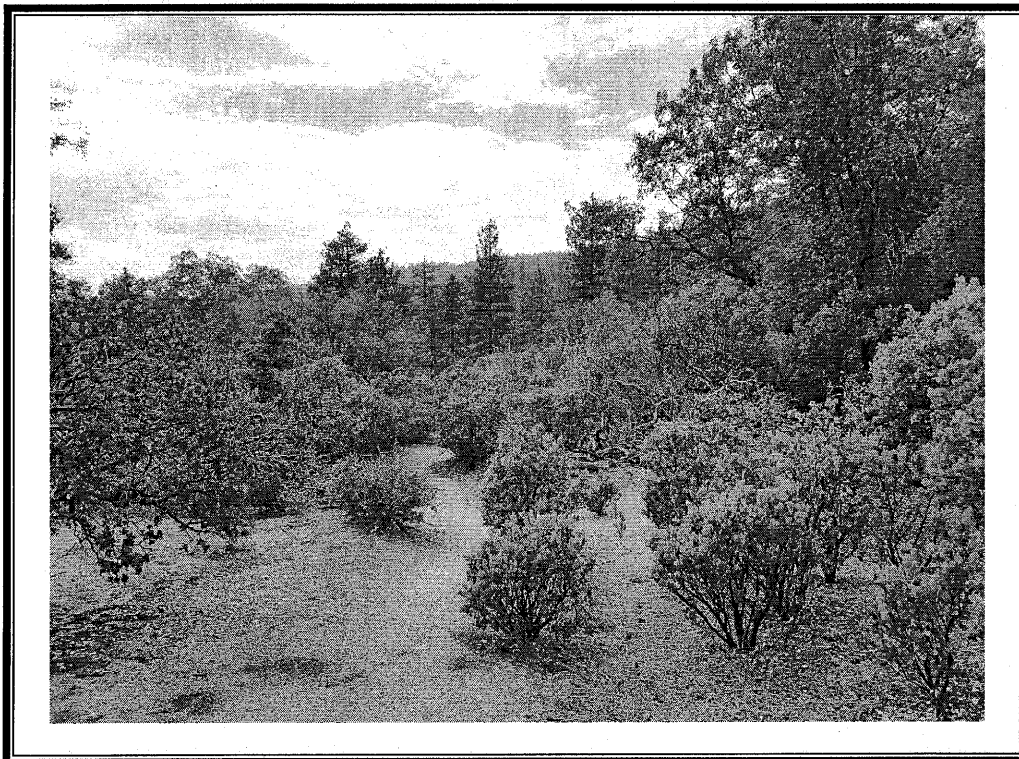


Figure 6. Hazardous fuel loadings adjacent to existing trail in the project area.



Figure 7. Location along access road that requires maintenance and improvement of an existing fuel break.



Figure 8. Portion of an existing fuel break within the project area that requires minimal maintenance.