



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

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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|-------------------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| PROJECT TITLE | Laughlin Peak Access and Fuels Reduction | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | T17N R13W Sections 14, 15, & 16, Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian. | COUNTY | Mendocino |
| PUBLIC AGENCY | California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) | | |
| CONTACT | Robert B. Douglas, Environmental Scientist CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit | | |
| ADDRESS | Resource Management 17501 North Highway 101 Willis, CA 95490 | PHONE | 707-972-3795 |

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The intent is to break-up the vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels along a road easement through private property to allow passage of fire engines and other equipment to access a State-owned communications facility located 7 miles southeast of the town of Willits. The project will employ hand crews to remove shrubs, standing dead trees, and thin areas of live trees (10” dbh and less) within the road easement (10-20 feet on either side) along 8 miles of road, starting at Laughlin Peak Road near Highway 101, ending at the Laughlin Peak Radio Tower, which exists on State Property. Larger live trees (> 10” dbh), with low overhanging limbs, will be pruned with a pole saw. Work along the road will be hand work only with no mechanical methods or the piling and burning of slash. Woody material proximal to the roadway may be carried to the roadside by hand for chipping. Shrubs and standing dead trees resulting from the 2017 Redwood Complex Fire will be removed, cut, piled and burned within 300 feet of the radio tower facility, which also includes adjacent private property. Small live trees may be removed to thin areas of regeneration, and large conifers will be retained but may be pruned with a pole saw. Material proximal to the roadway will be chipped and scattered, but larger material will be piled and burned in place because steep slopes make transport of material upslope to the road for processing infeasible. The initial phase of this project is expected to take no more than 10 days to complete; annual maintenance 3 to 5 days per year.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type/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

The project meets the requirements of a CEQA Article 19 Class 4 Categorical exemption “Minor Alterations to Land” (Section 15304, Public Resources Code) as the proposed activities involve road grading of an existing road, understory brush and small tree removal, pruning and chipping to reduce wildfire threat. Although this project will modify some structural aspects of the vegetation, it will not convert the vegetation type or result in the removal of otherwise “healthy, mature, and scenic trees.” The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) was searched and no rare, threatened or endangered plant or animal species were identified on the project site that will be negatively impacted by this project. The CAL FIRE Archaeologist has been consulted and has determined that this project is exempt from further archaeological review.

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply (Section 15300.2) 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, energy, 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, utilities and service systems, or wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit, Resource Management, 17501 N. Highway 101, Willits, CA 95490, Attn. Environmental Coordinator.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING


 Matthew Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

6/10/20
 Date