



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Onion Valley Fuel Break and Fuel Reduction		
PROJECT LOCATION	Independence, CA 93526 Section 18 T13S R35E MDBM	COUNTY	Inyo County
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project is located adjacent to Independence Creek, in the town of Independence, CA on public land owned by the Los Angeles Department of Power and Water (LADWP). Ground cover types within and adjacent to the project site consists primarily of dense riparian habitat and sage/rabbitbrush scrub. CAL FIRE has collaborated with both the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Regional Water Quality Control Board to ensure the design of the project protects water resources and wildlife habitat, while addressing fire behavior and public safety. Avoidance measures and best management practices have been included below to ensure no significant, substantial impacts occur to water resources or wildlife habitat. Project implementation will reduce the likelihood for fire to travel down the Independence Creek corridor into the populated area of Independence and spread from the streambed into neighboring areas of sage/rabbitbrush scrub. Project implementation will also improve the safety and functional response of fire fighters by providing defensible space for staging crews and equipment.

This project consists of the creation and maintenance of a fuel break averaging approximately 50-feet in width and associated fuel reduction areas. Both the fuel break and fuel reduction will occur via hand removal of vegetation, which will be chipped or pile burned on site if necessary. Within the work areas, up to 85% of ground cover may be treated in a mosaic pattern, leaving vegetation islands of various sizes and shapes intact to maintain a natural appearance and retain habitat function. Distance between vegetation islands will be a minimum of 2.5 times the vegetation height. Where treatment occurs immediately adjacent to riparian habitat, a buffer of approximately 6'-10', or one shrub width, will be maintained to avoid any impacts to riparian habitat. Vegetation removal within the Mary DeDecker Native Garden will occur in close coordination with a garden representative(s). Treatment within this area will not exceed 50% removal. Maintenance will occur as necessary to maintain the standards listed above and may occur as frequently as an annual basis. Where the fuel break footprint occurs immediately adjacent to riparian habitat, a buffer of approximately 6'-10', or one mature upland shrub width, will be maintained to avoid any impacts to riparian habitat. Project implementation is expected to occur outside of nesting bird season, September 15-March 15. Work may be done during nesting bird season if nesting surveys are performed prior to commencement of operations.

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 Class 4 Categorical Exemption (Minor alterations to land) Section 15304. Project implementation will result in alterations to the land that are best described as minor in scope, that will not significantly impact the aesthetic of the property, or biological and/or cultural resources, and that do not involve the removal of mature, scenic trees for any purpose. No exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a "Notice of Exemption" for this project. It has been concluded that no significant adverse environmental impacts would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forest resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, populations and housing, public services, recreation, transportation and traffic, utilities and service systems, or wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the CALFIRE staff is kept on file at CAL FIRE's San Bernardino Unit Headquarters in San Bernardino, CA.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Matthew Reischman

1/22/2021

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

Date