



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

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Howard Forest Fire and Safety Hazard Reduction		
PROJECT LOCATION	T17N R13W Sections 4, 5, 8, and 9, Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian	COUNTY	Mendocino
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Robert B. Douglas, Environmental Scientist CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit		PHONE 707-972-3795
ADDRESS	17501 North Highway 101 Willits, CA 95490		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project area is located at the 87-acre Howard Forest Station and Training Center located at the top of Ridgewood Grade, off Highway 101, 2.8 miles south of the town of Willits. The Station and Training Center is situated in and adjacent to a Douglas-fir/mixed hardwood forest interspersed with Ponderosa pine, true oaks, grassy openings, and shrubs. The area contains multiple buildings for unit staff in a mostly wildland interface and serves as a training center for fire fighters. Annual vegetation management activities are necessary to maintain the grounds in a manner that reduces vegetative fuels around buildings to lower fire risk and remove trees or portions of trees that pose a fire and/or safety risk to structures, property, and human life. Fuels reduction activities also serve as training opportunities for unit fire fighters such as S-212 course (chainsaw certification), putting live fire on the ground, constructing fire line, and simulating mop-up operations. Fuel reduction activities involve the use of hand crews, chainsaws (tree falling, bucking, and brushing), pole saws, chippers, skid steer with masticator attachment, and pile and broadcast burning.

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 involves tree and brush removal, chipping, hazard tree removal, and burning 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." A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) found no rare, threatened or endangered plant or animal species on the project site that will be negatively impacted by this project. The CAL FIRE Archaeologist has been consulted and has determined, based on pre-operative surveys and historical information for the project area, the project as proposed will avoid impacts to cultural resources.

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

2/8/2021

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