



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

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	Arnold-Avery Healthy Forest Restoration (Arnold-Avery HFR); Project # 19-FP-TCU-2066		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	T5N, R15E, portions of Section 8 and 17; Dorrington Quad	<b>COUNTY</b>	Calaveras
	T5N, R14E, portions of Section 24 and 25; Fort Mtn Quad		
	T4N, R14E, portions of Section 13, Murphys Quad		
	T4N, R15E, portions of Section 19, Stanislaus Quad, all in MDBM		
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Current conditions in the Arnold-Avery HFR project area are characterized by dense, mixed-conifer forests, which have experienced increased levels of tree mortality in recent years due to drought and bark beetles. Stand densities are currently above thresholds associated with increased risk of insect and disease mortality throughout much of the project area; surviving trees remain susceptible to future disturbances such as drought, outbreaks of insect and disease, and high-intensity wildfire.

The primary purposes of the Arnold-Avery HFR project are to improve the project area's resilience to current and future large-scale disturbances (drought, bark beetle outbreaks, high-intensity wildfire) and to provide for public and firefighter safety. In order to meet these objectives, the project will reduce stand densities and competition among trees and other vegetation for limited resources (water, nutrients, light) and to abate hazardous trees, reduce elevated fuel loads, and maintain and improve the existing fuelbreak in the WUI near the communities of Arnold and Avery. To meet the needs of the project, multiple vegetation treatments are proposed including mechanical mastication, mechanical thinning, removal of dead trees, and hand (lop & scatter) work. In concert with treatments on federal USFS lands, the project area entails 7 private land units for a total of 74 acres.

The project area is on gentle to moderate slopes (<50%). Elevations range from 4800 feet in the north along Summit Level Road to ~3200 feet in the south near Hathaway Pines. The project area is representative of the Sierran Mixed conifer forest type consisting of an overstory of Ponderosa and Sugar pine, Incense-cedar, White fir and Douglas-fir, and an understory of black and live oak over various brush species. There are no known endangered, threatened or sensitive plants or animal species within the project area. The project area is predominantly on main ridges and follows 2015 Butte Fire contingency lines; the primary drainage is the Upper South Fork of the Mokelumne River, fed by smaller drainages including San Domingo Creek, O'Neil Creek, and San Antonio Creek.

### 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

This project fits under the description for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption to CEQA. An environmental review was conducted to confirm that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. This review included an on-the-ground field inspection by a Registered Professional Forester on various dates from July 2020 to May 2021. A full Archeological Survey Report was reviewed by CAL FIRE Contract Archeologist Mark Walker, Archaeologist, Anthropological Studies Center/Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

In addition, consultation/correspondence was sent via email to representatives of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Regional Water Quality Control Board. No concerns were raised by these Agency Representatives other than a completed request to include an evaluation of two species not populated in the CNDDB search. 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, wildfire or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at TCU Unit Headquarters in San Andreas, CA.

### DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

5/27/2021

*Matthew Reischman*

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