

Notice of Exemption

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To:

Office of Planning and Research

For U.S. Mail:

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Street Address:

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From:

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Inland Deserts Region

3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Suite C-220

Ontario, CA 91764

Contact: Aaron Johnson

Phone: (760) 920-7473


**Project Title:** Post-fire seeding of Slinkard/Little Antelope Wildlife Area**Project Location:** The project is located at the Slinkard/Little Antelope Wildlife Area in Mono County, California. The Slinkard/Little Antelope Wildlife Area is west, southwest, and northwest of the communities of Walker and Coleville and U.S. Route 395.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is proposing to seed and plant up to 1,800 acres within the 11,700-acre Slinkard/Little Antelope Wildlife Area that were impacted by the Slink Fire in 2020. Seeding will occur using aerial and mechanical methods in areas of high fire severity where resprouting and seed germination from the seed bank are expected to be insufficient for timely natural site recovery, and the risk of conversion to more fire-prone annual invasive grasslands of lower wildlife value is high. The following species may be seeded in the formerly shrub dominated (prior to fire) portions of the Slinkard Valley Unit and Little Antelope Valley Unit burned areas: *Purshia tridentata* var. *tridentata*, *Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana*, *Elymus elymoides*, *Poa secunda*, *Ericameria nauseosa*, *Elymus triticoides*, *Lupinus argenteus*, *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*, *Balsamorhiza sagittata*, *Ceanothus velutinus*, *Cercocarpus ledifolius*, *Elymus cinereus*, and *Achillea millefolium*, depending on the availability of regionally appropriate seed sources and site characteristics. The species were selected based on their importance as winter forage for mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), their presence pre-fire, ability to prevent erosion and invasive species spread, and expected success of germination and establishment. Preference will be given to seeding with native species; however, the limited use of nonnative noninvasive plants will be considered on the agricultural fields of the Little Antelope Valley Unit for their ability to suppress highly invasive grasses such as cheatgrass, provide high quality forage for wildlife, and reduce fire danger. In addition to the native plant species, a combination of the following desirable nonnative species may also be seeded in agricultural fields: *Bromus marginatus*, *Linum lewisii*, *Agropyron cristatum*, *Agropyron fragile*, *Elymus lanceolatus* ssp. *lanceolatus*, *Elytrigia intermedia*, *Kochia prostrata*, *Onobrychis viciifolia*, *Poa secunda*, and *Sanguisorba minor*. These fields have been heavily impacted by invasive non-native plants in recent years and most of these species, or closely related varieties, have been previously seeded in this location to improve forage.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife**Exempt Status:** Categorical Exemption. Class 4 § 15304 (d), Minor Alterations to Land, Class 7 § 15307 Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources, Class 8 § 15308 Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment.

Reasons why project is exempt: Class 4, §15304, the project will result in minimal impacts to the condition of the land, water, and vegetation on an existing officially designated wildlife management area which will result in the improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources and will not result in removal of mature, healthy, scenic trees. Class 7 § 15307 and Class 8 § 15308, the project is an action taken by CDFW to expedite the restoration of vegetation in burned areas for the benefit of wildlife where the fire intensity is likely to result in delayed natural recovery, and the threat of conversion to invasive nonnative grasslands is high.

CDFW Contact Person: Aaron Johnson, Senior Environmental Scientist, (760) 920-7473.**Date Received for filing at OPR:** _____

DocuSigned by:

 Signature Heidi Calvert Heidi Calvert
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 Leslie MacNair
 Regional Manager

Date: 10/8/2021