

**MARIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT  
A NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

**Walker Creek Ranch Distaff Thistle Control Project**

**REVIEW PERIOD: November 9, 2021 – December 9, 2021**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) intends to adopt a Negative Declaration (ND) for the Walker Creek Ranch Distaff Control Project.

This ND is being circulated for a 30-day agency and public review and comment period starting on **November 9, 2021, and ending at 5pm on December 9, 2021**. After the close of the public comment review period on the ND established by this notice, this matter will be set for public hearing before the Marin County Office of Education Board of Trustees. Notice of the date, time and place for such public hearing will be published and/or mailed as provided by law.

Please take notice that - pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 21177, Government Code Section 65009, and other applicable law - if you challenge the proposed action described above in court, then you may be limited to raising only those issues or objections you or someone else raised during the public comment period or the public hearing, or in written correspondence delivered to the Marin County Recorder's Office within the review period, or to the Planning Commission during the public hearing.

A copy of the ND will be available for review at the Marin County Office of Education, at 1111 Las Gallinas Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94903, Due to the coronavirus emergency, an appointment will be necessary to view the document at RMA. Please reach out to contact below to schedule a viewing of document. The ND may also be viewed on the Walker Creek Ranch web site at:

[www.Walkercreekranch.org](http://www.Walkercreekranch.org)

Questions, comments and recommendations on the adequacy of the environmental document may be sent to the attention of:

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1. **PROJECT:** Walker Creek Ranch Distaff Thistle Control Project
2. **APPLICANT/AGENT:** Marin County Office of Education
3. **LOCATION:** Walker Creek Ranch is a 1700-acre property owned by the Marin County

Office of Education that serves as a public outdoor education school as well as a conference/retreat center. Sections of the property are also leased for cattle ranching. The project site is located in a rural, unincorporated, agricultural/open space area in the north-central portion of Marin County, about 4 miles east of the town of Marshall. (See Figure 1). The Project is proposed on approximately 402 acres on the MCOE's Walker Creek Ranch property, at 1700 Marshall Petaluma Road. Local access to the site is via Marshall Petaluma Road from Highway 1 to the west and Redhill Road (in Novato) to the east.

4. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Woolly distaff thistle is classified as a "highly invasive" noxious weed by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) Inventory. It is highly competitive with cereal crops and desirable rangeland species, and dense populations can develop. In addition, the spiny foliage and flowerheads can injure the eyes and mouths of grazing livestock. The MCOE is proposing to remove the dense stands of this weed on the Walker Creek Ranch property to improve grazing, prevent spread of the weed to other nearby lands, and to restore native habitat values to the site.

The proposed project involves aerial (helicopter) and manual (backpack and side-by-side boom on ATV) application of herbicides to approximately 402 acres of grasslands. The aerial spraying would occur over a one-to-three-day period during the late winter/spring growing season for the thistle, typically between January and April. The project would include the following measures to protect sensitive resources and receptors:

- 100-foot buffers would be placed surrounding all streams, water courses, water stock ponds, and other sensitive areas. These areas would be flagged or painted with high-visibility markings. No aerial spraying would occur in these buffer areas; instead, areas within the buffers would be treated using backpack sprayers and/or side-by-side sprayers mounted on ATVs.
- The helicopter spraying would be greater than 600 feet from any residence or occupied building.
- No children or other visitors would be allowed on the property during or within 24 hours after aerial spraying activities. Children and visitors would not be allowed in areas of ground spraying for 24 hours after spraying, assuming dry conditions (if wet, then 24 hours after end of precipitation).
- No spraying would occur on days with winds over 10 miles per hour.
- Adjacent land-owners would be notified of aerial spraying at least two weeks before the spraying occurs. Will work directly with ranchers who runs cattle on property to create a plan to relocate cattle during spraying
- Workers involved in treatment would be trained to recognize San Francisco gumplant and aquatic resources, and be briefed on the importance of avoiding.

After the initial spraying, aerial and manual treatment may be repeated annually for 3-5 years, with manual maintenance spraying to continue annually as needed. All treatments would continue to occur in the late winter-early spring period. Future treatment would be subject to the same safety and application measures/limitations as for the original spray.