



# N·C·S·D

Northstar Community Services District  
Northstar Fire Department  
910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161  
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## Notice of Exemption

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**PROJECT TITLE:** 2022-2023 Northstar Community Evacuation Route Fuels Reduction Project

**PROJECT NUMBER:** G22-003

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The 1.5-mile part of Highlands View Road that lies within Section 32, T17N, R17E, MDB&M.

**COUNTY:** Placer

**ACRES:** 45-acres

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**LEAD AGENCY:** Northstar Fire Department

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**CONTACT:** JOE BARRON (NFD FORESTER, RPF #2984)

**ADDRESS:** 910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161

**PHONE:** 530-562-1212 x2

**Project Description:** The multi-year project schedule for this project is May 2022 and expiring at the end of November of 2023. The project's funding mechanism is from a 2021 Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation Grant Cycle and driven by private funding. The project has a focus on various methods of forest fuels reduction designed to enhance an identified evacuation route from the updated 2022 Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Below are key components to the project:

1. To perform forest fuels reduction within an identified major evacuation route to the upper part of the Community of Northstar. The project exists on privately owned, open common space forested land and next to a major evacuation route to the upper part of the Northstar Community. The project area is a part of Priority Number One in the Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
2. To remove dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees that identify as a fire hazard and or are detrimental to forest health.
3. The funding from the grant will help subsidize forest fuels reduction for an evacuation route that exists outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary. The project will treat 1.5 linear miles of road, 45-acres of land and set up a three-hundred-foot (300') buffer for the road, (150' each side from centerline). This project is Priority Number One with the 2022 updated Northstar Fire Department Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
4. This project exists within a State Regulatory Area (SRA), CAL FIRE named Very High Fire Severity Zone. The project area holds over-stocked conifer tree stands, declining conifer trees, vegetation health that is a result of multiple years of drought and correcting one hundred plus years of historical timber harvesting practices which altered the forests of the Martis Creek Watershed. Currently, forest fuels that exist along the evacuation route areas require a combination of first entry and maintenance treatment. The goal is to reduce forest fuels within areas that are readily able to burn hot and travel at an accelerated rate across the topography and affect a safe community wide evacuation. A secondary issue is addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees will help reduce the acceleration of tree mortality before reaching an epidemic level.

**Project Activities:** Project work will consist of the following:

1. (45)-acres of forest fuels reduction within a forested area along a 1.5-mile section of Highlands view Road. This project exists outside the eastern part of the Northstar Community Services District Boundary and is property of Northstar California (Vail Resorts/Trimont land Company). On the ground treatment for this project will be by hand crew, mastication, and chipping. A contingency of pile burning exists withing steep rocky areas, (See map for the entire project area). The treatment/disposal of biomass will be by chipping (broadcasting), skid steer-based mastication and the contingency of pile burning. Hand crew treatment methods involve a seven to ten (7-10) person hand crew equipped with one to two (1-2) chainsaws, (1-3) pole saws and various hand tools such as a rakes and shovels. Hand crews will focus on reducing the density of 1” to 14” Diameter Breast Height (DBH) conifer trees that are considered suppressed and intermediate class trees. Dead, diseased, dying and pest infected conifer trees may have a larger diameter up to “24” DBH. Residual conifer trees will be limbed from a range of 4’ to 15’ from the highest point of the ground up. Flammable brush thinning will create mosaics. Mosaic thinning will create various age classes and spacing based on slope and topography. Ground fuel reduction will range from 1,000 to 3,000 tons per acre. Chipping will be with the Northstar Fire Department (NFD) Track Chipper #31, (C-31). C-31 is a rubber tracked chipper that can run via remote control through the forest up to 30% slopes. Chipper -31 does not require a road/skid trail system to run through the forest and has the capability of chipping trees up to 16” Diameter Breast Height, (D.B.H). A computer system allows the feeding of the chipper to be efficiently without clogging the “chute” which is the mechanism to broadcast woodchips. (C-31) operation requires a 3 to 5-person crew that consists of an operator who has a remote control in hand for maneuvering the chipper. The operator watches the instrumentation, feeding of the chipper and safety of the crew. Chipper personnel “feed” the chipper when in operation. The operator guides the chipper to biomass piles. Broadcasting will be the proper method of dispersal. Woodchip broadcasting will be a depth range of 2”-3”. Raking will be in areas of heavy depth concentrations or woodchip accumulations, especially near tree wells. The chipping crew will follow behind the chipper and rake out any deep chipper track ruts to ensure water disturbance will not occur. For the pile burning part of the project, the same contracted hand crew will create burn piles 8’ x 8’ in size. Burn pile placement will be in open areas, which are well-spaced from one another The contingency estimates are no greater than 150 burn piles. All pile burning operations and the permitting process will be through the Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCACD).
2. 8-15 acres of forested land will have a prescription of mastication where brush fields, downed fuels and smaller diameter trees exist. This prescription will be within 150’ of centerline of Highlands View Road, (Both Sides).
3. 30-37-acres of contiguous flammable brush growth will have treatment by a hand crew. The hand crew will selectively thin 1” to 14” Diameter Breast Height (DBH) conifer trees, thin brush and remove downed fuels where the masticator cannot operate. Additionally, there will be a target of larger dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees if they are a fire and or safety hazard. Chipper-31 (C-31) will ease biomass removal by laying the material on the forest floor. The secondary machine is a Caterpillar skid steer mastication machine with a rotating drumhead. The mastication machine will focus on the removal of contiguous brush fields by creating separation and diversity in a mixed age class of brush by setting up a mosaic brush field pattern. Thinning of brush fields will reduce fire’s ability to travel across the landscape and carry into the mature tree canopy as a ladder fuel.
4. The contingency of pile burning will be in place for the project within areas that will be steep, rocky, and inaccessible for the mastication and chipper machines.
5. The result of this project will be setting up an evacuation route to the upper part of the Northstar community. Create an effort to reduce the threat of a wildfire, promoting a healthy and diverse Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer Forest.

**Project Goals and Accomplishments:** This project meets priority numbers one, found in the 2017 updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan, (CWPP). A copy of the Northstar CWPP can be found from the Northstar Community Services District Website: <https://www.northstarcsd.org/departments/fire/forestry>. The goals of the project are as follows: 1. Support a 300' fuels buffer zone, protecting the Eastern portion of the Highlands View Road system for emergency vehicle access and an upper community evacuation. 2.. Reduce the threat of wildfire and to support forest health by addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infested trees to mitigate the spread of tree mortality and can mitigate mortality and a manageable rate. This comprehensive project will help stretch fund a forest fuels reduction project that exists outside the Measure U authority. Once the project is completed, it will allow the project to be placed on a maintenance schedule and future treatments can be performed at a workable cost per acre.

- Permitting Method(s): The project will use the following as Code of Regulations to perform the project.
- The following Exemptions are applied to the project.

**Justifications for Use of a Categorical Exemption (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):**

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under *14CCR§15304 Minor Alteration to Land*. The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or next to a major evacuation route and the Community of Northstar's road system. This project is designed to mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is chosen by CAL FIRE as existing within a Very High Fire Severity Area.

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under *Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources 14CCR§15307*. This project will help prevent a wildfire from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

The use of two *CAL FIRE 1038b Exemptions* to help meet the goals of the project. These Exemptions allow for the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infested, green trees and biomass which is identified as a wildfire/forest health issue.

**EXEMPTION STATUS:** Categorical Exemption(s)

14 CCR§15304, Minor Alterations to Land

14CCR§15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources

*14CCR§15304, Minor Alteration to Land* - The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or next to a major evacuation route and the Community of Northstar's road system. This project is designed to mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is chosen by CAL FIRE as existing within a Very High Fire Severity Area.

*The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources 14CCR§15307*. This project will help prevent a wildfire from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

*The use of two CAL FIRE 1038b Exemptions to help meet the goals of the project*. The Exemption allows for the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infested, green trees and biomass which is identified as a wildfire/forest health issue.

FIELD AND OFFICE REVIEW BY THE NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREST FUELS MANAGEMENT STAFF CONFIRMED THAT NO EXCEPTIONS APPLY 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, 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, OR TO UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS. DOCUMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMPLETED BY THE DEPARTMENT IS KEPT ON FILE AT NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT, STATION #31, LOCATED AT 910 NORTHSTAR DRIVE, IN TRUCKEE, CA.

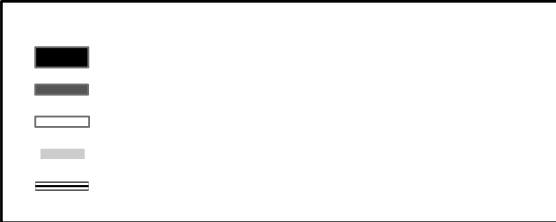
**DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING** \_\_\_\_\_

**Joe Barron (Forester, RPF# 2984)**

**DATE** **05-03-2022**

*Joe Barron*

**NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT**



**Project Scope: 45 acres (1.5 miles of Roadway)**

