

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research  
 P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk  
 County of: Placer  
3715 Atherton Road  
Rocklin, CA 95765

From: (Public Agency): Northstar Fire Department  
910 Northstar Drive  
Truckee, CA 96161

(Address)

Project Title: 2024-2025 Northstar Community Evacuation Route Fuels Reduction Project (G22-003)

Project Applicant: Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management)

Project Location - Specific:

Access if off of U.S. Highway 267 or Ridgeline Road. T17N, R17E, MDB&M.

Project Location - City: Truckee (Rural portion) Project Location - County: Placer

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

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. The project area is a part of Priority Number One in the Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management)

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: JOE BARRON (NFD FORESTER, RPF #2984)

Exempt Status: (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 14CCR§15304,14CCR§15307
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons why project is exempt:

14CCR§15304 - 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. 14CCR§15307. This project will help prevent wildfires from occurring and to protect the resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

Lead Agency  
Contact Person: Joe Barron (RPF #2984) Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 530-308-0170

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

Signature: Joe Barron (NFD) Date: 07-10-2024 Title: Forester #2984

Signed by Lead Agency  Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.  
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_



# N·C·S·D

Northstar Community Services District  
Northstar Fire Department  
910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161  
P: 530.562.1212 • F: 530.562.0702 • www.northstarscd.org

#### **Board of Directors**

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#### **General Manager**

Michael Staudenmayer

#### **Fire Chief**

Jason Gibeaut

## Notice of Exemption

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**PROJECT TITLE:** 2024-2025 Northstar Community Evacuation Route Fuels Reduction Project

**PROJECT NUMBER:** G22-003

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

**COUNTY:** Placer

**ACRES:** 44-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

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**Project Description:** This multi-year project began in 2022 and was set to expire at the end of November of 2023. Added funding has been provided to enhance the project in areas that were unable to be treated from the original funding mechanism. The original roadside forest fuels reduction project funding mechanism was from a 2021 Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation Grant Cycle. Current funding is from the Tahoe Truckee Airport District. Both funding mechanisms are driven by private funding. The project has had a focus on various methods of forest fuels reduction designed to enhance a main 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. 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 a primary evacuation route that exists outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary. The project will treat priority areas that require final treatment or maintenance on 1.5 linear miles of road, 44-acres of land and set up/support a three-hundred-foot (300') buffer for the road, (150' each side from centerline).
4. This project exists within a State Regulatory Area (SRA). CAL FIRE has appointed this project area to exist within a "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. (44)-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, hauling off-site (Truckee Landfill) and the contingency of pile burning. Hand crew treatment methods involve a seven to ten (3-5) person hand crew equipped with one to two (1-2) chainsaws, (1-2) pole saws and various hand tools such as rakes and shovels. Hand crews will focus on reducing the density of 1.0” to 14.0” 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 have a goal that ranges from 1,000 to 3,000 tons per acre. The contingency estimates are no greater than 25-burn piles. All pile burning operations and the permitting process will be through the Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCACD). For this project there will be no merchantable products collected and harvested. All material will be chipped burned or hauled to a disposal facility.
2. 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. 29-acres of contiguous flammable brush growth will have treatment by a hand crew. The hand crew will selectively thin 1.0” to 14.0” Diameter Breast Height (DBH) conifer trees, thin brush and remove downed fuels where the masticator cannot work. Additionally, there will be a target of larger dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees if they are a fire and or safety hazard. Chipping by a track chipper will ease biomass removal by laying the material on the forest floor and as a secondary benefit and broadcasting it on roadcuts to mitigate erosion control. The mastication machine will have a rotating drumhead and 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 (above 30% slope) and rocky terrain which will be 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 and to create an effort to reduce the threat of wildfire, promoting a healthy and diverse Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer Forest.

**Project Goals and Accomplishments:** This project meets Priority Number One, found in the 2022 Northstar Fire Department Community Wildfire Protection Plan, (CWPP). A copy of the Northstar CWPP can be found from the Northstar Community Services District/Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management HUB) <https://nfd-fuelsmanagement-ncsd.hub.arcgis.com/pages/community-wildfire-protection-plan>. 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 to effectively implement an upper community evacuation.
2. Reduce the threat of wildfire and support forest health by addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected 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 Categorical 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 wildfires 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.

**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 wildfires from occurring and to protect the resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

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.

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

**DATE of Filing 07-10-2024**

*Joe Barron*

**NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT  
 910 Northstar Drive (Station #31)  
 Truckee, CA 96161**