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NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

For the Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment

This notice is to inform the public and interested agencies that in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County is circulating an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment for public comment.

Project/Location: The Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment legal location is in Township 19S, Range 01E (M), Sections 31 and Township 19S, Range 02E (M), Section 36. The USGS quadrangle for the project is **Pfeiffer Point**.

Project Description:

The Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment is a fuels treatment project funded by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Prevention Grants program. The total acreage of the project is 104 acres. Treatments consist of roadside vegetation treatments and fuels reduction treatments on the ridgetop and north slope of the Rancho Rico community area. These treatments will enhance existing defensible space, allow for safer emergency ingress and egress, decrease wildfire ignition risk and rate of spread, and allow for more effective control of wildfires for a Big Sur community.

Rancho Rico Treatments

Roadside Treatments: The Rancho Rico treatments will consist of roadside mowing and/or mastication within 50 feet on either side on part of the main road system in Rancho Rico. This will be coupled with pruning and limbing of trees and shrubs within this zone, with trees being limbed up the main bole or stem to 10 feet wherever feasible. Shrubs will be pruned as needed to prevent horizontal layering of fuels, with a recommended guideline of at least five radial feet between shrubs in this zone. All mature French broom in this treatment type will be removed mechanically or by hand; cut French broom should be piled away from other vegetation and pile burned or covered with plastic sheeting until it can be disposed of. Masticated material may be distributed along the outer boundary of the treatment area to a depth of no greater than 18" in any given area. There are approximately 1.7 miles of roadside treatment areas within Rancho Rico.

Community Fuels Treatment (Zone 1: 100 to 300 feet): The defensible space treatment area surrounding homes and structures in parts of Rancho Rico will have trees limbed up to at least ten feet from the ground level starting at 100 feet out from main homes and structures to at least 300 feet out from structures. Bushes and other woody vegetation will be masticated, mowed or cut to reduce ground cover to no more than 25% cover of

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non-tree woody vegetation in Zone 1. Treatments may be implemented by tracked or wheeled skid steers in accessible parts of the treatment zone. Less accessible areas will be treated by hand crews with chainsaws, loppers and other portable equipment. Masticated, mowed or chipped material will not exceed 18" depth in any given area in this zone. Additionally, if a tree poses a safety threat to a structure or road, it will be removed in accordance with Monterey County tree removal regulations. Trees smaller than 12 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) can be removed to reduce ladder fuels where they exist. The emphasis in this zone is to provide extra security for structures, reduce fire spread rate and intensity and provide an area for fire personnel to defend Rancho Rico structures in the event of a wildfire. Individual treatments in this zone may be modified from this description depending on slope, vegetation composition and discovery of any previously unknown resource concerns.

Community Fuels Treatment (Zone 2: 300 feet and beyond): In the area greater than 300 feet from structures, trees will be limbed or pruned up to eight feet wherever feasible; this applies to all areas regardless of slope percentage. Other woody vegetation will be mowed or masticated to achieve 33% ground cover of shrubs and woody vegetation in Zone 2, with an average horizontal spacing of 2 times the average shrub height between shrubs and up to six times the average shrub height on slopes greater than 25%; masticated/mowed/mulched material resulting from treatments will not exceed 18" depth in any given area in this zone. The emphasis in this zone is to reduce ladder fuels and prevent fire moving into the canopy of trees. No trees will be removed unless they are 8 inches dbh or less and contribute to ladder fuels in this zone. In areas inaccessible to machinery, cut limbs or vegetation will be lopped and scattered, with material distributed evenly and not exceeding 18" in depth. There will be no piling of materials in either zone unless specifically requested by the landowner.

No treated vegetation will be transported offsite in this project.

Document Availability: The Initial Study/MND will be available for review at the following locations beginning on Monday, August 15th, 2022:

- Resource Conservation District of Monterey County office: 744-A LaGuardia St, Salinas, CA 93905
- Resource Conservation District of Monterey County website: <https://www.rcdmonterey.org/public-notices-alerts>

Public Review Period: The 30-day public review period for the IS/MND is from Monday, August 15th, 2022 to Wednesday, September 14th, 2022.

Comments: Any person who wishes to comment on the RCDMC's intent to adopt the MND must submit written comments no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14th, 2022. Written comments may be sent by e-mail (preferred) to jtlewis@rcdmonterey.org or by mail to: Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, 744-A LaGuardia St, Salinas, CA 93905.

Project Impacts: Based on the findings of the Initial Study, it has been determined that the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment will not have a significant effect upon the environment based on mitigating measures, which will be attached to the project as conditions of approval.

Public Hearing: A virtual public hearing will be held on August 31st, 2022 at 5:30 pm. Public comments will be heard during this session.

Public Hearing Link:

Contact jtlewis@rcdmonterey.org for meeting Zoom link.