



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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|-------------------------|--|---------------|----------------|
| PROJECT TITLE | Alta Vista Fuelbreak; Project Number 5GG20156 | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | Section 1, T05S R17E; Sections 31, 32; T04S R18; and, Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, T05S R18E, MDB&M. | COUNTY | Mariposa |
| LEAD AGENCY | California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) | | |
| CONTACT | Brian Mattos | | |
| ADDRESS | CAL FIRE/MMU; 5366 Highway 49, Mariposa CA 95338 | PHONE | (209) 742-1907 |

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Alta Vista Fuelbreak occurs on both federal (BLM) and private lands. The Alta Vista Fuelbreak has an east-west orientation and will be ~6.5 miles long, averaging 400' wide, and encompassing approximately 315 acres (221.44 acres on Private Lands and 93.80 acres on BLM Lands) between 2500-4200' elevation. The fuelbreak will follow the Alta Vista Ridgeline, then travel through, and directly protect, the communications and broadcasting tower complex atop the Mt. Bullion Knob and terminate its western extent at the CYA Road adjacent to the CAL FIRE Mt. Bullion Conservation Camp. The project area includes 41 Assessor's Parcels. The project area vegetation is primarily oak woodland, with some pine trees, shrubs, and grassland understory. The vegetation community is well adapted to fire activity and recovery. The vegetation community can recover quickly from mastication treatment; maintenance of the fuelbreak is then a high priority. While management goals on private lands vary, prevalent is the prevention of catastrophic wildfire.

The silvicultural strategy is to retain healthy trees to create a shaded fuelbreak condition with tree crowns spaced for full utilization of available sunlight, water and nutrients. This treatment will significantly reduce the opportunity for a crown fire. The majority of dead and decadent stands of shrubs/brush and other ladder fuels will be removed. Resulting logs that are large/long enough to truck may be removed from the site and delivered to a biomass facility. Treatment methods include: **Mechanical Mastication**: A mechanical masticator would be utilized to grind, chip, and shred vegetation on site. Equipment selected to carry out this task is designed to minimize ground disturbance such as tracked rather than rubber-tired vehicles and articulating booms. Multiple cutting attachments will be used to adapt to the fuel type and terrain. Ladder fuels will be eliminated in the project area, minimizing the risk of crown fire. The average depth of masticated material will be 2-7 inches deep; this mulch layer will assist in erosion control, soil moisture retention and will also suppress vegetative resprouting. **Manual Mastication**: The project area contains some areas – particularly on slopes over 45% – that would be constructed by a hand crew (i.e., a California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) inmate crew or a private contractor). In addition to using chainsaws and other hand tools, crews would feed cut vegetation into a rubber-tracked brush chipper or similar chipper staged on existing roads and trails. The chipped vegetation would be broadcast over the project area which will aid in the suppression of undesirable brush sprouting. As an alternative where access for a chipper is not attainable, fuels may be reduced manually via "lop and scatter" of the material (vegetation is cut into short strips and dispersed evenly over the treatment area).

EXEMPTION STATUS

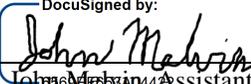
- Categorical Exemption Type/Section:
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
Public Resources Code Section 4799.05(d)(1)
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. All BLM Alta Vista Fuelbreak project activities are included in the Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment for Alta Vista Fuelbreak. The BLM Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, populations and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/ traffic, utilities and service systems, or to wildfire. In addition, field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project.

Documentation of the environmental review is kept on file at Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit Headquarters in Mariposa, CA.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:

 John Mahrin, Assistant Deputy Director Date
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 9/8/2022