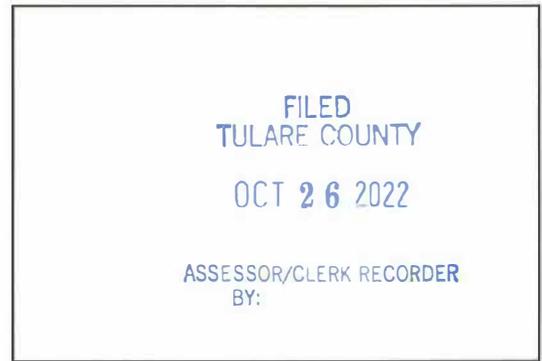


Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

- To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814
- Tulare County Clerk
Room 105, Courthouse
221 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, California 93291



Date filed with the Tulare County Clerk

Lead Agency: Tulare County Resource Management Agency
5961 South Mooney Blvd. 559-624-7000
Visalia, CA 93277 *h.guerra@tularecounty-ca.gov*

Applicant(s): Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Grants Unit
5961 South Mooney Boulevard Ph: 559-624-7000
Visalia, CA 93277

Project Title: Sequoia National Forest and Forest Hazard Mitigation Project
Project Location - Specific: County M216 (Redwood Drive), Forest Road 20S03 (Fox Farm Road), and Alder Drive
Project Location- Section, Township, Range: See Project Location Map (see Attachment) incorporated herein by reference
Project Location - City: N/A Project Location - County: Tulare

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Tulare County and the USDA, Forest Service entered into a Master Stewardship Agreement for the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument to achieve land management goals for the national forest; and meet local and rural community needs to mitigate hazards and improve watershed and forest health.

The project's purpose is to improve overall forest and watershed health by reducing the dangers created by recent catastrophic wildfires and hazards to public safety in Tulare County. The project locations have widespread tree mortality hazards within national forest lands on critical transportation corridors and critical habitat. In 2020, the Castle Fire burned within the project. The next year, in 2021 the Windy Fire destroyed 97,000 acres, in the Project area. Both fires left very hazardous conditions for personnel, residents, and visitors accessing and traveling across the Sequoia National Forest. The fires also destroyed important habitat and environmental infrastructure. Due to the increased risks, California and Tulare County have proclaimed states of emergency for tree mortality paving the way for a united effort to implement full scale, immediate and aggressive measures to undertake efforts to remove dead or dying trees to restore forest and watershed health.

New growth in the burn scars have created conditions for invasive species to root and a lack of defensible space to protect against the spread of wildfires across the landscape; thus, limiting protection of key environmental infrastructure as well as personnel, roadway travelers, and communities along the main access roads. Not only does this project mitigate safety hazards for forest personnel working on habitat restoration work, but it will also address evacuation route capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios.

The project would affect three County roads: County M216 (Redwood Drive – 5.7 miles), Forest Road 20S03 (Fox Farm Road- 3.43 miles), and Alder Drive (.16 miles). Approx. 9.29 miles (or 409.8 project acres). It is anticipated that the scope of the project would include: 1) Logging (cut, skid, deck)/trucking; 2) Fuel Treatment & Biomass Removal; and 3) Road Maintenance (incident damage regrading of dirt road on Fox Farm), clean culverts/ditches, clean debris.

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(c));
- General Rule: CEQA guidelines 15061 (b)(3)
- Categorical Exemption: **CEQA Guidelines Class 1 Section 15301 Existing Facilities (c)**
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons why project/activity is exempt: The proposed Project is excluded or exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) on the grounds that the proposed Project is consistent with the following:

Public Resources Code Section 21080, subdivision (b) (4) (Emergency), and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15269, subdivision (c)

(Emergency).

The Project addresses the risk and potential impact of wildfire and dead and dying trees Countywide that pose a threat to public health and safety within National Forest lands on critical transportation corridors along County M216 (Redwood Drive), Forest Road 20S03 (Fox Farm Road), and Alder Drive.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15359, an "Emergency" applies when a project is necessary "...to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to life, health, property or essential public services." As such, preventive efforts would be undertaken to remove dead or dying trees to protect essential public services (such as accessible roads) prior to the occurrence of catastrophic wildfire.

Also, this action is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 Class 1, Existing Facilities (c) Existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities through the application of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.4, Application by Public Agencies, whereby the County of Tulare Board of Supervisors adopted an exemption for the removal of trees or limbs which are dead or diseased or for traffic safety of the aforementioned facilities per the Tulare County Guidelines for the Implementation of California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, Section 300 (c)(5). Therefore, the application of CEQA Section 15301 and Tulare County Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA of 1970, Section 300 (c)(5) are applicable and appropriate for this proposed Project

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Tulare, Resource Management Agency

Project Planner/Representative: Reed Schenke. - RMA Director Area Code/Telephone: 559-624-7000

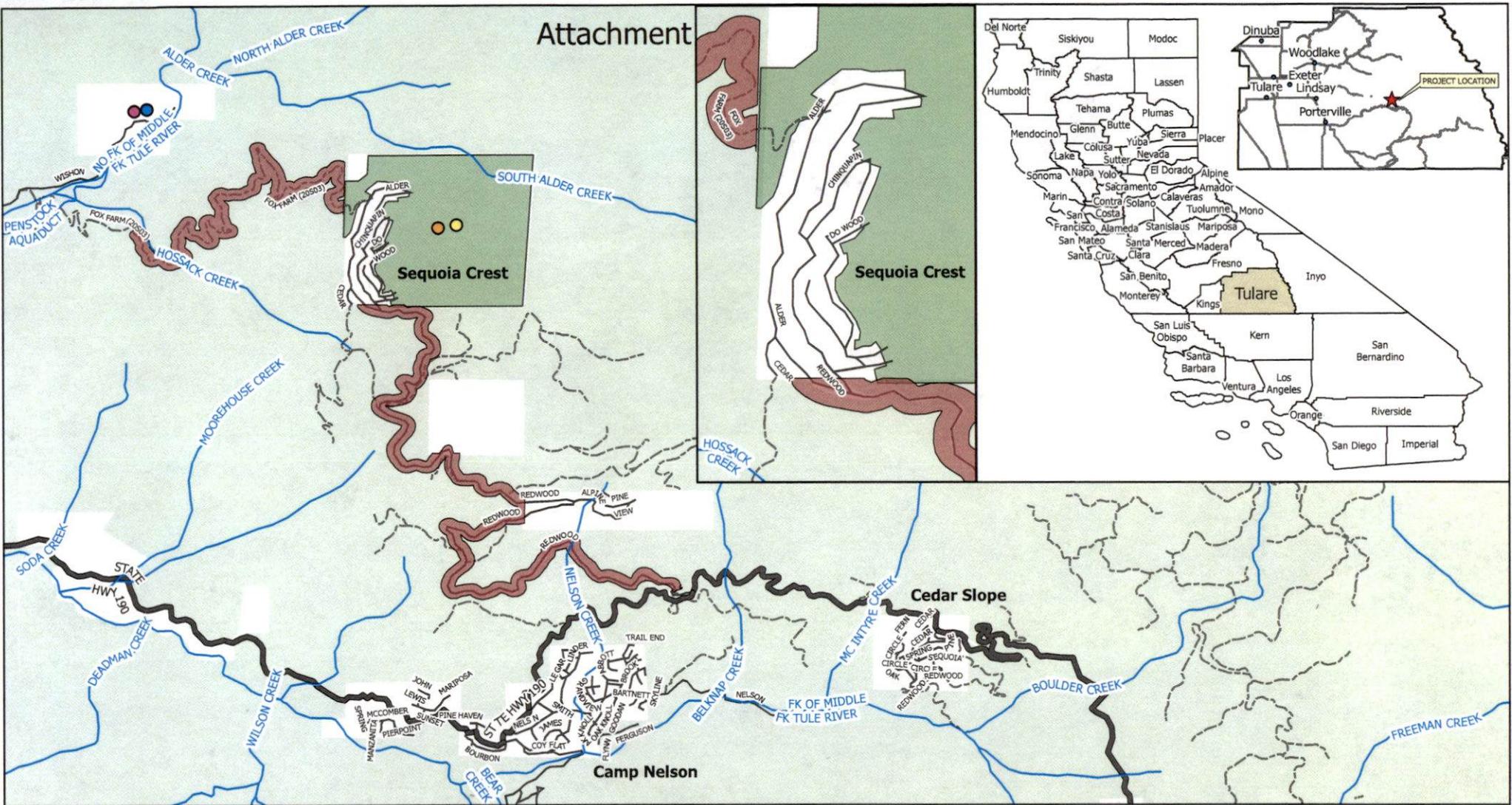
Signature:  _____ Date: 10/25/22 Title: Chief Environmental Planner
Hector Guerra

Signature:  _____ Date: 10/26/22 Title: Environmental Assessment Officer
Reed Schenke RMA Director

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: N/A

Signed by Applicant



Grant No. 1562 - Sequoia National Forest Wildfire and Forest Hazard Mitigation Project

USDA Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest

Legend

- Project Area / SNC Grants
- USFS Roads
- Rivers
- Doyle Springs Fuel Reduction Project
- Sequoia Crest Fuel Reduction Project

Other Projects

- 2018 Grant Fuel reduction Project
- Chipping & Skid Steer Project

Land Ownership

- Save the Redwoods League
- United States Forest Service

