



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE:	TUD Critical District Facilities Fuels Reduction Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	T1N, R16E portions of Sections 8 and 9; T2N, R16E portions of Sections 6, 18, 28 and 33; T2N, R15E portions of Sections 1 and 13, MDBM.	COUNTY	Tuolumne
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Gary Whitson, Unit Forester	PHONE	(209) 533-2265
ADDRESS	785 Mountain Ranch Rd San Andreas, CA 95249		

Project Description:

The proposed project will reduce hazardous fuel loading around seven water treatment and water storage facilities operated by the Tuolumne Utilities District in Tuolumne County. The seven sites consist of the Tuolumne Water Treatment Plant, Rainbow Reservoir (tank), Ponderosa Hills Water Treatment Plant, Crystal Falls Water Treatment Plant, Falls Tank, Cedar Ridge Water Treatment Plant, and Oakhaven Tank. The objective of the project is to provide protection to vulnerable district infrastructure by reducing the amount of flammable vegetation from a 200 to 300-foot radius around the various facilities. The facilities are all located in urban interface settings and are adjacent to residences. Vegetation at each site varies. The lower elevation sites are dominated by interior live oak and California gray pine with an understory of chamise, manzanita, toyon, poison oak, buckeye, and ceanothus. The Crystal Falls Water Treatment Plant and Cedar Ridge Water Treatment Plant are Sierra mixed conifer with an understory of conifer, manzanita and live oak. Surface and ladder fuels will be reduced or modified by mastication, chipping, or piling and burning. Mastication may be conducted by a variety of track laying type tractors. Hand work for chipping, as well as piling and burning will be conducted by hand crews using chainsaws and other hand tools. Trees less than 12-inches in diameter at breast height (dbh), surface fuels and ladder fuels will be removed to achieve a target residual tree spacing of 20-feet between stems. Residual trees will be pruned to a height of 8-feet above ground level. Dead trees of any size may be removed and treated by mastication, chipping, or piling and burning. The reduction in vegetation will create an open and parklike shaded fuel beak condition that will minimize fire behavior and create a stand structure that is resistant to stand replacing fires.

EXEMPTION STATUS

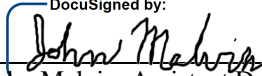
- Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Minor Alterations to Land, Class 4, §15304
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits under portions of 15304- Minor Alterations to Land. The project will consist of removing surface and ladder fuels from around critical water treatment and water storage facilities in Tuolumne County. The project will create an open and park like condition around each site. The project will not involve the removal of mature or scenic trees. Stand health will be improved by removing dead, dying, and suppressed trees and brush, and increasing growing space for mature, healthy trees. Sensitive species will not be impacted by the proposed project. The project was designed to avoid adverse impacts to watercourses. Mastication and chipping will leave a layer of organic material that will provide for excellent erosion control. The project was designed to avoid adverse impacts to historical resources. The project was designed to protect critical water treatment and water storage infrastructure from wildfire and will make communities in Tuolumne County more resilient regarding wildfires.

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that 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, 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. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at San Andreas.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:

John Melvin, Assistant Deputy Director Date 11/1/2022
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection