

Notice of Exemption

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Item 9.0

Post Office Box 1450 · 30 Horseshoe Lane · Weaverville, CA 96093-1450

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|-------------------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| PROJECT TITLE | Travis Ranch Fire Recovery and Forest Health Improvement Project [21-FH-HUU-023] | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | Located in portions of Sections 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 29 T4S, R8E, HB&M; Sections 3, 4, 11, 14, 16, 17, T5S, R8E, HB&M, Section 31, T26N, R12W, MDB&M, Section 6, 7, 8, 16, 17, T25N, R12 W, MDB&M. Trinity County, CA. | COUNTY | Trinity |
| LEAD AGENCY | Trinity County Resource Conservation District (The District) | | |
| CONTACT ADDRESS | Amelia Fleitz, Watershed Program Manager. afleitz@tcrd.net PO Box, Weaverville, CA 96093 | PHONE | 530-623-6004 |

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

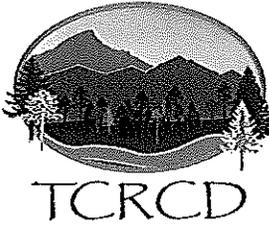
The Travis Ranch will implement fuels reduction, oak woodland restoration and reforestation activities on approximately 1,877 Acres in the headwaters of the North Fork Eel River. This project occurs within the scar of the August Wildfire Complex of 2020 and seeks to restore and improve fire effected timberlands and native oak woodlands. Treatment prescriptions include manual thinning, pruning, hand-piling and burning, and tree planting. Thinning will remove live and dead shrubs and small trees up to 10" in diameter to reduce fuel loading and improve forest health. This project area may be maintained with the same treatments for up to 20 years.

Timberlands & mixed conifer-hardwood forests: Reducing the accumulation of dead woody material is a critical management priority in the project area because residual fuels will act to increase the overall severity of fire events in the future. Salvage logging operations were conducted on the Travis Ranch and adjacent BLM lands in 2021 to begin addressing this need. The cut, pile, and burn treatments proposed constitute the next important step. They are designed to protect stands by lowering the height of live flame and overall heat output of any subsequent fire. Thinning and pruning in selected stands will reduce fuel loads and remove ladder fuels from stands. Thinning stands of smaller diameter trees and pruning limbs on fire damaged trees will reduce stand density, alleviate competitive pressures, and improve spacing. Retained trees will thus achieve larger diameters in less time, have greater ability to sequester carbon, and be more resilient to future wildfire. Combined with reforestation, these treatments will promote a well-stocked, diverse forestland that acts as a carbon sink and supports watershed health within these important headwaters.

Native oak woodlands: The project area includes a rich assortment of native oak woodlands stands dominated by Oregon white oak and California black oak. Proposed fuels reduction and restoration activities in such selected oak woodlands will promote fire resiliency, biodiversity, and contribute to restoring ecological functions within those stands, including landscape-level wildlife/habitat benefits. Some stands of oak that were impacted by the August Complex have benefitted in part through the burning of some encroaching, invasive Douglas-fir trees and associated understory brush. However, the accumulation of dead fuel material within these stands makes them vulnerable to future fires. The proposed clean-up of dead and dying material, brush removal in certain locations, and removal of remaining small diameter Douglas-firs in these stands will help to further restore the oak woodlands to un-encroached conditions.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 § 15304
Minor Alterations to Land
 - 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))
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REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

It has been determined that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. This project is consistent with the requirements stated in Section 15304; Minor Alterations to land, and will have no significant environmental impacts 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.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

x 

Kelly Sheen
District Manager