



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

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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|-------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|
| PROJECT TITLE | Laughlin Peak Road Access Maintenance and Tower Clearance | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | T17N; R13W; Sections 14 - 16; Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian | COUNTY | Mendocino |
| LEAD AGENCY | California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) | | |
| CONTACT | Julie Rhoads | | |
| ADDRESS | CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit - VMP 802 North Main Street Fort Bragg, CA 95437 | PHONE | 707-671-3357 |

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is to improve the ingress and egress of fire engines, reduce wildfire risk to the state-owned Laughlin Peak radio tower, and aid in fire suppression activities through fuel reduction treatment on 35 acres, approximately 7 miles southeast of the town of Willits in Mendocino County, California. The tower and surrounding vegetation was heavily impacted by the Redwood Complex Fire in 2017. The project will remove shrubs, standing dead trees, and thin areas of live trees (<10" DBH) within the road easement (10-20 feet on either side) along 4.2 miles of road, starting at Laughlin Peak Road at Highway 101, ending at the Laughlin Peak Radio Tower. Fuel reduction work will be conducted within an additional 300' buffer zone around the tower on State property. Larger live trees, (>10" DBH), with low overhanging limbs, will be pruned with a pole saw up to 14' from the ground. Dead/dying or hazard trees of any size that pose a safety hazard to the roadway, people, or other infrastructure will be removed. Associated slash (limbs/tops <12" diameter) will be carried to a chipper, masticated, or piled and burned. Logs will be bucked and left on site. Operations will be conducted by hand crews, chippers, and machinery with mastication attachments (chippers and machinery will not leave the roadway). This project includes long-term maintenance of fuel loading and hazard tree removal as necessary.

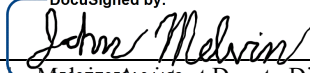
EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type and 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))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The project meets the requirements of a CEQA Article 19 Class 4 Categorical exemption "Minor Alterations to Land" (Section 15304, Public Resources Code) as the proposed fuel management activities entail understory brush removal, 10 "BDH or less tree removal, thinning, pruning, chipping, masticating on developed roadway, pile burning, and dead/tree removal to improve access and reduce volume of flammable vegetation encroaching state-owned radio tower. As such, CAL FIRE 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, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities, and service systems, or to wildfire. No exceptions apply (Section 15300.2) which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit, 802 N. Main Street. Attn. VMP Coordinator.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:

John Melvin, Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

7/18/2023
Date