

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 222
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
 County Clerk, County of _____

From: University of California, San Diego
Campus Planning, MC 0074
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, California 92093-0074

Project Title – Mesa Housing Emergency Eucalyptus Tree Removal
Project Location – UC San Diego East Campus – Mesa Graduate Student Apartments
Project Location – City: San Diego
Project Location – County: San Diego

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project (Project Description): UC San Diego intends to remove approximately 260 eucalyptus trees in the southern portion of the East Campus, at the Mesa Graduate Housing Neighborhood, including the Central and South Mesa Apartments, Early Childhood Education Center, and immediately adjacent properties. See Figure 1, General Project Location, on the following page.

The tree removal is proposed as an emergency project to reduce significant and imminent risk to life and property, including student housing facilities, a child daycare facility, and their occupants. An emergency event in late June 2023 involving a tall eucalyptus tree falling directly onto a residential building, breaking into the roof and ceiling, has led the university to immediately study the risk of other similar trees in the neighborhood. The university has found that there are approximately 260 other in the neighborhood that are of similar size, height, and age located near a parking lot, playground, childcare facility, or housing unit. The tree removal project will eliminate the risk of these trees falling and potentially causing bodily injury such as broken bones, paraplegia, quadriplegia, paralysis, traumatic brain injury and death, and property damage to both UC San Diego's and residents' property. The emergency work is anticipated to begin in late July or August 2023 and be completed by the end of 2023 or early 2024.

None of the trees to be removed are located within a designated/protected open space area, and none are located within a designated public view/viewshed. No native trees or vegetation will be removed. For any work occurring during the raptor and passerine bird nesting seasons (between January 15 and July 31, and between February 15 and August 31, respectively), nesting bird surveys will be conducted within 7 days prior to each tree removal to ensure no tree is removed that contains an active nest. Any trees with identified active nests will be protected in place until the young have fledged or the nest is otherwise deemed inactive. No-activity buffers appropriate for individual nesting species identified will be implemented to maintain no impact to nesting birds.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: University of California, San Diego

Parties Undertaking Project: University of California, San Diego

Exempt Status:

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080 (b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 15269(c))
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304. Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: 20180.35
- General Exemption (Sec. 15061(b)(3)).

Reason Why Project is Exempt: The project qualifies for Statutory Exemption Section 15269, Emergency Projects, under c) specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency. The project also qualifies as a Categorical Exemption under Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land because it would not remove health, mature, scenic trees. All trees to be removed are non-native, not located within a designated open space, and not within a designated public scenic viewshed. None of the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2 apply.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Lauren Lievers
Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 949-939-3076

Signature: 

Title: Principal Environmental Planner
Date: July 20, 2023

Signed by Lead Agency
 Signed by Applicant

Figure 1: General Project Location

The project is within UC San Diego's East Campus, specifically in the Central and South Mesa Apartment neighborhoods and immediately adjacent property. The project would generally occur within the approximately 45-acre blue polygon shown on the map below.

