



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

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	Santa Margarita Sawyer Training		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	Three locations northeast and south of Santa Margarita, CA.	<b>COUNTY</b>	San Luis Obispo
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
<b>CONTACT</b>	Zach Cipriano		
<b>ADDRESS</b>	CAL FIRE – San Luis Obispo Unit Headquarters 1150 Laurel Ln. (STE 175) San Luis Obispo, CA 93401	<b>PHONE</b>	(805)903-3492

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) San Luis Obispo Unit (SLU) proposes to conduct sawyer training, including tree felling, within designated areas on the private Santa Margarita Ranch property in an area previously affected by the 2015 Cuesta Fire northeast of and south of Santa Margarita, California. The project site spans approximately 100 acres on private property, including a series of interconnected farm/ranch roads connecting separate tree felling sites. The project area is dispersed across grass/oak woodland, with gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) stands intermixed. These gray pine stands, and individual gray pine species, will be the subject of the felling operations.

This project will serve as a chainsaw sawyer training location for tree felling of dying, and/or diseased gray pines averaging 16" diameter at breast height (DBH) or less, across an average slope of less than 20 percent. Individual pine trees will be specifically chosen for removal that meet the above requirements. Designated trees will be felled, limbed, and bucked in place utilizing handheld chainsaws and pole saws. Slash produced from tree felling and bucking activity will be scattered and left on the ground within the project area. No protected status flora or fauna have been observed at the tree felling locations. No sensitive cultural resources have been observed or documented within the project boundaries. No excavation or ground disturbance will occur.

### EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4 14CCR§15304 Class 4 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

This project fits under 14CCR§15304 Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land. This project will treat a very small/specific area and is designed to minimize the risks and hazards associated with potential wildfire and threat to natural resources, while providing important training to operational personnel. Through project design, these treatments will be important in protecting first responders and the public in the event of wildfire. Thinning of diseased or dying pine species in this area will allow for the restoration of grasslands, improve oak woodland conditions, and allow for more forage for wildlife in the area. The entirety of this project will occur on private land and will not be visible to the public.

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 CAL FIRE SLU Headquarters in San Luis Obispo.

### DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

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7/25/2023

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