



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	CDFW Wister Unit – Invasive Vegetation Management with Prescribed Fire		
PROJECT LOCATION	Sections 9, 10, 14, 15, 22, 23, 25, 26, 35, 36, T. 10S., R. 13E. and Sections 1, 12, T. 11S., R. 13E. and Section 6, T. 11S., R. 14E., SBBM	COUNTY	San Diego
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Cheyenne Borello		
ADDRESS	CAL FIRE – San Diego Unit 2249 Jamacha Road El Cajon, CA 92019	PHONE	(619) 672-8165

Project Description:

CAL FIRE, at the request of and in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), proposes using periodic broadcast burning to assist with the control of invasive plant species at CDFW's Imperial Wildlife Area - Wister Unit, located directly southeast of the Salton Sea, five miles northwest of the rural community of Niland. Phased broadcast burning will be implemented over time in specific locations of the property where CDFW has identified that control of tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.) and cattails (*Typha* sp.) is warranted. The burn units will be confined to the existing small reservoirs and shallow field/pond areas that vary in size from 5 to 50 acres and are separated by roads and levees. Project activities would utilize these existing roads and levees as control lines which may require mechanical brushing and/or scraping depending on their conditions at the time of site preparation. Potential project treatment areas could occur throughout the approximately 5,243-acre Wister Unit, with the goal of treating between 200 to 500 acres per year with prescribed fire. Determining the locations, size, and timing of burns will be in cooperation with CDFW staff and concurrent with environmental parameters. Treatment areas will be drained and dry prior to burning. A site-specific burn plan will be prepared and approved by CAL FIRE San Diego Unit management prior to burning. All burning will be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of a burn permit issued by the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District.

The proposed project is located on properties owned and managed by CDFW. The Wister Unit consists of 5,243 acres located in an isolated area of northwestern Imperial County. The Wister Unit was established in 1954 for the development of waterfowl habitat, to help alleviate crop depredations and to provide a public venue for hunting waterfowl. The development consists of a series of reservoirs and shallow field/pond areas separated by levee and canal systems that are seasonally flooded. The Wister Unit is situated between 200 and 230 feet below sea level in the Colorado Desert and is located on relatively level topography. It is a heavily disturbed area that is actively managed and is surrounded by agricultural cultivation.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 15304, Minor Alterations to the 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 is consistent with one Categorical Exemptions as identified in the CEQA Guidelines: Class 4 pertaining to Minor Alterations to the Land. After completing an environmental analysis at the Unit level, the Department has determined this project will have no significant impacts on the environment. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which 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, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities, and service systems or to wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is retained on file at CAL FIRE SDU Headquarters in El Cajon.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:

David Fulcher

9/26/2023

David Fulcher, Southern Region Chief Date
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection