

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: X Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

 X County Clerk
County of Butte
25 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

FROM: Butte County Planning Division
7 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

Project Title: Butte County Defensible Space and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program (BCFSC Program), CEQA24-0001

Assessor's Parcel No.: Numerous

Applicant: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Project Location-Specific: The project area is within the eastern portion of Butte County, excluding the Town of Paradise. Activities would be located on the homesites of up to 1,400 program participants and 1,200 homesites with standing or downed fire-hazard trees located across the wildland-urban-interface (WUI) area that are within 500 feet of a main evacuation route. Many participating homesites may have both activities conducted on the property.

Project Location-City: Numerous

Project Location-County: Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The scope of the program is to reduce future fires' rate of spread, intensity, and hazard to homes and infrastructure. The program will accomplish this by creating defensible space and fuels reduction. The program will be available to participants across the wildland-urban-interface (WUI) area, as long as their homes are within 500' of a main evacuation route. This ensures that work done under the grant will achieve the dual purpose of creating defensible space for homeowners while also improving evacuation route safety during wildfire events. Work can and will be done in any of the 25 Butte County WUI communities, with the exception of the Town of Paradise (which has received its own Hazard Mitigation grant funding) because all Butte County WUI communities are equally at risk and in need of mitigation.

Homesites are eligible for the program if they are within the "Moderate to high-risk zone" (as defined by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) of the WUI area and also within 500' of a main evacuation route.

After site identification is complete, defensible space inspections will be offered to qualifying homesites. Specific defensible space clearance treatments, such as hand-cut-and-chip or lop-and-scatter, will be recommended on a case-by-case basis, and landowners will have the option to participate in the Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC) defensible space clearance program or to do the work themselves. Landowners will also have the option to participate in the BCFSC fuels reduction program (fire hazard/large tree removal) if their properties have fire hazard trees 10" in diameter and larger. All these treatment methods are intended to eliminate vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels so that the rate and magnitude of wildfire spread will be less severe during future events. The defensible space and fuels reduction programs include the removal, utilization, and/or disposal of timber and vegetative waste from fire-damaged areas; removal is important because woody debris and downed trees pose a threat to people, infrastructure, and private property by contributing to overall fuel loads. Woody debris that is not chipped on-site will be transported to either a biomass-to-energy facility or a local staging area for disposal.

The program will progress in two phases:

Phase 1 includes assembling the team, conducting community outreach, identifying qualifying properties, obtaining Right-of-Entry forms from landowners as they voluntarily join the project, and completing the Benefit-Cost Analysis. Phase one will also involve environmental review and clearance.

Phase 2 will include the implementation of the project on the qualifying and approved properties. Implementation includes defensible space clearance such as cutting and chipping brush and fuels reduction such as removal and disposal of fire hazard trees over 10" in diameter.

Name of Person or Agency Approving Project: Butte County Zoning Administrator

Exempt Status: (Check One)

- Ministerial (Sec. 15073)
- Declared Emergency [Sec. 15071(a)]
- Emergency Project [Sec. 15071 (b) and (c)]
- X Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 15304 Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutorily Exempt – 15274(a)
- Review for Exemption – 15061(b)(3)

Reasons why project is exempt: The project is classified as a Class 4 Categorical Exemption, under CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land. The project is a hazardous fuel management program activity that consists of minor treatments to vegetation in the form of hand-cutting, piling, and onsite chipping of brush, small trees, and standing or downed burned trees (10 inches in diameter and larger) that are determined to be a fire hazard by a certified arborist or registered professional forester to be removed, within 100 feet of existing structures for the creation of defensible space. The activities do not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species, or sedimentation to surface waters. No vegetation removal would be performed near any wetlands, ponds, or rivers. An RPF would identify and establish a minimum 25-foot to 150-foot buffer around these resources, dependent upon stream class and slope, as recommended by the NMFS for the State Hazard Tree Removal Program (NMFS 2022).

Contact Person: Rowland Hickel, Senior Planner

Telephone: (530) 552-3684

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?
Yes _____ No _____

Date Received For Filing: _____

1/22/2024
Date Signed


Dan Breedon, Planning Manager
Department of Development Services

DECLARATION OF FEES DUE
(California Fish and Game Code Section 711.4)

NAME AND ADDRESS OF APPLICANT

Butte County Fire Safe Council
5619 Back Olive Drive
Paradise, CA 95969

FILING NO. _____

Project Title/File Number: Butte County Defensible Space and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program, CEQA24-0001

CLASSIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT:

1. NOTICE OF EXEMPTION/STATEMENT OF EXEMPTION
 A. Statutorily or Categorically Exempt
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee
 B. De Minimis Impact - Certificate of Fee Exemption
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

2. NOTICE OF DETERMINATION - FEE REQUIRED
 A. Negative Declaration
\$2,764.00 State Filing Fee
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee
 B. Environmental Impact Report
\$3,839.25 State Filing Fee
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

3. OTHER (Specify) _____
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

PAYMENT / NON-PAYMENT OF FEES:

1. PAYMENT: The above fees have been paid.

2. NON-PAYMENT: The above fees are required. Not paid.

Chief Planning Official

By: Paula M. Daneluk, AICP, Development Services
Title: Director
Lead Agency: Butte County Department of
Development Services
Date: January 22, 2024

TWO COPIES OF THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED WITH ALL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS FILED WITH THE BUTTE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE.

THREE COPIES OF ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION ARE REQUIRED FOR FILING.

ALL APPLICABLE FEES ARE DUE AND PAYABLE PRIOR TO THE FILING OF ANY ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT WITH THE BUTTE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE. MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE COUNTY OF BUTTE.