

NOTICE OF CEQA EXEMPTION

To: Lassen County Clerk
220 South Lassen Street
Susanville, CA 96130

From: Honey Lake Valley RCD
170 Russel Avenue
Susanville, CA 96130
(530) 257-7271

Date: 3/28/2024

Project Title:

Mountain Meadows Restoration Project

Project Location:

Lassen and Modoc Counties, Township 31N, Range 16E, Sections 21 and 28 (Deep Creek); Township 31N, Range 16E, Sections 14, 22 and 23 (Five Springs); Township 32N, Range 16E, Section 16 (Hall Spring); Township 49N, Range 6E, Section 11 (Harvey Jones Butte); Township 32N, Range 13E, Section 28 (Sheep Corral); Township 32N, Range 14E, Section 34vc (Snowstorm 40); Township 32N, Range 15E, Section 16 (Snowstorm Section), Township 32N, Range 15E, Section 36 (Staging Area for Hall Springs Sling Operations), Township 35N, Range 13E, Sections 27 and 34 (Termo); Township 32N, Range 14E, Section 9 (Whitehorse Spring). See Figure 1.

Project Description:

The Mountain Meadows Restoration Project includes restoration of stream and meadow habitat and the ecological communities they support. The project includes installation of virtual and pipe-fencing, low-tech, process-based restoration (LTPBR) techniques, and juniper removal to achieve enhancement of riparian and meadow habitat across the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Willow Creek Wildlife Area and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ownerships. A description of each project activity is included below.

Hall Springs Pipe Fencing Installation

Livestock exclusion fencing will be installed around approximately 27 acres of the Hall Spring system. Approximately 4,500 linear feet of fence will be installed. Fence material will be transported to the site by helicopter. The helicopter staging area will be located north of Shinn Ranch Road and is less than one acre. Fence material will be transported to the staging area in trucks and then sling loaded by helicopter to the Hall Springs installation site.

Virtual Fence (Vence) Antennae Installation

Three virtual fence (Vence) antennas will be installed to improve grazing management over three public grazing allotments totaling 33,599 acres and an additional 2,753 acres of wetland within the CDFW Willow Creek Wildlife Area. Virtual fence technology allows a user to designate specific land areas via computer applications where livestock may be confined within or excluded from. The virtual fence system used for this project transmits directions to collars worn by the animal using a combination of satellite GPS and radio signals. Vence

technology has the potential to provide a more precise, flexible, cost-effective, and environmentally neutral tool for controlling the distribution of cattle on range.

Great Basin Springs Parcels Juniper Removal

Phase I juniper will be removed from four parcels(Whitehorse Spring, Snowstorm Section, Snowstorm 40, and Termo) totaling 830 acres. Phase 1 encroachment is characterized by small, scattered trees that are encroaching to sagebrush habitat important for sage grouse. Juniper trees will be cut using loppers, chainsaws or hand saws. Branches and boles will be cut to 3- to 4-foot lengths. Material will be dispersed onsite. Dispersed material will not be piled on top of other vegetation. Old growth juniper trees will not be treated. Vehicles and/or utility terrain vehicles (UTVs) will be used to access work areas will be operated on existing roads where feasible.

Stream Restoration

Stream restoration activities will occur at three stream and stream system locations: The Five Springs restoration project area is 96 acres. The Deep Creek and Sheep Corral stream restoration project areas are 16 and 15 acres, respectively. Within these areas, low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR) structures will be installed to restore riparian areas by elevating stream beds, decreasing erosion, and stabilizing head cuts. Revegetation will also occur using plantings and seeding of native species, mostly using willow stakes. Ground disturbance will not occur within the entire project area, only where materials are gathered, vegetation is planted or LTPBR structures are installed.

Exempt Status (Guidelines Section and Class): Categorical Exemption:

15304 (Class 4), which exempts minor alterations to land

Reason Why Project is Exempt:

The project qualifies for the Minor Alterations to Land (Class 4) Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 which consists of minor public or private alterations in the conditions of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Project alterations to land will be limited to installation of T-posts to secure fencing and Vence antennae, minimal ground leveling or rock removal for antennae installation, as well as small areas of ground disturbance to gather material and install LTPBR structures for stream restoration. The project includes harvesting of juniper, willow, and other woody vegetation to construct LTPBR structures as well as removal of small, scattered juniper trees. The project does not include removal of old-growth juniper or other healthy mature, scenic trees.


Review of biological and cultural resources within the activity areas have been completed by qualified professionals and findings included in reports provided to Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District (HLVRCD). Activities will be conducted to avoid impacts to cultural resources and significant impacts to biological resources. The project will not result in a significant cumulative impact or significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The project site is not within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. The project is not located on a hazardous waste site compile pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The project will not result in a substantial adverse change in the significant of a historical resource.

Public Agencies that will be involved in the Project:

Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Bureau of Land Management
United States Forest Service

Lead Agency Contact Person:


Kelsey Siemer, District Manager
Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District
(530) 257-7271

Signature:  _____ Date: 3/28/2024
Jesse Claypool, Chairman
Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District

ATTEST:

I, Kelsey Siemer, Clerk of the Board of Directors, Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District, do hereby certify that the Honey Lake Valley Resources Conservation District approved this Notice of Exemption on March 28th, 2024 by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 Abstentions: _____
Noes: _____ Absent: 1

 _____

Kelsey Siemer, Clerk of the Board of Directors
Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District

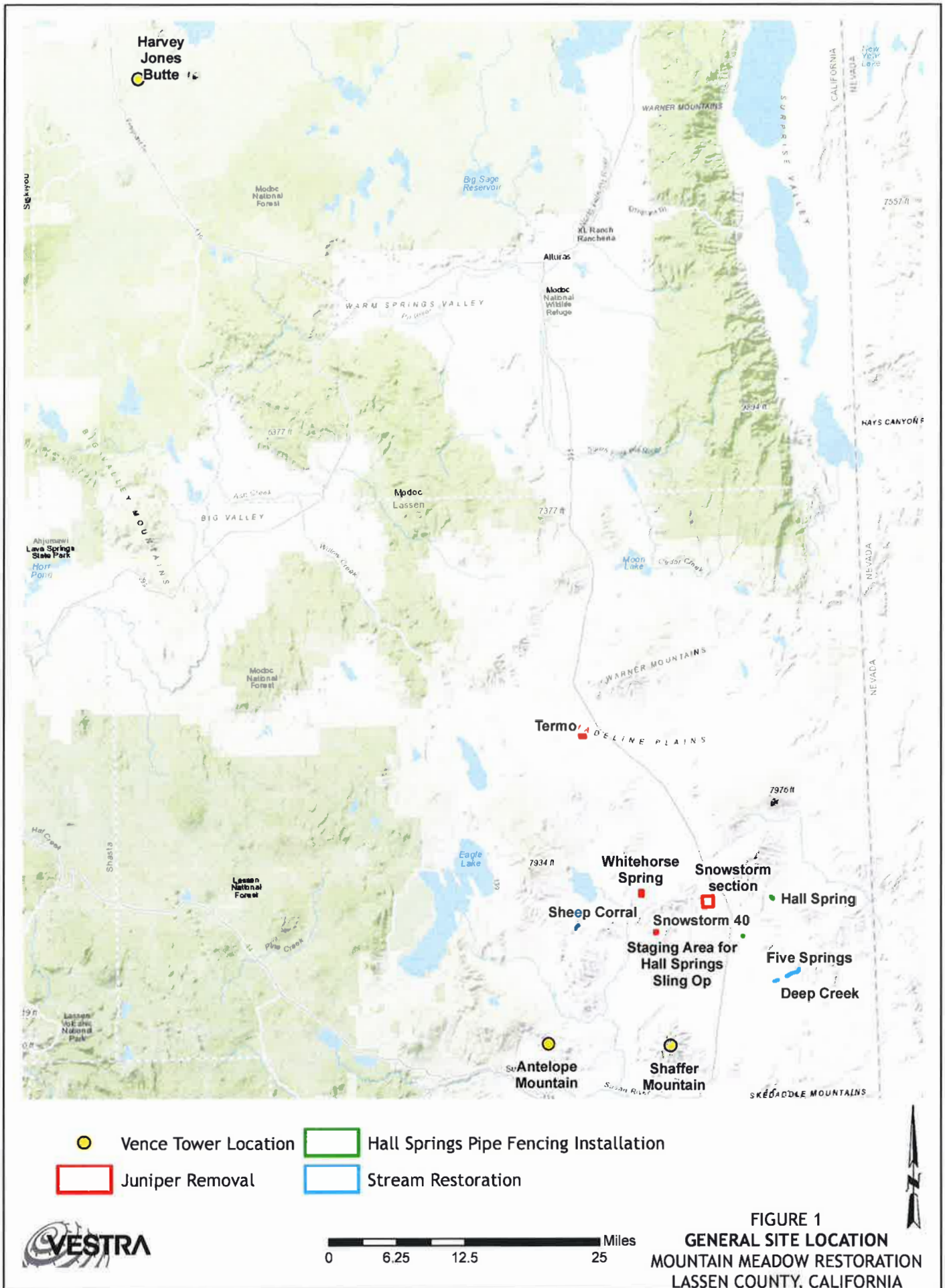


FIGURE 1
GENERAL SITE LOCATION
MOUNTAIN MEADOW RESTORATION
LASSEN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA