



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

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	Big Valley Rancheria Fire Prevention Project		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	T14N R09W Section 32, Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian	<b>COUNTY</b>	Lake
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
<b>CONTACT</b>	Mike Wink Assistant Chief, Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit	<b>PHONE</b>	707-967-1408
<b>ADDRESS</b>	1199 Big Tree Road, St. Helena, CA 94574		

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is to reduce wildfire risk and aid in fire suppression activities through fuel reduction treatments around tribal buildings and residences at Big Valley Rancheria. The project area is located on undeveloped tribal property on the southwest shore of Clear Lake, approximately 1.5 miles southeast of Lakeport. The project consists of two treatment units totaling 18 acres.

Unit 1 is 13.3 acres and follows along the Rumsey Slough connected to Clear Lake; it is composed of freshwater forest/shrub wetland with valley oaks and dense understory shrubs. Vegetation will be thinned and pruned using manual treatment methods (no off-road heavy equipment or ground disturbance is proposed). Hand crews will employ chainsaws, pole saws, weed whackers, and hand tools to remove small trees, brush, and surface/ground fuels. Live trees (10 inches in diameter or less) will be removed when appropriate. Larger trees will be pruned to provide for a minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet. Access to the treatment area will be by an existing unpaved road and off-road hiking. Slash and debris created by this project will be burned in piles not exceeding 4-feet by 4-feet. Burn piles will not be located in identified sensitive resource areas such as the buffer zone of any watercourse or in the drip line of trees.

Unit 2 is 4.7 acres of freshwater emergent wetland composed of patches of smartweed and rough cocklebur, and tule with widely dispersed valley oak and cottonwood trees. Fuel reduction work will consist of broadcast burning whereby fire will be used under a narrow range of climatic conditions to ensure control and follow a seasonal burn window to maximize beneficial effects on the plant and wildlife communities. A mosaic burn pattern is planned with an objective to consume up to 80% of tule thatch. Ignitions in the treatment area will include both interior and perimeter ignitions. Access to the treatment area will be by an existing dirt road, through the neighboring property to the south. Staging areas and control lines are replanned and will not be made with heavy equipment. A walk-behind mower with metal blades will be employed to mow control lines in the tule. Grass and tule will be mowed and watered to create wet containment lines.

### EXEMPTION STATUS


- Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4/15304 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 meets the requirements of a CEQA Article 19 Class 4 Categorical exemption "Minor Alterations to Land" (Section 15304, Public Resources Code) as the proposed fuel management activities entail understory brush removal, 10" DBH or less tree removal, thinning, pruning, and burning to reduce wildfire threat. Although this project will modify some structural aspects of the vegetation, it will not convert the vegetation type or result in removal of otherwise "healthy, mature, and scenic trees."

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 Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit, 1199 Big Tree Road, St. Helena, CA 94574.

### DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

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4/23/2024

George Morris III, Northern Region Chief  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Date