

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
 P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
 County Clerk
 County of: Placer
3715 Atherton Road
Rocklin, CA 95765

From: (Public Agency): Northstar Fire Department
910 Northstar Drive
Truckee, CA 96161

(Address)

Project Title: 2024-2029 Northstar Community Evacuation/Forest Fuels Reduction Project

Project Applicant: Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management Department)

Project Location - Specific:

See attached sheet

Project Location - City: Truckee Project Location - County: Placer

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Forest fuels reduction project funded through NCS D Measure U/CAL FIRE grant funding. Funding of the project is for the Wildfire Prevention Zone for the Community of Northstar.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Northstar Fire Department

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Joe Barron (RPF #2984) (Fuels Management Dept.)

Exempt Status: (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 14CCR§15304, 14CCR§15307
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or next to a major evacuation route and the Community of Northstar's road system. This project is designed to mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is chosen by CAL FIRE as existing within a Very High Fire Severity Area. This project will help prevent wildfires from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Joe Barron Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 530-308-0170

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

Signature: Joe Barron (RPF #2984) Date: 04-23-2024 Title: Forester RPF #2984

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____



N·C·S·D

Northstar Community Services District
Northstar Fire Department
910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161
P: 530.562.1212 • F: 530.562.0702 • www.northstarcsd.org

Board of Directors

Warren "Chip" Brown, President
John Radanovich
Nancy Ives
Marilyn Forni
Michael "Spoon" Witherspoon

General Manager

Michael Staudenmayer

Fire Chief

Jason Gibeaut

Notice of Exemption

PROJECT TITLE: 2024-2029 Northstar Community Evacuation/Forest Fuels Reduction Project

PROJECT NUMBER: 5GA22210

PROJECT LOCATION: Project work within the boundary of the Northstar's Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ), which lies within Sections 29, 30, 31,32, T17N, R17E, MDB&M

COUNTY: Placer

ACRES: 1,514 acres

LEAD AGENCY: Northstar Fire Department

CONTACT: JOE BARRON (NFD FORESTER, RPF #2984)

ADDRESS: 910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161

PHONE: 530-308-0170

Project Description: The multi-year project is scheduled to begin as early as May 15th, 2024 (weather depending) and will expire on March 15, 2029. The projects funding mechanism is a combination of Measure U voter property tax initiative, partner based hard match and CAL FIRE, Wildfire Prevention funding. The project has a focus on various methods of forest fuels reduction designed to enhance evacuation routes, provide 300' fuels buffers that protect residential/commercial structures, infrastructure, and natural resources. The focus of this project is priorities from the 2022 Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Below are key components to the project:

1. To perform forest fuels reduction along named major evacuation routes, within 300' of residential/commercial structures and infrastructure protection to the Community of Northstar which lies within the Wildfire Prevention Zone. Project areas exist on privately owned, open common space forested lands. The selected project areas for the 2024-2029 project areas are identified as "Priorities" in the 2022 Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
2. To remove dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees that are identified as a fire hazard and or are detrimental to forest health.
3. The funding for forest fuels reduction work exists exclusively within the Northstar Community Services District's Wildfire Prevention Zone boundary. The project will cover 1,514 acres of forested land.
4. This project exists within a State Regulatory Area (SRA), CAL FIRE named Very High Fire Severity Zone. The project area consists of a variation of over-stocked conifer tree stands, declining conifer trees, vegetation health that is a result of multiple years of drought and correcting one hundred fifty-four years of historical timber harvesting practices which altered the forest composition of the Martis Creek Watershed. Currently, forest fuels that exist along the evacuation route and 300' fuels buffer zone areas require a combination of first entry and Northstar Ordinance 38-22 required treatment to meet compliance. The goal is to reduce forest fuels within areas that are readily able to burn hot and travel at an accelerated rate across the topography and enhance a safe community wide evacuation. A secondary issue is addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees will help reduce the acceleration of tree mortality before reaching an epidemic level.

Project Activities: Project work will consist of the following:

1. Treat 1,514 acres for forest fuels reduction within the Northstar Community Services District (NCS D), Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ) boundary. For this project, forest fuels reduction treatment will be by hand crew, mastication, and chipping. Pile burning exists within areas considered steep and rocky as well as landlocked areas where mechanical equipment cannot reach. The overall treatment/disposal of biomass will be by chipping (broadcasting and hauling off-site), skid steer and excavator-based mastication and pile burning. Hand crew treatment methods involve a seven to ten (7-11) person hand crew equipped with one to three (1-3) chainsaws, one to three (1-3) pole saws and various hand tools such as rakes and shovels. Hand crews will focus on reducing the density of 1.0" to 16.0" Diameter Breast Height (DBH) conifer trees that are considered suppressed and intermediate class trees. Dead, diseased, dying and pest infected conifer trees may have a larger diameter of up to "24" DBH to remove. Residual conifer trees will be limbed from a range of 4' to 15' from the highest point of the ground up. Flammable brush thinning will create mosaics. Mosaic thinning will create various age classes and spacing based on slope and topography. The target ground fuel reduction will range from 1,000 to 3,000 tons per acre. Chipping will be with a towable and a rubber tracked chipper. The track chipper can run via remote control through the forest up to 30% slopes. Track chippers do not require a road/skid trail system to run through the forest and have the capability of chipping trees 15" Diameter Breast Height, (D.B.H) and under. Woodchip broadcasting will be a depth range of 1"-3". Raking will be in areas of heavy depth concentrations or woodchip accumulations, especially near tree wells. The chipping crew will follow behind the chipper and rake out any deep chipper track ruts to ensure water disturbance or channeling will not occur. For the contingency of pile burning, the contracted hand crew will create burn piles 8' x 8' in size. Burn pile placement will be in open areas, which are well-spaced from one another. All pile burning operations and the permitting process will be through the Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCACD) and the Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System, (PFIRS).
2. 400-acres of forested land will have a prescription of mastication where brush fields, downed fuels and smaller to medium diameter trees exist. For the brush part, the prescription will be within brush induced areas and where the removal of contiguous brush fields by creating separation and diversity in a mixed age class of brush by setting up a mosaic brush field pattern. The thinning of brush fields will reduce fire's ability to travel across the landscape and carry fire into the mature tree canopy. Skid-steer and excavator-based mastication machines will focus on the thinning of brush components, downed forest fuels and conifer trees ranging from 1.0" to 6.0" DBH. Excavator based machines will work in larger acre areas where a combination of brush, downed forest fuels and conifer trees ranging from 6.1" to 14.0" DBH exists. The conifer tree removal part will target the white fir (*Abies concolor*) species and work towards promoting a higher ratio of pine species over true fir species.
3. 1,114 acres of contiguous flammable brush, conifer trees and downed forest fuels will have treatment by a hand crew. The hand crew will selectively thin 1.0" to 16.0" Diameter Breast Height (DBH) conifer trees, thin brush and remove downed fuels where the masticator cannot run. Additionally, there will be a target of larger diameter dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees if they are a fire and or safety hazard. The track chipper will ease biomass removal by broadcasting the material on the forest floor or hauling it away.
4. Pile burning will be in place for the project within areas that will be steep, rocky, and landlocked areas inaccessible for the mastication and chipper machines. Pile burning will create 8' x 8' piles, selectively placed to minimize residual tree scorch. It is estimated to have a range of 150-300 piles to burn annually during the lifetime of this project.
5. The result of this project will be enhancing evacuation routes, protect residential/commercial structures, infrastructure, and natural resources protection and to create an effort to reduce the threat of a wildfire, promoting a healthy and diverse Sierra Nevada mixed conifer forest.

Justifications for Use of a Categorical Exemption and CAL FIRE 1038 Exemptions (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):

EXEMPTION STATUS: Categorical Exemption(s)

14 CCR§15304, Minor Alterations to Land

14CCR§15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources

14CCR§ (1038c6)

14CCR§ (1038b)

14CCR§ (1038d)

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Minor Alteration to Land 14CCR§15304 - The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or next to a major evacuation route and the Community of Northstar's road system. This project is designed to mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is chosen by CAL FIRE as existing within a Very High Fire Severity Area.

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources 14CCR§15307. This project will help prevent wildfires from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

The use of CAL FIRE 1038 (1038c6), (1038b), (1038d) Exemptions to help meet the goals of the project. The Exemption allows for the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected, green trees and biomass which is identified as a wildfire/forest health issue.

FIELD AND OFFICE REVIEW BY THE NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREST FUELS MANAGEMENT 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, 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, OR TO UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS. DOCUMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMPLETED BY THE DEPARTMENT IS KEPT ON FILE AT NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT, STATION #31, LOCATED AT 910 NORTHSTAR DRIVE, IN TRUCKEE, CA.

Date of filing by the Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management) 04-23-2024



**Joe Barron (Forester, RPF# 2984)
NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT**