

Notice of Exemption

To:
Office of Planning and Research
For U.S. Mail:
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From:
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Central Region
1234 Shaw Ave.
Fresno, CA 95670



Street Address:
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Title: Tule River Indian Reservation Beaver Reintroduction

Project Location (include county): The project will be implemented on the Tule River Indian Reservation, which is sovereign territory in the South Fork Tule River watershed in Tulare County.

Project Description: The project will reintroduce North American beavers (*Castor canadensis*) to the South Fork Tule River (River) and its tributaries within the Tule River Indian Reservation. Multiple family groups, breeding pairs, and/or individuals will be captured from healthy source populations, quarantined, and released into the valley watershed over a 3- to 5-year period, with the goal of establishing genetically diverse breeding populations within the tributaries of the River. All beavers will be uniquely tagged and a portion of the beavers will be fitted with transmitters. The beavers will be monitored for population establishment and a variety of ecosystem parameters will be monitored over time to evaluate overall success of the project.

Person or Public Agency Carrying Out Project: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Exempt Status:

- Statutory Exemption.
- Categorical Exemption. Type – Class 7, 8; California Code of Regulations, title 14, sections 15307, 15308

Reasons why project is exempt: This project is for the maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of the natural resources and environment within the Tule River Indian Reservation and the South Fork Tule River watershed, ultimately for the overarching objective of protecting the environment. Beavers serve critical ecological roles as both ecosystem engineers and a keystone species; they are a virtually untapped resource in California’s fight against our greatest ecological threats: climate change, drought, wildfires, and habitat loss. The establishment of beavers within the Reservation is expected to ultimately result in the engineering of an extensive wetland complexes and creation of wet meadows that increase carbon sequestration, reduce downstream sediment transport and deposition, repair channel incisions, reconnect streams to their floodplain, increase riparian vegetation/habitat and improve function, and create critical habitat for both wetland- and riparian-obligate species, as well as increases habitat complexity to provide suitable habitat necessary for multiple taxa, species, and life stages within. Further, the retention of water on the landscape is expected to increase groundwater recharge, improve summer baseflows, extend seasonal flows, and increase fuel moisture during wildfire season, effectively creating a green belt that can serve as wildfire buffers or breaks and provide refugia for wildlife.

CDFW Contact Person: Valerie Cook, Environmental Program Manager, 916-616-6366

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Signature: _____ **Date:** 6/14/2024
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 Julie Vance, Regional Manager

Date received for filing at OPR: _____