

## Notice of Exemption

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**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
5550 Skylane Boulevard  
Santa Rosa CA, 95403  
Phone 707-576-2220  
Fax 707-523-0135  
Email: [NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov)

**Project Title:** McKee Creek Habitat Restoration and Forest Thinning Project

**Project Location:** 40.081528, -123.95133

**Project Location – City:** Whitethorn

**Project Location - County:** Humboldt

**Description of Project:** This Project will improve habitat for Coho salmon and steelhead in McKee Creek, an important salmon bearing tributary in the Mattole River headwaters by addressing the limiting factors of low summer stream flows, poor summer rearing habitat, and lack of winter refuge habitat. The Project will enhance instream and floodplain habitat by raising the stream bed to engage flows with the floodplain, increasing pool depth, and adding instream habitat complexity through wood placement. Log weirs with sub-surface clay barriers will elevate the water table and increase channel complexity. Enhancing the riparian ecosystem is also expected, with increased diversity and abundance of riparian plants in response to the higher water table. The project is designed to restore natural processes over the long-term, promoting sediment deposition and formation of a complex meandering stream with adjacent floodplain wetlands. Further, by increasing the bed elevation of McKee Creek at strategic locations throughout the Project extents, conducting grading to increase floodplain engagement, installing subsurface clay barriers on the upstream side of proposed log weirs, and reducing incision rates, the project is expected to result in additional detained runoff during the wet season leading to higher spring and summer base flows. Finally, Project objectives also include increased diversity of the riparian area and reduced evapotranspiration along with improved groundwater, streamflow and fire resiliency which will be achieved through strategic forest thinning treatments.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** April Newlander, Sanctuary Forest Inc.

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1): (5268):
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)):
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21 080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption; Section 15333 Small Habitat Restoration Projects
- Statutory Exemptions: section 21080.56 (Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects)

**Reasons why project is exempt:** CDFW has concurred with the determination that the Project meets the qualifying criteria set forth in Section 21080.56, subdivisions (a) through (d), inclusive. This determination is supported by (1) CDFW's February 7, 2024, initial determination as the lead agency (see attached), that the Project meets the qualifying criteria set forth in Section 21080.56, subdivisions (a) through (d), inclusive; and (2) pursuant to Section 21080.56, subdivision (e), the CDFW Director's April 29, 2024, concurrence with that lead agency determination, which is available at [wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cutting-Green-Tape/SERP/Concurrences](http://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cutting-Green-Tape/SERP/Concurrences).

**Lead Agency Contact:** Jake Shannon

**Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** 707-576-2673

**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:** JAKE SHANNON **Date:** July 18, 2024 **Title:** Sr. Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_