



## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**TO:** Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**FROM:** Department of Parks and Recreation  
Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District  
12301 CA-1  
Mendocino, CA 95460

**PROJECT TITLE:** Sonoma Coast Burn Complex

**LOCATION:** Sonoma Coast State Park

**COUNTY:** Sonoma

**DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PROJECT:** Implement a series of controlled broadcast burns in Sonoma Coast State Park to meet long-term goals of reducing conifer and scrub encroachment in coastal grasslands and oak woodlands, creating and maintaining habitat for native wildlife and plant species, and reducing potential fuel loads, with the end goal of new and enhanced habitats that are more resilient to catastrophic changes due to wildfire. These burns will also increase spatial heterogeneity in the forest canopy, alter tree species composition to give redwood, true oak, and other fire-adapted species a competitive advantage, and form unique structures for wildlife habitat, as well as provide training opportunities for staff and partner agencies and organizations, and build relationships with tribal governments and members. Project implementation is estimated to take place within 3 years. There are three phases for implementation of successful prescribed fire projects: unit preparation, ignitions, and mop-up.

Burn units will cover approximately 823 acres and will be generally located in the Willow Creek and Freezeout Creek watersheds. Each burn unit will utilize handlines and existing or legacy roads and trails as control lines. Work will occur via use of hand tools such as hoes, rakes and Pulaskis; small equipment such as string trimmers, brush cutters, leaf blowers, and chainsaws; and heavy equipment such as mowers and tractors. Vegetation removal on, under and around department structures shall meet the Guidelines for the Protection of Structures from Wildland Fire. More specifically, fuel modification may consist of:

- Removing limbs up to a height of 15-ft (from the uphill side) on trees;
- Modifying, relocating, and reconfiguring downed and dead material;
- Selectively removing tree seedlings, saplings, and poles less than 11-in. DBH;
- Creating spacing between shrubs and trees (2x the shrubs height);
- Felling dead and dying trees while maintaining sufficient snags for wildlife habitat;
- Mowing vegetation and relocating material;
- Raking away excess litter and duff or creating a scratch line around the base of trees, snags, stumps, infrastructure, developed areas, structures, or other resources; and
- Digging to mineral soil for control lines.

Prior to start of controlled burns, a DPR Environmental Scientist(s) shall identify protected wildlife and plant species and habitat and prescribe proper measures to maintain or increase populations and habitat and avoid adverse impacts, and a DPR Archaeologist(s) shall identify protected sites and prescribe proper treatments to avoid adverse impacts. Tribal consultation shall be initiated and completed when required.

The project may require temporary closure of trails during project implementation, and/or have trail use be restricted, for public safety. Adjacent property owners will be notified before any broadcast

burn event. Public notifications will be made via social media and/or news outlets before major broadcast burn events.

**PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVING THE PROJECT:** California Department of Parks and Recreation

**NAME OF DIVISION OR DISTRICT CARRYING OUT THE PROJECT:** Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District

**EXEMPT STATUS:**

Categorical Exemption      *Class:* 1 & 4      *Section:* 15301 & 15304

**REASONS WHY PROJECT IS EXEMPT:** Project consists of the operation, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond current levels, and minor public or private alterations in the condition of land and vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and is included as "Prescribed burns to restore native vegetation, reduce fuel loads, and control invasive exotic or alien species" and "Resource management projects" in the Department of Parks and Recreation's list of exempt activities in accordance with CCR § 15300.4.

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 07/12/24

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For William Maslach      Date  
District Superintendent  
Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District