

2025-029

FILED

April 2, 2025

JENAVIVE HERRINGTON

COUNTY CLERK
LAKE COUNTY

By *Ka*
Deputy clerk



COUNTY OF LAKE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Planning Division
Courthouse - 255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453
Telephone 707/263-2221 FAX 707/263-2225

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (REVISED)

TO: County Clerk Office of Planning & Research
County of Lake 1400 Tenth Street
Lakeport, CA 95453 Sacramento, CA 95814-3044

FROM: Lake County Community Development Dept.
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

PROJECT TITLE: Woody Biomass Carbonizer Pilot Project (Categorical Exemption
CE 24-29; SCH No. 2024110443, Revised)

PROJECT LOCATION: 20126 Hwy 175, Middletown, CA 95461 (013-011-54)

BACKGROUND: A Notice of Exemption was filed with the Lake County Clerk and State Clearinghouse for the project on November 14, 2024 (SCH No. 2024110443) and the project has been in operation since early 2025; however, the project analysis included the use of one carbonizer unit and the applicant proposes utilizing a second carbonizer to ensure the operation is complete before the end of the permitted burn season. This NOE has been revised accordingly.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The Hometown Wildfire Safety Collaborative is a partnership between Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC), Earth Foundries, Northshore Fire Protection District, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). They are working together to address wildfire risks and biomass management logistics in Lake County. This is a pilot project funded by PG&E & CLERC to help improve wildfire safety in Lake County.

The project seeks permission to establish a portable and temporary biochar production facility on a 7.5-acre of the 167-acre parcel. The site is associated with the Middletown Wastewater Treatment Plant and is located at the western edge of the property operated by Lake County Sanitation District (LACOSAN) under the management of Lake County Special Districts. The proposed project site has previously been disturbed and has been rocked on numerous occasions. The area has a long history of use and serving as a staging area for various community benefit projects, such as: being used as an effluent spray field associated with the Middletown Wastewater Treatment Plant since the late 1980's; being utilized as a staging area for dead and burned trees after the Valley Fire in 2015; being utilized as a staging area for construction materials and equipment during implementation of the 2017 Anderson Springs Sewer Project, etc. Currently, CalFire and the South Lake County Fire Protection District have an Air Curtain Incinerator (ACI) staged at the site to burn accumulated woody material from the community in order to reduce wildfire risks. The project site currently contains approximately 6,000 tons of logs ready to be processed.

The proposed project would process the debris into biochar and includes the following components:

Equipment and On-Site Facilities. On-site equipment would include: two (2) Tigercat 6040 Carbonizers for biochar production; use of the existing air curtain burner to remain on-site; loader with wood sheer; and a biochar bagging station. Ancillary on-site facilities include: an office trailer and/or security trailer; porta potty; temporary water tanks; Fire truck and emergency fire suppression equipment; and a weather monitoring station (Tempest) for compliance with Fire District operational prescriptions.

Operation. Operation of the carbonizers would be 24-hours a day, seven days a week, through April 30, 2025 (or otherwise approved by CalFire and Lake County Air Quality Management District). There would be approximately 500 tons of woody material processed each day. Operation will be in compliance with Lake County Air Quality Management District permit regulations.

Deliveries to and from the site will occur during normal business hours and biochar distribution from the site would occur during normal business hours (no more than 1 truckload per day). The project has designated staging areas for delivery and storage of un-merchantable wood sourced from Lake County wildfires, tree mortality emergency, and wildfire mitigation projects. Deliveries will be by PG&E contractors and locally contracted haulers and only clean forest wood and slash, including charred wood, will be accepted.

Best Management Practices. The project includes the following Best Management Practices to ensure no impacts to the environment occur: a 100-foot minimum setback from the Putah Creek riparian corridor to the log deck and related operations; a minimum setback of 200 feet from the Putah Creek riparian corridor and the carbonizers; minimum 50-foot setback between carbonizer and log decks; 24-hour on-site fire suppression equipment and personnel; compliance with all Air Quality regulations related to emissions; and continued coordination with Middletown Rancheria related to tribal cultural resource protection.

NAME OF PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVING PROJECT: Lake County Community Development Department

NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT: Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC) and Earth Foundries

EXEMPT STATUS (Check One):

- Ministerial [Section 21080(b); 15268];
- Declared Emergency [Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)];
- Emergency Project [Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c)];
- Statutory Exemption: State code number ____
- Categorical Exemption (Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15304; Minor Alterations to Land, Class 4; and Section 15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of natural Resources, Class 7.
- General Rule [Section 15061(b)(3)]

REASONS WHY PROJECT IS EXEMPT: As noted on the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Lake County State Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map, the majority of Lake County has been classified as having Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. In addition, according to the Lake County Community Wildfire Protection Plan that was completed in September 2023, since 2015, Lake County has lost more than 1,800 homes to wildfire. Some estimates indicate more than 60 percent of Lake County has burned in the decade from 2011 to 2021. This has resulted in a large amount of downed and dead trees and debris, leading to a higher amount of ground fuel and wildfire risk.

The County has concluded that the project is categorically exempt under the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land, Class 4, and Section 15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of natural Resources, Class 7. It has been concluded that no known impacts covered in the exceptions listed in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15300.2 would occur from the proposed project based on the following: a) the temporary project would be located on an existing public facility that has been disturbed for decades and operation would not occur within 100 feet of the Putah Creek. A query of the California Natural Diversity Database was completed, and an evaluation of environmental impacts concluded that there are no known occurrences of special status species within the footprint of the project area where operations will occur. Diesel fuel will be present on the site but would adhere to all local, State, and federal safety standards and containment requirements. In addition, the project would obtain a permit from the Lake County Air Quality Management District and comply with all regulations related to emissions. While the addition of the second carbonizer would result in the wood being burned in a more expeditious manner, the overall amount of wood would be the same as was originally proposed. The Air Quality Management District has noted that the emissions would be similar compared to the original proposal and would not exceed their thresholds; b) There are currently 19 projects being proposed in the unincorporated Middletown. However, the proposed project would be temporary with a 12-month operation period; c) There are no known unusual circumstances that might result in significant effects on the environment; d) There are no officially designated state scenic highways according to the Caltrans List of Officially Designated County Scenic Highways; e) There are no recorded hazardous waste sites according to the State's EnviroStor database; and f) The project site is not on the California Historical Resources list and there are no other known historical resources present. As mentioned previously, the site has historically been disturbed. Lastly, the County has met with the Middletown Rancheria regarding the project and they stated there are no impacts to tribal cultural resources with the implementation of the Best Management Practices described above.

Based on the aforementioned, the Lake County Community Development Department has determined that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment and is, therefore, exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CONTACT PERSON: Michelle Irace; 707-263-2221; Resourceplanning@lakecountycalifornia.gov

Signature:



Title: Resource Planner

Date: April 2, 2025



State of California - Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEE
CASH RECEIPT
 DFW 753.5a (REV. 01/01/25) Previously DFG 753.5a

RECEIPT NUMBER:
17-04/02/2025-022

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER (If applicable)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE. TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY.

LEAD AGENCY LAKE COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	LEAD AGENCY EMAIL	DATE 04/02/2025
COUNTY/STATE AGENCY OF FILING LAKE COUNTY	DOCUMENT NUMBER 2025-029	

PROJECT TITLE

 WOODY BIOMASS CARBONIZER PILOT PROJECT CE 24-29 SCH NO 2024110443 REVISED

PROJECT APPLICANT NAME CLERC	PROJECT APPLICANT EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER
PROJECT APPLICANT ADDRESS 20126 HWY 175	CITY MIDDLETOWN	STATE CA
		ZIP CODE 95461

PROJECT APPLICANT (Check appropriate box)

Local Public Agency
 School District
 Other Special District
 State Agency
 Private Entity

CHECK APPLICABLE FEES:

- Environmental Impact Report (EIR) \$ 4,123.50 \$ _____
- Mitigated/Negative Declaration (MND)(ND) \$ 2,968.75 \$ _____
- Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) document - payment due directly to CDFW \$ 1,401.75 \$ _____
- Exempt from fee
 - Notice of Exemption (attach)
 - CDFW No Effect Determination (attach)
- Fee previously paid (attach previously issued cash receipt copy)

- Water Right Application or Petition Fee (State Water Resources Control Board only) \$ 850.00 \$ _____
- County documentary handling fee \$ 50.00 \$ 50.00
- Other \$ _____

PAYMENT METHOD:

- Cash
 Credit
 Check
 Other 2592
 TOTAL RECEIVED \$ 50.00

SIGNATURE X	AGENCY OF FILING PRINTED NAME AND TITLE Deputy County Clerk
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