



City of Clearlake  
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## Notice of Categorical Exemption Statement

The City of Clearlake proposes to carry out the following project and has determined that this project is Categorically Exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**Project Title:** Clearlake MTZ Project

**Lead Public Agency:** City of Clearlake

**Project Applicant/Responsible for the Project:**

- Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC)  
200 Park Street; Lakeport, CA 95453

**Project Location:** City Limits of Clearlake

**Project Approval Date:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**NOE Filed:** Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**Prepared By:** Mark Roberts – Senior Planner

**Certifying Environmental Officer:** Alan Flora – City Manager

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### **DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE AND BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT:**

The project aims to utilize various fire mitigation strategies including, mechanized equipment/techniques, “pile burning”, “broadcast burning”, etc. with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2,240 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels throughout the city. Out of the 2,240 acres, approximately 1,500 acres is within the recommended Very High Fire Hazard Zone (VHFHZ) in a Local Response Area (LRA). The project will manage and maintain fire fuels within the project footprint. This fuel reduction treatment is located in the most high risk and fire prone areas of the City to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. Additionally, the project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. (*Refer to Figure 1 & 2 for details*).

### **EXEMPT STATUS (CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION SECTIONS):**

- Class 4 § 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land): Minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes.
- Class 8 § 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources): Actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. Construction activities and relaxation of standards allowing environmental degradation are not included in this exemption.

## **FINDINGS FOR EXEMPTIONS:**

*The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) {Section 21000, et. seq. of the California Public Resources Code}, requires analysis of agency approvals of discretionary “projects.” A “project,” under CEQA, is defined as “the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” The Project is defined as a project under CEQA.*

Staff has reviewed the approved project to determine the required level of review under the CEQA and has determined the project to be Categorically Exempt from the CEQA pursuant to the following CEQA Guidelines:

- The project meets the requirements of *CEQA Article 19 Class 4 (Section 15304) Categorical Exemption “Minor Alterations to Land”* as the project aims to utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including “pile burning” and “broadcast burning” with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2,240 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels throughout the city. Out of the 2,240 acres, approximately 1,500 acres is within the Very High Fire Hazard Zone (VHFHZ) in a Local Response Area (LRA). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities. The project will manage and maintain fire fuels throughout the project area. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located throughout the City to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. Additionally, the project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. By managing and maintaining wildfire intensity and severity, it will improve our defensible space, provide safer egress for evacuating citizens, provide safer ingress for emergency resources, and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property. Also, project activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, and/or threatened plant or animal species, or cause sedimentation to surface waters. The project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs), including restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways.
- The project meets the requirements of *CEQA Article 19 Class 8 (Section 15308) Categorical Exemption “Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources”* as the project consist of actions by regulatory agencies (*CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection & the Lake County Fire Protection District*) as authorized by state laws or local ordinances. The project will utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including “pile burning” and “broadcast burning” with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2,240 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels throughout the city. Out of the 2,240 acres, approximately 1,500 acres is within the Very High Fire Hazard Zone (VHFHZ) in a Local Response Area (LRA). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located throughout the City to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. The project will implement Best

Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. Additionally, the referenced agencies confirmed the hazardous fuel reduction clearance is mandatory to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, adhere to PRC 4291/local ordinances and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events.

City staff also reviewed all potential exceptions (Section 15300.2) to the categorical exemptions and determined that no exceptions would apply: (a) because there are no project impacts and/or no cumulatively significant impacts; (b) There would be no significant effects due to unusual circumstances because the routine maintenance and/or removal of hazardous forest/fire fuels to reduce wildfire intensity/severity, including the protection of life and property from catastrophic events is a common practice in communities; (c) There would be no damage to scenic resources, historic buildings, and/or rock outcroppings; (d) The project is not located on a hazardous waste site; and (e) The project is designed to require minimal to no ground disturbance. Furthermore, there are no known special circumstances that exist which would create a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, the project meets the criteria outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 and 15308 and would be categorically exempt from the requirements of CEQA. No further CEQA is required.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION (IF APPLICABLE):**

- Attachment # 1 – Project Treatment Map (Shaded in Yellow – Approx. 2,240 Acres)
- Attachment # 2 – Very High Fire Hazard Zone (Shaded in Orange – Approx. 2,240 Acres)

**Authorized Staff Signatures**

*Document Prepared By: Mark Roberts – Senior Planner*



**Mark Roberts – Senior Planner**

*11-25-24*

**Date**

**Certifying Environmental Officer Approving Project**



**Alan Flora – City Manager**

*11-26-24*

**Date**

**Attachment # 1 – Project Treatment Map**  
*(Shaded in Yellow – Approx. 2,240 Acres)*



**Attachment # 2 - Map - VHFHZ in LRA**  
(Shaded in Orange – Approximately 1,500 Acres)

