

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: ___ Office of Planning and Research **FROM:** Butte County Planning Division
 1400 Tenth Street, Room 121 7 County Center Drive
 Sacramento, CA 95814 Oroville, CA 95965

 X County Clerk
 County of Butte
 25 County Center Drive
 Oroville, CA 95965

Project Title: Butte County Fire Safe Council Feather Falls Defensible Space and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program (BCFSC Program), CEQA24-0002

Assessor's Parcel No.: Numerous

Applicant: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Project Location-Specific: The project area is located east of Oroville, part of the Sierra Nevada foothills, in the Feather Falls community. Activities would be located upon approximately 46,523 acres and has an elevation range from 900 feet to 4350 feet. The project is located in a 'Very High' Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the State Responsibility Area (SRA). Feather Falls is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) community where strategic management and control of wildland vegetation is essential to the safety, and health of the community of Feather Falls. The northern boundary follows the canyon of Fall River and into the Middle Fork of the Feather River, which flows into Lake Oroville. The southern boundary follows the South Fork of the Feather River. The eastern side extends to Lumpkin Ridge while the western side is bounded by the Middle Fork and South Fork of the Feather River. Portions of both Lumpkin Rd. and Lumpkin Ridge Rd. are located within the Feather Falls NOE.

Project Location-City: Feather Falls / Eastern Oroville

Project Location-County: Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

Objectives

1. Protect Feather Falls and East Oroville communities, forest resources, and infrastructure within the WUI from wildfires.
2. Implement vegetation prescriptions to reduce fire hazard and intensity, promote tree growth, and support forest resilience.
3. Reduce fire spread, ignition potential, and crown fire risk through strategic vegetation management.

The purpose of this project is to protect the community and infrastructure of Feather Falls, promote forest resilience and watershed health by developing a plan to remove invasive shrub species and replanting mixed conifer species. Feather Falls is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) community where strategic management and control of wildland vegetation is essential to the safety, and health of the community of Feather Falls. The project area is located in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the State Responsibility Area (SRA). This project involves the clearing of brush, small trees (10 inches and less diameter at breast height), and dead hazard trees (15 inches and less diameter at breast height) which pose a risk to public safety, to reduce the existing fire hazard for this area. The vegetation management treatments include hand-cutting and piling, hand cutting and chipping, lop and scatter, mechanical mastication, prescribed fire, goat grazing, and herbicide treatment to be applied in accordance with a licensed Pest Control Advisor's Chemical Use Recommendation. Burning of the piles and prescribed fire will take place later in the season when moisture levels are sufficiently high enough to allow for safe disposal. Trees within Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones (WLPZ) shall be directionally hand felled away from watercourses. Herbicides shall not be used within the Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones. Pile burning will not occur within 25 feet of stream zones, in special status plant areas, or cultural resource boundaries. Chipping machines will be used near structures and in areas where the slope allows access, and chips will not be blown into stream zones, special status plant areas, or cultural resource boundaries. Mechanical mastication will be designated in areas less than 50% slope where accessibility from existing roads is possible, and will not take place in stream buffer zones, cultural resource boundaries, or special

status plant buffers. Prescribed fire will be used in areas of light amount of ladder fuels or as a follow up maintenance treatment in areas. Goat grazing will be used as an initial treatment in areas with light amounts of ladder fuels or as a follow up (maintenance) treatment. Herbicide treatment will be used as follow up maintenance in areas where shrubs, brush, and invasive species have been treated initially with either mastication or hand cutting. Herbicides will not take place in stream buffer zones or special status plant buffers.

A protocol botanical survey shall be conducted prior to operations to determine if special status species are in the project area. If Special Status species are identified, a 25-foot buffer (EEZ) shall be placed around the species. No heavy equipment, pile burning, prescribed fire, or herbicide treatment shall take place within the buffer. Where the project area is below 3000 feet, a survey for Sambucas (Elderberry) species shall be conducted prior to operations. If Sambucas species are present and are smaller in diameter than 1 inch, a 25-foot buffer (EEZ) shall be placed around the species. No heavy equipment, pile burning, prescribed fire or herbicide treatment shall take place within the buffer.

The boundaries of all cultural resources in the Project Area will be marked immediately before vegetation management activities by a cultural resources specialist that is Secretary of the Interior qualified or supervised by a qualified specialist. The preferred treatment is avoidance. If avoidance is not possible, after being marked, the following activities are **allowed but not required** within the resource boundaries:

- Hand cutting
- Directional felling of trees, and removal of felled trees by vehicles parked outside of resource boundaries if trees are not dragged
- Animal grazing
- Herbicides

The following activities are not allowed within the resource boundaries:

- Pile burning
- Lop and scatter
- Mechanical treatment by a masticator or any other vehicle
- Prescribed burning

Inadvertent Discoveries: If unknown cultural resources are found during work, operations halt within 50 feet until assessment occurs. Minimal-impact treatments may continue under supervision.

Future Phases: Pedestrian surveys will be conducted for each project phase, and documentation will be submitted for review.

Human Remains If human remains are discovered, work ceases, and the area is secured. The Butte County Coroner is notified, and Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) protocols are followed for remains of Native American origin.

Conclusion

The Feather Falls Vegetation Management Project is a multi-faceted effort to reduce wildfire risk, protect WUI communities, and support forest health. Using a combination of hand cutting, mastication, controlled burns, and goat grazing, the BCFSC aims to restore the area's natural fire resilience. Strict guidelines protect cultural resources, human remains, and sensitive habitats, while funding from CAL FIRE supports effective project implementation. By reducing fire intensity and supporting forest regrowth, this project serves as a model for sustainable forest management and wildfire prevention.

Name of Person or Agency Approving Project: Butte County Zoning Administrator

Exempt Status: (Check One)

- Ministerial (Sec. 15073)
- Declared Emergency [Sec. 15071(a)]
- Emergency Project [Sec. 15071 (b) and (c)]
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 15304 Minor Alterations to Land Statutorily Exempt – 15274(a)
- Review for Exemption – 15061(b)(3)

Reasons why project is exempt: The project is classified as a Class 4 Categorical Exemption, under CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land. The project is a hazardous fuel management

program activity that consists of minor treatments to vegetation in the form of hand-cutting, piling, and onsite chipping of brush, small trees, and standing or downed burned trees (10 inches and less diameter at breast height), and dead hazard trees which pose a risk to public safety (15 inches and less diameter at breast height). A botanical survey shall be conducted prior to operations to determine if special status species are in the project area. If special status species are identified, measures will be taken to protect them, including placing a 25-foot buffer around the species and no heavy equipment, pile burning, prescribed fire, or herbicide treatment shall take place within the buffer. The activities do not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species, or sedimentation to surface waters.

Contact Person: Tristan Weems, AICP, Senior Planner

Telephone: (530) 552-3685

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 _____

Date Received For Filing: _____

12/16/2024
Date Signed



Dan Breedon, Planning Manager
Department of Development Services

DECLARATION OF FEES DUE
(California Fish and Game Code Section 711.4)

NAME AND ADDRESS OF APPLICANT

Butte County Fire Safe Council
5619 Back Olive Drive
Paradise, CA 95969

FILING NO. _____

Project Title/File Number: Feather Falls Fuels Reduction Project, CEQA24-0002

CLASSIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT:

- 1. NOTICE OF EXEMPTION/STATEMENT OF EXEMPTION
 - A. Statutorily or Categorically Exempt
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee
 - B. De Minimis Impact - Certificate of Fee Exemption
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

- 2. NOTICE OF DETERMINATION - FEE REQUIRED
 - A. Negative Declaration
\$2,916.75 State Filing Fee
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee
 - B. Environmental Impact Report
\$4,051.25 State Filing Fee
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

- 3. OTHER (Specify) _____
\$50.00 Clerk's Documentary Handling Fee

PAYMENT / NON-PAYMENT OF FEES:

- 1. PAYMENT: The above fees have been paid.

- 2. NON-PAYMENT: The above fees are required. Not paid.

Chief Planning Official

By: Paula M. Daneluk, AICP, Development Services
Title: Director
Lead Agency: Butte County Department of
Development Services
Date: December 16, 2024

TWO COPIES OF THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED WITH ALL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS FILED WITH THE BUTTE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE.

THREE COPIES OF ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION ARE REQUIRED FOR FILING.

ALL APPLICABLE FEES ARE DUE AND PAYABLE PRIOR TO THE FILING OF ANY ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT WITH THE BUTTE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE. MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE COUNTY OF BUTTE.