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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Filed to: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk of: San Mateo

Project Title: Middleton Tract Roadside Fuel Reduction

Project Location: Middleton Tract residential community

City and County: Unincorporated San Mateo County

Description of Nature and Purpose of Project:

This project will reduce hazardous wildfire fuels along approximately 2.5 miles of road within the Middleton Tract community, a remote community located in unincorporated San Mateo County. Dense vegetation encroaching on roads in the community pose hazards for wildfire ignition as well as evacuation in the event of a fire. Manual and mechanical methods will be utilized to remove vegetation smaller than 8 inches in diameter within 25 feet of the road centerline, as well as dead, dying, and/or hazard trees that pose hazards to homes, roads, or other critical infrastructure. The objectives will be to disrupt the horizontal continuity of surface fuels, disrupt vertical continuity resulting from ladder fuels and increase shrub and understory crown spacing to improve evacuation safety, firefighting access, and potentially slow the spread of fire.

Name of Person, Board, Commission or Department Proposing to Carry Out Project:

San Mateo Resource Conservation District
80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Contact Person: Timothy Federal Telephone: 650-712-7765 ext. 124

Lead Agency
Responsible Agency

EXEMPT STATUS:

Categorical Exemption, Class 4 (15304)

Remarks: See next page.

Date of Determination: Jan 8th, 2025
I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and Local requirements.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy Federal".

Timothy Federal, Senior Program Manager

REMARKS:

This project will address hazards posed by vegetative wildfire fuels in the Middleton Tract residential community. The following provides a brief description of the project, and an explanation for why the project qualifies for exemption from CEQA environmental review Class 4 [CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15304].

Project Description

The project will utilize hand crews and equipment to reduce dense, hazardous understory vegetation in forested areas along approximately 2.5 miles of roads within the Middleton Tract residential community, located near Portola Redwoods State Park in unincorporated San Mateo County. The roads are owned and managed by the Middleton Tract Roads association and pass through various private properties. Fuel treatments will be up to 25 feet from road centerlines on each side, on parcels where written owner permission has been obtained. Width of treatment may vary depending on slope, access, or landowner restrictions. Some areas may not be treated due to steep slopes, cut banks, or other barriers. The objectives will be to disrupt the horizontal continuity of surface fuels, disrupt vertical continuity resulting from ladder fuels and increase shrub and understory crown spacing. The fuel reduction will utilize a "thin from below" approach by removing the majority of trees and shrubs under 8 inches DBH, while leaving small clusters of these smaller-diameter plants for habitat and landscape diversity. The lower limbs of trees larger than 8 inches DBH will be pruned to a height of 8-10 feet or to 15 feet for branches over the roadbed itself. Some hazardous, dead, and/or dying trees up to 16 inches DBH may be removed. Cut material that is not masticated will generally be chipped and spread uniformly on-site or lopped-and-scattered to knee-height or less, with large-diameter material left in ground-contact or in piles as firewood near safe turn-offs. On certain parcels, chips may be piled for future use by the property owner. The project will not involve timber harvesting or the piling and burning of slash. The project area will be surveyed prior to treatment and sensitive biological resources, water infrastructure, and other avoidance areas will be flagged. Contractors will be given training to recognize sensitive species for avoidance and a monitor will be on-site when appropriate.

Class 4 (CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15304)

Class 4 consists of 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.

The work proposed is a minor alteration to vegetation which does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and is consistent with Categorical Exemption Class 4 - Minor Alterations to Land. No activity is proposed that is listed as a limitation under CCR 15300.2 (a-f). Field review by RCD staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The project has been planned and designed to ensure that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems.