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State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant: Palomar Mountain Emergency Access and Emergency Evacuation Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	Palomar Mountain Sec. 14, T10S, R1E, SBBM	**COUNTY**	San Diego
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT ADDRESS	Cheyenne Borello CAL FIRE – San Diego Unit 2249 Jamacha Road El Cajon, CA 92019-4301	**PHONE**	619-672-8165

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project areas are composed of mixed conifer forests at an elevation range of approximately 4,000' to 5600' within private lands in the local sphere of influence of the Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council (PMFSC).
The Palomar Mountain Fuel Reduction project focuses on 1) improving emergency resident evacuation from and firefighter access to the area on the eastern crest of Palomar Mountain and 2) protecting critical infrastructure including water, power and communication that is essential in providing wildfire protection for Palomar Mountain. The roadsides to be treated consist of approximately 13.8 acres, 15 feet on either side of 3.79 miles of roadside. This is the same type of fuels reduction work filed under State Clearing House number 2021070536 in 2021, but for new road locations, which include: Pedley Valley Road, Bailey Meadow Road, Fern Meadow Road, Palomar Vista Road, Upper Meadow Road and Yoga Road.
This project may involve hazardous tree felling, chipping of branches (onsite or haul away), brush removal and possible removal of logs from the site resulting from tree felling. Trees will either be climbed and cut into sections which will be lowered to the ground using ropes, cut from the ground, or cut utilizing bucket trucks. All branches will be lopped and/or chipped onsite. If tree logs need to be removed from the project site, then the logs will be cut into firewood size lengths and removed by hand to minimize ground disturbance. All trees will be felled in the least ground-disturbing manner feasible. Slash created from the fuel abatement will be brought to an existing road and chipped. The chips will be broadcast back onto the soil surface. No equipment will be used off the existing road surface. All work vehicles and ground-based equipment will stay on existing road prisms, driveways, and developed areas.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304 Minor alterations to land
- ☐ Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- ☐ Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project is consistent with Categorical Exemption 15304, Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land as identified in the CEQA Guidelines. After reviewing and approving an environmental analysis completed by a California Registered Professional Forester (RPF) #3190, Paul Ohlman, the Department has determined this project will have no significant impact on the environment. This determination is based on field assessments and an Environmental Review completed by the RPF that included a greenhouse gas emission calculation.

Field review by Paul Ohlman confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The RPF has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, 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, wildfire or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the RPF is kept on file at CAL FIRE's SDU Headquarters in San Diego.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

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Mike Van Loben Sels 3/12/2025
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Mike van Loben Sels, Southern Region Chief Date
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection