

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

Date: April 29, 2025

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Humboldt – Del Norte Unit Headquarters Facility Relocation Project, and Scheduling of a Scoping Meeting from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on May 14, 2025

Project Title: CAL FIRE Humboldt – Del Norte Unit Headquarters Facility Relocation Project

Lead Agency: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Location: 410 4th Avenue, Rio Dell, California

Comment Period: April 29, 2025 through May 29, 2025

Project Information Available at:

<https://calfire.app.box.com/s/6uzjbg146cfn018h1jw98871hp740x7t/folder/238725157425>

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), with assistance from the State of California Department of General Services (DGS), will be the lead agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), to determine any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed CAL FIRE Humboldt – Del Norte Unit Headquarters Facility Relocation Project (also referred to as “the proposed project”).

An Initial Study will not be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15063[a]). In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) provides a project description, location, and the potential environmental effects of the proposed project, and will be circulated to the public and responsible agencies for input regarding the analysis in the EIR. DGS will rely on responsible and trustee agencies to provide information relevant to the analysis of resources falling within the jurisdiction of such agencies. Specifically, input is requested on:

- **Scope and Content of the Environmental Analysis** – guidance on the scope of analysis for this EIR, including identification of specific issues that will require closer study due to the location, scale, and character of the project;
- **Mitigation Measures** – ideas for feasible mitigation measures, including those that would avoid, or reduce potentially significant impacts; and
- **Alternatives** – suggestions for alternatives to the proposed project that could potentially avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts.

As outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b), each responsible and trustee agency must identify specific environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be explored in the EIR.

Written comments on the Notice of Preparation:

This Notice of Preparation is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 30 days beginning April 29, 2025. Written comments will be accepted through May 29, 2025. Comments, along

with the name and contact information of the appropriate person in your organization, should be addressed to:

Stephanie Coleman, Senior Environmental Planner,
Department of General Services
Real Estate Services Division
Project Management and Development Branch / Environmental Unit
707 3rd Street, 4th Floor
West Sacramento, CA 95605
stephanie.coleman@dgs.ca.gov

Public Scoping Meeting Information:

A public scoping meeting will be held to provide opportunities for agencies and interested parties to obtain information about the project, ask questions of the project team, and provide comments on the scope of the environmental analysis. A brief presentation on the proposed project and the CEQA process will be given at the start of the meeting, followed by an open house format where attendees will have the opportunity to talk to planning team members. All comments made at the meeting will have to be submitted in writing to be considered during preparation of the EIR.

Date: May 14, 2025

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Location: Rio Dell Elementary School, Multipurpose Room
95 Center Street, Rio Dell, CA 95562

Project Location:

The project site is located at 410 4th Avenue in the city of Rio Dell, California, in southcentral Humboldt County, south of the city of Fortuna and north of the town of Scotia. The project site is bound by Davis Street to the north, residential neighborhoods to the west and south, and U.S. Highway 101 to the east. Adjacent land uses are primarily residential, with the exception of a substation facility located immediately south of the project site. North of the project site and across Davis Street, land uses include residential and a neighborhood park, Davis Street Park. The nearest schools are Eagle Prairie Elementary School and Monument Middle School, less than one-quarter mile north of the project site. See Figure 1 for the project site's location within the region, and Figure 2 for a more detailed depiction of the project site within the local vicinity.

Project Summary

CAL FIRE is proposing to construct and operate the Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Headquarters Facility Relocation project at the project site. The Humboldt-Del Norte Unit serves regional and statewide emergency services requirements. As part of CAL FIRE's mission to protect lives, property, and natural resources, the Humboldt-Del Norte Unit CAL FIRE Headquarters plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of the communities it serves. The property in Rio Dell is owned by the State of California and provides an opportunity for CAL FIRE to expand and modernize its facilities and operate in an efficient, effective, and quality manner to carry out its mission.

As part of CAL FIRE's mission to protect lives, property, and natural resources, the Humboldt-Del Norte Unit CAL FIRE Headquarters plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of the communities

it serves, as well as serving regional and statewide emergency services requirements. The proposed project would address deficiencies in the existing Unit Headquarters and meet the following objectives:

- Provide sufficient space to accommodate state-of-the-art operations technology for the CAL FIRE Emergency Command Center;
- Provide training facilities for regional staff;
- Provide regional maintenance facilities;
- Build in capacity for future fire and other natural disaster emergency response needs.
- Design for onsite maintenance and use of CAL FIRE trucks and equipment, including appropriate circulatory design for such access and movement.
- Accommodate the facilities and space to support fully integrated interagency response
- Accommodate the colocation of CAL FIRE administrative programs, CAL FIRE Training Facilities, Law Enforcement program, Resource Management program, State Fire Marshall Program, and all related staff and equipment.
- Provide a centrally located site in the region to safely and quickly deploy from to any emergency site within Humboldt and Del Norte Counties.
- Serve regional and statewide emergency services requirements, including coordination with California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

The project site is 17.9 acres, was previously zoned Community Commercial and was acquired by CAL FIRE in 2023. The site would provide space for a modern facility to meet current and future needs, including capacity considerations for future fire and other natural disaster emergency response needs in the region. The project would include the demolition of two existing structures at the site (a former residence and garage) and construction and operation of the new Humboldt-Del Norte Unit Regional Headquarters facility. Construction would include an emergency command center; a future fire station; facilities to house administrative programs; a CAL FIRE training facility; Law Enforcement Program; Resource Management Program; State Fire Marshall Program, and related staff; facilities for onsite parking, maintenance, and use of CAL FIRE trucks and equipment; other support buildings; covered parking with photovoltaic panels; onsite circulation; a telecommunication tower; facility supporting infrastructure and utilities including a sewer system, domestic and fire water systems, stormwater detention, site lighting and fencing, and landscaping and irrigation.

Presently, the proposed project site has two structures, proposed for demolition, and is otherwise generally undeveloped. There is an underground storage tank that will be removed as part of the project. The site includes trees and shrubs around the periphery, is surrounded by urban residential land uses to the south and west, community commercial to the north across Davis Street, and U.S. Route 101 to the east and northeast.

Responsible Agencies

For the purposes of CEQA, the term “Responsible Agency” includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit, authorization, or easement needed to complete some aspect of the proposed project. Where city approval may constitute a discretionary decision related to the proposed project, such as potential approvals related to street abandonments or utility connections into the site, it is expected that the City will use the EIR for the project to support these decisions. Other agencies whose approval may be required for the

project include but may not be limited to: the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, State Historic Preservation Officer, North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and California Department of Transportation. Table 1 below lists the permits and approvals which may potentially be required for project-related activities. All necessary permits/approvals would be obtained prior to construction to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and requirements throughout project implementation.

Table 1. Permits and Approvals Which May Be Required

Agency/Department	Permit/Approval	Description
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit	Required if a project would result in placement of dredge or fill materials in Waters of the U.S., including tributaries and wetlands.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Marine Fisheries Service	Federal Endangered Species Act	Required if a project would result in take of a federally listed species.
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	NPDES Permit for construction	RWQCB approval is needed for general construction runoff and/or construction dewatering discharges under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	General Construction Permit	Project proponents are required to submit a Notice of Intent to the RWQCB for coverage under the General Construction Permit if project disturbance would be over 1 acre.
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit or Porter Cologne Waste Discharge Requirement Permit	Section 401 permits are necessary when Section 404 permits are required; a Waste Discharge Permit is required for impacts to Waters of the State that are not subject to federal jurisdiction.
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	California Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Authorization	Incidental Take Authorization is required if a project would result in take of a State-listed species.
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Fish & Game Code Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement	Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement is required if a project results in impacts to the bed and bank of a lake or stream and associated riparian habitat
California Department of Transportation	Encroachment Permit	Required if a project would result in modifications to the Caltrans Rights of Way at the Davis Street Exit to accommodate project circulation
Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	Underground Storage Tanks Construction Permit	Required for a construction permit to repair, modify, install, or close an underground storage tank.
City of Rio Dell	Local right of way or encroachment permit	Approvals related to street or utility connections into the site or improvement on local roadways
California Air Resources Board (CARB) or Air Quality Management District (AQMD)	Portable Equipment Registration or Air Quality Permit to Operate	Portable equipment subject to local air quality permitting requirements, such as generators or air compressors, must be registered under the CARB Portable Equipment Registration Program or obtain a local air quality permit to operate.
North Counties Unified Air Quality Management District	Authority to Construct and Permit to Operate	Required if the internal combustion engine for the emergency backup generator is rated at 50 brake-horsepower or greater.

Potential Environmental Effects

As required by CEQA, the EIR will describe existing conditions and evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed project and a reasonable range of alternatives, including the no-project alternative. It will address reasonably foreseeable direct, indirect, cumulative, and growth inducing effects. Where applicable, the EIR will identify feasible mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts. The following environmental topic areas are preliminarily anticipated to be evaluated in the EIR:

- **Aesthetics, Light and Glare**—The EIR will evaluate existing visual conditions at the site and the potential impacts on scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character that may result from development of the project, as well as impacts related to light and glare. While there are no State-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the project site, the portion of U.S. Route 101 in the project site vicinity is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources**—The EIR will describe existing agricultural and forestry resources and evaluate potential direct and indirect impacts from conflicts with existing zoning or Williamson Act contracts, and from conversion to urban uses of lands designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The project site is not zoned for agricultural uses and the project site is not encumbered by an active Williamson Act contract. This section will also document that no forest land resources are present.
- **Air Quality**—The project site is within the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District, which is in "attainment" or "unclassified" for all federal and state ambient air quality standards with the exception of the state 24-hour standard for particulate matter of 10 microns or less in diameter in Humboldt County only. The EIR will discuss the regional and local air quality conditions and applicable air regulatory framework and standards, as well as proximity of the project site and off-site travel routes to nearby sensitive receptors, including nearby residences and schools. The EIR will quantify air pollutant emissions for construction and subsequent operation of proposed uses and any off-site improvement areas. The EIR will explain how methods and thresholds are designed to assess potential effects on regional air quality and human health. This section will also discuss the potential for substantial odors to result from the proposed project.
- **Biological Resources**—A biological resources assessment will be conducted to evaluate the potential presence of sensitive biological resources including special-status species and their habitats and sensitive natural communities on the project site. The assessment will inform the EIRs biological resources section.
- **Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources**—A cultural resources inventory will be prepared and used to support the EIR analysis. The EIR will describe existing cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources and evaluate potential impacts on those resources, including the potential to affect undiscovered resources during excavation and grading. The EIR will also include consultation with California Native American tribes to assess potential impacts on Tribal Cultural Resources.
- **Energy**—The EIR will quantify anticipated energy consumption associated with construction and operation of the project.
- **Geology, Soils, Minerals, and Paleontology**—The EIR will describe the geological setting and potential environmental effects related to geologic and soils hazards, mineral resources, and

unique paleontological resources. The EIR will also identify any potential impacts from loss of mineral resources and on undiscovered fossils.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**—The EIR will quantify GHG emissions from construction and subsequent operations based on the proposed project.
- **Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Wildfire**—The EIR will identify potential impacts from the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; releases of hazardous materials; emissions of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste near a school; location on a hazardous materials site; impairment of an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan; and exposure to wildland fires. A Phase I and a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment were conducted for the project site and will be used to inform the analysis.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality**—The EIR will evaluate hydrologic and water quality conditions and potential short-term construction-related effects on water quality from stormwater runoff, as well as longer-term effects on stormwater drainage and maintenance effects on water quality, potential impacts on groundwater recharge and sustainability, and on surface water hydrology from the addition of impervious surfaces associated with proposed development.
- **Land Use and Planning, Population, and Housing**—The EIR will describe existing land uses and evaluate the potential for the proposed project to conflict with existing, adopted land use and natural resource plans or regulations that were adopted with the purpose of reducing or avoiding environmental effects.
- **Noise and Vibration**—A Noise Study will be prepared in support of the EIR, which will include evaluation of existing ambient noise levels and potential short-term and long-term noise sources associated with the proposed project.
- **Public Services and Recreation**—The EIR will analyze existing public services and potential increases in demand, and whether those demands would require new facilities (e.g., law enforcement) that could result in potentially significant environmental impacts.
- **Transportation**—The EIR will evaluate access and circulation, including interface with the public roadway network, emergency vehicle access and circulation, and pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation adjacent to the site.
- **Utilities and Service Systems**—The EIR will evaluate physical environmental impacts related to the expansion and extension of utility systems, such as those that are required for water supply, stormwater drainage, wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, and the provision of electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications.

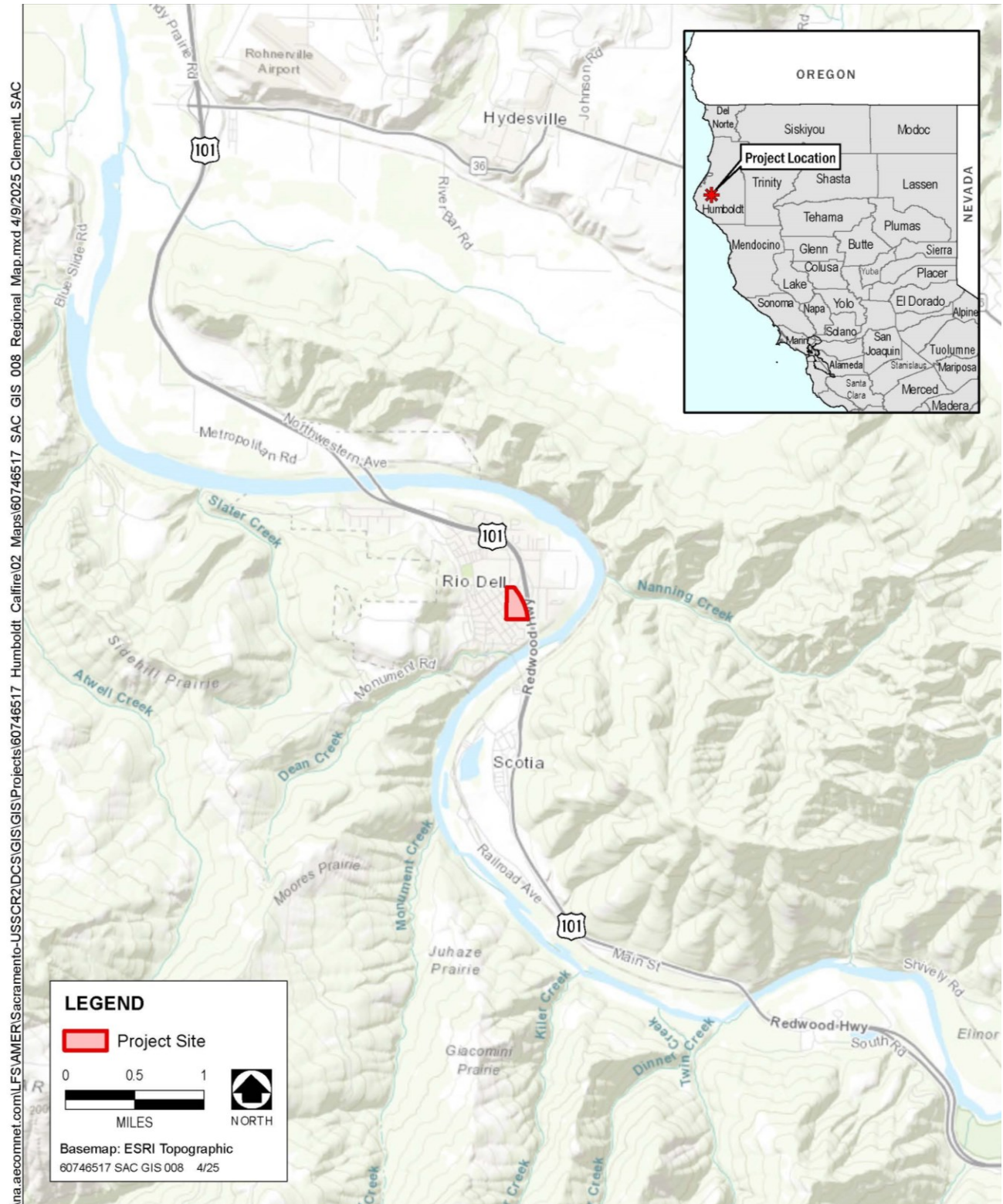


Figure 1. Project Regional Vicinity



Figure 2. Project Site Location