



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| PROJECT TITLE | Trinity Village Fuel Reduction | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | Sections 20, 21, 38, and 29 of T6N R6E - Humboldt Base & Meridian | COUNTY | Trinity |
| LEAD AGENCY | California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) | | |
| CONTACT | Jason Butcher - SRA VMP Forester Humboldt - Del Norte Unit | | |
| ADDRESS | 118 S. Fortuna Blvd. Fortuna, CA 95540 | PHONE | 707-726-1258 |

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project proposes to remove accumulations of hazardous fire fuels along the egress/ingress roads of Trinity Village near Hawkins Bar. Crews will utilize hand tools, weed eaters, chainsaws, and bumper pull chipper to reduce fire fuels through a combination of treatments. Treatments include grass removal, brush removal, limb removal, chipping, and the felling of select trees within 100 feet of the road edge. Tree removal will be focused on suppressed immature understory trees with treatments focused on separating the continuity of their crowns or eliminating their ladder fuel characteristics. The maximum tree diameter for removal is 6 inches. Mature trees will be limbed to reduce ladder fuels. Site disturbance will be limited to this minor modification and removal of vegetation. These fuel management activities will reduce the volume and arrangement of flammable vegetation providing approximately 85 homes with increased fire protection and safer egress/ingress access roads.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 1, 4 §15301 Existing Facilities, §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 fits within the descriptions of Class 1 and Class 4 Categorical Exemptions described in CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR §15301 and §15304) pertaining to Existing Facilities and Minor Alterations to Land. This project will not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded 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. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at CAL FIRE Humboldt – Del Norte Unit, 118 Fortuna Blvd., Fortuna, CA 95540.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAY 21 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Matthew S. Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Date

5/15/19



California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Environmental Review Report for an Exempt Project

Note: This report form is intended for use by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) staff to document a limited environmental impact analysis supporting the filing of a Notice of Exemption (NOE) document for a proposed CAL FIRE project. Although the project appears to fit within the descriptions for allowable Categorical Exemptions, this report presents CAL FIRE's review for possible "Exceptions" that would preclude finding the project to be categorically exempt as discussed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. This report will be filed with the CEQA administrative record for this project to document the environmental impact analysis conducted by the Department.

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Project Name: Trinity Village Fuel Reduction
Project Number:
Program Type: Pre-Fire Protection
CAL FIRE Unit: Shasta – Trinity Unit (SHU) by HUU
County: Trinity
Acres: 11
Legal Location: S20,21,38,29 T6N R6E - Humboldt Base & Meridian
Name of USGS 7.5' Quad Map(s): SALYER, DENNY, HENNESSY PEAK, IRONSIDE MTN
☐ Project Vicinity Map Attached ☒ Project Location Map Attached. ☐ Google Earth image Attached. ☐ Photos Attached

Other Public Agency Review/Permit Required:

Would the project result in:

alterations to a watercourse (DFG - Lake and Stream Alteration Agreement)
conversion of timberland (CAL FIRE - Conversion Permit or Exemption)
demolition (Local Air District - Demolition Permit)
soil disturbance over 1 acre (RWQCB - SWPPP)
fill of possible wetlands (404 Permit - USACE)
other: Burn/Smoke management from the North Coast Unified AQMD

YES

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NO

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Project Description and Environmental Setting (Describe the project activities, project site and its surroundings, its location, and the environmental setting):

Project proposes to remove accumulations of hazardous fire fuels along the egress/ingress routes of Trinity Village near Hawkins Bar, CA. This project has crews utilizing hand tools, weed eaters, chainsaws, and bumper pull chipper to reduce hazardous fuels with a combination of treatments. Treatments include weed whacking, brush removal, limb removal, chipping, lop and scatter, and the felling of small trees within 100 feet of the road edge. The project area is best classified as Montane Hardwood-Conifer habitat made up of various brush species; manzanita, coyote brush, blue blossom, as well as several tree species which include; California black oak, bigleaf maple, Pacific madrone, and tanoak are common with ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, white fir, incense-cedar, and sugar pine forming the overstory. Post operations, debris should not be higher than nine inches if loop and scatter is used. The remaining trees should be spaced at a target spacing of fourteen by fourteen feet with focus on removing suppressed understory trees. The maximum tree diameter for removal is 6 inch DBH. Remaining trees will be limbed to reduce ladder fuels. These fuel management activities will reduce the volume of flammable vegetation allowing the community safer access in the event of wildfire. The project will provide approximately 85 homes in this rural residential community with increased fire protection and safer egress/ingress along access roads. Hazardous fuel loading and road side starts will be reduced. Site disturbance will be limited to minor modification and removal of vegetation.

Environmental Impact Analysis

Aesthetics

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The project area is not visible from Highway 299. Mature healthy trees will be retained. The understory vegetation will be removed using fuel treatments of chipping, lop and scatter, and brushing. Any aesthetical impact that might occur should be positive in nature due to the removal of excess debris which will result in a stand that is more open and park like.

Agriculture and Forest Resources

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ Yes ☐ No Would any trees be felled? If yes, discuss protection of nesting birds and compliance with FPRs.
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project convert any prime or unique farmland?
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project result in the conversion of forest land/timberland to non-forest use?
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Before any tree is felled it will be assessed for the presence of nests. If a nest is observed, the tree will not be felled. Only small diameter trees (≤ 6 inch DBH) will be felled. Shade/cover trees will be maintained within any watercourse or lake protection zone and no soil disturbance will occur. This project does not constitute "Timber Operations," as defined by PRC 4527, because the vegetation removed is not for "commercial purposes." Only small non-commercial trees will be felled. —No negative impact to Agriculture or Forest Resources is expected from this project.

Air Quality

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ Yes ☐ No The local Air Quality Management District guidelines for dust abatement and other air quality concerns were reviewed for this project.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

No burn piles are proposed to be created or treated. Only a chipper and small engine machines are expected to be used to reduce the vegetation. No negative impact to Air Quality is expected from this project.

Biological Resources

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ Yes ☐ No Will the project potentially effect biological resources?
☒ Yes ☐ No Was a current NDDDB review completed? Results discussed below:
☒ Yes ☐ No Was a biological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

A California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) search was conducted on 6/12/2018 and 3/13/2019. This 5-mile search resulted in the identification of 5 special status species; 1 rare plant (bensoniella), 1 candidate amphibian (foothill YLF), 2 threatened mammals (fisher & CA wolverine), 1 endangered bird (bald eagle). Each species habitats and life cycles were thoroughly reviewed and multiple field visits were performed between 6/15/2018 and 4/5/2019. A determination was made that none of these special status species are expected to be impacted due to their absence during project layout, the treatment site characteristics, and the type/duration of treatments proposed in the project area.

Visual inspections for nesting migratory birds will be made in trees and mature shrubs within and adjacent to the project area prior to the commencement of vegetation removal. Signs of nesting birds include completed nests, accumulation of nesting material at base of tree, accumulation of bird droppings, and sounds/signs associated with nesting birds. If any nests are found, a "No Ops" buffer will be applied where fuel treatment activities will not occur until it is determined that the juveniles have fledged. The support structure of the nest will not be cut down.

The project will not affect any stream or watercourse. The areas to be treated are located on the slopes well above the Trinity River. No pile burning will occur and project implementation will not result in delivery of contaminants, sediment or the alteration of natural drainage patterns. No negative impacts to Biological Resources are expected from this project.

Cultural Resources

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Was a current archaeological records check completed? Results discussed below:
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Was a CAL FIRE Staff or Contract Archaeologist consulted? Results discussed below:
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Was an archaeological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Will the project effect any historic buildings or archaeological site?
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Focused field surveys have not identified any signs of prehistoric artifacts adjacent to road edges. State Archeologist, Steve Grantham has reviewed this project proposal. Should cultural resources be revealed during project activities, project activity will cease within 100 feet of the discovery, a State Archaeologist will be contacted and work will not resume in the buffered area until clearance is received from the Archaeologist, per standard CAL FIRE policy. Furthermore, should project activities expose human bone/remains, operations will cease and the Humboldt County Coroner's Office and a CAL FIRE archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours of discovery. All work will remain halted until clearance is granted. Negative impacts to Cultural Resources are not expected from this project.

Geology and Soils

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The project area is stable with no geologic concerns. Only minor modification to existing vegetation will occur. No disturbance to soil is expected to occur. No significant impacts to geology or soils are anticipated.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project generate significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Would these GHG emissions result in a significant impact on the environment? Discuss below:
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? Discuss below:

Minor emissions will occur from the equipment needed to cut, chip and lop the vegetation on the site, but these will be minor in nature and for a short period of time. The treated vegetation will decompose over several years. The remaining vegetation is expected to sequester more GHG emissions than will result from the project. No significant impacts resulting from Greenhouse Gas Emissions are anticipated as a result of this project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

*Crews will be working with chainsaws and chippers to remove brush and trees within the treatment area. All crews shall be supervised and wear proper Personal Protective Equipment while operating or servicing the equipment. Equipment used for this project **shall not** be serviced in locations where servicing will allow grease, oil, or fuel to pass into a watercourse. No adverse impacts from hazards or hazardous materials are anticipated.*

Hydrology and Water Quality

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Will the project potentially affect any watercourse or body of water?
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Operations will not take place within the watercourse channel zone. Any vegetation that contributes to shading of the watercourse will not be removed. Site disturbance will be limited to minor modification of vegetation. No treated material that has the propensity to enter the watercourse will be stored within the watercourse transition line. No negative impacts to water quality are anticipated.

Land Use and Planning

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

This project will not have an effect on current land use and planning.

Mineral Resources

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
This project will not have an effect on current mineral resources.

Noise

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
This project will utilize hand crews and mechanized equipment to cut, chip, lop and scatter vegetation along the proposed roadside fuel reduction areas. Work will occur Monday-Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM and short term noise levels are expected to be consistent with hand crew work, using chain saws and weed eaters. Chipping noise will occur from a single piece of mechanized equipment. Noise thresholds should remain below levels of concern. There will be no long-term increases in noise as a result of this project. No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

Population and Housing

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
There are approximately 85 houses in the area that will benefit from the reduction in vegetation along the main and arterial roads of Trinity Village. Some homes are within the 100 foot vegetation clearance width wherein the clearance buffer will be reduced to the county road easement. No impact to the population or housing is expected to occur.

Public Services

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
This project will enhance egress and ingress for the public and emergency personnel as well as reducing the risk of roadside starts within this wildland urban interface community. The net result will be a reduction of wildland fuel build up and a decrease in the chance of catastrophic wildfires. No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

Recreation

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
No recreational opportunities exist within the area of the project.

Transportation/Traffic

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
A minor traffic delay could occur immediately adjacent to the project area along the Denny Road. Every effort will be made by the crews to park off of the road surface in turnouts to reduce any minor traffic delays.

Utilities and Service Systems

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
There are power lines in the area but only limbing and small tree falling is expected to occur. No negative impact to Utilities and Service Systems are expected from this project.

Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:

Canopy cover providing shade for watercourses shall be retained. No ground disturbance shall occur.

| Mandatory Findings of Significance: | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probably future projects) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Justification for Use of a Categorical Exemption (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):

*The proposed activities will reduce the volume of flammable vegetation along community roads allowing safer egress/ingress in the event of wildfire. Site disturbance will be limited to minor modification of vegetation. The project is classified as a Categorical Exemption: **Class 1, Section 15301, Existing Facilities and Class 4, Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land**. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded 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. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at CAL FIRE Humboldt – Del Norte Unit, 118 Fortuna Blvd., Fortuna, CA 95540.*

Conclusion:

☒ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project fits within one or more of the exemption classes and no exceptions exist at the project site which would preclude the use of this exemption. The Department considered the possibility of (a) sensitive location, (b) cumulative impact, (c) significant impact due to unusual circumstances, (d) impacts to scenic highways, (e) activities within a hazardous waste site, and (f) significant adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. A Notice of Exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse.

☐ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project does not fit within the description for the various exemption classes or has found that exceptions exist at the project site which precludes the use of a Categorical Exemption for this project. Additional environmental review will be conducted and the appropriate CEQA document used may be a Notice of Exemption or a Mitigated Notice of Exemption.

Trinity Village Fuel Reduction - Environmental Review Report Form (ERRF) Supporting an Exempt Project

