



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

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

2019090297

PROJECT TITLE	Cohasset Public Assembly Area Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	T24N R2E Sec. 23 Cohasset Quadrangle	COUNTY	Butte
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Melissa Correa	PHONE	530-215-5236
ADDRESS	6640 Steiffer Rd. Magalia, CA 95954		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Cohasset Public Assembly Area Project is located in the town of Cohasset approximately 0.2 miles North of CAL FIRE station 22. The project is on private property on the East and West side of Cohasset Rd. in a wildland urban interface setting. It is on the Cohasset Ridge with Maple Branch Creek approximately 0.3 miles to the West and Rock Creek approximately 0.9 miles to the East. The vegetation consists of mixed conifers, CA black oak, dogwood, CA bay and manzanita. The school vegetation has planted fruit trees, bamboo and a variety of ornamental trees and shrubs. Within the project boundary there are multiple structures, property fences, utility sheds and lines and septic tanks. Cohasset Rd is the main way down the ridge and escape route for the community in case of an emergency, such as a wildfire. In the event of a wildfire, the school will serve as an emergency temporary refuge area (TRA) for the community members unable to immediately evacuate. Decreasing fuels on school and surrounding properties will improve the defense against fire for the first responders and increase the protection of community members. Since the school's closure, the once open area on the grounds has been populated by young trees, shrubs, brush and weeds. The increase in fuels and fuel continuity has put the Public Assembly Area at a higher risk of fire. There are several large dead and dying cedars on the school that are hazard trees that will be removed. Shrubs and most trees up to 12" in diameter will be cut and piled for burning or broadcast chipped; with the exclusion of dogwood, maples and fruit trees. The maples and remaining vegetation will be pruned up to 10'. Cut vegetation on neighboring parcels will be broadcast chipped or piled for burning per landowner request. Work will be conducted by hand crews. Post-project completion, continued maintenance of the school will be conducted by Station 22 while also serving as continued training opportunity.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4 §15304
☐ 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 under portions of §15304 Minor Alterations to Land. No activity is proposed that is listed as a limitation under CCR §15300.2 (a-f).

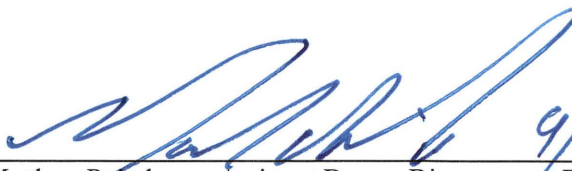
Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of a notice of exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland or timberland, air quality, biological resources, 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 or traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at Butte Fire Center: 6640 Steiffer Rd, Magalia, CA 95954.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

SEP 11 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE


Matthew Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director Date
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 9/5/19



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 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 CAL FIRE.

Author: Melissa Correa
Title: Forestry Assistant II
Address: 6640 Steiffer Rd, Magalia, CA 95954
Phone: 530-215-5236
Email: Melissa.Correa@fire.ca.gov

Project Name: Cohasset Public Assembly Area Project
Project Number:
Program Type: Fuels Reduction
CAL FIRE Unit: BTU
County: Butte
Acres: 9.5
Legal Location: T24N R2E Sec. 23 MDBM
Name of USGS 7.5' Quad Map(s): Cohasset
☒ Project Vicinity Map Attached ☒ Project Location Map Attached ☒ Photos Attached

Other Public Agency Review or Permit Required:

Would the project result in:

Alterations to a watercourse (DFW - 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:

YES

NO

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Discuss any above-listed topic item checked Yes and consultation with agencies:

Project Description and Environmental Setting (describe the project activities, project site and its surroundings, its location, and the environmental setting): The Cohasset Public Assembly Area Project is located in the town of Cohasset approximately 0.2 miles north of CAL FIRE Station 22. The project is on Cohasset School District and private property on the east and west side of Cohasset Rd. in a wildland urban-interface setting. It is on the Cohasset Ridge with Maple Branch Creek approximately 0.3 miles to the west and Rock Creek approximately 0.9 miles to the east. The vegetation consists of mixed conifers, CA black oak, dogwood, CA bay and manzanita. The Cohasset School District parcel is designated as an assembly point in CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire's Cohasset and Richardson Springs evacuation plan. The school is currently closed. The school district property and areas on the adjacent private parcels will be treated for fuel reduction to make the school property a safer assembly area in the event of a wildfire. The school's vegetation has planted fruit trees, bamboo and a variety of ornamental trees and shrubs, some of which will be trimmed to reduce the fire hazard. Within the project boundary there are multiple structures, property fences, utility sheds and lines and septic tanks on both the School District and private properties. Cohasset Rd is the main way down the ridge and escape route for the community in case of an emergency, such as a wildfire. In the event of a wildfire, the school parcel will serve as an emergency temporary refuge area for the community members unable to immediately evacuate. Decreasing fuels on school and surrounding properties will improve the defense against fire for the first responders and increase the protection of community members. Since the school's closure, the once open area on the grounds has been populated by young trees, shrubs, brush and weeds. The increase in fuels and fuel continuity has put the public assembly area at a higher risk of fire. There are several large dead and dying cedars on the school that are hazard trees that will be removed by felling and burning or cutting into firewood for use by the neighboring Cohasset Community Association. Shrubs and most trees up to 12" in diameter will be cut and piled for burning or broadcast chipped, with the exclusion of dogwood, maples and fruit trees. The maples and remaining vegetation will be pruned up to 10'. Cut vegetation on neighboring parcels will be broadcast chipped or piled for burning per landowner request. Work will be conducted by hand crews. Post-project completion, continued maintenance of the vegetation in an around the assembly area will be conducted by Station 22 while also serving as continued training opportunity. The initial project work will be completed by the engine crew

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 California Natural Diversity Database 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:

There are no species of special concern within the project area. There is an estimated occurrence area of the 4.2 S3 ranked Butte morning glory that runs along Cohasset Rd through the project area. None was observed. A conversation was had with Unit Environmental Scientist Henry Lomeli with the CDFW; a letter was also sent along with an email response (attached). Discussing the project and project details his response/advise was:

Before felling the large dead and dying cedars just make sure to check for cavities and confirm there is no owl nest present. (Email): Looks good and a long overdue project. If possible, avoid work in April-June 15 to help minimize impacts to nesting birds.

A table containing the results of the CNDDDB is attached. No potential impacts are expected.

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, archaeological or tribal cultural resources?
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Native American Notification/Info Request letters were sent and one written reply was received (attached). Greenville Rancheria had no comments or concerns; only requested to be informed if anything was to be found. Results of the I.C. Records Check showed that there are no recorded prehistoric or historic sites within project area; however, there are recorded sites within one mile of proposed area. A complete walkthrough survey was conducted and no sites were found. No impacts are anticipated. If cultural materials are encountered during project activities, the project will cease within a 100-foot radius of the discovery and will not resume until a CAL FIRE archaeologist has been notified. If after review by the archaeologist, the project remains exempt, the work may resume. However, depending on what's found the project may no longer be exempt and work will not resume until the appropriate CEQA analysis has been completed. CAL FIRE Archaeologist Steve Grantham approved the archaeological report on 8/19/19.

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 soil type of the project area is Paradiso loam; a well-drained soil on a slope less than 10%. Its susceptibility to compaction is low although no soil compaction is expected. No significant adverse impacts 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:

This project will not contribute a significant amount of greenhouse gas to the environment due to limited scope. Actual area of work is about half of the total project area. The removal of existing vegetation in the overgrown areas will reduce the competition for remaining healthy trees; improving tree growth and vigor, which will increase carbon sequestration. Per the Cal Fire simple spreadsheet for GHG calculations (attached) the project will generate 157 tons of CO₂ which will be sequestered at a rate of 4 tons/ac/yr. The project will take 1.1 years to requester all the carbon generated through project activities.

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:

The project consists of treating wildland vegetation adjacent to a school area, which will be used as an emergency public refuge area. Such activities will have no effect on recreation.

Transportation and 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:

While some of the vegetation being removed falls within the county roads right of way, traffic control is not expected to be needed. The area where the chipper will be used is the landowner's private road and the school grounds. The school's parking lot is large enough to stage all vehicles and equipment. There should be no significant effects from the project on transportation or traffic.

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:

Project activities will not disrupt utility service or service systems. There are power lines and septic tanks within the project area. Trees near the powerlines will be sized up by the feller to determine if it can be cut safely away from the lines. The septic tanks identified are in areas where no vegetation removal work is being conducted.

Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:

Pile burning will be performed according to the limitations prescribed by the AQMD burn permit.

Operations that occur during nesting season will be visually inspected for nests. Signs of nests include completed nests, accumulation of nesting material at base of tree, accumulation of bird droppings and sounds associated with nesting birds. Trees with active nests will not intentionally be felled.

If cultural materials are encountered during project activities, the project will cease within a 100-foot radius of the discovery and will not resume until a CAL FIRE archaeologist has been notified. If after review by the archaeologist, the project remains exempt, the work may resume. However, depending on what's found the project may no longer be exempt and work will not resume until the appropriate CEQA analysis has been completed.

The trees and area will be sized up and cut by a licensed faller; the tree(s) will not be cut if it is determined that it cannot be done safely or without causing damage to a structure.

Vegetation removed will not be placed or broadcast chipped within the ditches. Piles will be placed a minimum of 10' from the ditches.

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?

☐☒

(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.

☐☒

(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

☐☒



Figure 2. School grounds from the garden to fence looking to the East.



Figure 5. Dense vacant parcel owned by Mr. Scott.



Figure 6. Chipper access road and East project boundary on Clements property.

General Information

Project Name Cohasset Public Assembly Area Project
 Project Acres 9.5
 Total Project Days 10

Blue = Variable Inputs
 Black = Equation Produced Data
 Red = Constants

Exhaust CO2 Emissions

Total Round Trip Miles	0.5		
# of Chainsaws	4	Total Chipper days	4
# of Chippers	1	Total Chainsaw days	10
# of Masticators	0	Total Masticator days	0
Diesel Kilograms/Gal	10.15		
Gas Kilograms/Gal	8.91		
Pounds of CO2/Kilogram	2.20462		
Chipper Diesel Gal/day	6		
Crew Bus MPG	8		
Chainsaw Gas Gal/Day/Saw	1.5		
Masticator Diesel Gal/day	20		
Conversion Factor Pounds to Tons	2000		
Conversion Factor Tons of Biomass to Tons CO2	1.65		
Crew Bus Total Miles	5	Chainsaws Total Gal Gas Needed	60
Crew Bus Gal Diesel Needed	1	Total Kilograms of Gas Produced	535
Chipper Gal Diesel Needed	24	Gas Total Pounds of CO2 Produced	1,179
Masticator Gal Diesel Needed	-	Gas Total Tons of CO2 Produced	1
Total Gal of Diesel Needed	25		
Total Kilograms of Diesel Produced	250		
Diesel Total Pounds of CO2 Produced	551		
Diesel Total Tons CO2	0		

Decay CO2 Emissions

Est. Biomass Tons Per Acre Removed (Fuel Model)	10
Biomass Total Tons Removed	95
Total Tons of CO2	157

Final Outputs

Total Tons of CO2 for Project	158
Sequestration Rate 2 - 6 Tons/Ac/Yr (Chapparral tranistion to mixed pine stand)	4
Total Sequestration Rate/Yr	139.46
Years Required for Complete Sequestration	1.1

and manzanita (*arctostaphylos* spp.). There is some sugar pine (*pinus lambertiana*), dogwood (*cornus nuttallii*), blackberry (*rubus armeniacus*) and *ceanothus* spp. scattered in the area as well. Planted ornamentals and fruit trees consists of cherry, peach and apple, big leaf maple (*acer macrophyllum*) and red bud (*cercis occidentalis*).




Since this project is within your jurisdiction, we request that you review it and provide any written comments and/or mitigations appropriate to your findings within 30 days of this letter. I can be reached at Melissa.correa@fire.ca.gov or at 530-215-5236.

If we receive no response within the specified time period, we will proceed with the approval of this project.

Thank you for your time,



Melissa Correa
CAL FIRE
Butte Fire Center
Forestry Assistant II

				scattered with meadows. No impact is expected.
<i>Allium jepsonii</i>	Jepson's onion	1B.2		Habitat: chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest- in serpentine and volcanic soils on slopes and flats. There is no known occ. in Paradise quad but has an estimated range on Cohasset range. None found in project area but prior to work a walk around of project will be done.
<i>Botrychium ascendens</i>	Upswept moonwort	2B.3		Habitat: Meadows and seeps, grassy fields, coniferous woods near springs and creeks. Roadside ditches on site not known to support this spp. No impact is expected.
<i>Campylopodiella stenocarpa</i>	Flagella-like atractyllocarpus	2B.2		Spp. populations found on roadsides where habitat is open woodland and rocky soils which are not present on site.
<i>Cardamine pachystigma</i> var. <i>dissectifolia</i>	Dissected- leaved toothwort	1B.2		Habitat: Chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest. Spp. found in serpentine soils, outcrops and gravelly serpentine talus. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Carex xerophila</i>	Chaparral sedge	1B.2		Habitat: Serpentine chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Clarkia mildrediae</i> ssp. <i>mildrediae</i>	Mildred's clarkia	1B.3		Spp. found on decomposed granite and on roadsides sometimes. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Clarkia mosquinii</i>	Mosquin's clarkia	1B.1		Usually found on steep, rocky cutbanks and slopes. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Cryptantha crinita</i>	Silky cryptantha	1B.2		Spp. found in gravelly streambeds. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Drpsera anglica</i>	English sundew	2B.3		Habitat: bogs and fens, meadows and seeps. Not present in project area and no impact expected.
<i>Frangula purshiana</i> ssp. <i>ultramafica</i>	Caribou coffeeberry	1B.2		Habitat: lower and upper montane forest, chaparral, meadows and seeps. Spp. found on serpentine soils. Not present in project area and no impact expected.

<i>Stellaria longifolia</i>	Long-leaved starwort	2B.2		Spp. found in moist areas. Habitat: bogs and fens, meadows and steeps, riparian woodlands, upper montane coniferous forest. Not present in project area and no impact expected
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Re: Cohasset Project

Lomeli, Henry@Wildlife <Henry.Lomeli@wildlife.ca.gov>

Mon 7/29/2019 7:45 AM

To: Correa, Melissa@CALFIRE <Melissa.Correa@fire.ca.gov>

Warning: this message is from an external user and should be treated with caution.

Hi Melissa,

Looks good and a long over due project. If possible, avoid work in April-June 15 to help minimize impacts to nesting birds.

H-

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 15, 2019, at 7:52 AM, Correa, Melissa@CALFIRE <Melissa.Correa@fire.ca.gov> wrote:

Good Morning Mr. Lomeli,

Thank you for letting me introduce myself and taking the time to talk with me this past Saturday. And I hope I can get a group of friends and family to go out on one of those tours this summer; that vehicle looked like a fun experience. Here is the email and letter I mentioned I was planning to send to you. Thank you for the advise and suggestions to look for/ be aware of regarding my projects (and future projects). This is my first NOE that I am writing up; hopefully the first of many fuels reduction projects for the county; so another name to your list of people emailing/ mailing you regarding CEQA. An email reply with your comments is much appreciated.

Thank You,
Melissa Correa

<CDFW.pdf>

<Quad 10000 scale.pdf>

<General Maps.pdf>