Copy

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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

PROJECT TITLE	Mount Crossman Community Fuel Break		
PROJECT LOCATION	Unincorporated areas outside Pioneer and Buckhorn	**COUNTY**	Amador
LEAD AGENCY	Amador Resource Conservation District (RCD)		
CONTACT	Steve Q. Cannon, President, Amador RCD		
ADDRESS	12200 B Airport Road Jackson, CA 95642	**PHONE**	(209) 223-3581

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will construct a community fuel break on prominent ridges just north of Buckhorn. This (NOTE: 4500 ft, plus 2600 ft) 1.4-mile fuel break encompasses an area of approximately 85 acres.

The objective of the project is to create a shaded fuel break approximately 400 to 500 feet wide. This fuel break will protect hundreds of habitable structures directly adjacent to the fuel break from catastrophic fire, will protect the communities of Buckhorn and Pioneer and will protect water quality in the Mokelumne River watershed. The project will utilize a combination of treatments to reduce or remove incompatible vegetation within the fuel break. These treatments may include mechanical mastication, hand thinning and chipping, piling and burning, pruning, the application of herbicides and/or other treatment methods. Ground fuels and brush will be masticated, and small conifer and hardwood trees will be thinned. Property owners included in the project have signed Right-of-Entry agreements to allow project work to be performed on their properties. The project area has been flagged on the ground with flagging.

The intent is for this Notice of Exemption to cover ongoing maintenance of the project in perpetuity.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- [x] Categorical Exemption Type/Section: 14CCR§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 under the description for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption to CEQA. Amador RCD staff conducted an environmental review to confirm that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Amador RCD 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, utilities and service systems, or wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Amador RCD staff is kept on file at the Amador RCD office in Jackson, CA.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

File No. 03072025-027
Posted On 07/25/2025
Posting Removed

Steve Q. Cannon, President
Amador Resource Conservation District

22 July 2025
Date

ENDORSED
FILED

JUL 25 2025

KIMBERLY L. GRADY, County Clerk
AMADOR COUNTY
By M. MORRIS Deputy

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.

Author: Ed Struffenegger, RPF #2200
Title: Amador RCD, Contract Forester
Address: 140 Creek View Court, Sutter Creek, CA 95685
Phone: 209-304-2045
Email: edstruff@volcano.net

Project Name: Mt Crossman Community Fuel Break
Project Number: ARCD-2025
Program Type: CalFire CCI Fire Prevention Grant
CAL FIRE Unit: Amador – El Dorado Unit (AEU)
County: Amador
Acres: 85 acres of proposed project (CEQA area assessed = 147 acres)
Legal Location: Sections 9, 10, 15, 16, T7N, R13E MDBM.
Name of USGS 7.5'Quad Map(s): West Point, Calif.
☒Project Vicinity Map Attached ☒Project Location Map Attached ☒Photos Attached

Other Public Agency Review/Permit Required:

Would the project result in:	YES	NO
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:	☐	☒

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will construct a community fuel break on prominent ridges just north of Buckhorn in Amador County. This shaded fuel break encompasses an area of approximately 85 acres over a total length of approximately 1.4 miles.

The objective of the project is to create a shaded fuel break approximately 300 to 500 feet wide. This fuel break will protect hundreds of habitable structures directly adjacent to the fuel break from catastrophic fire, will protect the communities of Buckhorn and Pioneer and will protect water quality in the Mokelumne River watershed. The project will utilize a combination of treatments to reduce or remove incompatible vegetation within the fuel break. These treatments may include mechanical mastication, hand thinning and chipping, piling and burning, pruning, the application of herbicides and/or other treatment methods. Ground fuels and brush will be masticated, and small conifer and hardwood trees will be thinned. Property owners included in the project have signed Right-of-Entry agreements to allow project work to be performed on their properties. The project has been designated on the ground with flagging.

A Notice of Exemption (NOE) will be filed for this project. The intent is for the Notice of Exemption filed for this project to cover ongoing maintenance of the project in perpetuity.

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 fuels reduction project will result in a visual change to the treated vegetation.

The visual landscape will not be adversely impacted due to the retention of overstory trees and a reduction of shrubs. This project will generally target ground fuels, brush, small understory trees, and dead trees. Small trees will be spaced to provide for maximum fuel break effectiveness. In most cases, views may improve as the reduction in understory vegetation will allow for increased visibility into the surrounding forestland; visual results of this work are commonly characterized as "looking park-like."

The treated areas will be rapidly re-vegetated with a variety of annual and perennial plants which will ameliorate any potential negative aesthetic impacts. Portions of the project will be visible from various county roads in the area, and from a short portion of Highway 88 just east of Buckhorn.

Although a portion of Highway 88 is a designated state "Scenic Highway," the portion of Highway 88 that is in the view shed of this project east of Buckhorn is not part of the Scenic Highway designation.

There will be no adverse impacts to Aesthetics from this project.

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:

This project involves the mechanical mastication of ground fuels, brush, and small trees. Other treatment options will be utilized, as needed. Operations will be planned to fall outside of the normal nesting bird season, which is generally from March 1 to September 15.

A walk-through survey of the project area has been conducted during the preparation of this ERRF. No nesting birds or species at-risk were located during this walk-through survey. No large stick-nests were observed in or adjacent to the project area. Several older snags with nesting cavities were observed in the project area, but none of these nesting cavities appear to have active nesting activities at this time.

If operations will be conducted during nesting bird season, nesting bird walk-through surveys will be conducted just prior to operations. These walk-through surveys will be conducted within 14 days of planned operations in that area. If an active nest is located during the survey, no fuels reduction activities shall take place within 50 feet of the nest until after the young have fledged. If a listed or sensitive species is identified, the area around that detection will be excluded from the project, and a qualified wildlife biologist will be consulted for appropriate protective measures.

There will be no adverse impacts to Agriculture and Forest Resources 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:

The Amador Air District Rulebook was reviewed for this project. Specifically, Rule #218 "Fugitive Dust Emissions" was reviewed for applicable provisions that could apply to this project. For this project as proposed, no appreciable fugitive dust would be generated that would require notification to the Amador Air District. Vehicle and equipment exhaust emissions will be minor and short-lived. Fugitive dust from mechanical mastication will be generally short-lived in any given area, due to relatively rapid treatment of fuels in any given area. Any pile burning of vegetation will be in full compliance with local air district regulations. Additionally, no special provisions listed in this section would apply to this project. For this project no significant adverse impacts to air quality are anticipated.

The Amador Air District Rules can be found at: https://www.amadorgov.org/services/amador-air-district/air-district-rules

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 NDDB 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:

METHODS
A California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) background query and report for regulated species occurrences was completed for an area within a 9-quad area around the project area on April 18, 2025. The project area is within the West Point 7.5-minute quad; the other surrounding quads that were included in this query were: Aukum, Omo Ranch, Caldor, Pine Grove, Devils Nose, Mokelumne Hill, Rail Road Flat, and Fort Mountain.

A background query and report for California spotted owl occurrences was completed for an area within this same 9-quad area.

A total of 34 listed or sensitive species were listed on the CNDDB species report. Each species was evaluated for the potential to exist on the project area. Some species were excluded from further evaluation based on their location relative to the project area, their specific habitat types that do not exist on the project area, or other parameters. This scoping was completed with the assistance of a certified wildlife biologist.

No occurrences of any listed species were recorded on the project area, or within one mile of the project boundary. No historic California spotted owl occurrences on the project site have been reported.

Pedestrian surveys to locate potential wetlands, regulated plants, and regulated wildlife resources within the project site were completed between May 14 and May 21, 2025. These surveys were conducted by Ed Struffenegger, Registered Professional Forester, and field forester Jason Smith. All resources identified for protection or avoidance were marked with electronic pin markers in Avenza mapping software via cell phone in the field. Resources were also marked with orange, and yellow and black striped flagging for recognition in the field.

RESULTS OF FIELD SURVEY

Regulated Plant Species. No regulated plant species or species considered rare or threatened by the California Native Plant Society were observed in the project area. No elderberry shrubs were observed in the project area.

Regulated Animal Species. No regulated animal species were observed in the project area.

Nesting Birds. Potential bird nesting habitat exists throughout the project area, primarily as tree canopy and cavities in standing snags or dead branches in larger living black oak trees. These include trees that are suitable for raptor nesting. Additional habitat features exist for roosting bats and woodrat nests. Several large snags with potential nesting cavities were

located and mapped with pin markers in Avenza. No occupied bird nests or unoccupied raptor nests were observed during surveys.

Ephemeral Watercourses. The project area contains several ephemeral watercourses that serve to transport stormwater. These ephemeral watercourses do not support physical characteristics typical of higher-order intermittent or perennial streams. These ephemeral watercourses transition from ephemeral to intermittent channels well outside of the project area.
These ephemeral watercourses do not support any potential habitat for species such as the foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frogs, or western pond turtles. None of these species were observed during the survey.

Intermittent or Perennial Watercourses. One intermittent watercourse was identified in the far north region of the project area. This watercourse is the headwaters of Misery Creek, which transitions to a perennial watercourse downstream from the project area. This watercourse supports some riparian vegetation, but no riparian animal species of concern were observed in the area.

No perennial watercourses were found on the project area.

Ponds, Lakes. No ponds or lakes were observed during the survey. The closest pond to the project area is located on the Mace Meadows Gold Course, approximately 1,000 yards from the project area. The area between this pond and the project area is generally a developed subdivision with homes, roads, and other improvements. Although western pond turtles can wander far from their home ponds, there is virtually no chance that a western pond turtle would wander into the project area through this developed subdivision. The frog species of concern generally do not travel more than 200 feet from water, and the project area is much further than the normal travel distance of these frogs.

Wetlands. No wetlands were observed in or near the project area.

Caves, Mines, Abandoned Buildings. No caves, mines, or abandoned buildings were observed on any portion of the project area. These features can support a variety of regulated species that are normally associated with these features. Many of the CNDDB occurrences of these species are associated with caves in the Volcano, CA area. This is approximately 6 miles from the project area.

Rock Outcrops/Lava Caps. Several small rock outcrops were observed in the project area. Some of these rock outcrops have populations of common soap root. These areas were further surveyed for the presence of Red Hills soap root. No Red Hills soap root plants were observed. These rock outcrop areas have been identified on Avenza and flagged for protection.

Lava caps are often habitat for the Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily. No Lava Caps were observed on the project area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of the protection measures described below will reduce or eliminate the potential for any significant impacts on biological resources.

Ephemeral watercourses may be temporarily impacted by mechanical treatment, including falling of trees and shrubs into the channel and crossing in pre-determined locations, however, the areas of impacts must be returned to their original condition at the conclusion of the project. This includes the removal of all significant deposits of debris, such as dirt, rocks, vegetation, or masticated material from the watercourse. If there is an anticipated 50 percent or greater chance of rain (via www.weather.gov) accidental deposits of debris will be removed. Prior to the rain event.

The one intermittent watercourse will have a minimum of a 15-foot buffer on both sides of the watercourse. Where the incised watercourse channel is wider than 15 feet, the buffer will extend to the edge of the incised channel, regardless of width. Within this buffer, no equipment will be allowed to work at any time when water is present and no mechanical mastication will be allowed within this buffer. All significant deposits of debris will be removed from the watercourse. If there is an anticipated 50 percent or greater chance of rain (via www.weather.gov) accidental deposits of debris will be removed.

Standing dead snags provide cavity nest habitat for birds and peeling bark for roosting bats. These standing dead trees may provide migratory bird nest habitat in the future. Some standing dead trees were identified for protection because of the presence of cavities and peeling bark for bat roosting. All standing dead snags identified as potential habitat were flagged for preservation.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects active bird nests from removal or impacts. Measures to protect active bird nests are listed previously under “Agriculture and Forest Resources.”

If during operations, regulated species are found within the project area, measures will be adopted to protect the species from project impacts. Work will be immediately stopped at the point of observation and the project biologist or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife office in Rancho Cordova immediately notified. A protection plan must be adopted for the species prior to work restarting in the area.

POTENTIAL HABITAT CHANGES:

The project area is within the West Point USGS 7.5-minute quad map, and is between 3,400 ft and 3,900 ft elevations. The general vegetation type in the project area and adjacent areas is montane chaparral and Sierra mixed conifer. The montane chaparral is generally comprised of white-leaf manzanita and deer brush. The Sierra mixed conifer vegetation type is generally comprised of Ponderosa pine, sugar pine, Douglas fir, and incense cedar of various ages. Black oaks and live oaks can be found scattered throughout the entire project area in various densities and age classes.

This project will create a shaded fuel break 300 to 500 feet wide. As a result, only a small portion of the total vegetation in the general area will be treated. Abundant vegetation of both vegetation types will be abundant after project completion in areas outside the actual project footprint. In addition, healthy conifer and hardwood trees of various species will be left scattered in the actual project area as part of the "shaded fuel break" prescription.

The fuel break will be rapidly re-vegetated after treatment, and early seral plant species such as grasses, forbs, and young brush will provide browse for a variety of wildlife, thereby improving overall habitat for various species by providing a variety of early-seral vegetation types.

EVALUATION OF VARIOUS CNDDB SPECIES

The following regulated plant and animal species listed in the CNDDB output were evaluated for potential to exist on the project area. The CNDDB query reports for this project are on file at the Amador RCD office.

Listed Botanical Resources:

Red Hills soaproot (*Chlorogalum grandiflorum*): Several occurrences were listed, the closest of which was approximately 2 miles away on Buckhorn Ridge, well away from any project activities. No signs of Red-Hills soaproot were found during the field layout of this project. Areas where common soaproot was evident were also surveyed for Red Hills soaproot, but no Red Hills soaproot was found.
Tuolumne button-celery. (*Eryngium pinnatisectum*.): The occurrence of this specie was documented in Indian Grinding Rocks State Historic Park, which is well away from any project activities.
Stanislaus monkeyflower. (*Erythranthe marmorata*): This occurrence was documented in the Mokelumne River Canyon, which is well away from any project activities.
Pleasant Valley mariposa-lily (Calochortus clavatus var. avius): Several occurrences were listed, the closest of which was approximately 3 miles away, south of Highway 88, and several additional occurrences in the vicinity of Omo Ranch Road., approximately 8 miles to the east.These locations are well away from any project activities. No signs of Pleasant Valley mariposa-lily were found during the field layout of this project. Specific habitat for this species includes open, rocky areas. No Pleasant Valley mariposa lily were found during field layout of this project
Yellow-lip pansy monkeyflower *(Diplacus pulchellus):* Several populations were located in northern Calaveras County, and in portions of El Dorado County, both of which are well away from any project activities. An additional population was discovered in the North Fork Mokelumne Canyon, which is also well away from any project activities. Occurs usually in wetlands, occasionally outside of wetlands. All areas around watercourses were examined; no D. pulchellis was located during field layout of this project.
Parry's horkelia *(Horkelia parryi):):* Several populations were located in southern El Dorado County, approximately 5 miles from the project area. No populations of *H. Parryi* were located anywhere near the project area.

Listed Terrestrial Species

North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*). The nearest occurrence was west of Pine Grove Volcano Road, which is at least 6 miles from the nearest point of the project area. No porcupines were discovered during the walk-through surveys conducted during the spring of 2025. If any porcupines are discovered, they will have a 100-foot operational buffer

established around the area where they were discovered. If it is determined that the porcupines have moved to a different area off the project area, then project activities can resume in that area.

American goshawk (*Accipiter atricapillus):* The nearest occurrence was approximately 6 miles north of the project in the Cosumnes River drainage. No goshawks were seen during the field layout of this project, and no goshawk stick nests were found on the project area.

Other Raptors: There were several sightings of other raptors, generally red tailed hawks. There were no signs these hawks were nesting in or around the project area. No active or inactive stick nests were found in or next to the project area.

Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii),*
American bumble bee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*)
These bees have been located in the Plymouth area, well away from the project area. However, these bees and wasps may be present in many areas of the county. Many bees, including unidentified bumble bee species, were observed on manzanita flowers and various native wildflowers in early spring, and on other wildflowers, such as vetch and lupines, and introduced species during the field layout of this project. Although this project will reduce the amount of vegetation, including manzanita, on the project area, vast areas of adjacent vegetation containing both manzanita and wildflowers will remain untouched during and after the implementation of this project. These areas will continue to provide food sources for the bees in the area. In addition, the reduction of dense brush areas will promote the growth of native wildflowers, thus providing an important food for these, and other, pollinators. The rapid growth of native wildflowers in cleared areas is very evident in the project area, where previous brush clearing has resulted in larger populations of native wildflower populations.

At this time, no species of bumble bees on the CNDDB output table are state or federally listed. They are listed as species of special concern.

Tulare cuckoo wasp (*Chrysis tularensis*) The nearest sighting of the Tulare cuckoo wasp is in the Plymouth area, which is well away from the project area. No Tulare cuckoo wasps were found during the field layout of this project.

Aquatic Wildlife Species:

Western pond turtle. (*Emys marmorata*.) Most occurrences were at least 4 miles from the project area. Most occurrences were either in the Pine Grove area or just east of Pine Grove. The large pond at the Mace Meadows Golf Course was examined for the presence of the Western Pond Turtle, but no turtles were found in May of 2025. The intermittent watercourse, which is the headwaters of Misery Creek in the northern portion of the project area, was examined for Western pond turtles. No turtles were found in this watercourse.

Foothill yellow-legged frog - south Sierra DPS. (*Rana boylii*.). Several occurrences were recorded in the North Fork Mokelumne River canyon and areas just north of this canyon, including perennial streams that drain into the North Fork Mokelumne. These are well away from this project, and there is a major hydrological disconnection between these watercourses and the project area. No Foothill yellow-legged frogs were found during the field layout of this project.

Cave dwelling species:

The following cave-dwelling species were found in caves in the area surrounding Volcano, CA:

Grady's Cave amphipod Stygobromus gradyi
Townsend's big-eared bat Corynorhinus townsendii
Graham's Cave amphipod Stygobromus graham

No caves or abandoned mines were discovered during the field layout of this project. Volcano, CA is approximately 7 miles west of the project area. No populations of Grady's Cave amphipod or Graham's Cave amphipod are likely to exist on any portions of the project area as no caves or mines are on the project area.

The walk-through surveys of the remainder of the project area indicated that no additional species at-risk exist on the project area.

An additional pre-construction walk-through survey of the project area will be performed just prior to operations. If a listed or sensitive species is identified, a qualified wildlife biologist will be consulted for appropriate protective measures.

There will be no adverse impacts to Biological Resources 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:

An Archaeological Survey Report was completed for this project in May 2025 by Environmental Resources Compliance LLC (ERC) and submitted to the ARCD on June 17, 2025. This report summarized archaeological procedures and findings for the project.

This summary prepared by ERC is as follows:

Date of Records Search and Consultation: ERC completed the records search using information gathered from the Northern Central Information Center (NCIC) Records Search File No. AMA-25-9, May 2025. The county ARCD (Lead Agency) is responsible for Native American Consultation.

Pedestrian Survey: was conducted on May 19th and 20th, 2025. A survey was done by CCRCD Archaeologist Sarah Theofanopoulos, CCRCD staff Erin Livernois, Walter Tryon, and ARCD planner Todd Bertwell completed a 147-acre intensive pedestrian survey for the Project.

Findings of the Investigation: FarWestern Anthropological Research Group, Inc., completed an archaeological survey report for hazardous tree removal in 2004. Their report yielded old highways, historic materials, and prehistoric materials. However, no known resources were determined to be within the boundary of the current proposed project area. Recorded resources outside the project area, within radius: None. Known reports within the project area (2): 7557 and 13000. Known reports outside the project area, within radius (7): 154. 372. 724. 748. 2741. 7549. and 7558. One new resource was located, PH-001, a Native American bed rock mortar.

Findings of the Investigation: FarWestern Anthropological Research Group, Inc., completed an archaeological survey report for hazardous tree removal in 2004. Their report yielded old highways, historic materials, and prehistoric materials. However, no known resources were determined to be within the boundary of the current proposed project area. Recorded resources outside the project area, within radius: None. Known reports within the project area (2): 7557 and 13000. Known reports outside the project area, within radius (7): 154. 372. 724. 748. 2741. 7549. and 7558. One new resource was located, PH-001, a Native American bed rock mortar.

Summary and Recommendations: Based on the results of the background investigation, field survey, and assessment of potential direct or indirect project impacts, archeological protection and avoidance monitoring measures are recommended at this time. The project will assume the CRHP eligibility of one new resource, PH-001; the new findings and full eligibility determinations will not be completed. ERC included post-review discovery procedures for treating historical resources and Native American human remains per Public Resources Code (PRC) 5097.98 and Health and Safety Code (H&SC) 7050.5.

The Project area has steep topography, and the summit of the project area is covered heavily in thick manzanita. Pine trees were dispersed over the slopes, and a grove of madrone trees was located on the northwestern section of the summit.

Disposition of Archaeological Data: Report will be deposited with ARCD, CCRCD, NCIC and ERC. All field notes and other documentation related to the study are on file at the ERC Sacramento office.

In addition to the above summary, ERC has listed the specific protection measures for the newly discovered site, PH-001, a bedrock mortar:

"Newly documented sites BRM: PH-001 was flagged for avoidance using orange while stripped flagging during the survey to assume all resources are protected and avoided during operational activities. A 10-foot buffer was used to delineate the site boundary. Direction fell, lop, and scatter, as well as log bogs, will be utilized when necessary to reduce impacts, and all will be used to minimize any potential adverse effects on a less-than-significant level. "

Other Information:

AFSC has contacted the Native American tribes on the list provided by the Native American Heritage Commission. This notification was made on June 18, 2025. This notification was pursuant to AB52. This contact included a description of the project, a vicinity map, and a project area map. All known pertinent information relating to archaeological sites was included in this notification. No responses to this notification have been received as of July 18, 2025.

ARCD additional recommendations:

Protection measures for PH-001: The site and the 10-foot buffer will be re-flagged just prior to operations. No operations will be allowed to take place within the flagged site boundary and buffer area.

Additional sites discovered during operations: If any new sites are discovered during operations, all operations in the area will cease. The site will be flagged for protection.

There will be no adverse impacts to Cultural Resources from this project.

Energy

☐ 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 minimal amount of energy in the form of gasoline and diesel will be consumed by the vehicles and equipment used in this project. This includes crew vehicles, mastication equipment, chippers, and chainsaws.

There is no anticipated use of the chips (biomass) produced by this project for energy production (cogeneration).

No significant adverse impact related to Energy is anticipated.

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:

No significant ground disturbance or soil disturbance is anticipated as part of this project. No significant adverse impact related to Geology and Soils is 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:

The project will reduce fuels on approximately 85 acres of mixed conifer-hardwood forests just north of Buckhorn, CA, but there will be minimal impacts to larger vegetation or the general overstory forest canopy. No alterations of general forest stand-types are anticipated. No significant changes in Greenhouse Gas Emissions are anticipated as a result of the vegetation-related activities proposed in this project.

The project will generally utilize mechanized mastication equipment. The amount of direct emissions from this type of operation will be minimal. Additional minor emissions will occur as a result of crew transportation vehicles and other support vehicles, such as mechanic's vehicles and service vehicles. The overall impacts from equipment and vehicles on Greenhouse Gases will be minimal.

A Greenhouse Gas emissions analysis was conducted for the entire project area. The input variables included the following:
Project Acres = 85
Total Project Days = 50

Round Trip Miles for crew = 60
Number of chainsaws utilized by the crew = 3
Number of masticators utilized by the crew = 3
Estimated Biomass Tons Per Acre Removed = 15

Utilizing a sequestration rate of 2 Tons/Ac/Year (which is at the low-end of the 2-6 Tons/Ac/Yr range for stocked "Sierra mixed conifer"), the results show that the "Years Required for Complete Sequestration" is 3.4. This indicates that the relatively low carbon emissions due to this project will be rapidly offset by increased growth of a future Sierra mixed conifer stand.

The detailed Greenhouse Gas Analysis conducted for this project is attached to the back of this ERRF.

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:

Selective herbicide use may be utilized on various portions of the project area either before or after mastication operations are complete. The use of these herbicides is intended to reduce the rapid re-sprouting or re-seeding of the treated vegetation. All herbicide application prescriptions will be developed by a licensed Pest Control Advisor (PCA). The transportation, storage, mixing, and application of any herbicides will be in accordance with all laws and regulations established by the California Department of Pesticide Regulations and any local jurisdictions.

This project is not expected to have any significant adverse impacts from Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

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:

There will be no ground disturbance throughout any portion of the project area. Mechanical mastication equipment will treat/remove vegetation with virtually no ground disturbance.

There are several small ephemeral watercourses throughout the project area. Equipment will be kept out of these watercourses, but reach-in mastication of adjacent vegetation will be allowed. Any accidental deposits of chips or debris will be removed from these watercourses. No excavation of any kind will be allowed in or adjacent to these watercourse channels. The ephemeral watercourses can be crossed with equipment, but only when dry.

The one intermittent watercourse identified in the far north region of the project area is the headwaters of Misery Creek, which transitions to a perennial watercourse downstream from the project area. This watercourse supports some riparian vegetation, but no riparian animal species of concern were observed in the area.

This intermittent watercourse will have a minimum of a 15-foot buffer on both sides of the watercourse. Where the incised watercourse channel is wider than 15 feet from the channel, the buffer will extend to the edge of the incised channel, regardless of width. Within this buffer, no equipment will be allowed to work at any time when water is present is present and no mechanical mastication will be allowed within this buffer. All significant deposits of debris will be removed from the watercourse. If there is an anticipated 50 percent or greater chance of rain (via www.weather.gov) accidental deposits of debris will be removed before the rain event.

The project will result in the project area being blanketed with a layer of masticated material, which will ameliorate any potential for sediment transport from the project area. Operations will be monitored during the winter period to prevent any significant rutting or movement of soils, either on the actual masticated area or on the dirt roads accessing the project. The RPF will shut down all operations when saturated soil conditions may result in adverse water quality impacts and will allow resumption of operations when conditions warrant.

There will be no adverse impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality from this project.

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 is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on 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 is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on 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:

Proposed project activities will result in some noise; specifically, from the running of mechanical mastication equipment, chainsaws, and vehicles. The equipment shall only be operated during normal daylight hours, and no equipment use will be allowed on Sundays or holidays.

Project activities will occur in many areas adjacent to the Mace Meadows subdivision and other homes off Sugar Pine Drive. In these areas, the equipment use in any given area will be generally short-lived, as the nature of this project will result in rapid treatment of fuels in any given area within the project area. Noise may also be generated by vehicles transporting personnel and/or service vehicles accessing the equipment parked at staging areas. This noise will also be generally short-lived and will be less than significant.

This project is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on Noise.

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:

This project is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on Population and Housing.

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 is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on Public Services.

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 area is on private lands which are closed to the general public for access. No public recreation of any type is allowed on these lands.

This project is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on Recreation.

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:

Work adjacent to public or private roads will generally be minimal. When working along these roads, all operations will comply with traffic control standards established by Amador County and the State of California. This includes the use of warning signs on each side of the active project area where lane closures are necessary, flaggers on each side of the active project area as needed, and the placement of safety cones to warn of downed vegetation, parked vehicles and equipment, or other potential obstacles. Equipment staging will occur off all roads and will have no impact to transportation or traffic.

Full road closures will be allowed when necessary, and the duration of full road closures will be limited to 20 minutes. Silver Point Drive, an Amador County Road, is within portions of the project area. When working adjacent to this road, traffic control will be necessary.

An Amador County Road Encroachment Permit will be required for work adjacent to Silver Pointe Drive. This permit will be obtained by the Amador RCD prior to operations in that location.

The project is not expected to have any significant adverse impact on Transportation/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. No significant adverse impact is expected.

Wildfire

☐ 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 treat fuels in the vicinity of many residential structures within the Mace Meadows subdivision and adjoining subdivisions, including the communities of Buckhorn and Pioneer. The resulting shaded fuel break will potentially reduce adverse impacts from large, catastrophic wildfires.
This fuel break is in the vicinity of the Mokelumne River canyon, which has experienced a number of large, catastrophic fires in the past several years.

The fuel break will treat fuels on several larger parcels in the Mace Meadows area. Most of these parcels are undeveloped. These parcels are the last remaining undeveloped parcels in an area of densely populated communities. The treatment in these undeveloped parcels will be more effective than attempting to treat similar areas in adjacent, densely populated areas, where dwellings, other structures, and other improvements may severely limit the amount of area that can be treated. Additionally, the treatment of fuels on these larger parcels will facilitate continuity of the fuels treatment, making the final fuel treatment more effective.

The clearing of vegetation will facilitate fire-fighting activities in the event of a fire and may allow for more aggressive firefighting activities. Access by emergency personnel in the event of a future wildfire may be improved by the treatment of roadside vegetation within the project area. The overall effect of this project will increase public safety in the event of a wildfire.

To reduce the potential of an operations fire caused by operations as part of this project, all fire-preventions rules and regulations established by the State of California through the Public Resources Code will be enforced during all operations associated with this project.

Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:

No changes were made to avoid adverse environmental impacts.

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?	☐	☒

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 project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under 14CCR§15304, Minor Alterations to Land. No significant adverse environmental impact is anticipated from implementation of this project.

The ARCD has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, energy, 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, utilities and service systems, or wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the ARCD is kept on file at Amador RCD office at 12200B Airport Road, Jackson, CA 95642.

Conclusion:

☒ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, the ARCD 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 ARCD 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.

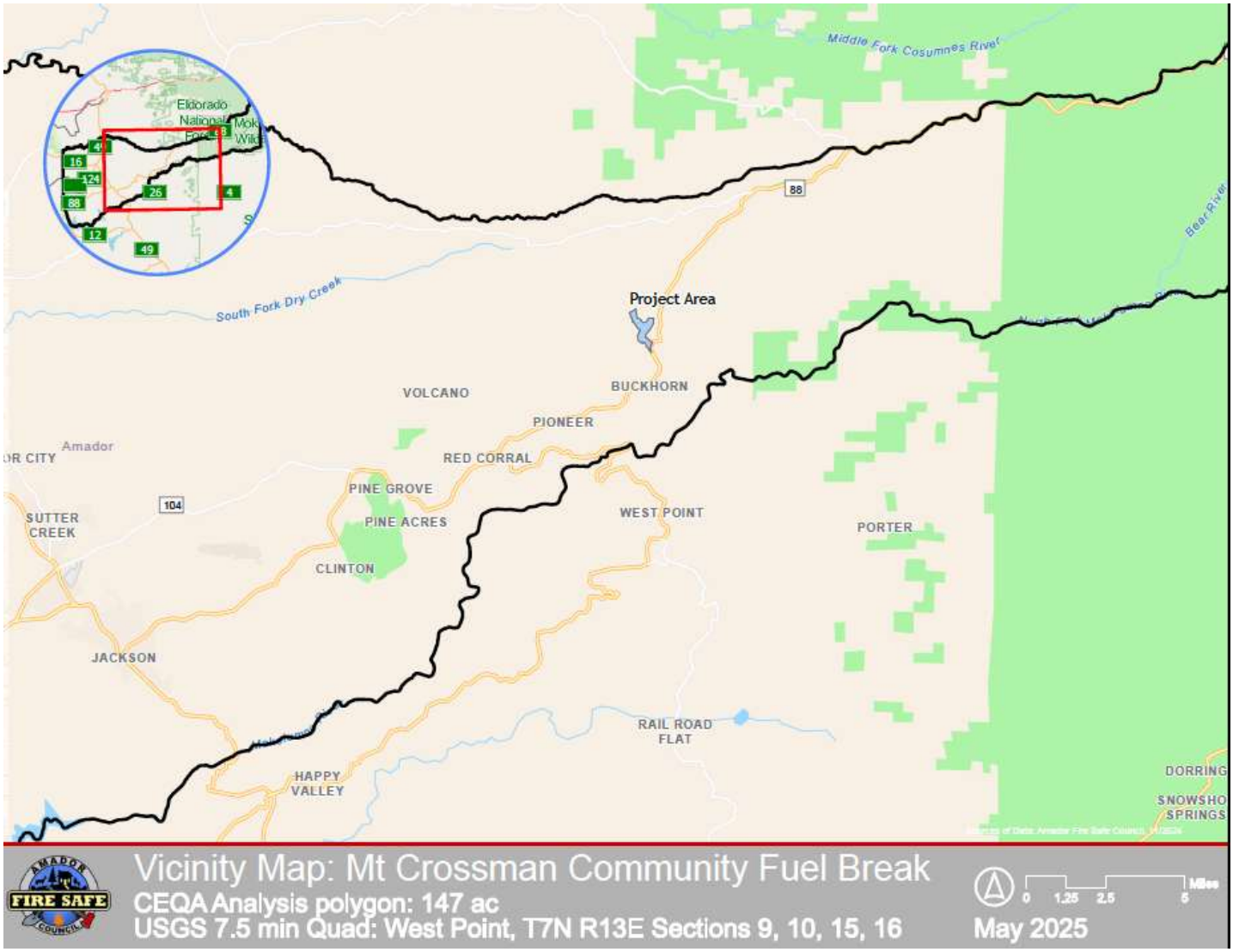
☐ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, the ARCD has determined that the project does not fit within the description for the various exemption classes or has found that exceptions exist at the project 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 Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Photos of current conditions of the Mt Crossman Community Fuel Break.

.

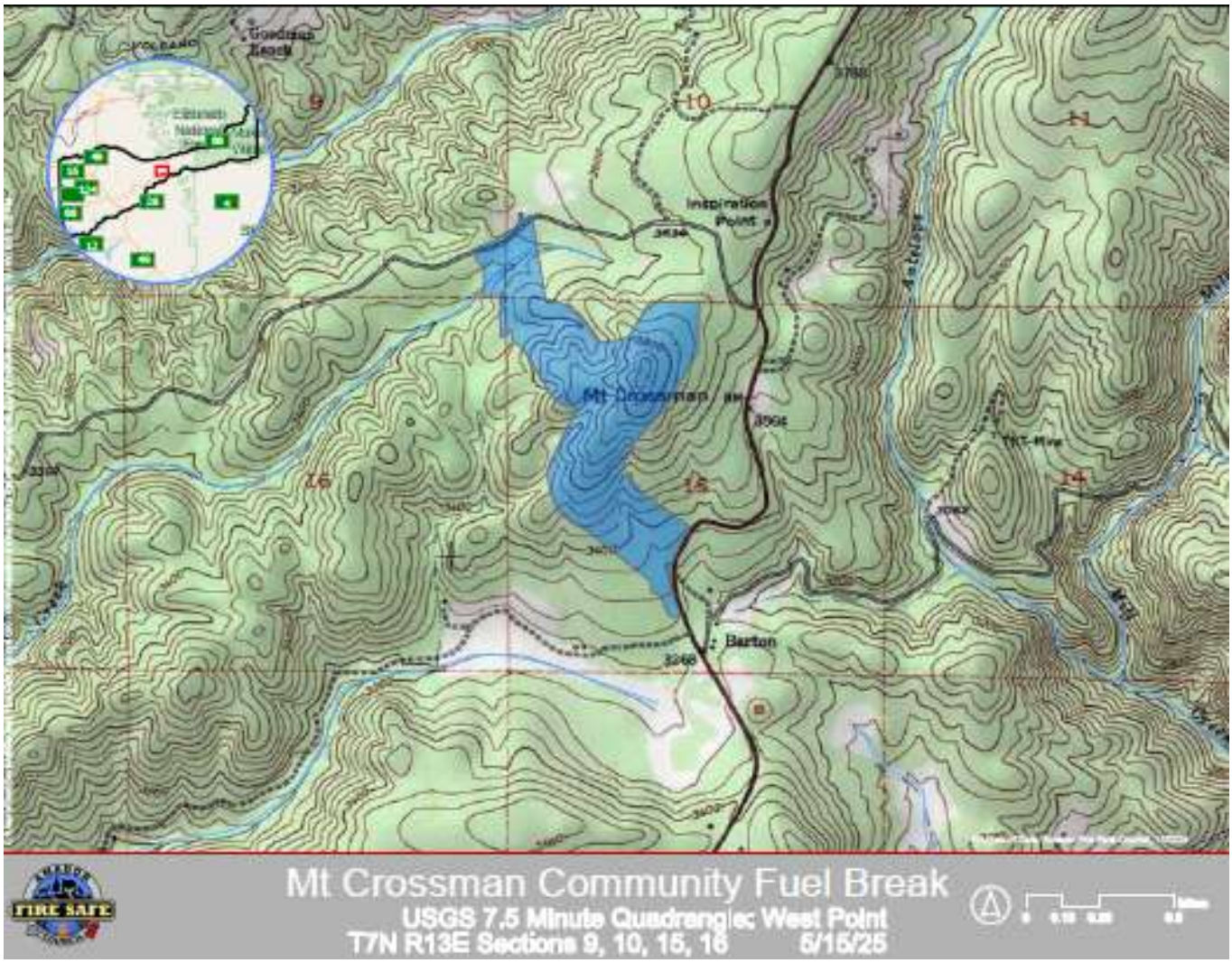
VICINITY MAP:

MT CROSSMAN COMMUNITY FUEL BREAK



CEQA AREA MAP

MT CROSSMAN COMMUNITY FUEL BREAK



Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Analysis:

General Information				
Project Name	**Mt Crossman Community Fuel Break**	30-May-25	Blue = Variable Inputs	
Project Acres	85		Black = Equation Produced Data	
Total Project Days	50		Red = Constants	
Exhaust CO2 Emissions				
Total Round Trip Miles	60			
# of Chainsaws	3			
# of Chippers/Masticators	3			
Diesel Kilograms/Gal	10.15			
Gas Kilograms/Gal	8.91			
Pounds of CO_2/Kilogram	2.20462			
One Masticator Diesel Gal/day	40			
Crew Bus MPG	8			
Chainsaw Gas Gal/Day/Saw	1.5			
Conversion Factor Pounds to Tons	2000			
Conversion Factor Tons of Biomass to Tons CO_2	1.65			
Crew Bus Total Miles		3,000	Chainsaws Total Gal Gas Needed	225
Total Gal of Diesel Needed		375	Masticator Total Diesel Needed	6000
Total Kilograms of Diesel Produced		3,806	Total Kilograms of Fuels Produced	8,005
Diesel Total Pounds of CO_2 Produced		8,391	Fuel Total Pounds of CO_2 Produced	17,647
Diesel Total Tons CO_2		4	Fuel Total Tons of CO_2 Produced	9
Smoke or Decay CO2 Emissions				
Est. Biomass Tons Per Acre Removed (Fuel Model)		15		
Biomass Total Tons Removed		1275		
Total Tons of CO_2		2104		
		Final Outputs		
Total Tons of CO_2 for Project		2117		
Sequestration Rate 2 - 6 Tons/Ac/Yr (stocked Sierra mixed conifer)		2		
Total Sequestration Rate/Yr		623.9		
Years Required for Complete Sequestration		3.4		