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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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

PROJECT TITLE:	Dragoon Fuels Reduction		
PROJECT LOCATION	T2N, R14E, Portions of Sections 25, 26, 35 and 36; MDBM.	**COUNTY**	Tuolumne
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT ADDRESS	Roger Petersen, Unit Forester CAL FIRE Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit 785 Mountain Ranch Rd., San Andreas, CA 95249	**PHONE**	(209) 754-3831

Project Description: The proposed project will reduce hazardous fuel loading in strategic locations near the community of Sonora. The project will reduce shrubs growing in control lines constructed during the Washington Fire in 2021 and will remove large wind rows of brush adjacent to old control lines. Additionally, hazardous fuel loading will be reduced by creating shaded fuel breaks adjacent to control lines and adjacent to residential areas. The project area is approximately 138 acres in size. The project area ranges in elevation from approximately 1,785 to 2,400 feet above sea level. Vegetation at the site would best be described as oak woodland with dense brush. Overstory tree species consist primarily of interior live oak with scattered gray pine, ponderosa pine, and California black oak. Understory species consist of manzanita, toyon, chamise, poison oak, blackberry and patches of French broom. The project area contains dozer lines constructed during the Washington Fire of 2021. Manzanita, toyon and live oak are regrowing in the control lines and range from 18-inches to four-feet in height. Some live oak sprouts within old control lines will be retained to create a shaded fuel break condition. Surface and ladder fuels will be reduced or modified by mastication, chipping, or by hand cutting, piling and burning. Mastication may be conducted by a variety of track laying type tractors. Wind rows of brush created during the Washington Fire may be masticated or piled for burning with an excavator. Hand work for chipping, as well as piling and burning or lopping and scattering will be conducted by hand crews using chainsaws and other hand tools. Work within 25-feet of Dragoon Gulch walking trails will be conducted by hand. Trees less than 12-inches in diameter at breast height (dbh), surface fuels and ladder fuels will be treated to achieve a target residual tree spacing of 25 to 30-feet between stems. In areas where no trees are available for retention, aggregations of brush may be retained. Residual trees will be pruned to a height of approximately 8 to 10-feet above ground level. Dead trees of any size may be felled and chipped, piled and burned, or masticated. Masticated or chipped material will be left on site. The reduction in vegetation will create a shaded fuel break condition that will minimize fire behavior and create a stand structure that is resistant to stand replacing fires.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- [x] Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4, §15304 Minor Alterations to Land
- [ ] Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- [ ] Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- [ ] Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- [ ] Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits under 15304- Minor Alterations to Land. The project will consist of removing surface and ladder fuels to create a shaded fuel break condition. The project is located in an urban interface area. The project will not involve the removal of mature or scenic trees. Stand health will be improved by removing dead, dying, and suppressed trees and brush, and increasing growing space for mature, healthy dominant and co-dominant trees. Sensitive species will not be impacted by the proposed project. The project was designed to avoid adverse impacts to watercourses. Mastication and chipping will leave a layer of organic material that will provide excellent erosion control. The project was carefully designed to avoid adverse impacts to archaeological and biological resources. The project was designed to reduce hazardous fuel loading in a strategic area around the community of Sonora and will make Tuolumne County more resilient regarding wildfires. 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/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, populations and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/ traffic, utilities and service systems, or to wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Headquarters in San Andreas.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:
Mike Van Loben Sels 10/9/2025
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Mike van Loben Sels, Southern Region Chief Date:
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection