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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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

PROJECT TITLE:	Hunter Reservoir Fuels Reduction Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	T4N, R14E Section 24 and 25 and T4N, 15E, Sections 18, 19, 20, and 30; MDBM	**COUNTY**	Calaveras
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Roger Petersen, Unit Forester CAL FIRE Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit		
ADDRESS	785 Mountain Ranch Rd., San Andreas, CA 95249	**PHONE**	(209) 754-3831

Project Description: The proposed project is just east of the communities of Hathaway Pines and Red Apple, CA and south of Hunter Reservoir in Calaveras County. This project will reduce hazardous fuel loading across properties in the vicinity of Saddle Road, Canyon View Drive, Sunset Point, and Ponderosa Park. The project area is approximately 409 acres in size. The project area ranges in elevation from approximately 2,800 to 3,500 feet above sea level and consists of varied topography with slopes ranging anywhere from less than 10% to over 60%. The objective of the project is to reduce the current build-up of understory fuel loading on these parcels to protect local resources such as the Utica Power and Water infrastructure, private residences, and communities in the Wildland Urban Interface.

The current site conditions consist of overstory vegetation that would best be described as Sierra Mixed Montane Conifer with some Oak Woodland inclusions and a dense, overgrown understory and ladder fuel component. The overstory tree species consist primarily of California black oak, gray pine, ponderosa pine, canyon live oak, valley oak, blue oak and interior live oak with an understory of manzanita, ceanothus, toyon, yerba santa, blackberry and poison oak. The proposed treatments include initial and maintenance treatments reducing or modifying live trees up to 12-inches diameter at breast height (DBH), and surface and ladder fuels by mastication, chipping, or by hand or machine cutting, piling and burning. Mastication may be conducted by a variety of track laying type tractors. Work may be conducted by hand crews using chainsaws and other hand tools across all treatments, including piling and burning. Retained trees and vegetation will be targeted to achieve a target residual tree spacing of 25 to 30-feet between crowns to reduce the risk of crown fires. Residual trees may be pruned to a height of approximately 8 to 10-feet above ground level to decrease the amount of ladder fuels. Dead trees of any size may be felled and chipped, piled and burned, or masticated. Masticated material will be left on site. This proposed 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

- ☒ 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

The Class of Exemption to be used is 15304- Minor Alterations to Land. The project will consist of removing surface and ladder fuels to create an open 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 for excellent erosion control. The project was carefully designed to avoid adverse impacts to archaeological resources. The project was designed to reduce hazardous fuel loading in a strategic area near the community of Hathaway Pines and Hunter Reservoir and will make this section of Calaveras County more resilient regarding wildfires. 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 10/15/2025
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Mike Van Loben Sels, Southern Region Chief Date:
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection