

Fee exempt Per government code Section 6103 **NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

To: ☒ Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

☒ Tulare County Clerk
Room 105, Courthouse
221 South Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93291

Lead Agency: County of Tulare c/o CAL Fire Tulare Unit
1968 South Lovers Lane
Visalia, CA 93277 (559) 288-2603
Attn: gmills@tularecounty.ca.gov

Applicant(s): CAL FIRE Tulare Unit
1968 South Lovers Lane
Visalia, CA 93277

Project Title: Three Rivers Creating a Wildfire Resistant and Resilient Community

Project Location - Specific: An approximately 2.32-mile-long segment surrounding the Cherokee Oaks Subdivision and the residential areas of Heidi Road and Old Three Rivers Road in the unincorporated community of Three Rivers, Tulare County, California.

Project Location- Section, Township, Range: Section 25, 26, 34, 35, and 36, Township 17S, Range 28E

Project Location – City/Community: Three Rivers, CA **Project Location - County:** Tulare

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The Three Rivers Creating a Wildfire Resistant and Resilient Community Project (project) is a strategic, community-driven initiative designed to reduce wildfire risk and enhance public safety in and around the community of Three Rivers, Tulare County, California. This project directly supports the implementation of the *Three Rivers Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, completed in fall 2022, which identified the urgent need for fuel management on both public and private lands within the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

The project aligns with the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and advances the goal of developing Fire Adapted Communities (FAC). It was collaboratively developed with input from CAL FIRE’s Three Rivers Unit, Tulare County Fire, the Tulare County Resource Conservation District, the National Park Service, and numerous local residents and business owners.

The primary purpose of the project is to reduce hazardous fuels near the community’s boundaries, thereby protecting lives, homes, critical infrastructure, and natural resources. The project builds upon the community’s successful Stage One efforts—focused on defensible space and home hardening education—and now moves into Stage Two—the creation of a strategic fuel break around the most densely populated and high-value areas of Three Rivers, including the Cherokee Oaks Subdivision and the Heidi Road and Old Three Rivers Road residential zones.

The beneficiaries of the project include the residents, property owners, and business operators of Three Rivers, as well as critical infrastructure such as water storage systems, Southern California Edison (SCE) powerlines and repeaters, and the Three Rivers Community Cemetery. By reducing wildfire risk and enhancing community resilience, the project would protect not only physical assets but also the safety, well-being, and long-term sustainability of the Three Rivers community.

Exempt Status: (check one)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☐ Common Sense Exemption: CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(3)
- ☒ Categorical Exemption: **CEQA Guidelines Class 4 Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land**
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions:

FILED TULARE COUNTY
JAN 12 2026
ASSESSOR / CLERK-RECORDER BY:
DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING AT TULARE COUNTY CLERK’S OFFICE

Reasons why project is exempt: Section 15304/Class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land) consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation that do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to: (i) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions. The project would be consistent with the provisions of a Class 4 Categorical Exemption because it includes fuel reduction activities within 100 feet of an existing roadway used by trucks and other vehicles and would not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. The purpose of the project is to create and maintain a fuel break no wider than 300 feet bordering the Cherokee Oaks Subdivision and the residential areas of Heidi Road and Old Three Rivers Road in the unincorporated community of Three Rivers through prescribed herbivory and manual treatments to reduce the potential for a large-scale wildfire to spread across the landscape.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15300.2 identifies exceptions that would disqualify a project from being exempt under the State CEQA Guidelines. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, a project that would be located within an environmentally sensitive area, result in significant cumulative impacts, result in a significant effect on the environment, damage scenic resources within the viewshed of a state scenic highway, be located on a hazardous waste site compiled pursuant to California Government Code 65962.5, or cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource would not qualify for an exemption under the State CEQA Guidelines. The project would not result in potentially significant environmental impacts associated with its location, cumulative impacts, scenic resources, hazardous waste sites, historical resources, energy demand, or otherwise have the potential to result in a significant effect that could constitute an exception to a Categorical Exemption pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.

Environmental Assessment Officer: Reed Schenke, P.E., RMA Director/EAO

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Tulare

Project Planner/Representative: Elizabeth LaMar, Three Rivers Fire Safe Council

Telephone: (559) 288-2603

Signature: 
Gary A. Mills

Date: 1/6/2025

Title: Chief Planner,
Environmental Planning Division

Signature: 
Michael G. Washam, A.C.E.

Date: 1.12.25

Title: Associate RMA Director, Designee

☒ Signed by Lead Agency

Date submitted to the LCI/SCH: _____

Figure 1. Project Location Map

