

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION



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

PROJECT TITLE	Seeds and Conifer Cone Collections on USDA Forest Service Managed Lands		
PROJECT LOCATION	US Forests Service land under active Good Neighbor Agreement with CAL FIRE	COUNTY	Counties that contain US Forests Service land under active Good Neighbor Agreement with CAL FIRE
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under existing Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Agreements, CAL FIRE staff, approved volunteers, and contractors will do cone production surveys, monitor cone crops for ripeness, and manually collect cones and seeds on USFS lands in California to build a seed bank for reforestation after wildfires or other natural events. Collection is limited to low-impact methods like hand-picking, climbing, or using pole pruners. No heavy machinery, road construction, or felling of trees is included in the project.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type and Section:
- Statutory Exemption (state code section): Common Sense Exemption (CEQA Guidelines §15061(b)(3))
- 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 qualifies for the “common sense” exemption because manual seed and cone collection does not significantly alter the forest environment. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the collection activity will have a significant effect on the environment based on the following evidence:

- Collection is limited to manual, non-extractive methods. No trees are removed, and there are no permanent alterations to the landscape, soil, or water resources.
- Harvest protocols ensure most of the cone crop remains on-site to support natural regeneration and wildlife forage, maintaining the local food web.
- Activities are strictly prohibited during bird nesting seasons and other critical wildlife windows to ensure zero disturbance to protected species.
- Staff presence is transient and of short duration, causing no long-term displacement of wildlife or recreational users.
- Restorative Purpose: The project is designed to facilitate environmental recovery; any minor, temporary footprint is far outweighed by the long-term ecological benefit of reforestation.

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John Melvin, Assistant Deputy Director
Date

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection