

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION



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

<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	Aromas Shaded Fuel Break EPP		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	Township 12 South, Range 3 East, Section 16, 17, 20, 21, 29; Mount Diablo Base and Meridian	<b>COUNTY</b>	Monterey
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This project aims to create a shaded fuel break to reduce heavy fuel loading to mitigate the threat of a large catastrophic fire within the Aromas Community. The fuel break will serve as a strategic control line for pre-suppression efforts and increase the likelihood of successful wildfire containment by lowering fire intensity, severity and slowing the rate of spread. These conditions facilitate safer and more effective engagement by both ground and aerial suppression resources. Ultimately, the project will help protect nearby communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources. Treatment objectives include reducing ladder fuels and dense understory vegetation in oak woodlands to disrupt vertical fuel continuity and support effective shaded fuel break function. In eucalyptus-dominated stands, trees will be mechanically or manually removed to reduce extreme flammability and high ember-cast potential. Removing eucalyptus will also allow native species to reestablish, creating a more fire-resilient landscape. Herbicide treatments will be applied to cut stumps and targeted regrowth under the direction of licensed professionals to maintain long-term hazard reduction.

**EXEMPTION STATUS**

- Categorical Exemption      Type and Section: Class
- Statutory Exemption (state code section (i.e. (§21080.49))):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(4); 15269(c))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

**REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT**

Pursuant to CEQA Section 21080(b)(4) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15269 (c) a project is exempt from CEQA if it is a “specific action necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.” On March 1, 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency to exist due to catastrophic wildfire risks created by forest conditions and found that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist within the State of California due to these conditions. Pursuant to the Emergency Proclamation, a critical fuels reduction project qualifies for CEQA exemption if: (1) it has as one of its primary objectives at least one of the following activities: (a) removal of hazardous, dead, and/or dying trees; (b) removal of vegetation for the creation of strategic fuel breaks as identified by approved fire prevention plans, including without limitation CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans or Community Wildfire Preparedness Plans; (c) removal of vegetation for community defensible space; (d) removal of vegetation along roadways, highways, and freeways for the creation of safer ingress and egress routes for the public and responders and to reduce roadside ignitions; (e) removal of vegetation using cultural traditional ecological knowledge for cultural burning and/or prescribed fire treatments for fuels reduction; or (f) maintenance of previously-established fuel breaks or fuels modification projects; (2) has been approved by the appropriate Agency Secretary, or their designee, as being eligible to be conducted under the suspension; and (3) is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Protection Plan (EPP). This project’s primary purpose of 1.b, has been approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources as being eligible to be conducted under the suspension, and will be conducted in accordance with the EPP. The action is therefore exempt from CEQA. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at 2221 Garden Rd. Monterey CA 93940.

**DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING**

DocuSigned by:  
  
 Mike van Loben Sels, Southern Region Chief      Date  
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

5/21/2026