



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**



Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Southern California Ignition Reduction Program (SCIRP) I-8 Project

DIST-CO-RTE: 11-SD-8

PM/PM: R34.5/R51.0

EA: N/A

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Description

Caltrans District 11 proposes to conduct vegetation fuel reduction treatments, including vegetation management strip vegetation clearance, invasive flashy fuel removal, and vegetation thinning along Interstate 8 (I-8) and within Cleveland National Forest to reduce fire risks and promote native plant resiliency. Additional information is included on continuation page.

Caltrans CEQA Determination (Check one)

- Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency
- Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

- Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.) (PRC 4799.05[d][1])
- Categorically Exempt.** (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Mitchell Doucette

Mitchell Doucette

5/27/2026

Print Name

Signature

Date

Project Manager

Li Zhang

Li Zhang

5/27/2026

Li Zhang

Signature

Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

[X] Not Applicable. USFS Lead NEPA Agency

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See SER Chapter 30 for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

[] 23 USC 326: Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

- [] 23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(Enter activity number)
[] 23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)
[] Activity Enter activity number listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans

[] 23 USC 327: Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Print Name Signature Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Print Name Signature Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): N/A

Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 4/9/2026

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).



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Continuation Page:

As part of the HQ Division of MTCE Office of Natural Resources Management's objectives to increase the pace and scale of roadside fuel reduction, our District Vegetation Management team has been in coordination with the United States Forest Service (USFS) as part of a Charter (called SCRIP) to expand vegetation fuel management along I-8 and within the Cleveland National Forest. Caltrans District 11 funded NEPA environmental review and is funding and managing the implementing contractor as part of service contract, and USFS is serving as the NEPA lead agency.

Work along I-8 and within the Cleveland National Forest includes reducing flashy fuels along roadways and management of non-native invasive plants. The project includes the removal of all vegetation, dead or alive, within a narrow strip along the edge of the roadway pavement. This strip may be as narrow as four feet in steep areas but typically extends up to approximately 10 feet from the edge of pavement. This area would be maintained free of vegetation using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control risk of fire, provide for visibility, provide space for emergency use, and preserve the pavement. Within this unvegetated area, the project would retain a duff/biomass layer of no more than two inches above the bare mineral soil. Brush stumps would be cut as close to ground as reasonably possible, but not to exceed four inches above bare mineral soil.

Beyond the non-vegetated strip, vegetation management of grasses, forbs and invasive species will be implemented to achieve ignition reduction through a suite of approaches described in the USFS's Durable Ignition Reduction Toolbox (DIRT), which is a decision-support tool that provides guidance for appropriate treatments based on existing and desired conditions. The DIRT treatment options are designed to create durable, long-term roadside vegetation conditions that are resistant to ignition and require minimal ongoing maintenance. Treatment methods described in the DIRT Toolbox include prescribed burning, mechanical treatment, manual treatment, herbicides, replanting of native and/or fire-resistant species and biomass processing. Project implementation would adhere to the Design Criteria determined throughout the NEPA analysis to reduce environmental impacts.

The USFS Descanso Ranger District has approved their NEPA document, also known as the Finding of Applicability and No Extraordinary Circumstance (FANEC) on April 13, 2026. See *attached*.

The reason for allowing USFS to take the NEPA lead was to use PRC 4799.05, which exempts CEQA, post NEPA approval. Public Resources Code Section 4799.05 (enacted by [Senate Bill 901](#) [2018]) exempts the following activities from CEQA; prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands where NEPA has been completed and the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing (e.g., grant funding) for those projects. The "SB 901 Exemption" has provided a very valuable streamlining tool to help the state achieve its goal to substantially increase the pace and scale of vegetation treatment to reduce wildfire risks in response to California's wildfire crisis. Refer to Section 23 and Section 24 in the SB 901 link above. An extension to use PRC 4799.05 was granted by AB 211, which extends use of the CEQA Exemption statute to January 1, 2028.

In accordance with PRC 4799.05, SB 901, and AB 211, Caltrans District 11 has determined proposed activities are Statutorily Exempt.



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Applicable CEQA measures accompany SCRIP Project Design Criteria and USFWS informal consultation conditions are provided in the Project ECR, *also attached*.