

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION



County of Kern
Fire and Emergency Services

PROJECT TITLE	Pine Mountain Club Wildfire Defense Zone		
PROJECT LOCATION	Section 19, 20, 29, 30 T9N R21W Section 24 T9N R22W	COUNTY	Kern
LEAD AGENCY	Kern County Fire Department		
CONTACT	Ethan Kennedy		
ADDRESS	5642 Victor St Bakersfield, CA 93240	PHONE	(661) 330-0140

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This fuel reduction project is aimed at reducing fuel loading within the community of Pine Mountain Club to protect life, property, and natural resources from the threat of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface. The project boundary will consist of 2,427 acres, as shown on the attached project map (Attachment A) with pink shading. The goal is to treat approximately 386 acres of that land (proposed treatment areas shown in blue) using a variety of targeted vegetation management techniques.

This project is part of the Kern County Fire Department's coordinated wildfire defense strategy for Pine Mountain Club, as outlined in the Kern County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2022). It complements the separate but adjacent Pine Mountain Club Vegetation Project (Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, prepared by SWCA Environmental Consultants for Kern County Fire Department, February 2026, SWCA Project No. 94176), which focuses on fuels reduction and shaded fuel break creation on approximately 212.42 acres of undeveloped wildland terrain immediately to the west of the community (view Attachment B for summary). Together, these two projects will establish a strategic, complimentary fuels reduction network across more than 500 acres, significantly enhancing protection for life, property, and natural resources in the wildland-urban interface while maintaining the community's aesthetic and ecological character.

The fuels within the community are dense and thick and consist of a mix of brush and timber that create continuous ladder fuels and high fire hazard conditions throughout the developed areas and ridgelines. Crews will work off existing roadways throughout the community to thin the fuels in a strategic manner and use those areas thinned to connect to ridgeline fuel reduction work that is in the form of shaded fuel breaks to assist in wildfire control. Treatments will include hand thinning to selectively remove understory vegetation, piling of slash for later disposal, chipping of biomass to reduce fuel volume on site, masticating dense shrub fields, mowing of open grassy areas, lop and scatter methods to allow natural breakdown of debris, and pile burning when needed under controlled conditions and in compliance with air quality regulations. All work will be performed by trained crews following best management practices to avoid impacts to soil, water quality, wildlife, and cultural resources.

EXEMPTION STATUS

☒	Categorical Exemption	Type and Section:	Section 15301, (Class 1(C)) Existing Facilities Section 15304, (Class 4) 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

This project fits under California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1 – existing facilities, specifically work conducted off existing roadways) and Section 15304 (Class 4 – minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry purposes).

The area is under an immediate threat from wildfire and, due to the proximity to homes and the lack of recent large fire history, is a prime candidate for resource management/fuels reduction work. Field review by Kern County Fire Department staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of a notice of exemption for this project (per CEQA Guidelines §15300.2). The proposed treatments are limited in scope, occur within or adjacent to developed areas, use low-impact methods (hand crews, chipping, mastication from existing roads), and incorporate best management practices to avoid impacts to soil, water quality, wildlife, and cultural resources.

Furthermore, this project is complementary to the ongoing Pine Mountain Club Vegetation Project (Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, February 2026), which addresses wildland fuels to the west under a Mitigated Negative Declaration. The combined efforts result in a net beneficial effect on wildfire risk reduction with no cumulatively considerable adverse environmental impacts when viewed in connection with past, present, and probable future projects in the area. Section 15061(b)(3) supports that CEQA applies only to projects with the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment; here, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility of a significant effect.

The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, populations and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities and service systems, or to wildlife.

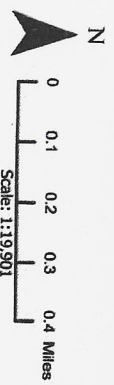
DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING


Aaron Duncan, Fire Chief
Kern County Fire Department

Date

5/6/24

Attachment A



KERN COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
Pine Mountain Club

- Egress Route Treatment
- Pine Mountain Club Property Owners Association Parcels (2,427 Acres)
- Proposed Treatments (386 Acres)

ATTACHMENT B



County of Kern
Fire and Emergency Services

Pine Mountain Club Vegetation Project (ISMND) Summary

Peak to Peak

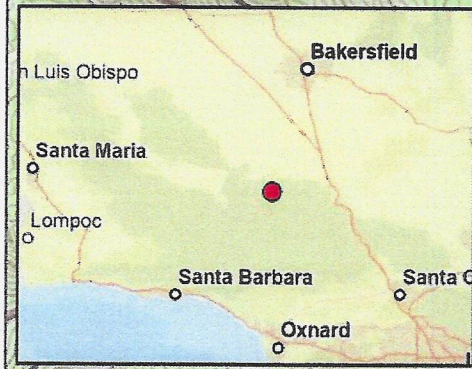
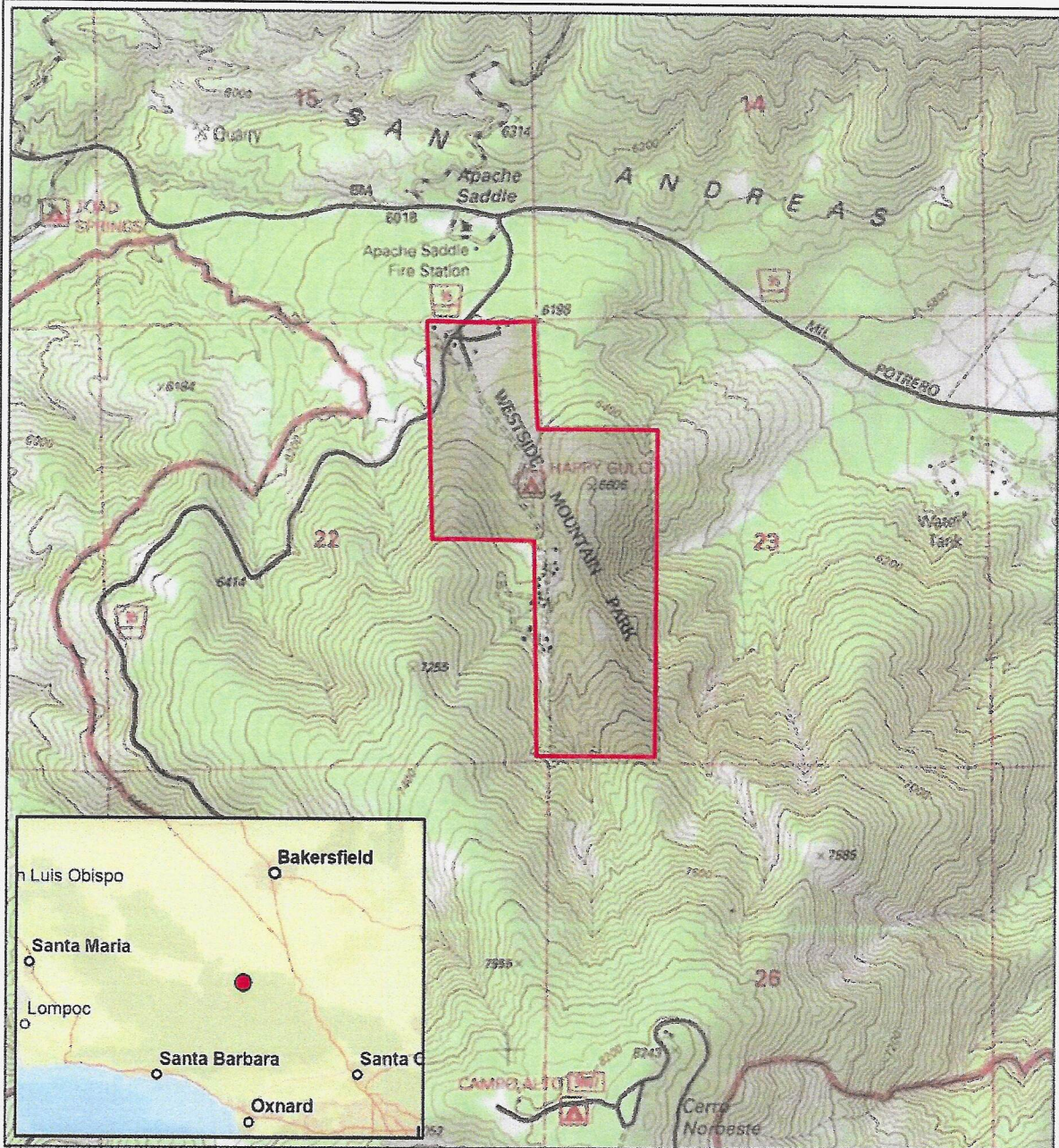
- Project Boundary: Approximately 212.42 acres, centered on a north-south drainage ~2 miles west of Pine Mountain Club community.
- Key Features: Access via Cerro Noroeste Road; includes Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, Happy Gulch Campground, Westside Mountain Park.
- Dominant Vegetation: Oak woodlands, mixed chaparral, mixed conifer forests.
- Primary Treatments: Manual/mechanical thinning, mastication, prescribed broadcast burning, pile burning, shaded fuel break creation.
- Adjacency Note: The eastern edge of this project area is within 2 miles of the western boundary of the Pine Mountain Club community and Property Owners Association parcels addressed in the Pine Mountain Club Wildfire Defense Zone NOE (see Attachment A).
 - There is also a United States Forest Service Fuel Reduction project immediately west of the PMC WDZ that provides additional continuity to the NoE. (Not shown)

Figure Reference: See Figures 1 (Vicinity) that follows, and 2 (Location), and 3 (Treatment Map) in the full ISMND document for detailed boundaries.

ATTACHMENT B



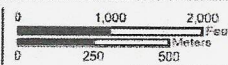
County of Kern
Fire and Emergency Services



Project Site

Kern County, CA
USGS 7.5' Quadrangle:
Sawmill Mountain 34119-G2
T09N R22W Section 22.23
NAD 1983 California Teale
Albers FUS
34.849°N 119.2083°W

Base Map: Esri ArcGIS Online,
accessed November 2023
Updated: 11/28/2023
Project No: 94176-000-SLO
Layout: 94176_ProLocVio
Apx: 94176_pineMountainClub_CR



1:24,000

SWCA
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

