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Northstar Community Services District
Northstar Fire Department
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Notice of Exemption

PROJECT TITLE: 2026-2027 Truckee Tahoe Airport District (TTAD) Forest Fuels Reduction

PROJECT NUMBER: G27-002

PROJECT LOCATION: Project work will occur within the Northstar Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ), found in Sections 28, 29, and 32, Township 17 North, Range 17 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDB&M), Placer County, California.

COUNTY: Placer

ACRES: 181-acres

LEAD AGENCY: Northstar Fire Department

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Project Description

The proposed project is an approximately 18-month forest fuels reduction effort expected to begin as early as July 1, 2026 (weather dependent), with a contract end date of January 31, 2028. Funding for the project is provided through the Tahoe Truckee Airport District (TTAD) Wildfire Mitigation Grant Program.

The project will implement a combination of forest fuels reduction treatments designed to reduce hazardous fuel loading and wildfire risk across a landscape scale. Treatments will set up a strategic buffer beyond the immediate defensible space zone to protect residential and commercial structures, critical infrastructure, and natural resources within the Northstar Community Services District (NCSD) Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ). Project priorities are informed by the 2022 Northstar Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

The project encompasses approximately **181 acres** of privately owned forested open space/common-area lands found within two treatment areas inside the WPZ boundary.

Forest Fuels Reduction Treatments

Implementation of fuels reduction treatments within forested open space common-areas to reduce fire intensity, improve stand structure, and enhance defensibility of adjacent developed areas.

Hazard Tree Removal and Forest Health Improvement

Removal of dead, diseased, dying, and pest-infested trees that present wildfire hazards or contribute to declining forest health conditions.

Project Area and Regulatory Setting

The project is found entirely within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) appointed by CAL FIRE as a **Very High Fire Hazard**

Severity Zone. Existing conditions include overstocked conifer stands, elevated fuel loading, and declining vegetation health due to prolonged drought, insect and disease activity, and legacy effects of historic timber harvesting within the Martis Creek Watershed.

Project Objectives:

The project is designed to:

Reduce fuel continuity and wildfire intensity.

Slow the rate of fire spread across varied topography.

Improve conditions for safe community evacuation.

Support long-term forest health and resilience.

Implementation of this project will support compliance with **Section 5 of Northstar Ordinance 38-22**.

Project Activities:

The proposed project consists of forest fuels reduction treatments within the Northstar Community Services District Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ). Treatment activities are intended to reduce hazardous fuel loading, improve stand structure and species composition, and reduce the overall threat of catastrophic wildfire to residential and commercial structures, infrastructure, and natural resources.

1. Forest Fuels Reduction Treatments – 181 Acres

Approximately 181 acres will be treated for forest fuels reduction within the NCSD Wildfire Prevention Zone boundary. Treatment methods will include hand crew operations, mastication, chipping, and contingency pile burning in areas inaccessible to mechanical equipment due to steep slopes, rocky terrain, or limited access conditions.

Primary biomass disposal methods will consist of:

Chipping with broadcast distribution or off-site hauling.

Skid steer and excavator-based mastication; and

Contingency pile burning where mechanical treatment is infeasible.

Hand crew operations may use five- to eleven-person crews equipped with chainsaws, pole saws, rakes, shovels, and associated forestry hand tools. Hand crews will selectively thin suppressed and intermediate conifer trees ranging from 1.0 inch to 12.9 inches Diameter Breast Height (DBH). Dead, diseased, dying, or pest-infested conifer trees up to 28.9 inches DBH may also be removed where determined to be a fire hazard, safety hazard, or necessary for stand improvement.

Residual conifer trees will be limbed from approximately 4 feet to 15 feet above ground level, depending upon terrain, ladder fuel conditions, and stand structure goals.

Brush treatment activities will create both mosaic and contiguous thinning patterns intended to show variable age classes, improve spacing, and reduce horizontal fuel continuity based upon slope, topography, and vegetation composition.

Target ground fuel reduction goals are intended to substantially reduce hazardous fuel loading and improve wildfire resilience throughout the treatment area.

Chipping operations may use towable and rubber-tracked chippers. Rubber-tracked chippers can operate on slopes up to approximately 30 percent without requiring road or skid trail construction. Chipping operations will generally process material up to 12.9 inches DBH.

Woodchip broadcast depth will generally range from approximately 1 to 3 inches. Areas with excessive chip accumulation, including tree wells and concentrated deposits, will be raked and redistributed to minimize potential impacts to soil conditions, water movement, and vegetation health. Chipping crews will also rehabilitate any minor surface disturbances or track depressions resulting from equipment operations.

Where pile burning is needed as a contingency treatment method, burn piles will generally range from approximately 8 feet by 8 feet up to 15 feet by 15 feet in size and will be found within open areas to minimize residual tree scorch and wildfire escape potential. Burn pile construction, permitting, and ignition operations will follow requirements of the Placer County Air Pollution Control District and the Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System (PFIRS).

2. Mastication Treatments – Approximately 135.75 Acres

Approximately 135.75 acres will receive mastication treatment prescriptions targeting brush fields, downed woody material, and small- to medium-diameter conifer trees.

Brush treatments will focus on reducing contiguous fuel continuity by setting up mosaic treatment patterns and mixed-age vegetation structure intended to reduce fire spread potential and canopy fire transition risk.

Skid steer and excavator-based mastication equipment will target:

Brush species and downed woody fuels.

Conifer trees ranging from approximately 1.0 inch to 6.9 inches DBH for skid steer treatments; and

Conifer trees ranging from approximately 6.1 inches to 14.9 inches DBH for excavator-based mastication treatments.

Treatment goals include reducing white fir (*Abies concolor*) dominance and promoting a greater proportion of pine species within the mixed conifer forest composition to improve long-term forest resilience and stand health.

3. Hand Crew Treatments – Approximately 45.25 Acres

Approximately 45.25 acres will receive hand crew treatment in areas inaccessible or unsuitable for mastication equipment operations.

Hand crews will selectively thin:

Conifer trees ranging from approximately 1.0 inches to 12.9 inches DBH.

Contiguous brush components; and

Downed woody fuels and ladder fuels. Added removal of larger diameter dead, diseased, dying, or pest-infested conifer trees may occur where determined to pose a wildfire or operational safety hazard.

Biomass generated from hand treatments may be processed using a rubber-tracked chipper for either broadcast distribution across the forest floor or off-site removal and disposal.

4. Contingency Pile Burning

Pile burning may occur within steep, rocky, inaccessible, or landlocked treatment areas where mastication and chipping equipment cannot safely operate.

Burn piles will generally range from approximately 8 feet by 8 feet up to 15 feet by 15 feet in size and will be selectively placed to minimize impacts to residual vegetation and reduce the likelihood of residual tree scorch.

All pile burning activities will follow applicable permitting, operational, and smoke management requirements.

Project Purpose and Expected Outcome

The proposed project is intended to enhance fuels reduction within open-space common-areas throughout the Wildfire Prevention Zone, thereby improving wildfire resilience and reducing wildfire threat exposure to residential structures, commercial properties, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Project implementation is also intended to:

Reduce hazardous fuel loading and wildfire intensity potential.

Improve defensible space and fuel continuity conditions.

Promote a healthier and more diverse Sierra Nevada mixed conifer forest ecosystem; and

Improve long-term forest stand resilience to wildfire, drought, insects, and disease.

Justifications for Use of Categorical Exemptions and CAL FIRE 1038 Exemptions (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):

EXEMPTION STATUS: Categorical Exemption(s)

14 CCR§15304, Minor Alterations to Land

14CCR§15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources

14CCR§ (1038c6)

14CCR§ (1038b)

14CCR§ (1038d)

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Minor Alteration to Land 14CCR§15304 - The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels within the Districts Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ). This project is designed to mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is chosen by CAL FIRE as existing within a Very High Fire Severity Area.

The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources 14CCR§15307. This project will help prevent wildfires from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within and outside the boundaries of the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.

The use of CAL FIRE 1038 (1038c6), (1038b), (1038d) Exemptions to help meet the goals of the project. The Exemption allows for the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected, green trees and biomass which is identified as a wildfire/forest health issue.

FIELD AND OFFICE REVIEW BY THE NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREST FUELS MANAGEMENT STAFF CONFIRMED THAT NO EXCEPTIONS APPLY WHICH WOULD PRECLUDE THE USE OF A NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FOR THIS PROJECT. THE DEPARTMENT HAS CONCLUDED THAT NO SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT WOULD OCCUR TO AESTHETICS, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTLAND/TIMBERLAND, AIR QUALITY, BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES, CULTURAL RESOURCES, GEOLOGY AND SOILS, GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY, LAND USE PLANNING, MINERAL RESOURCES, NOISE, POPULATION AND HOUSING, PUBLIC SERVICES, RECREATION, TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC, OR TO UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS. DOCUMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMPLETED BY THE DEPARTMENT IS KEPT ON FILE AT NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT, STATION #31, LOCATED AT 910 NORTHSTAR DRIVE, IN TRUCKEE, CA.

Date of filing by the Northstar Fire Department (Fuels Management)

June 17th, 2026



**Joe Barron (Forester, RPF# 2984)
NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT**

