NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Calaveras County
Resource Conservation District

PROJECT TITLE	San Andreas East Fuelbreak		
PROJECT LOCATION	Portions of Sections: 8, 15,16,17, T4N, R12E, MDBM, portions of San Andreas 7.5 minute quadrangle	**COUNTY**	Calaveras
LEAD AGENCY	Calaveras County Resource Conservation District (CCRCD)		
CONTACT: **ADDRESS**	Trina Walley, Executive Director, Calaveras County Resource Conservation District P.O. Box 1041, San Andreas, CA. 95249	**PHONE**	(209) 754-9488

This project will create a 147-acre shaded fuel break north and east of the city of San Andreas. This fuel break will reduce fuel loads and the risk of catastrophic fire in an area that has a history of destructive wildfires. The fuel break will provide a staging area for fire suppression forces to effectively fight a wildfire. This fuel break will greatly improve the ability of the firefighting agencies to stop a fire from entering San Andreas, schools, the county's only hospital, county buildings and nearby communities. Additional dispersed residences between these communities will also benefit from the fuel reduction within this fuel break. Ingress and egress will be facilitated by the removal of encroaching roadside vegetation.

The project area contains mostly Blue Oak Foothill Pine, Mixed Chaparral, and Annual Grassland habitat types. Predominant tree species include blue oak, interior live oak, canyon live oak, black oak, with scattered gray pine and Ponderosa pine. Predominant brush/shrub species include Yerba Santa, coyote brush, toyon, poison oak, and white-leaf manzanita. Various annual and perennial grass species can be found, predominantly in the western portion of the project area. Vegetation density in most areas throughout the project area is dense-to-very dense. Scattered dead and dying over-story trees are evident throughout the project area. These dead trees occur as individual trees, or as small pockets of dead trees. Some of these dead trees have fallen, contributing significantly to ground fuels. Other dead trees will be targeted for removal. When dead trees or snags exhibit potential for cavity nest sites, these trees may be designated as "save" trees for wildlife.

The proposed treatment will include the mastication of all ground fuels, all brush, and small diameter trees up to 14-inches diameter to achieve a desired trees spacing of 40 feet between boles. The width of the shaded fuel break will be dependent upon terrain and topography, but the desired goal is to develop a shaded fuel break approximately 400 feet wide.

The proposed treatment over the project area will primarily use mechanical mastication to create a shaded fuel break. Some incidental hand work may be necessary around fences or in other locations inaccessible to the mastication equipment. This hand treatment will involve cutting inaccessible vegetation, then moving this cut vegetation to areas where it can be masticated or using a tracked chipper to chip the material in-place.

Where there is significant overstory tree cover, all understory brush will be masticated. Live, vigorous trees up to 14 inches diameter will be thinned to a spacing of 40 feet between boles. All suppressed, low vigor trees 14 inches diameter or less will be removed. Retention of Ponderosa pine, gray pine, and black oak will be favored in cases where choices must be made.

The project may utilize a combination of other treatments paired with mastication to reduce or remove incompatible vegetation within the fuel break. These treatments may include hand thinning and chipping, piling and burning, pruning, grazing, prescribed fire, and/or other treatment methods. The use of these treatments will be targeted in areas unable to be treated using mastication in order to create a more continuous and functional fuel break. The intent is for this Notice of Exemption to cover the maintenance of project which may utilize a combination of all treatment methods listed above.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: 14CCR§15304 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))

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REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The class of exemption to be used is "Class 4 §15304 Minor Alterations to Land". The project will consist of removing surface and ladder fuels to create and/or maintain a shaded fuel break. The project is located in an urban interface area. The project will create and/or maintain an open stand condition. This project will not involve the removal of mature of scenic trees, but will improve overall stand health by removing dead, dying and suppressed trees and brush. Growing space for mature, healthy dominant and co-dominant trees will be increased. The project was designed to avoid sensitive and special status species; there will be no significant adverse impacts by the project. The project will not have adverse impacts on watercourses or water resources. The project was designed to have no significant adverse impacts on any other biological or archaeological resources. The project was designed to reduce hazardous fuel loading in a strategic area around the community of San Andreas, and will make Calaveras County more resilient regarding wildfires

Field review by CCRCD staff and contracted professionals have confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of Notice of Exemption for this project. The CCRCD and contracted professionals 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, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities and service systems, or wildfire.

This project fits under portions of the above-listed Class 4 Categorical Exemption listed in CEQA Guidelines §15304 pertaining to Minor Alterations to Land. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the CCRCD staff and contracted professionals are kept on file at the CCRCD office in San Andreas, CA.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

06/30/2026

Executive Director Date
Calaveras County Resource Conservation District