CEQA – Notice of Exemption

Santa Barbara County Fire Department

PROJECT TITLE	The Groves Defensible Space
PROJECT LOCATION	Orcutt 34° 51'04.89N -120° 24'30.61W
LEAD AGENCY	Santa Barbara County Fire Department
CONTACT	Vince LaRocco, VMP Coordinator
ADDRESS	4410 Cathedral Oaks Santa Barbara, CA 93110
PHONE	805-681-5500

PROJECT DESCRIPTION -

The project consists of 4 shaded fuel reduction treatments and treatment of emergency access road totaling 9.6acres located in the County owned open space intermixed with The Groves Housing Development in the foothills of the unincorporated community of Orcutt. The project will utilize hand crews to reduce flammable fuel volume by removing dead material, reducing ladder fuels, and selectively thinning standing vegetation. The existing fuel is predominately mature oak woodland with scattered chaparral and stands of Conifers. Mature trees will be limbed and pruned of dead branches. The cut material will be chipped and spread uniformly on site. The shrub dominated areas will be treated with a residual mosaic approach, leaving scattered shrubs and islands of intact formation comprising approximately 30% of the original cover. No mature trees will be removed. No work will occur within 50 feet of a riparian corridor. The project will greatly increase the defensible space around the community and also protect the open space wildland from a fire starting from the surrounding residential developments. The project will also involve maintenance of established emergency access road to the south of the Groves housing development.

No heavy equipment is authorized under this document. A query of the National Diversity Database will be performed for each treatment to check for the presence of endangered plants and/or animals. DFW will be consulted for input as necessary. Chips will not be deposited within the standard width of a watercourse or lake protection zone.

This exemption will be reevaluated every 5 years.

EXEMPTION STATUS

☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section:

15301 Existing Facilities
15304 Minor Alterations to Land
15308 Actions Taken for Protection of Environment

☐ 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

The work proposed is a minor alteration to vegetation which does not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and is consistent with Categorical Exemption Class 4- Minor Alterations to Land. The project also involves maintenance of existing fire access roads and recreational area. A biological assessment has concluded that no listed species shall be adversely impacted by project activities. The limited nature of this project's footprint in relation to the amount of identical habitat available in the surrounding area further reduces the likely hood of any species (T & E or otherwise) being adversely affected by potential habitat modification due to the fuel reduction activities. SBC 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 SBC Fire GIS, 4570 Hollister Ave, Santa Barbara 93110.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

3/18/2021

Rob Hazard, Fire Marshal — Date
Santa Barbara County Fire Department