

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk

County of: Orange

601 N Ross Street

Sanata Ana, CA 92071

From: (Public Agency): City of San Clemente
910 Calle Negocio, Ste. 100
San Clemente, CA 92673

(Address)

Project Title: City of San Clemente Open Space Wildfire and Vegetation Management - Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Project Applicant: City of San Clemente - Community Development Department

Project Location - Specific:

San Clemente Open Space adjacent to 990 Avenida Vista Hermosa

Project Location - City: San Clemente Project Location - County: Orange

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This Wildfire and Vegetation Management project will reduce or prevent wildfires resulting from hazardous fuels in the most critical areas of the City's approximately 5,300 acres of public and private Open Space areas by implementing a multi-year wildfire mitigation project consisting of deploying goat grazing to clear dense brush, hand crews (manual thinning), strategic mechanical vegetation removal, and restoring native vegetation to create fire resilient open space areas, decrease fuel loads, and enhance overall ecosystem health. This program would accomplish and carry out multiple mitigation actions contained in the City's recently-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of San Clemente

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of San Clemente

Exempt Status: (check one):

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 15301(h) , 15304, 15307, 15308
- ☒ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: § 21080.49 , § 21080(b)(4)

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project involves vegetation management on established open space zones (15301 and 15304) within the city using methods and practices consistent with natural resource protection environmental preservation (Sections 15307 and 15308), in the interest of mitigating wildfire risk (§ 21080.49 & §§ 21080(b)(4)).

None of the exceptions to the exemption listed in CEQA Guidelines 15300.2 apply. Additional supportive information is attached.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Adam Atamian Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 949-361-6196

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature:  Date: 9/4/26 Title: Community Development Director

▪ Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____



CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Adam Atamian
Community Development Director
(949)-361-6196
AtamianA@san-clemente.org

8/26/2026

Orange County Clerk-Recorder
County Administration South Building
601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

SUBJECT: Notice of Exemption (CEQA) Filing

On August 19, 2025, the San Clemente City Council approved a resolution confirming the City's commitment to provide a 25% local match for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application. As part of this ongoing implementation of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the project "Open Space Wildfire and Vegetation Management - Hazardous Fuel Reduction", is reaching its implementation phase, beginning with the open space adjacent to 990 Avenida Vista Hermosa. This Wildfire and Vegetation Management project will reduce or prevent wildfires resulting from hazardous fuels in one of the most critical areas of the City by deploying goat grazing to clear dense brush, hand crews (manual thinning), strategic mechanical vegetation removal, and restoring native vegetation to create fire resilient open space areas, decrease fuel loads, and enhance overall ecosystem health. This program would accomplish and carry out multiple mitigation actions contained in the City's recently-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. A map of the project area is attached.

The City of San Clemente, as Lead Agency, finds and determined that the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301(h) (Class 1: Existing), 15304 (Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land), 15307 (Class 7: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources), and 15308 (Class 8: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment), and is statutorily exempt under Public Resources Code §§ 21080(b)(4) (Emergency Projects) and § 21080.49 (SB 131—Fire Prevention Exemption).

The Class 1 exemption specifically exempts from further CEQA review the operation, repair, maintenance, and minor repair of existing public or private facilities and topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. This exemption covers, but is not limited to, maintenance of existing landscape, native growth, and water supply reservoirs. The project does not change the existing general use of properties. Thus, the project qualifies for the Class 1 exemption.

The Class 4 exemption specifically exempts from further CEQA review the minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. This exemption covers, but is not limited to, fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions. The project is, by definition, a minor alteration targeting vegetation that is invasive and/or dead in a selective manner. The selective manner of the vegetation management program, through the use of mechanical removal, hand crews, and goat grazing, avoids activities not covered by this exemption. Consulting partners provided maps and figures identifying any biological resources to consider when conducting vegetation removal. Thus, the project qualifies for the Class 4 exemption.

The Class 7 exemption specifically exempts from further CEQA review the actions taken by regulatory agencies as authorized by state law or local ordinance to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of a natural resource, where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. This exemption covers, but is not limited to, agency actions aimed at safeguarding natural resources through regulatory procedures, provided there's no physical construction involved. Thus, the project qualifies for the Class 7 exemption.

The Class 8 exemption specifically exempts from further CEQA review actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. The purpose of the Wildfire and Vegetation Management project is to protect the City's environmental resources by reducing risk of wildfires, and invasive and non-native vegetation that degrades the natural environment. Thus, the project qualifies for the Class 8 exemption.

Furthermore, none of the exceptions to the use of the Class 1, 4, 7, and 8 categorical exemptions identified in State CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply, supported by spatial analysis and a review of resource materials. The Wildfire and Vegetation Management project consists of regular maintenance activities to reduce the risk of fires in the City. The project will not result in a cumulative impact from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time. There are no unusual circumstances surrounding the project that result in a reasonable possibility of a significant effect on the environment because the project is limited to the removal of weeds, and invasive and non-native vegetation that degrades the natural environment within the City's open space areas. The project will not damage scenic resources, including trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources. The project does not include any hazardous waste sites, and the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The project will be carried out on open space-zoned properties with no historical resources affected. The program is implementing multiple treatment

strategies and best management practices to ensure the project has no possibility of a direct or foreseeable indirect significant impact on the environment.

Additionally, the Wildfire and Vegetation Management project is statutorily exempt under Public Resources Code §§ 21080(b)(4) (Emergency Projects) and § 21080.49 (SB 131—Fire Prevention Exemption); in that it consists of specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency—namely, the imminent threat of wildfire in areas designated as Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The project's vegetation management activities are directly intended to reduce flammable fuel loads and create defensible space to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure from catastrophic fire events. Under § 21080.49, the work qualifies for the fire prevention exemption because it involves wildfire risk reduction in compliance with applicable environmental protection measures, is located in a wildland-urban interface area, and does not exceed the acreage limitations set forth in the statute. The agencies position is supported by fire hazard maps in the Centennial General Plan's Safety Element and other spatial analysis. Thus, the project qualifies for both the emergency project and fire prevention statutory exemptions. Thus, no further environmental review is required.

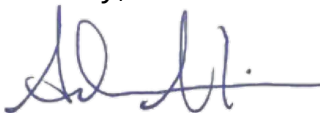
Attached please find a Notice of Exemption to be filed and a check for the \$50.00 filing fee.

Please mail a copy of the receipt and filed notice to:

City of San Clemente
Attn: Planner Name
910 Calle Negocio
San Clemente, CA 92673

Alternatively, filed copy and receipt can be emailed to HanleyB@san-clemente.org. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adam Atamian', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Atamian
Community Development Director

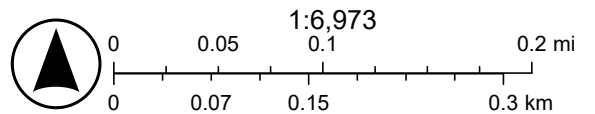
ArcGIS Web Map



8/31/2026, 4:53:46 PM

- Parcels
- City Boundary
- Outside City Mask
- World_Boundaries_and_Places
- Eagle 1ft Tiled 2019
- Red: Band_1
- Green: Band_2
- Blue: Band_3

World Imagery
Low Resolution 15m Imagery
High Resolution 60cm Imagery
High Resolution 30cm Imagery
Citations



City of Riverside, County of Riverside, Esri, HERE, Garmin, iPC, Eagle Aerial, Vantor



