

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

NAPA COUNTY PLANNING, BUILDING, & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
DEPARTMENT
1195 THIRD STREET, SUITE 210, NAPA, CA 94559

SUBMITTED TO: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 0334
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

EXEMPT FROM RECORDING FEE CG 27383

Napa County Clerk
1127 1ST Street
Suite A
Napa, Ca, 94559

Lead Agency: County of Napa, Planning, Building and Environmental Services Department

NAME: Dana Morrison – Supervising Planner, Conservation

ADDRESS: 1195 Third Street – Suite 210

PHONE: (707) 253-4437

PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT TITLE: Chappellet, Knife and Flying L Ranch Prescribed Burn

PROJECT LOCATION - SPECIFIC: The prescribed burn project is proposed to occur across approximately 2600 acres within the Chappellet LLC, Acme Rocket Inc, Gallo Inc, Knife and Rattlesnake LLC holdings (all contiguous parcels) located approximately 5.5 miles east of the Town of Yountville and approximately 2.0 miles southeast of Lake Hennessey. The project will occur on the following 17 APNs: 032-560-014-000, 032-560-022-000, 032-560-030-000, 032-560-031-000, 032-560-012-000, 032-560-033-000, 032-560-034-000, 032-560-035-000, 032-020-003-000, 032-020-044-000, 032-020-045-000, 032-020-046-000, 032-020-047-000, 032-020-013-000, 032-020-014-000, 032-020-048-000 and 032-540-004-000 located in Napa County, California.

PROJECT LOCATION – CITY (NEAREST): Yountville

PROJECT LOCATION - COUNTY: Napa

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project will involve pile burning operations to prepare the site for broadcast burning by reducing fuel loading and creating conditions suitable for low-intensity broadcast burning. Broadcast burning will then be utilized as a land management tool to help protect communities, maintain critical access and egress routes, strengthen strategically important areas for wildfire suppression, and promote long-term forest health, rangeland improvement, and watershed resilience. The project will involve pile burning and broadcast burning to reduce and remove accumulated dead vegetation and other hazardous fuels remaining from the 2017 Atlas Fire and 2020 Hennessey Fire. These activities will help protect the rural communities of Atlas Peak, Soda Canyon, Sage Canyon and the surrounding areas. Broadcast burning will also assist in reducing the encroachment of invasive species and promote more resilient native plant communities. The property is located within an area of the County identified as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, where fuel reduction treatments are essential to reducing wildfire risk and

improving community protection. The project will adhere to various Best Management Practices and will also obtain all necessary permits from applicable agencies, such as a Smoke Management Plan from the Bay Area Air Quality District, as well as LE-5 and LE-7 permits from CALFIRE.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: CalFIRE, Sonoma Lake Unit

ADDRESS 1199 Big Tree Road, St. Helena, Ca 94574

PHONE: (707) 531-9691

NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT: Napa County Fire Administrator and CalFIRE

ADDRESS: 1195 Third Street – Suite 310, Napa, Ca 94559

PHONE: (707) 259-8199

EXEMPT STATUS (CHECK ONE):

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15268(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQAG) section number: ***Class 4 - Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), and Class 8- Section 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources.***
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

REASONS WHY PROJECT IS EXEMPT: Pursuant to CEQA Section 15300, the proposed project would be considered Categorically Exempt based on at least two Exemption Classes. The project site is not listed on any hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5. As a result, there is no reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

EXEMPT STATUS (CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION SECTIONS):

- Class 4 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land): 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 or agricultural purposes.
- Class 8 15308 Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources: 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. Construction activities and relaxation of standards allowing environmental degradation are not included in this exemption.

FINDINGS FOR EXEMPTIONS:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) {Section 21000, et. seq. of the California Public Resources Code}, requires analysis of agency approvals of discretionary 'projects. " A "project, „under CEQA, is defined as "the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. " The Project is defined as a project under CEQA.

Staff has reviewed the proposed project to determine the required level of review under the CEQA and has determined the project to be Categorically Exempt from the CEQA pursuant to the following CEQA Guidelines:

- The project meets the requirements of CEQA Article 19 Class 4 (Section 15304) Categorical Exemption "Minor Alterations to Land" as the project aims to utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including "pile burning" and "broadcast burning" with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2600 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels in the County. The entirety of the 2600 acres is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities with a high or very high fire hazard. The project will manage and maintain fire fuels throughout the project area. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located to improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. Additionally, the project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. By managing and maintaining wildfire intensity and severity, it will improve defensible space, provide safer egress for evacuating citizens, provide safer ingress for emergency resources, and ultimately facilitate the protection of life and property. Also, project activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, and/or threatened plant or animal species, or cause sedimentation to surface waters. The project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs), including restoration efforts with noninvasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways.
- The project meets the requirements of CEQA Article 19 Class 8 (Section 15308) Categorical Exemption "Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources" as the project consists of actions by regulatory agencies as authorized by state laws or local ordinances. The project will utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including "pile burning" and "broadcast burning" with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2600 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels throughout the County. The entirety of the proposed 2600-acre project area is located within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. The project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. Additionally, the referenced agencies confirmed the hazardous fuel reduction clearance is mandatory to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, adhere to local ordinances and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events.

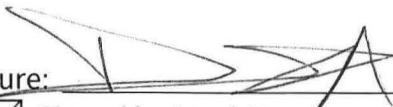
County staff also reviewed all potential exceptions (Section 15300.2) to the categorical exemptions and determined that no exceptions would apply: (a) because there are no project impacts and/or no cumulatively significant impacts; (b) There would be no significant effects due to unusual circumstances because the routine maintenance and/or removal of hazardous forest/fire fuels to reduce wildfire intensity/severity, including the protection of life and property from catastrophic events is a common practice in communities; (c) There would be no damage to scenic resources, historic buildings, and/or rock

outcroppings; (d) The project is not located on a hazardous waste site; and (e) The project is designed to require minimal to no ground disturbance. Furthermore, there are no known special circumstances that exist which would create a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, the project meets the criteria outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 and 15308 and would be categorically exempt from the requirements of CEQA. No further CEQA review is required. The project site is not on any of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5.

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT PERSON: Dana Morrison, Supervising Planner, County of Napa, PBES

ADDRESS: 1195 Third Street – Suite 210

PHONE: (707) 253-4437

Signature: 

Title: Supervising Planner

Date: 9/23/2026

Date received for filing at OPR: 9/23/2026.

- ☒ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant



Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

Brian D. Bordona
Director

To:	Ryan Isham, Deputy Chief – Community Risk Reduction Sonoma Lake Napa Unit	From:	Dana Morrison, Supervising Planner Conservation Division, PBES
Date:	September 23, 2026	Re:	CEQA Determination – Chappellet, Knife, and Flying L Ranch Prescribed Burn

This memo is in response to your request for a determination of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines for fire fuel management prescribed burn project (Knief Ranch) proposed to occur within Napa County California. The projects will be implemented and management by the Napa County Fire Department with support from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Sonoma Lake Napa Unit. The goal of the project is to reduce hazardous fuel loads within approximately 2600 acres located within areas denoted as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) in Napa County.

Location – The subject properties are in a critical area for fire protection. The prescribed burn project is proposed to occur across approximately 2600 acres within the Chappellet LLC, Acme Rocket Inc, Gallo Inc, Knife and Rattlesnake LLC holdings (all contiguous parcels) located approximately 5.5 miles east of the Town of Yountville and approximately 2.0 miles southeast of Lake Hennessey. The project will occur on the following 17 APNs: 032-560-014-000, 032-560-022-000, 032-560-030-000, 032-560-031-000, 032-560-012-000, 032-560-033-000, 032-560-034-000, 032-560-035-000, 023-020-003-000, 032-020-044-000, 032-020-045-000, 032-020-046-000, 032-020-047-000, 032-020-013-000, 032-020-014-000, 032-020-048-000 and 032-540-004-000 located in Napa County, California (image of project boundary at end of document). The proposed project area is largely undeveloped and rural, with limited rural residential development, vineyard development, access roads and one winery.

Project Description - The project will involve pile burning operations to prepare the site for broadcast burning by reducing fuel loading and creating conditions suitable for low-intensity broadcast burning. Broadcast burning will then be utilized as a land management tool to help protect communities, maintain critical access and egress routes, strengthen strategically important areas for wildfire suppression, and promote long-term forest health, rangeland improvement, and watershed resilience. The project will involve pile burning and broadcast burning to reduce and remove accumulated dead vegetation and other hazardous fuels remaining from the 2017 Atlas Fire and 2020 Hennessey Fire. These activities will help protect the rural communities of Atlas Peak, Soda Canyon, Sage Canyon and the surrounding areas. Broadcast burning will also assist in reducing the encroachment of invasive species and promote more resilient native plant communities. The property is located within an area of the County identified as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, where fuel reduction treatments are essential to reducing wildfire risk and improving community protection. The project will adhere to

various Best Management Practices and will also obtain all necessary permits from applicable agencies, such as a Smoke Management Plan from the Bay Area Air Quality District, as well as LE-5 and LE-7 permits from CALFIRE.

No Biological Resource Assessment Report was prepared for this project. The project areas do support local movement patterns of terrestrial wildlife species and provide food and cover resources for common wildlife species. However, the projects would not include the removal of any healthy, mature, or scenic trees. Hazardous trees (e.g., dead or dying trees) identified by Napa County Fire Department and CAL FIRE staff would be removed as well as fire-hazardous trees up to 10 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) although typically fire-hazardous trees would be less than 6 inches DBH. Downed dead trees and logs would be removed and cleared. Standing dead vegetation would be removed and cleared, leaving mature, healthy trees. Temporary effects due to noise and increased human activity during project activities would not permanently interfere with local movement patterns of wildlife over time or affect the ability of these species to forage or reproduce. Post fire can also create snags for cavity-nesting birds and create even more viable nesting habitats. The controlled burn proposed is designed to be low-intensity which should reduce negative impacts and various Best Management Practice (BMP) have been included including requiring a survey of the project areas for bird active nests prior to commencing work, if project occurs during the nesting season. Additional avoidance areas have been identified in consultation with WRA Environmental Consultants for 032-560-034 associated with Erosion Control Plan P18-00446. Furthermore, due to the fact that the proposed projects are not development proposals and instead involve fuel management attempting to reduce future potential wildfire risk and provide safe ingress/egress during wildfire events and according to the Napa County Fire Department and CAL FIRE these controlled burns typically help native vegetation to establish while enhancing public safety and defensibility during wildlife events, which should leave the environment in better conditions compared to pre-project.

BMPs:

- Vehicle Use – Vehicles and equipment shall use on existing roads and trails, and previously disturbed areas to the extent practicable. Off-road vehicular access will be restricted to as needed and to within the temporary access area to conduct Project work. Visual checks for wildlife under vehicles and equipment which have been stationary will be performed prior to moving them.
- Minimize Disturbance - Project duration and disturbance should not exceed the minimum necessary to complete operations. Workers will not enter streambed areas.
- No ignitions within established riparian zones. Fire is allowed to back into riparian buffers.
- Conduct required botanical and nesting bird surveys based on blooming and nesting seasons and establish protective buffers where needed.
- Tree removal shall be limited to dead, dying, or invasive trees. Living trees may be limbed to prevent fire spread into canopies during prescribed burn.
- Heavy fuels will be piled and burned to ensure full consumption.
- Prescribed burns will be low-intensity and patchy, designed to avoid impacts to mature scenic trees.

CEQA Determination:

Pursuant to CEQA Section 15300, the proposed project would be considered Categorical Exempt based on at least two Exemption Classes. The project site is not listed on any hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5. As a result, there is no reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

EXEMPT STATUS (CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION SECTIONS):

- Class 4 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land): 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 or agricultural purposes.
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Staff has reviewed the proposed project to determine the required level of review under the CEQA and has determined the project to be Categorical Exempt from the CEQA pursuant to the following CEQA Guidelines:

- The project meets the requirements of CEQA Article 19 Class 4 (Section 15304) Categorical Exemption "Minor Alterations to Land" as the project aims to utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including "pile burning" and "broadcast burning" with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2600 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels in the County. The entirety of the 2600 acres is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities with a high or very high fire hazard. The project will manage and maintain fire fuels throughout the project area. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located to improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. Additionally, the project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. By managing and maintaining wildfire intensity and severity, it will improve defensible space, provide safer egress for evacuating citizens, provide safer ingress for emergency resources, and ultimately facilitate the protection of life and property. Also, project activities will not result in the taking of

endangered, rare, and/or threatened plant or animal species, or cause sedimentation to surface waters. The project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs), including restoration efforts with noninvasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways.

- The project meets the requirements of CEQA Article 19 Class 8 (Section 15308) Categorical Exemption "Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources" as the project consists of actions by regulatory agencies as authorized by state laws or local ordinances. The project will utilize mechanized equipment/techniques, including "pile burning" and "broadcast burning" with minimal to no ground disturbance to manage and maintain approximately 2600 acres of vertical and horizontal fire fuels throughout the County. The entirety of the proposed 2600-acre project area is located within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). The managing and maintaining of vertical and horizontal fire fuels is a common practice within communities. This fuel reduction treatment is strategically located to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events. The project will implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts with non-invasive species to restore natural habitats and help prevent and/or reduce the amount of sediment and runoff into nearby drainages/waterways. Additionally, the referenced agencies confirmed the hazardous fuel reduction clearance is mandatory to moderate the movement of wildfire, improve defensible space, provide safe egress for evacuating citizens, provide safe ingress for emergency resources, protect critical infrastructure, adhere to local ordinances and ultimately facilitate in the protection of life and property from catastrophic wildfire events.

County staff also reviewed all potential exceptions (Section 15300.2) to the categorical exemptions and determined that no exceptions would apply: (a) because there are no project impacts and/or no cumulatively significant impacts; (b) There would be no significant effects due to unusual circumstances because the routine maintenance and/or removal of hazardous forest/fire fuels to reduce wildfire intensity/severity, including the protection of life and property from catastrophic events is a common practice in communities; (c) There would be no damage to scenic resources, historic buildings, and/or rock outcroppings; (d) The project is not located on a hazardous waste site; and (e) The project is designed to require minimal to no ground disturbance. Furthermore, there are no known special circumstances that exist which would create a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, the project meets the criteria outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 and 15308 and would be categorically exempt from the requirements of CEQA. No further CEQA review is required.

This determination is solely based on information provided by the Napa County Fire Department and Ryan Isham, CAL FIRE Sonoma Lake Napa Unit. Should the proposed project be modified, or new evidence be presented that environmental impacts have not been fully disclosed, this determination would not be valid.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Dana Morrison at (707) 253-4437 or by e-mail at dana.morrison@countyofnapa.org.

Project Area

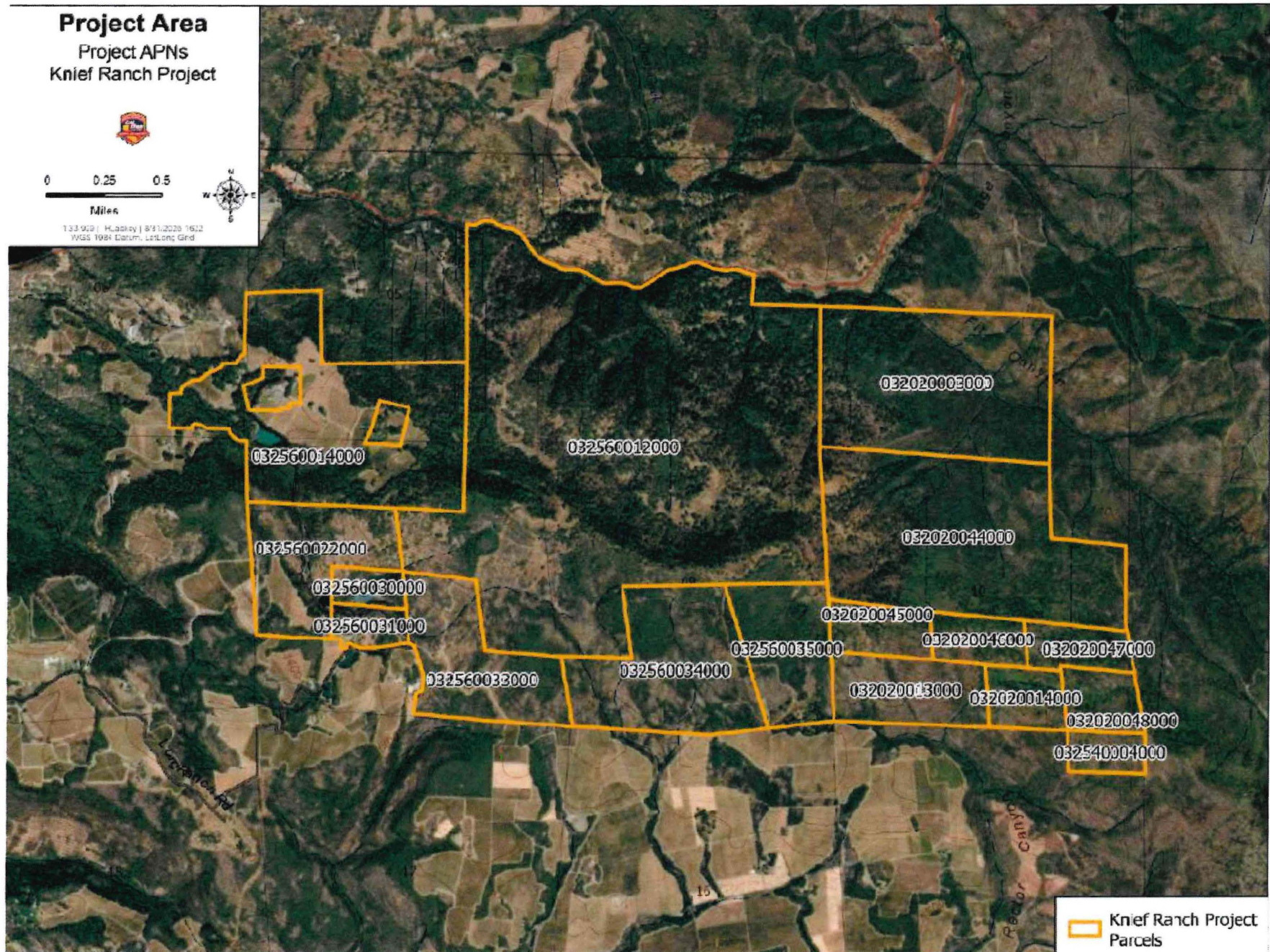
Project APNs
Knief Ranch Project



0 0.25 0.5

Miles

133 929 | H. Askey | 8/11/2020 1632
WGS 1984 Datum, NAD83 Grid



 Knief Ranch Project
Parcels