



# N·C·S·D

## Northstar Fire Department

Northstar Community Services District

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## Notice of Exemption

PROJECT TITLE	2018 Northstar Tree Mortality/Fuels Reduction Program	PROJECT NUMBER:	18-TMG-111-748
PROJECT LOCATION	The Northstar Community Services District Boundaries within, Sections 29, 30, 31, 32, T17N, R17E, Sections 5, T16N, R17E MDB&M	COUNTY	Placer
LEAD AGENCY	Northstar Fire Department		
CONTACT	JOE BARRON (NFD FORESTER, RPF #2984)		
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Project Description: The multi-year project that is expected to last into the spring of 2021 is funded from a 2018 California Fire Safe Council Grant Cycle. The Project that has a focus on various methods of forest fuels reduction that is located within and outside the boundary of the community of Northstar. Project focus is as follows:

1. To remove dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees that possessed a fire hazard and or were detrimental to forest health.
2. To perform forest fuels reduction within priority areas identified as open space common areas. These areas exist within and in proximity to residential and commercial structures and or adjacent to evacuation routes.
3. To perform maintenance for forest fuels reduction within areas falling out of compliance.
4. To perform forest fuels reduction with a Notice of Emergency Timber Operations/Fuel Hazard Reduction that is located within and outside the district boundary.

The funding from the grant will help subsidize the district costs of fuels reduction and treatment will help meet the priorities of the 2017 Northstar Fire Department Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This project will address a multitude of forest fuels issues that must be addressed due the Community of Northstar existing within a Very High Fire Severity Zone and the declining tree and vegetation health that was impacted by the previous 5-years of drought and correcting 100 plus years of historical timber harvesting practices which altered the forests of the Martis Creek Watershed. Currently, forest fuels that exists within the open space common areas and residential and commercial properties require a combination of initial and maintenance treatment. The objective is to reduce forest fuels within areas that are readily able to burn hot and travel at an accelerated rate across the topography. In addition, addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees will help reduce the acceleration of tree mortality before reaching an epidemic level.

Project Activities: Project work is to be performed by utilizing the four methods described above. This will consist of the following:

1. 70-acres of forest fuels reduction within open common space areas which will be treated by means of a hand crew disposing the biomass by means of chipping, pile burning or hauling to the Community Green Waste Recycling

Center. This treatment method will be performed by using a four to seven (4-7) person hand crew equipped with one to two (1-2) chainsaws, (1-2) pole saws and various hand tools such as a rakes and shovels. Hand crews will focus on reducing the density of small diameter, non-merchantable conifer trees that are considered suppressed and intermediate class trees. Residual conifer trees will be limbed from a range of 4' to 15' from the highest point of the ground up. Flammable brush will be thinned by means of creating mosaics. Mosaics will be thinned by creating various age classes and spacing adequately based on slope and topography. Ground fuels will be reduced to a range of 1,000 to 3,000 tons per acre. Chipping will be utilized with the Northstar Fire Department (NFD) Track Chipper #31, (C-31). C-31 is a rubber tracked chipper that can operate via remote control through the forest up to 30% slopes. Chipper -31 does not require a road/skid trail system to operate through the forest and has the capability of chipping trees up to 16" Diameter Breast Height, (D.B.H.). A computer system is embedded within the chipper that allows the feeding of the chipper to be efficiently without clogging the "chute" which is the mechanism to broadcast woodchips. (C-31) is operated with a 3 to 4-person crew that consists of an operator who has a remote control in hand for maneuvering the chipper. The operator watches the instrumentation, feeding of the chipper and safety of the crew. Chipper personnel will "feed" the chipper when in operation. The operator will guide the chipper to biomass piles that will be chipped and broadcasted. Woodchip broadcasting will be a depth range of 2"-3". Areas of heavy depth concentrations or woodchip accumulations near tree wells will be raked out by hand. The chipping crew will follow behind the chipper and rake out any deep chipper track ruts to ensure water disturbance will not occur. Method two will be by means of hauling. The hauling of material will require the use of a 2003 GMC, 1-ton hydraulic tilt bed dump truck. The truck will operate in designated areas and position itself where the crew can load the biomass into the dump bed. The material will then be hauled to the Community Green Waste Recycling Center and off-loaded.

2. 25-acres of forested land will be treated by means of a "Notice of Emergency Timber Operations/Fuel Hazard Reduction". This area is in proximity to commercial and private structures and will reduce the stand density which averages 200 square feet of basal area per acre and surface fuel loading which ranges 18-25 tons per acre. There exists continuity in ladder fuels within the forest stand. Red fir (*Abies magnifica*) is the focus species of treatment due to over-stocking, forest disease and pest attack. The stand structure in this project area is capable of rapid fire spread and the transition of fire spread on the ground to the crowns can be instantaneous. Rapid single tree torching will lead to continuous crown to crown ignition.
3. 65-acres of contiguous flammable brush growth will be treated by means of a combination of hand crew and mastication. The hand crew will selectively thin non-merchantable conifer trees, thin brush and remove downed fuels where the masticator cannot reach. Biomass removal will be done with C-31 or laying the material on the forest floor for the masticator. A small rubber tracked ASV brand mastication machine with a rotating drum head has been selected for the mastication operation. The machine will focus on the removal of contiguous brush fields by creating separation and diversity in a mixed age class of brush by establishing a mosaic brush field pattern. Thinning of brush fields will reduce fire's ability to travel across the landscape and carry into the mature tree canopy as a ladder fuel. The Area of focus for mastication will be brush fields adjacent to U.S. Highway 267 and the entrance of Northstar. These road systems are to be used for entrance and egress during a wildfire or other emergency event.
4. The removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees that act as a fire and forest health hazard will be identified for removal within the 1,855-acre Northstar Community Services District Boundary (NCSDB). Trees identified for removal will be marked with a blue band at Diameter Breast Height (D.B.H.) at 4.5 feet from the highest point of the ground up. An ongoing list with the identified tree location has been created that identifies conifer trees that possess the most impact to wildfire and forest health. The tree list will be broken out as "upper" and "lower" portion of the district. These trees will be directional fallen by chainsaw using a locally 4-7 person contracted hand crew. Approximately ninety-seven percent (97%) of the dead/diseased/dying trees are white fir (*Abies concolor*) trees, two percent (2%) are Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) species and one percent (1%) is sugar pine. Trees of focus will be

the immediate dead trees that pose a fire/safety hazard to the community. A secondary focus of removing trees that have active bark beetle infestations and or are diseased that is impacting the residual trees. Stressed trees from the drought and disease are the primary host trees to the bark beetles within the district and reducing the number of hosts will help slow tree mortality. (4) A Community Green Waste Recycling Center will be established at a strategic location to accept green waste (biomass) from residential/commercial properties and fuels reduction projects that exist within the NCSD boundary. The facility will be enclosed with cyclone fencing to contain the material and once reaching capacity, a tub grinding operation will be implemented taking the grinded material to a biomass facility that recognizes material coming from areas designated as a "Very High Fire Severity Zone". The NCSD will provide two means of collecting material and taking it to the green waste recycling center. Option 1 will be having a NCSD flatbed truck drive through the community three (3) days a week and collect biomass left at the curb of residential/commercial properties and taken to the green waste recycling center (GWRC). The second will be hauling the material directly to the facility and making the facility available 5 business days a week from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, excluding holidays and weekends. A local tub grinding operation will be used equipped with a conveyer-based machine, one excavator and multiple hauling trucks will be used for the tub grinding operation. The biomass will be utilized from co-generation plants located at Rocklin and Honey Lake, California. One or both facilities will be used in the tub grinding project. It is expected that a range of 2,000 to 2,800 cubic yards of material of green waste will be collected for this project.

The result of this project will be establishing a community-based effort to reduce the threat of a wildfire, promoting a healthy and diverse Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer Forest and promote a community-based effort in fuels reduction.

Project Site, Surroundings and Environmental Setting: The project area and surrounding region are overlain Miocene-Pliocene volcanic rocks. The Martis Valley was created by relative downward movement of a hanging wall block on a normal fault. The project area and adjacent areas are occupied by the California Wildlife Habitat Relationship(s) WHR eastside pine and white fir forests that exist in various stages. The WHR classifications for the project area are 2M, 3M white fir and 3M, 4M, 4P, 5P, 5M eastside pine. The project site is located within the Community of Northstar which is an 1,855-acre residential community that is part of the Northstar Community Services District Boundary, (NCSD). The project area is approximately 4.25 miles southeast of the historic downtown center of Truckee, California and approximately 3 miles south of the Truckee River, Interstate 80 (I-80) and the Transcontinental Railroad. Northstar is a rural community located within the Martis Creek Watershed, and the project elevation ranges from 5,900' to 6,100'. West Martis Creek, a perennial watercourse is on the west side of the residential community which is outside the project boundary and flows into Martis Creek Reservoir which is designated as wild trout water and a domestic water source. The project boundary lies within the 1,855 NCSD boundary which begins on the transition edge of the Martis Valley floor to the north and travels to a mature mixed age conifer forest to the south, east and west boundaries of the NCSD. The project areas exist within open space common areas as well as residential and commercial properties. Within the NCSD boundary lies 19 miles of paved roads, recreational trails, road easements, a golf course, a ski resort, maintenance and emergency roads, and a Liberty Utilities power sub-station. The project is designed to reduce fires ability to impact a wildfire from coming into the community or escaping outside the NCSD boundary. The project will mitigate the wildfire threat potential, ensure that emergency vehicles can perform protection and life safety activities in the event of a wildfire and that the public can effectively evacuate. Secondary benefits will help control an accelerating bark beetle and forest disease epidemic that has been stimulated by five years of drought

Project Goals and Accomplishments: This project meets priority numbers one, two and five which is identified in the 2017 updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan, (CWPP). A copy of the Northstar CWPP can be found from the Placer County Fire Alliance Website: [WWW.placerfirealliance.org](http://WWW.placerfirealliance.org). The goals of the project are as follows: 1. To mitigate forest fuels that have accumulated at an accelerated rate and require maintenance and or initial treatment. 2. Maintain 300' fuels buffer zones(s) from residential/commercial properties as well as protecting road systems for emergency vehicle access and evacuation. 3. Reduce the threat of wildfire and maintain forest health by addressing the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees to mitigate the spread of tree mortality and can mitigate mortality and a manageable rate. 4. Provide a Community Green Waste Recycling Center for residential/commercial property owners to help subsidize the cost of maintaining defensible space and have a way to efficiently mitigating the biomass and use it as a resource. This comprehensive project will help stretch Measure E dollars (District dollars), thus allowing completed projects to be placed on a maintenance schedule and future

treatments can be performed at a feasible cost per acre.

- Permitting Method(s): The project will implement the following as permits to perform the project.
  - The following Exemptions will be applied to the project.
  - *14CCR§15304* Minor Alteration to Land. The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or adjacent to residential and commercial properties and mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is designated as a Very High Fire Severity Area.
  - *14CCR§15307*, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources - The Northstar Fire Department an entity of the Northstar Community Services District within Placer County and is working under Northstar Ordinance 26-09 which relates to fuel treatments within regarding "Wildland Fire Prevention and Defensible Space Requirements". This project will help prevent a wildfire from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.
  - Cal Fire 1038 (b) Exemption(s) – 1038 (k) Exemptions will be in place by multiple land owners within the Northstar Community Services District boundary. These Exemptions will allow the removal of dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees of any diameter that pose a wildfire and forest health threat.
  - Notice of Emergency Timber Operations/Fuel Hazard Reduction – This Exemption will be filed under the requirements of PRC § 4592 and 14 CCR §§ 1052-1052.4 to remove timber on an emergency basis.

This CEQA Environmental Review document and all the attachments from this review will be available upon request and stored at 910 Northstar Drive, Truckee, CA 96161. This project is a multi-year project and will reflect the life of the project which will officially expire on December 31, 2020.

**Justifications for Use of a Categorical Exemption (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§15304, Minor Alteration to Land** - The project meets the Categorical Exemption as described under 14CCR§15304 Minor Alteration to Land. The project's main emphasis is to reduce the abundance of fuels near or adjacent to residential and commercial properties and mitigate the effects of a wildfire occurring within or outside the Northstar Community Services District Boundary which is designated as a Very High Fire Severity Area.*

***14CCR§15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources** - 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 a wildfire from occurring and to protect the cultural resources that exist within the Northstar Community Services District and as a part of the Martis Valley Complex.*

FIELD AND OFFICE REVIEW BY THE NORTHSTAR FIRE DEPARTMENT 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 IN TRUCKEE, CA.

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING \_\_\_\_\_

MAY 21 2019

*Joe B. (NFD)*

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

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

DATE 05-15-2019