



N.C.S.D

Northstar Fire Department
Northstar Community Services District
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Notice of Exemption

2019070887

PROJECT TITLE	2018 Northstar/USACE Fuels Reduction Partnership Project, PROJECT NUMBER: 5GG17188		
PROJECT LOCATION	The United States Army Corps of Engineers Property (USACE), Martis Creek Lake, T17N, R17E, Section 30, Mount Diablo Base & Meridian	COUNTY	Placer
LEAD AGENCY	Northstar Fire Department		
CONTACT	JOE BARRON (NFD FORESTER, RPF #2984)		
ADDRESS	910 NORTHSTAR DRIVE TRUCKEE, CA 96141	PHONE	530-562-1212 x2

Project Description: The multi-year project that is scheduled to begin on September 3rd, 2019 and will expire on March 15, 2022. The project is funded from CAL FIRE, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds. The project has a fuels reduction focus by means of a hand crew. Hand crew treatment will be performing basic methods of forest fuels reduction. The project is located on United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) property which is identified as Martis Creek Lake. The project area is located outside of the Northstar Community Services District Boundary in the northwest corner. Project work will perform the following treatment methods:

1. To remove dead, diseased, dying and pest infected trees that possesses a fire hazard or are identified as being detrimental to forest health.
2. To reduce the density of suppressed and selective intermediate class conifer trees within the forest understory, that act as ladder fuels and have the potential to carry forest fuels into the mature tree canopy.
3. To reduce the amount of downed forest fuels to an acceptable level for forest fuels management and a balance in forest health.
4. To reduce dense brush fields into appropriately spaced mosaics consisting of various age classes.

Funding from the CAL FIRE 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 mitigating 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 require an initial 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:

- 78-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 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.

- Selective 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 rates that currently exist at a rate of 25,000 – 10,000 tons per acre 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 Brush Bandit, 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.
- Hauling will be utilized where it is effective. The hauling of material will require the use of two hydraulic tilt bed dump trucks. The trucks will operate in approved designated area(s) for vehicle use and trucks will be positioned where the crew can load the biomass into the dump bed(s). The material will then be hauled to the Community Green Waste Recycling Center and off-loaded. This would be hauling large diameter material that is not efficient to chip or pile burn and delivered to the Northstar Community Green Waste Recycling Center. The material will later be grinded and delivered to a local biomass facility and or recycled for erosion control projects.
- Pile burning will be utilized where chipping and hauling are not an option. Small burn pile 8' x 8' in size will be created and placed in strategic locations that do not impact the residual tree canopy. Pile burning will occur during the late fall/winter months when snow is on the ground.
- The Community Green Waste Recycling Center (CGWRC) is a designated area located at Lot# 16 at the Castle Peak parking lot. The cyclone fenced lot will be one of the sources of containing the biomass. Once the material at the facility has reached capacity, one to two tub grinding operations will be implemented taking the grinded material to a local biomass facility that recognizes material coming from areas designated as a "Very High Fire Severity Zone" or used for local erosion control projects.

The result of this project will be establishing a Special District/Federal agency partnership working together to reduce the threat of a wildfire, promoting a healthy and diverse Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer Forest.

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 north outside the Community of Northstar district boundary 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 outside the NCSD

boundary which begins on the transition edge of the Martis Valley floor, moving north into the valley. The project site contains a mixed age conifer forest and is identified as open space. Within the NCS D 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 from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 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 six and seven 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. The goals of the project are as follows: 1. To mitigate forest fuels that have accumulated at an accelerated rate and require an initial forest fuels reduction treatment. 2. Maintain 300' fuels buffer zones(s) from the USACE property and the residential properties of Northstar as well as enhancing trail/utility road systems that can be used 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. 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 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.

This project has had an environmental review (**National** Environmental Policy Act, NEPA) conducted by the USACE to conform to applicable environmental laws, regulations and policies under (NEPA) and the Environmental Review and all the attachments from the NEPA review are functionally equivalent to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This document 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 March 15, 2022.

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

JUL 17 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

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 properties and will 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.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING Joe Barron (NFD, RPF#2984)

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

DATE 07-17-2019