



NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Laguna Canyon Unified Interface Fuel Break and Habitat Restoration Project – Cactus Restoration Project (Project Tracking Number 17-FP-ORC-2013)		
PROJECT LOCATION	T06S, R08W, Section 30	COUNTY	Orange
LEAD AGENCY	CalFire		
CONTACT	Mike Rohde, Project Manager	PHONE	(949) 464-6683
ADDRESS	505 Forest Ave., Laguna Beach, CA 92651		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Laguna Beach Fire Department (LBFD) proposes to install native cactus as a fire-resistant buffer along portions of Laguna Canyon Road (i.e., State Route 133) within the County of Orange. The project site is outside of and adjacent to the eastern boundary of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. The project would restore an approximately 20-foot wide by 4,000-foot long strip (1.84 acres) that is adjacent to Laguna Canyon Road. This strip would be modified from disturbed, predominately non-native grassland that becomes highly flammable during the dry season to a more fire-resistant, cactus-dominated scrub. The LBFD's responsibility is to provide fire prevention and safety measures for the City of Laguna Beach. Proposed project activities would include replacement of the existing disturbed roadside habitat with water-efficient and fire-resistant native landscaping to reduce wildfire hazards and increase safety. The purpose of this cactus roadside restoration is to reduce the potential for roadside fires to spread into the wildland and adjacent urban communities.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304 Minor Alterations to Land
☐ 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 proposed Laguna Canyon Unified Interface Fuel Break and Habitat Restoration Project – Cactus Restoration Project can be categorized as Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land per CEQA Guideline Section 15304. Section 15304 states:

Class 4 consists of 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.

Example includes, but is not limited to:

(b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire-resistant landscaping.

After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of categorical exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project fits within one or more of the exemption classes and no exceptions exist at the project site which would preclude the use of this exemption. CAL FIRE considered the possibility of (a) sensitive location, (b) cumulative impact, (c) significant impact due to unusual circumstances, (d) impacts to scenic highways, (e) activities within a hazardous waste site, and (f) significant adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. A notice of exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse.

Documentation of the environmental review completed by the LBFD is kept on file at 505 Forest Ave., Laguna Beach, CA 92651 After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA,

A Notice of Exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse..

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Matthew Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Date

2/18/20

FEB 18 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE



California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Environmental Review Report for an Exempt Project

Note: This report form is intended for use by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) staff to document a limited environmental impact analysis supporting the filing of a Notice of Exemption (NOE) document for a proposed CAL FIRE project. Although the project appears to fit within the descriptions for allowable Categorical Exemptions, this report presents CAL FIRE's review for possible "Exceptions" that would preclude finding the project to be categorically exempt as discussed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. This report will be filed with the CEQA administrative record for this project to document the environmental impact analysis conducted by the Department.

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Project Name: Laguna Canyon Unified Interface Fuel Break and Habitat Restoration Project – Cactus Restoration Site
Project Number: 5GG17192
Program Type: SRA
CAL FIRE Unit: ORC
County: Orange
Acres: 1.84 along a 20-foot x 4,000-foot strip
Legal Location: T06S, R08W, Section 30
Name of USGS 7.5' Quad Map(s): Laguna Beach and Tustin Quadrangles
☒ Project Vicinity Map Attached ☒ Project Location Map Attached ☒ Photos Attached

Other Public Agency Review/Permit Required:

Would the project result in:

- alterations to a watercourse (DFG - Lake and Stream Alteration Agreement)
- conversion of timberland (CAL FIRE - Conversion Permit or Exemption)
- demolition (Local Air District - Demolition Permit)
- soil disturbance over 1 acre (RWQCB - SWPPP)
- fill of possible wetlands (404 Permit - USACE)
- other:

YES

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NO

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Discuss any above-listed topic item checked Yes and consultation with agencies:

Project Description and Environmental Setting (Describe the project activities, project site and its surroundings, its location, and the environmental setting):

The Laguna Beach Fire Department (LBFD) proposes to install native cactus as a fire-resistant buffer along portions of Laguna Canyon Road (i.e., State Route 133) within the County of Orange (see Figure 1). The project site is outside of and adjacent to the eastern boundary of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. Vegetation on the project site is composed of coastal sage scrub, non-native grassland, and native grassland. The project would restore an approximately 20-foot wide by 4,000-foot long strip (1.84 acres) that is adjacent to Laguna Canyon Road. This strip would be modified from disturbed, predominately non-native grassland that becomes highly flammable during the dry season to a more fire-resistant, cactus-dominated scrub. The purpose of this cactus roadside restoration is to reduce the potential for roadside fires to spread into the wildland and adjacent urban communities.

The proposed roadside restoration would include the following activities:

- **Site Surveys:** A field survey was conducted in early fall of 2019 to refine and mark the layout of the restoration site. Survey activities included documenting existing native and non-native plant species, soil characteristics, relation to existing patches of coastal sage and cactus scrub, and accessibility for planting. Areas were checked for the latest information on sensitive species and locations in order to avoid impacting these species during implementation.
- **Site Preparation:** Upon the approval of the project, the restoration site would be cleared of non-native plants in the fall/early winter of 2019/20. No activities would occur until after the end of the breeding season of native birds in adjacent cactus and sage scrub habitat. Weed whipping and flail mowing would be used to cut the weeds on a 30-foot strip; the additional 10 feet would serve as a buffer on either side of the restoration strip to facilitate access. Cut plant materials and thatch would be removed from the site.

- **Planting and Sources:** Approximately 3,000 cactus pads (i.e., coast prickly pear, *Opuntia littoralis*) would be planted in the restoration site. Planting of cactus pads would be focused in areas dominated by annual grasses and non-native plant species patches within the strip. Areas with established coastal sage scrub would be avoided. Pads would be planted three feet apart, with patch dimensions to vary with site characteristics, avoiding areas dominated by native species (see Figure 2). Using augers and shovels, holes would be dug by hand to a depth of approximately six inches and the pads planted just deep enough to bury approximately one inch of the pad to avoid rotting. At the time of planting, pads would be irrigated using hose lays and/or back pack spraying supplied by a water tender.
- **Site Maintenance:** Initial maintenance consisting of weeding and watering would be necessary to establish the cactus sufficiently. The amount of maintenance each year would be adjusted depending on weather conditions and how well the site develops. At least two weeding and watering efforts per growing season would be needed in and around cactus patches for the duration of the grant. Weed control would mainly employ hand and mechanical methods. Cactus pads would be watered using hose lays and/or back pack spraying supplied by a water tender.
- **Site Monitoring:** Monitoring to measure success of the restoration effort would be performed in the summer following planting (2020), and again in 2021. Cactus pads would be examined for condition and growth, and the results would be documented in a summary report.

Workforce and Schedule. Planting and watering of pads would be conducted by a crew of nine to 12 workers. Work is estimated to occur over an approximately 20-day period during late January through March 2020, with expected delays due to weather and access. As noted above, the initial activities associated with the cactus roadside restoration (i.e., site surveying and site preparation) are expected to begin in the fall/early winter of 2019, while site monitoring would occur in the summer of 2020 and again in 2021.

Environmental Impact Analysis

Aesthetics

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The proposed Project would have no effect on an eligible or designated State Scenic Highway. The nearest designated highway is State Route 91, located 15 miles north of the proposed restoration activities, while the nearest eligible highway is State Route 1, located approximately five miles south of the proposed restoration activities.

Agriculture and Forest Resources

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ Yes ☒ No Would any trees be felled? If yes, discuss protection of nesting birds and compliance with FPRs.
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project convert any prime or unique farmland?
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project result in the conversion of forest land/timberland to non-forest use?

☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

No trees would be removed or damaged. According to the California Department of Conservation, the proposed Project area is located within designated "Other Land" (i.e. vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded by urban development). Therefore, the Project would not convert any prime or unique Farmland. The Project would have no impacts to forest land or timberland.

Air Quality

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ Yes ☐ No The local Air Quality Management District guidelines for dust abatement and other air quality concerns were reviewed for this project.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The proposed activities would utilize both manual and motorized hand-held equipment to clear non-native vegetation. Given the limited duration and scope of the Project, there would be no impact associated with air quality.

Biological Resources

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ Yes ☐ No Will the project potentially effect biological resources?
☒ Yes ☐ No Was a current CNDDDB review completed? Results discussed below:
☒ Yes ☐ No Was a biological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

A thorough review of available literature to identify special status plants and animals known from the vicinity of the Project site included searches of the California Natural Diversity Database (May 2019) for the following USGS 7½ minute topographic quadrangles: El Toro, Laguna Beach, San Juan Capistrano, and Tustin. The CNDDDB results are included in the attached Biological Resources Summary Report at the end of this document. The literature review also included the California Native Plant Society On-line Electronic Inventory (May 2019), Consortium of California Herbaria data (May 2019), iNaturalist (May 2019), and ebird (May 2019). Tables 1 and 2 list all special-status species identified during the literature review that have a potential to be present and summarizes their habitat, distribution, conservation status, and probability of occurrence on the site.

On April 30, 2019, Justin M. Wood, Senior Biologist with Aspen Environmental Group, surveyed the Project site for special-status plants and animals. Mr. Wood also conducted a habitat assessment for other special-status species. Three special-status plant species were present during site surveys: Catalina mariposa lily, paniculate tarplant, and Douglas' silverpuffs. These plant species have a California Rare Plant Rank of 4.2, which is not an indicator of rarity; any potential impacts to these species would not be considered significant under CEQA. No special-status plants or wildlife was found at the restoration site, although federally listed coastal California gnatcatcher and several other special-status animals have at least a moderate potential to be present. Impacts to wildlife habitat would not be significant given the abundance of coastal sage scrub in the surrounding open space. To ensure compliance with State and federal statutes protecting special-status species, LBFD shall implement Environmental Commitment EC-1 as part of the proposed restoration design.

EC-1: Pre-construction biological survey. No more than 24 hours prior to the start of vegetation removal, a biologist will survey the Project site for nesting birds and special-status species, including coastal California gnatcatcher. If any species are present, a buffer zone shall be flagged around the nesting site(s) in compliance with the biologist's recommendations before work commences. Contractor personnel shall be directed to check all vegetation for nests before vegetation clearance, and to cease work in the area immediately if one is found until a qualified biologist can assess it. If work ceases for more than two days, another nesting bird survey shall be required before work can recommence. No direct impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher will allowed without consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to the start of the Project.

With the incorporation of EC-1 into the Project design, potential impacts to biological resources would not be significant. Please refer to the attached Biological Resources Summary Report for a full analysis.

Table 1. Special-status Plants Known from the Vicinity of the Project Site with a Potential to be Present

Species Name	Habitat Requirements	Activity Season	Conservation Status	Potential to Occur
PLANTS				
<i>Brodiaea filifolia</i> Thread-leaved brodiaea	Clay soils; coastal scrub; valley and foothill grasslands; vernal pools; moist open grassy areas on gentle slopes, surrounded by chaparral, woodlands, Approx. 80-2900 ft. elev.	Mar-Jun	Fed: THR CA: END, S2 CRPR: 1B.1	Low. Suitable habitat is present immediately west of the Project site, not observed during focused survey.
<i>Calochortus catalinae</i> Catalina mariposa lily	Perennial herb; clay soils in grasslands, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and woodlands; Approx. 50-2300 ft. elev.	Mar-Jun	Fed: none CA: S3S4 CRPR: 4.2	Present. Approximately 13 plants observed immediately adjacent to the Project site.
<i>Calochortus weedii</i> var. <i>intermedius</i> Intermediate mariposa-lily	Perennial herb; rocky, calcareous soils, chaparral, coastal scrub, and valley and foothill grasslands with dry, rocky open slopes and rock outcrops. Approx. 300-2800 ft. elev.	May-Jul	Fed: none CA: S2 CRPR: 1B.2	Low. Minimally suitable habitat present west of the Project site, not observed during focused survey.

<i>Centromadia parryi</i> ssp. <i>australis</i> Southern tarplant	Annual herb; margins of marshes and swamps, native grasslands, and vernal pools; Approx. 0-1500 ft. elev.	May-Nov	Fed: none CA: S2 CRPR: 1B.1	Low. Marginally suitable habitat present, known from just east of the Project site, not observed during focused survey.
<i>Deinandra paniculata</i> Paniculate tarplant	Annual herb; mesic or sand sites in coastal scrub, vernal pools, and native grasslands, Approx. 80-3000 ft. elev.	Apr-Nov	Fed: none CA: S4 CRPR: 4.2	Present. Numerous plants observed throughout much of the central portion of the Project site.
<i>Horkelia cuneata</i> var. <i>puberula</i> Mesa horkelia	Perennial herb; sandy or gravelly soils in oak woodlands and coastal scrub; Approx. 200-2700 ft. elev.	Feb-Jul	Fed: none CA: S1 CRPR: 1B.1	Minimal. Minimally suitable habitat present to the west of the Project site, not observed during focused survey.
<i>Microseris douglasii</i> ssp. <i>platycarpa</i> Douglas' silverpuffs	Annual herb; clay soils in grasslands, coastal sage scrub, woodlands, and vernal pools; Approx. 50-2000 ft. elev.	Mar-Jun	Fed: none CA: S4 CRPR: 4.2	Present. Numerous plants observed immediately west of the Project site.
<i>Pentachaeta aurea</i> ssp. <i>allenii</i> Allen's pentachaeta	Annual herb; openings in coastal sage scrub and native grasslands; Approx. 250-1700 ft. elev.	Mar-Jun	Fed: none CA: S1 CRPR: 1B.1	Moderate. Suitable habitat is present, known from within about 1 mile, not observed during focused survey.
<i>Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum</i> White rabbit-tobacco	Perennial herb; sandy and gravelly soils in chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, and riparian woodland; Approx. 0-6900 ft. elev.	Jul-Dec	Fed: none CA: S2 CRPR: 2B.2	Minimal. Minimally suitable habitat is present to the west of the Project site, not observed during focused survey.

Conservation Status

Federal designations (Fed): (federal ESA, USFWS).

END: Federally listed, endangered.

THR: Federally listed, threatened.

Delisted: Previously Federally listed and formally delisted.

State designations (CA): (CESA, CDFW, Fish and Game Commission)

END: State listed, endangered.

THR: State listed, threatened.

RARE: State designated rare, may not be taken without permit from CDFW.

SC: Species of Special Concern

WL: Watch List

California Rare Plant Rank designations. Note: According to the California Native Plant Society (<http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/ranking.php>), plants ranked as CRPR 1A, 1B, and 2 meet definitions as threatened or endangered and are eligible for state listing. That interpretation of the state Endangered Species Act is not in general use.

1A: Plants presumed extinct in California.

1B: Plants rare and endangered in California and throughout their range.

2A: Plants presumed extinct in California but more common elsewhere in their range.

2B: Plants rare, threatened or endangered in California but more common elsewhere in their range.

3: Plants about which we need more information; a review list.

4: Plants of limited distribution; a watch list.

California Rare Plant Rank Threat designation extensions:

.1 Seriously endangered in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened / high degree and immediacy of threat)

.2 Fairly endangered in California (20-80% occurrences threatened)

.3 Not very endangered in California (<20% of occurrences threatened or no current threats known)

Definitions of occurrence probability: Estimated occurrence probabilities are based on literature sources cited earlier, field surveys, and habitat analyses reported here.

Present: Observed on the site by qualified biologists.

High: Habitat is a type often utilized by the species and the site is within the known range of the species.

Moderate: Site is within the known range of the species and habitat on the site is a type occasionally used.

Low: Site is within the species' known range but habitat is rarely used, or the species was not found during focused surveys covering less than 100% of potential habitat or completed in marginal seasons.

Minimal: No suitable habitat on the site; or well outside the species' known elevational or geographic ranges; or a focused study covering 100% of all suitable habitat, completed during the appropriate season and during a year of appropriate rainfall, did not detect the species.

Table 2. Special-status Animals Known from the Vicinity of the Project Site with a Potential to be Present

Species Name	Habitat Requirements	Activity Season	Conservation Status	Potential to Occur
INVERTEBRATES				
<i>Bombus crotchii</i> Crotch bumble bee	Coastal Calif. in sage scrub and chaparral. Food plant genera include <i>Antirrhinum</i> , <i>Phacelia</i> , <i>Clarkia</i> , <i>Dendromecon</i> , <i>Eschscholzia</i> , and <i>Eriogonum</i> .	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: S1S2	Low. Suitable habitat and food plants present, one historic record from Laguna Beach. No expected impacts from project activities.
<i>Danaus plexippus</i> pop. 1 Monarch - California overwintering population	Winter roost sites from Baja Calif. north to Mendocino Co. Roosts in protected tree groves including Eucalyptus, Monterey pine, and cypresses.	Winter	Fed: none CA: S2S3	Minimal. Several Eucalyptus trees are present but would not support overwintering monarchs. No expected impacts from project activities.
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS				
<i>Anniella stebbinsi</i> Southern California legless lizard	Costal Calif. from the Transverse Range south to Baja Calif. Moist loose soils under vegetation in a variety of habitats.	Year-round	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	Low. Minimally suitable sandy habitat in Project site, one historic record from Laguna Beach. No expected impacts from project activities.
<i>Aspidoscelis hyperythra</i> Orange-throated whiptail	So. Calif. in low-elevation coastal scrub, chaparral, and valley-foothill hardwood habitats. Prefers sandy soils.	Spring-summer	Fed: none CA: S3	High. Suitable habitat is present in Project site, known from the vicinity of the Project site.
<i>Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri</i> Coastal whiptail	Found primarily in hot and dry open areas with sparse foliage - chaparral, woodland, and riparian areas.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	High. Suitable habitat is present in Project site, known from the vicinity of the Project site. No expected impacts from project activities.
<i>Crotalus ruber</i> Red-diamond rattlesnake	Chaparral, woodlands, and grasslands, from San Diego and Orange Cos. Found in rocky areas with dense vegetation.	Spring-summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	High. Suitable habitat is present in Project site, known from the vicinity of the Project site. No expected impacts from project activities.
<i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i> Coast horned lizard	Found in open areas of sandy soil and low vegetation in valleys, foothills and semiarid mountains, grasslands, coniferous forests, woodlands, and chaparral, with open areas and patches of loose soil.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3S4	Low. Marginally suitable habitat present, known from the vicinity of the Project site. No expected impacts from project activities.
<i>Salvadora hexalepis virgulata</i> Coast patch-nosed snake	Coastal So. Calif. in coastal sage scrub. Mainly found in brushy or shrubby vegetation.	Spring-summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S2S3	Minimal. Marginally suitable habitat present, no records within 5 miles of the Project site.
BIRDS				

<i>Accipiter cooperii</i> Cooper's hawk	Hunts in broken woodland and habitat edges. Nests in dense stands of live oak, riparian deciduous or other forest habitats near water used most frequently.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: WL, S4	High (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat is present throughout the area. Minimal (nesting). No nesting habitat present.
<i>Agelaius tricolor</i> Tricolored blackbird	Common in wetlands and grasslands dominated by cattails and tall grasses. Once common in So Calif., now much less common.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: THR, SC, S1S2	Moderate (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat is present throughout. Low (nesting). Minimally suitable grass nesting habitat is present, no recent records in vicinity. Not found within project site.
<i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i> Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow	Frequents relatively steep, often rocky hillsides with grass and forb patches; also, grassy slopes without shrubs, if rock outcrops are present.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: WL, S3	Low (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat is present throughout. Minimal (nesting). Minimally suitable nesting habitat present.
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i> Grasshopper sparrow	Dense grasslands on rolling hills, lowland plains, in valleys and on hillsides on lower mountain slopes.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	Low (foraging and nesting). Marginally suitable nesting and foraging habitat is present in the Project site. Not found within project site.
<i>Athene cunicularia</i> Burrowing owl	Open, dry annual or perennial grasslands, deserts, and scrublands characterized by low-growing vegetation	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	Minimal (foraging and nesting). Minimally suitable nesting and foraging habitat is present. Not found within project site.
<i>Buteo regalis</i> Ferruginous hawk	Open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, low foothills and fringes of pinyon and juniper habitats. Nests in mid-western U.S. Migrates through So. Calif.	Spring and Fall	Fed: none CA: WL, S3S4	Low (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat is present, and birds may sporadically migrate through the region. Absent (nesting). Does not nest in region.
<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis</i> Coastal cactus wren	The key habitat element is thickets of chollas (<i>Opuntia prolifera</i>) or prickly-pear cacti (<i>O. littoralis</i> , <i>O. oricola</i>) tall enough to support and protect the birds' nests. Suitable conditions are found on south-facing slopes, at bases of hillsides, or in dry washes	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	Low (foraging). Marginally suitable foraging habitat present throughout. Minimal (nesting). Suitable nesting habitat is not present.
<i>Elanus leucurus</i> White-tailed kite	Rolling foothills and valley margins with scattered oaks & river bottomlands or marshes next to deciduous woodland.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: FP, S3S4	High (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat throughout. Minimal (nesting). No suitable nesting habitat.
<i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i> California horned lark	Coastal Calif. from Sonoma Co. south to San Diego Co. Also, main part of San Joaquin Valley and east to foothills.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: WL, S4	Low (foraging and nesting). Marginally suitable habitat present, known from the vicinity. Not found within project site.

<i>Polioptila californica californica</i> Coastal California gnatcatcher	Coastal sage scrub obligates; will utilize adjacent habitats, including grasslands, chaparral, and riparian habitats for foraging and dispersal.	Year-round	Fed: THR CA: SC, S2	Moderate (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat is present in coastal sage scrub near the project. Low (nesting). coastal sage scrub provides suitable but poor-quality habitat. Species not found within project site.
MAMMALS				
<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i> Western mastiff bat	Lowlands; Cent. And S Calif., S Ariz., NM, SW Tex., N Mexico; roost in deep rock crevices, forage over wide area	Year-round	Fed: none CA: SC, S3S4	Moderate (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat present. Minimal (roosting). No suitable foraging habitat present.
<i>Myotis yumanensis</i> Yuma myotis	Common and widespread, optimal habitat is open forests and woodlands but can be found over water sources such as ponds, streams, and stock tanks. Roosts buildings, mines, caves, or crevices.	Year-round	Fed: none CA: S4	Moderate (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat present. Minimal (roosting). No suitable foraging habitat present.
<i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i> San Diego desert woodrat	Coastal scrub from San Diego Co. to San Luis Obispo Co. in dense canopies with rock outcrops, rocky cliffs, and slopes.	Year-round	Fed: none CA: SC, S3S4	Low. Minimally suitable habitat present, better habitat to the west. No middens observed during survey.
<i>Nyctinomops macrotis</i> Big free-tailed bat	Low-lying arid habitats in So. Calif. Roosts on cliffs and in rock outcrops. Forages in a variety of habitats and feeds on large moths.	Spring-Summer	Fed: none CA: SC, S3	Low (foraging). Suitable foraging habitat present, one record from Orange Co. Minimal (roosting). No suitable foraging habitat present.

Cultural Resources

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- ☒ Yes ☐ No Was a current archaeological records check completed? Results discussed below:
- ☒ Yes ☐ No Was a CAL FIRE Staff or Contract Archaeologist consulted? Results discussed below:
- ☒ Yes ☐ No Was an archaeological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Will the project effect any historic buildings or archaeological site?
- ☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

An archaeological survey was conducted on April 29, 2019 by Michael E. Macko, Archaeologist for Aspen Environmental Group. The Project area was surveyed by foot. Mr. Macko also reviewed available literature by conducting a records search at the California Historical Resources Inventory System (CHRIS) facility at the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) at Cal State Fullerton. The records search was conducted for a 0.25-mile radius around the Cactus Restoration Project site. The archaeological survey and records search determined that no significant resources occur within the proposed cactus restoration site. Due to the State Route 133 realignment and widening project (2003-2006), no intact undisturbed soils occur within the remainder of the Cactus Restoration Project site. No Project-related impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. Please refer to the attached Cultural Resources Summary Report for a full analysis. Confidential documentation will be kept on file at the Unit level. CAL FIRE State Senior Archeologist Michael McGuirt has reviewed and determined that Cultural Resources have been adequately avoided and addressed as proposed for the project.

Geology and Soils

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The attached Paleontological Resources Report summarizes the site-specific paleontological resources analysis. The paleontological records search determined that there were no records of paleontological localities in the immediate Project area, and no impacts to paleontological resources are anticipated.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project generate significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?
☐ Yes ☒ No Would these GHG emissions result in a significant impact on the environment? Discuss below:
☐ Yes ☒ No Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? Discuss below:

Emissions of GHGs will occur during equipment operation through the burning of gas & diesel fuel in internal combustion engines. The total quantity of GHGs released during equipment operation is estimated at 3.8 metric tons CO₂. A detailed GHG calculation is presented at the end of this report. The proposed Project's total GHG emissions would be substantially below the South Coast Air Quality Management District's significance threshold of 3,000 metric tons CO₂e. Therefore, the proposed Project would not generate significant GHG emissions that would impact the environment.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

According to the Department of Toxic Substances Control, there are three hazardous waste facilities located within Orange County. These facilities are all at least 9 miles away from the proposed restoration site. As there are no hazardous waste facilities at or immediately adjacent to the restoration site, there would be no impact associated with the Project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ Yes ☒ No Will the project potentially affect any watercourse or body of water?
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The nearest body of water is Bubbles Lake, located approximately 500 feet southeast of the Project. The lake is separated from the Project site by State Route 133. All restoration activities would be contained within the Project site and along the northwest shoulder of State Route 133. The Project would not involve any grading or other activities that could affect the hydrology of the surrounding area. The Project would have no impact to a body of water or watercourse.

Land Use and Planning

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The Project is compatible with the site and the surrounding land uses.

Mineral Resources

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The proposed Project would not have any effect on current mineral resources.

Noise

- ☐ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

This project will utilize mechanical equipment such as weed whippers and a flail mower. Equipment operations would comply with the County of Orange noise regulations, which limits construction noise to the hours of 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday, with no work occurring on federal holidays. As there are no homes in the area surrounding the Project, Project activities would not affect residences. Given the short-term nature of the Project and its compliance with applicable noise standards, there would be no substantial noise-related impact.

Population and Housing

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The proposed Project would have no effect on population or housing.

Public Services

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The Project does not have the potential to affect public services.

Recreation

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Project activities would have no effect on recreational use or access to the adjacent Laguna Coast Wilderness Park.

Transportation/Traffic

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The Project does not have the potential to affect transportation or traffic.

Utilities and Service Systems

- ☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

This proposed Project would not impact utilities or service systems.

Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:

None.

Mandatory Findings of Significance:

(a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

YES ☐ NO ☒

(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probably future projects)

☐ YES ☒ NO

(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human

☐ YES ☒ NO

beings, either directly or indirectly?

Justification for Use of a Categorical Exemption (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):

The proposed Laguna Canyon Unified Interface Fuel Break and Habitat Restoration Project – Cactus Restoration Site can be categorized as Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land per CEQA Guideline Section 15304. Section 15304 states:

Class 4 consists of 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.

Example includes, but is not limited to:

(b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire-resistant landscaping.

Proposed project activities would include replacement of the existing disturbed roadside habitat with water-efficient and fire-resistant native landscaping to reduce wildfire hazards and increase safety. Therefore, a Notice of Exemption would satisfy CEQA requirements for the proposed Project and is not negated by any "exception" to the categorical exemptions, as described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. The following evaluates how the proposed activities relate to each exception from CEQA Section 15300.2:

(a) Location (applies to Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11). The restoration project can be categorized as a Class 4 categorical exemption, but the project site is not in a particularly sensitive environment and would not impact a designated environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed activities.

(b) Cumulative Impact. As indicated above, there would be no cumulatively considerable impacts and therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed activities.

(c) Significant Effect. The site for the proposed cactus restoration is located in an area that currently consists of disturbed, predominately non-native grassland. The restoration activities would not significantly impact the environment under unusual circumstances. Therefore, the proposed restoration activities would not be negated by exception (c).

(d) Scenic Highways. The proposed restoration activities would not be located within the viewshed of an eligible or designated State Scenic Highway. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed restoration activities.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. The proposed restoration site would not be located on a site that is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; therefore, the Project would not be negated by exception (e).

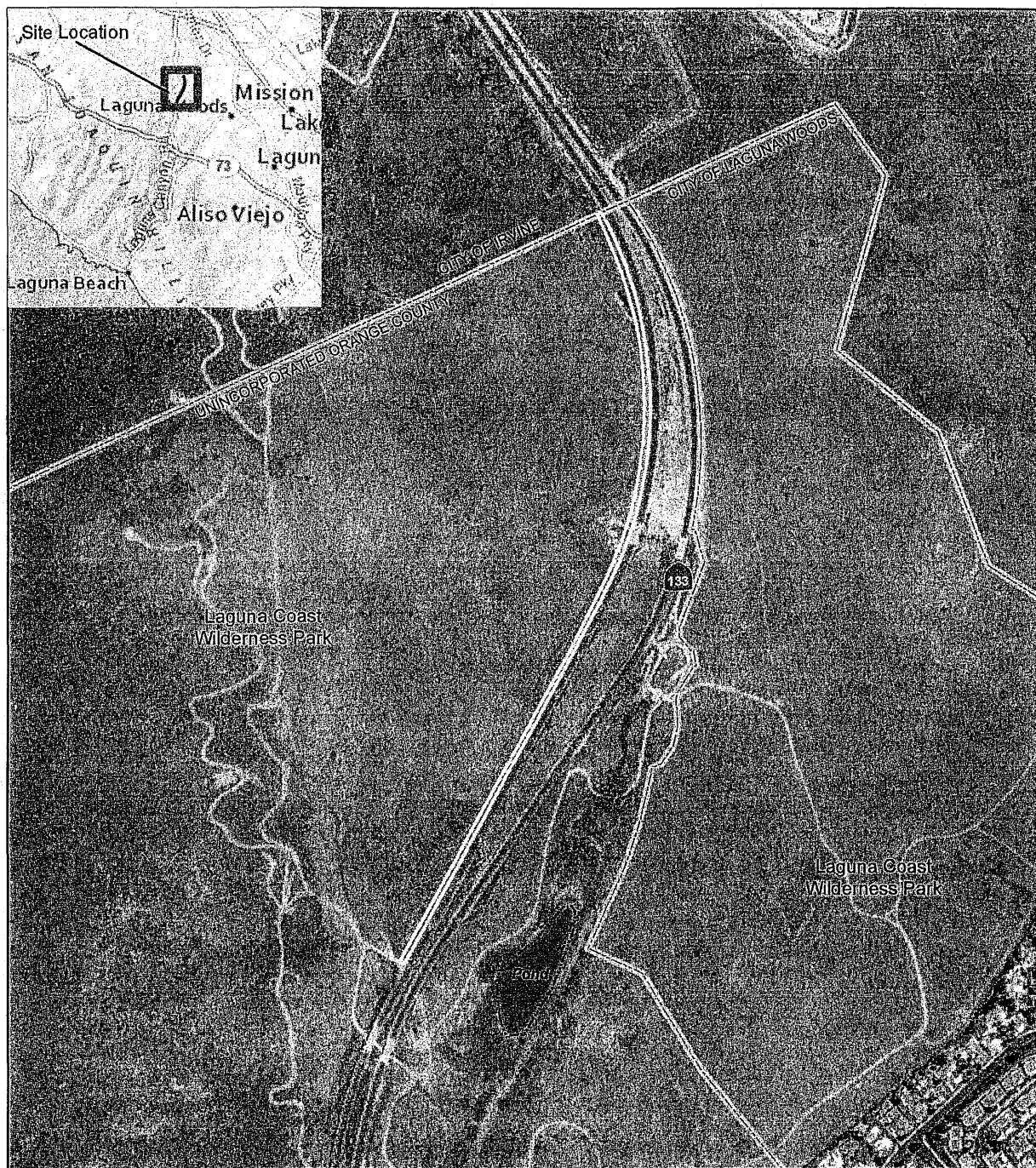
(f) Historical Resources. The proposed restoration site would not be located in an area designated as a California Historic Resource. No sensitive cultural resources were identified at the site or in the surrounding area. Therefore, the Project would not be negated by exception (f).

The LBFD's responsibility is to provide fire prevention and safety measures for the City of Laguna Beach. Because the purpose of the proposed activities is to restore the roadside habitat along Laguna Canyon Road with fire-resistant landscaping, the categorical exemption described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 applies. None of the exceptions in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 would negate the Class 4 exemption. The proposed cactus roadside restoration will not have a significant effect on the environment and is considered exempt from the requirement for the preparation of environmental documents.

Conclusion:

☒ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project fits within one or more of the exemption classes and no exceptions exist at the project site which would preclude the use of this exemption. The Department considered the possibility of (a) sensitive location, (b) cumulative impact, (c) significant impact due to unusual circumstances, (d) impacts to scenic highways, (e) activities within a hazardous waste site, and (f) significant adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. A Notice of Exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse.

☐ After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project does not fit within the description for the various exemption classes or has found that exceptions exist at the project site which precludes the use of a Categorical Exemption for this project. Additional environmental review will be conducted and the appropriate CEQA document used may be a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration.



250 0 250 Feet

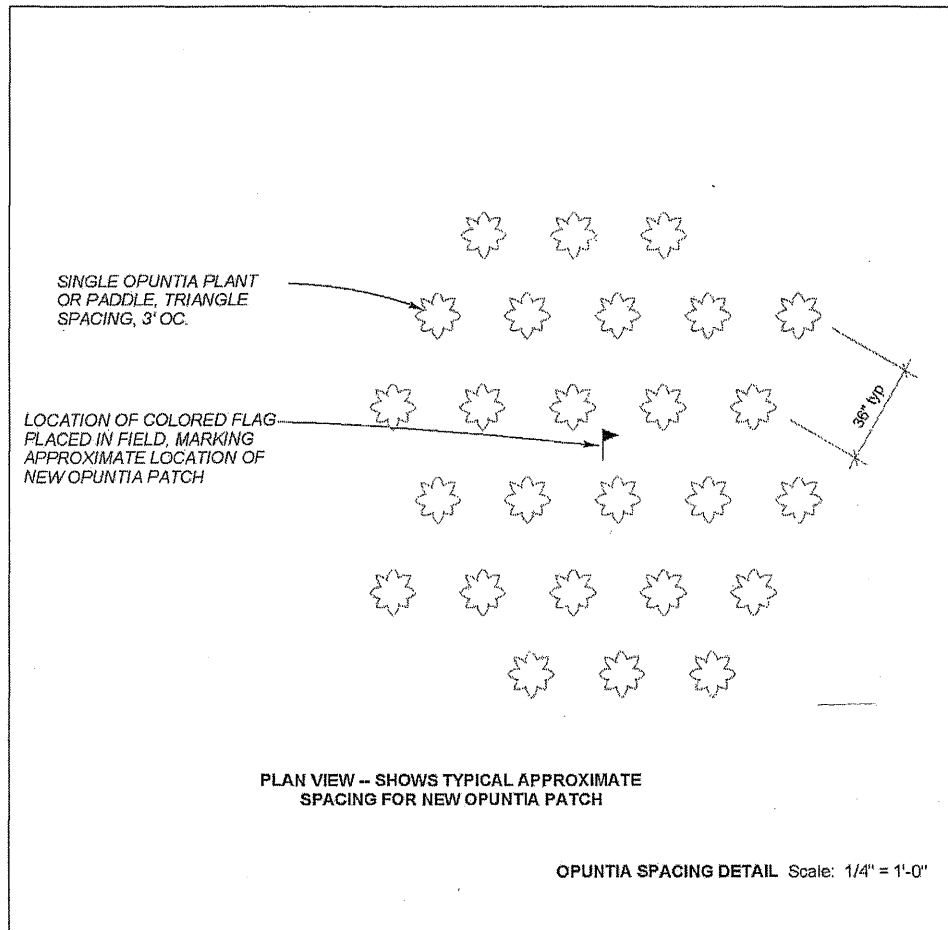


Restoration Area
Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

Figure 1.

**Cactus Roadside
Restoration Activities**

Figure 2. Cactus Pad Planting Layout





1:24,000

0

0.5 Miles



Restoration Area

Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

Figure 3.

Cactus Roadside
Restoration Activities
Overview

Cactus Restoration Site Photos



Photo 1: South-facing view of non-native grasslands.



Photo 2: North-facing view of coastal sage scrub.



Photo 3: South-facing view of coastal sage scrub.



Photo 4: Close-up view of Catalina mariposa lily.

Cactus Restoration Site

Estimated Greenhouse Gas Emission Calculations

Project Equipment

1. Staff Vehicle (1)

20 days x 25 miles/day = 500 miles; 500 miles ÷ 15 miles/gal = 33 gal gas

2. Crew bus (1)

25 miles/day ÷ 10 miles/gal = 2.5 gal/day; 20 days x 2.5 gal/day = 50 gal diesel

3. Pickup Truck (1)

20 days x 25 miles/day = 500 miles; 500 miles ÷ 15 miles/gal = 33 gal gas

4. Truck to transport portable toilets (2 round trips)

2 days x 25 miles/day = 50 miles; 50 miles ÷ 10 miles/gal = 5 gal diesel

5. Water tender (1)

25 miles/day ÷ 10 miles/gal = 2.5 gal/day; 3 days x 2.5 gal/day = 7.5 gal diesel

6. Weed whipper (3)

3 weed whippers x 2 gal/day = 6 gal/day; 10 days x 6 gal/day = 60 gal gas

7. Flail mower (1)

10 gal/day x 4 days = 40 gal gas

Total Fuel Consumption

Total gasoline: 33 + 33 + 60 + 40 = 166 gallons of gasoline

Total diesel: 50 + 5 + 7.5 = 62.5 gallons of diesel

Total CO2 Emissions

Gasoline GHG: 166 gal x 8.78 kg CO₂/gal = 1,457 kg CO₂ = 1.46 metric tons of CO₂

Diesel GHG: 62.5 gal x 10.21 kg CO₂/gal = 638.13 kg CO₂ = 0.64 metric tons of CO₂

FOFEM Grassland removal (see attached report): 1.7 metric tons of CO₂

Total estimated GHG emissions/project: 1.46 + 0.64 + 1.7 = 3.8 metric tons of CO₂

Assumptions

- Number of estimated crew days for project is 20 days
- Assumptions of equipment use, gallons per day, and miles per day were provided by the Laguna Beach Fire Department on October 7, 2019. Equipment use assumptions do not include miles/day for individual workers to commute to the crew bus.
- Conversion factors for grams of CO₂ emissions per gallon of gasoline consumed and per gallon of diesel consumed were obtained from The Climate Registry 2019 Default Emission Factors.

Slipsheet for Summary Resource Report Attachment

1. Biological Resources Summary Report
2. Cultural Resources Summary Report
3. Paleontological Resources Summary Report