

Notice of Exemption

21-2024-028

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
County Clerk County of: Marin
Marin Civic Center
3501 Civic Center Dr., Suite 234,
San Rafael, CA 94903

From (Public Agency):
Southern Marin Fire District
28 Liberty Ship Way
Sausalito, CA 94965

FILED

FEB 02 2024

SHELLY SCOTT
MARIN COUNTY CLERK
BY: L. Jawter, Deputy

Project Title: Shoreline Highway Evacuation Clearing Project

Project Applicant: Southern Marin Fire District

Project Location – Specific: Vegetation thinning along Shoreline Highway within the Tamalpais-Homestead Valley community.

Project Location – City:
Tamalpais-Homestead Valley

Project Location – County:
Marin County

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve vegetation clearance along Shoreline Highway to provide better access for first responders and emergency vehicles and safer evacuation for residents. The proposed project would also improve access by reducing heat, flame, ember, and smoke impingement on the roadway for evacuating residents in the event of an approaching wildfire.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Southern Marin Fire District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Southern Marin Fire District

Exempt Status (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Common Sense Exemption (Sec. 15061(b)(3));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 15304(i). Minor alterations to land for fuel management activities. 15301. Existing Facilities for vegetation removal along roadways.
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is categorically exempt under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1 for Existing Facilities and Section 15304, Class 4 for Minor Alterations to Land. A Class 1 exempt project consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. A Class 4 exempt project consists of minor public or private

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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. The proposed project would involve vegetation thinning and removal within 30 feet of the road edges along 2.4 miles of Shoreline Highway (also known as State Route 1) in the Tamalpais-Homestead Valley community shown in Figure 1. The SMFD filed a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Marin County Clerk's Office on November 1, 2023. However, the NOE described vegetation management activities within 100 feet of structures within Homestead and Tamalpais Valley residential communities and not along Shoreline Highway. This NOE clarifies that the proposed project would involve treatment focused on thinning up to 15 feet vertically above the road and up to 30 feet laterally from road edges. The scope of the proposed project is consistent with a minor alteration to the condition of the vegetation along the routes and maintenance of the existing roadways.

Additionally, no healthy, mature, scenic trees would be removed; no work would take place within sensitive habitat, including wetlands or waterways; and no ground disturbance, such as excavation, would take place. There are no facts or circumstances specific to this project that would support an exception to the categorical exemption. No exceptions listed under Section 15300.2 apply.

Lead Agency Contact Person:

Madison Mead

Area Code/Telephone/Extension:

415-388-8184

If filed by applicant:

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

Signature: 

Date: 1-31-24

Title: Fire Inspector

Signed by Lead Agency

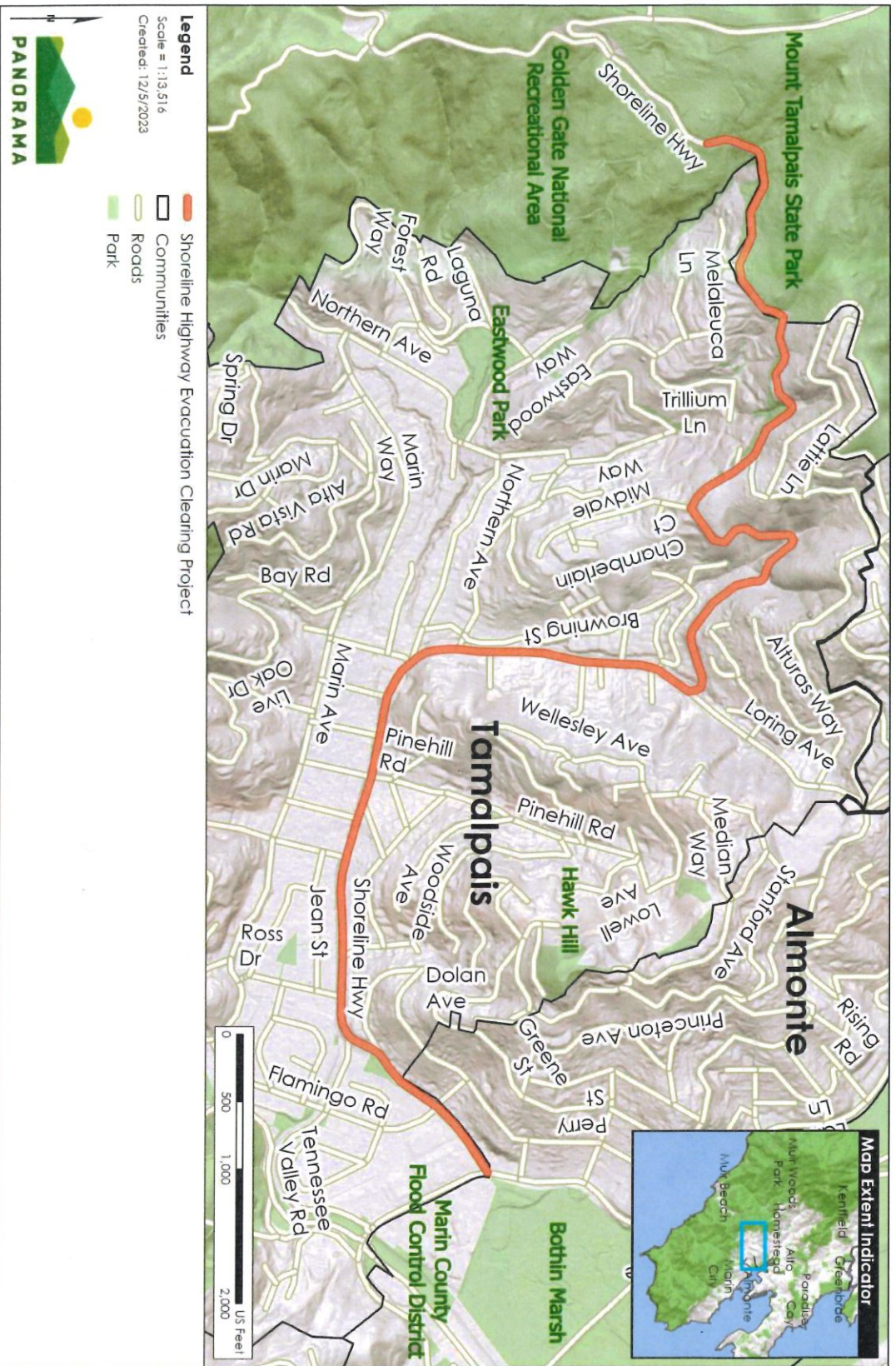
Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Figure 1 Shoreline Evacuation Route Clearing Project



Categorical Exemption Determination Memorandum

December 2023

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Date: December 2023

Project: Shoreline Evacuation Route Clearing Project

Categorical Exemption Summary

The Southern Marin Fire District (SMFD), as the lead agency under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has determined that the Shoreline Evacuation Route Clearing Project (proposed project) is categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1 for Existing Facilities and Section 15304, Class 4 for Minor Alterations to Land. A Class 1 exempt project consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. A Class 4 exempt project 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.

The proposed project would involve vegetation thinning and removal within 30 feet of the road edges along 2.4 miles of Shoreline Highway (also known as State Route 1) in the Tamalpais-Homestead Valley community shown in Figure 1. The SMFD filed a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Marin County Clerk's Office on November 1, 2023. However, the NOE described vegetation management activities within 100 feet of structures within Homestead and Tamalpais Valley residential communities and not along Shoreline Highway. This support memorandum clarifies that the proposed project would involve treatment focused on thinning up to 15 feet vertically above the road and up to 30 feet laterally from road edges. The scope of the proposed project is consistent with a minor alteration to the condition of the vegetation along the routes and maintenance of the existing roadways.

The following analysis demonstrates the proposed project would not result in adverse environmental effects. The proposed project would be conducted in compliance with applicable federal, State, and local regulations and under contractual provisions prohibiting work in violation of applicable regulations and plans.

Information regarding the purpose and need for the proposed project, a description of proposed activities, a discussion of why the potential exceptions to a categorical exemption do not apply here, and an assessment of the potential for environmental effects are provided below.

Background

The proposed project is funded by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Governor's Office of Emergency Services Vegetation Management for Healthy Forests and Safe Community Evacuation Grant, which funds plans and projects that reduce the effects of future natural disasters.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve vegetation clearance along Shoreline Highway to provide better access for first responders and emergency vehicles and safer evacuation for residents. The proposed project would also improve access by reducing heat, flame, ember, and smoke impingement on the roadway for evacuating residents in the event of an approaching wildfire.

Project Description

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Treatment Area

The proposed activities would be completed along Shoreline Highway in southern Marin County in the community of Tamalpais-Homestead Valley as shown in Figure 1. A total of 2.4 miles of Shoreline Highway may be treated under this proposed project.

To improve evacuation routes, invasive, non-native, and fire-hazardous vegetation and accumulated dead biomass would be reduced typically within 10 feet from road edges but could extend to up to 30 feet from road edges in some areas. The types of topographical features (e.g., steep slopes) or vegetation fuels (e.g., dense eucalyptus or broom) present may necessitate greater treatment distances beyond 10 feet, up to 30 feet from roadways. Areas where fuel treatments may need to extend beyond 10 feet would be determined by a forester or otherwise qualified professional who understands forest ecology and fuel management or a fire professional, prior to treatments. Work would focus on thinning and removing vegetation (e.g., overhanging limbs, understory brush) up to 15 feet vertically above the road surface. Tree branches would be pruned typically 8 to 10 feet above the ground (not to exceed 1/3 of the tree's height). Generally, invasive, non-native species, hazardous trees, and fire-hazardous vegetation would be targeted. Small trees under 8 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) and shrubs may be thinned from the understory. Grass would be mowed to 4 inches or less in height. Hazardous trees (e.g., dead or dying trees) identified by an arborist or qualified fire professional would also be removed along this evacuation route. No healthy, mature, scenic trees would be removed under this proposed project. Fuel reduction treatments would avoid wetted streams and wetlands within the proposed project area.

Treatment Method

Proposed project treatments would include handheld manual and mechanical fuel reduction including chainsaws, string trimmers, pole saws, and other similar handheld tools. A tractor with a mower or masticator head may operate from the road prism. Crews may conduct vegetation trimming from bucket trucks. A trailer-mounted chipper or chipper truck would be operated from the roadways.

Biomass Processing

Proposed project vegetative debris would be disposed of through chipping and hauling, or chipping and broadcasting depending on the location and condition of the work area. Approximately 20 to 25 cubic yards of material could be disposed of each workday. The vegetative material would be fed through the chipper and broadcast at the treatment area or hauled away for disposal. Disposed debris would be hauled to Marin Resource Recovery Center, West Marin Compost, or other appropriate facility.

Workers

A single contractor crew would consist of 4 to 8 workers. Two to three crews may operate along Shoreline Highway simultaneously on a single day.

Site Access

Proposed project work would be accessed from existing paved roads. Access to the work area would occur along project roadways. Vehicles and equipment would be staged at the contractor's yard daily.

Schedule and Duration

Treatments would be conducted during weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The roadside vegetation thinning treatment is anticipated to start in early 2024. Following proposed project

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implementation, the condition of the evacuation route would be monitored and reassessed by fire department staff every year to evaluate when maintenance is needed. Subsequent treatments are anticipated to be the same as the proposed activities but are subject to change depending on the condition of the evacuation route and response to initial treatment.

Figure 1 Project Location

