



**Fire Department
COUNTY OF TULARE
AGENDA ITEM**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

KUYLER CROCKER
District One
PETE VANDER POEL
District Two
AMY SHUKLIAN
District Three
EDDIE VALERO
District Four
DENNIS TOWNSEND
District Five

AGENDA DATE: August 13, 2019 - Revised

Public Hearing Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Scheduled Public Hearing w/Clerk	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Published Notice Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Advertised Published Notice	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meet & Confer Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Electronic file(s) has been sent	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Transfer (Aud 308) attached	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personnel Resolution attached	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agreements are attached and signature line for Chairman is marked with tab(s)/flag(s)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CONTACT PERSON: Annie Haynes PHONE: (559) 802-9800				

SUBJECT: Approve a CEQA Notice of Exemption for the South Fork Hazard Fuels Reduction Project

REQUEST(S):
That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines for the South Fork Hazard Fuels Reduction Project; and
2. Direct the Environmental Assessment Officer of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, or their designee, to file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk.

SUMMARY:
The California Climate Investment (CCI) Grant provides funding for projects related to the removal of dead or dying trees, hazardous fuel (vegetation) reduction, fire prevention education, and fire prevention planning. Reducing fuel along a vital evacuation route allows for the safe ingress or egress of civilians and first responders during a fast-moving wildland fire. In addition to securing a vital evacuation route, the reduction of available vegetation will also reduce the wildfire threat to habitable structures within Tulare County and the State Responsibility Area (SRA). The Tulare County Fire Department intends to conduct fuel reduction activities including: thinning, chipping, and vegetation removal along South Fork Drive adjacent to the community of Three Rivers.

The majority of this proposed project is located in a high fire severity zone, with portions of the project located in a very high fire severity zone. This project will

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reduce vegetation and fuel located within 113 acres along South Fork Drive, from the community of Three Rivers to the intersection of Lower Grouse Valley Road. Fuel reduction along South Fork Drive will increase roadside safety, as well as help secure the only evacuation route for more than 2,000 residents evacuating from fast moving wildland fires. The overriding goal is to reduce the spread of wildland fire from the South Fork area into the wildland/urban interface, and vice versa. The evacuation route addressed in this project is identified in the Tulare County Community Evacuation Plan as the only route of travel for inhabited structures in the area.

The public benefit of projects funded by CCI includes reducing the risk of fire ignition and spreading, and adjacent to, communities; educating owners of habitable structures about wildfire risks; allowing for strategic, long-term planning to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities in the SRA throughout the State; or removing dead or dying trees that pose a threat to public health and safety.

The project is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15359, an "Emergency" applies when a project is necessary "...to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to life, health, property or essential public services." As such, preventive efforts would be undertaken to remove dead or dying trees to protect essential public services (such as accessible roads) prior to the occurrence of catastrophic wildfire.

On October 30, 2018 this project, along with four others, were brought before the Board for approval and acceptance of the grant award totaling \$1,360,234. As explained in each individual project, Notices of Exemption for CEQA will be filed on as needed basis. A Categorical Exemption for each project consistent with the CEQA Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR), Sections 15269(c) and 15301 Existing Facilities (c) was approved by the Board on the same agenda item from October 30, 2018.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING:

The County was successful in receiving \$190,466 for the South Fork Project as requested in the grant application approved by the Board on October 30, 2018. The project will be completed over fiscal years 2019/20 and 2020/21. A total of \$63,489 in expenditures and revenues has been budgeted in the Fire Department's fiscal year 2019/20 operational budget, and \$126,977 will be included in the Fire Department's operational budget for fiscal year 2020/21.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF TULARE STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN:

The County's five-year strategic plan includes the Quality of Life Initiative and the Safety and Security Initiative to promote natural resource management, continued improvement of environmental quality, plan and provide coordinated emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation capabilities for both natural and manmade disasters. This request to approve the Notice of Exemption for the South Fork Hazard Fuels Reduction Project will reduce the risk of wildfire to communities

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while educating owners about wildfire risks and long-term fire prevention planning.

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:



Pete Marquez
Division Chief, Professional Standards Unit

cc: County Administrative Office

Attachment(s) Notice of Exemption – CAL FIRE California Climate Investment Grant
South Fork Hazard Fuel Reduction Project 5GG17238

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TULARE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVE NOTICE)
OF EXEMPTION FOR CALIFORNIA) Resolution No. _____
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FOR THE) Agreement No. _____
SOUTH FORK HAZARD FUELS)
REDUCTION PROJECT)

UPON MOTION OF SUPERVISOR _____, SECONDED BY
SUPERVISOR _____, THE FOLLOWING WAS ADOPTED BY THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, AT AN OFFICIAL MEETING HELD _____
_____, BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

ATTEST: JASON T. BRITT
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/
CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BY: _____
Deputy Clerk

* * * * *

1. Approved the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines for the South Fork Hazard Fuels Reduction Project; and
2. Directed the Environmental Assessment Officer of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, or their designee, to file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk.

Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

- To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814
- Tulare County Clerk
Room 105, Courthouse
221 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, California 93291

Lead Agency: Tulare County Resource Management Agency
5961 South Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, Ca 93277
Attn: hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us

Applicant(s): Tulare County Fire Department
835 S. Akers St
Visalia, CA 93277

Ph: 559-802-9800

Date filed with Tulare County Clerk

Project Title: CAL FIRE California Climate Investment Grant South Fork Hazard Fuel Reduction Project 5GG17238

Project Location - Specific: Unincorporated community of Three Rivers in Tulare County, CA,

Project Location- Section, Township, Range: See Project Location Map, Attachment "A", incorporated herein by reference

Project Location - City: N/A

Project Location - County: Tulare

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The California Climate Investment (CCI) Grant provides funding for projects related to the removal of dead or dying trees, hazardous fuel (vegetation) reduction, fire prevention education, and fire prevention planning. Reducing fuel along a vital evacuation route allows for the safe ingress or egress of civilians and first responders during a fast moving wildland fire. In addition to securing a vital evacuation route, the reduction of available vegetation will also reduce the wildfire threat to habitable structures within Tulare County and the State Responsibility Area (SRA). The Tulare County Fire Department intends to conduct fuel reduction activities including: thinning, chipping, and vegetation removal along South Fork Drive adjacent to the community of Three Rivers.

The majority of this proposed project is located in a high fire severity zone, with portions of the project located in a very high fire severity zone. This project will reduce vegetation and fuel located within 113 acres along South Fork Drive, from the community of Three Rivers to the intersection of Lower Grouse Valley Road. Fuel reduction along South Fork Drive will increase roadside safety, as well as help secure the only evacuation route for more than 2,000 residents evacuating from fast moving wildland fires. The overriding goal is to reduce the spread of wildland fire from the South Fork area into the wildland/urban interface, and vice versa. The evacuation route addressed in this project is identified in the Tulare County Community Evacuation Plan as the only route of travel for inhabited structures in the area.

The public benefit of projects funded by CCI includes reducing the risk of fire ignition and spreading, and adjacent to, communities; educating owners of habitable structures about wildfire risks; allowing for strategic, long-term planning to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities in the SRA throughout the State; or removing dead or dying trees that pose a threat to public health and safety.

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(c));
- General Rule: CEQA guidelines 15061 (b)(3)
- Categorical Exemption;
- Statutory Exemptions;

Reasons why project/activity is exempt: The proposed project is excluded or exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) on the grounds that the project is consistent with the following:

Public Resources Code Section 21080, subdivision (b) (4) (Emergency), and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15269, subdivision (c) (Emergency).

The County was successful in receiving \$190,466 as requested in the grant application. This will be used to address the risk and potential of wildfire impacts on South Fork Drive that pose a threat to public health and safety within the SRA in the unincorporated communities of Three Rivers and South Fork as noted earlier.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15359, an "Emergency" applies when a project is necessary "...to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to life, health, property or essential public services." As such, preventive efforts would be undertaken to remove dead or dying trees to protect essential public services (such as accessible roads) prior to the occurrence of catastrophic wildfire.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Tulare, Resource Management Agency

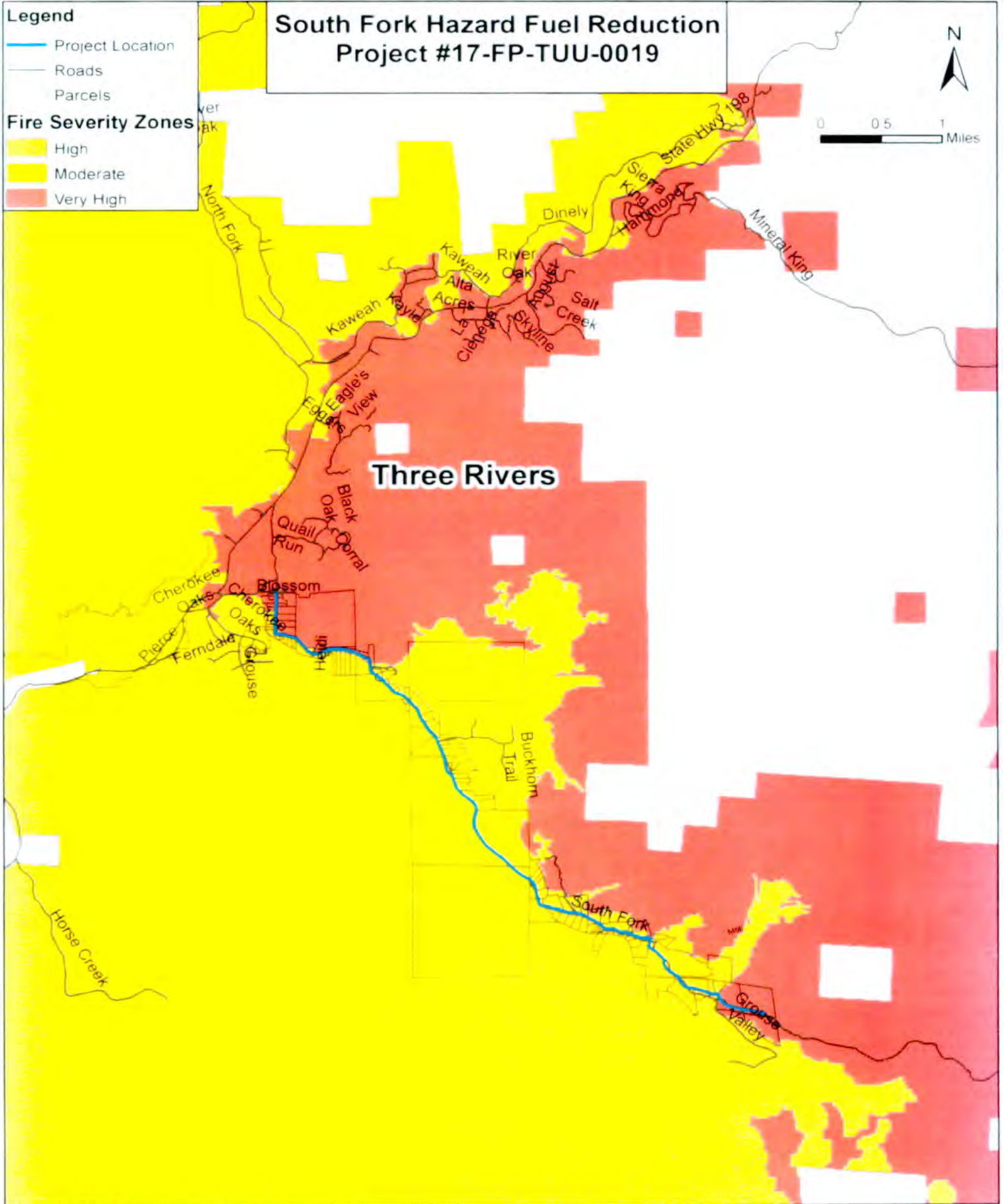
Project Planner/Representative: Division Chief Jeff McLaughlin Area Code/Telephone: 559-731-8681

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: Chief Environmental Planner
Hector Guerra

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: Environmental Assessment Officer
Reed Schenke P.E. RMA Director

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: N/A



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