



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: REVISED – March 24, 2020

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 California Environmental Quality Act Notice of Exemption for the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project

REQUEST(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the State CEQA Guidelines for the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree 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:

On October 30, 2018 the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project, along with four others, were brought before the Board for approval and acceptance of a California Climate Investment (CCI) grant award totaling \$1,360,234. A Notice of Exemption for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be filed on as needed basis for each project. 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.

The 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.

SUBJECT: Approve a California Environmental Quality Act Notice of Exemption for the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project

DATE: March 24, 2020

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 within 300 feet of permanent structures. 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 Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project is located adjacent to the communities of Hartland and Badger in Tulare County and Pinehurst in Fresno County, along Eshom Valley Drive. This project will focus on the modification of vegetation and the creation of a strategically located fuel break adjacent to Hartland Christian Camp reducing the available fuel and thus increasing roadside safety, securing the vital ingress and egress route for residents evacuating from fast moving wildland fires, and reducing the spread of fire from the wildland into the wildland urban interface. Eshom Valley Drive is a county maintained road that spans 7 miles, and is the only ingress and egress for 55 permanent residents and 1,000 seasonal residents. Additionally, Hartland is located less than 4 miles from the communities of Pinehurst and Badger. 52% (88 acres) of this proposed project is located in the Very High Fire Severity Zone with 48% (79 acres) of the project in the High Fire Severity Zone. This project will modify and remove 167 acres of fuel from the roadway upslope creating a safe evacuation route and reducing the impact to the community from a fast moving wildland fire. The project will also have a minimum of two public chipper days that should have a positive effect on the community's defensible space.

Additionally, the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project will link Phase One of Tulare County Hazard Tree Removal Project. The fuel along Eshom Valley Drive consists of heavy brush and indigenous conifers ranging from 3-24 Diameter Breast Height. The conifer stands located in the project area are in a Tier 1 High Hazard Tree Mortality Zone averaging 45 dead or dying trees per acre. This evacuation route is identified as the only route of travel for 22 habitable residential structures and Hartland Christian Camp. This project will modify the vegetation by chipping.

The project is exempt from 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.

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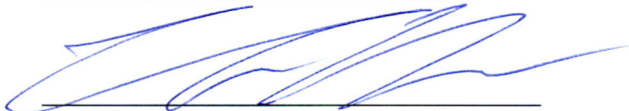
FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING:

The County was successful in receiving a CCI grant award of \$198,290 for the Hartland Project as requested in the grant application approved by the Board on October 30, 2018. The project will be completed in Fiscal Year 2021/22. The total of \$198,290 in expenditures and revenues will be included in the Fire Department's fiscal year 2021/22 operational budget.

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 Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project will reduce the risk of wildfire to communities while educating owners about wildfire risks and long-term fire prevention planning.

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:



Charlie Norman
Fire Chief

cc: County Administrative Office

Attachment(s) Notice of Exemption – CAL FIRE California Climate Investment Grant Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project 5GG17236

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

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVE A)
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY)
ACT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FOR THE) Resolution No. _____
HARTLAND HAZARD FUEL AND TREE) Agreement No. _____
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

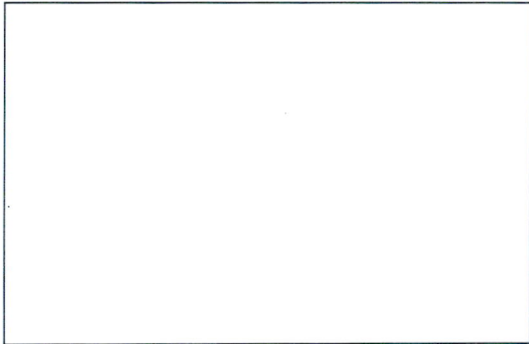
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1. Approved the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the State CEQA Guidelines for the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project; and
2. Directed the Environmental Assessment Officer of the Tulare County 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



Date filed with the Tulare County Clerk

Lead Agency: Tulare County Resource Management Agency
5961 South Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, Ca 93277

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

Ph: 559-802-9800

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

Project Location - Specific: Unincorporated community of Hartland 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

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escription of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: [Nature] The Tulare County Fire Department intends to conduct fuel reduction/removal of death or dying trees and activities including: thinning, chipping, and vegetation removal located adjacent to the communities of Hartland and Badger in Tulare County and Pinehurst in Fresno County, along Eshom Valley Drive. 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). [Purpose] 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. [Benefit] The public benefit of projects funded by CCI includes reducing the risk of fire ignition and spread in, 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. Tulare County is ranked third in the U.S. for the poorest air quality by the American Lung Association. This project has a great potential to reduce greenhouse gases and stored carbon. This project will have a positive outcome in relation to air quality and PM 10 particulates thus improving the environment. Additional co-benefits from the Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project are the improvement of roadside safety, reducing the threat to the wildland-urban interface, increasing wildland fire readiness and preparedness in the community, improved defensible space through public chipper days, the reduction of stored carbon and improved air quality, improving the community's outlook and making the community more fire wise, and improving the resiliency of the eco system. While all the above listed benefits of this project are a drastic improvement, the largest benefit to the 22 habitable residential structures and 1,000 seasonal residents who reside in Eshom Valley, is the reduction of fuel surrounding the community. The conifer stands located in the project area are in a Tier 1 High Hazard Tree Mortality Zone averaging 45 dead or dying trees per acre.

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 \$198,290 as requested in the grant application. This will be used to address the risk and potential of wildfire impacts on the community of Hartland that pose a threat to public health and safety within the SRA in the unincorporated communities of Hartland.

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

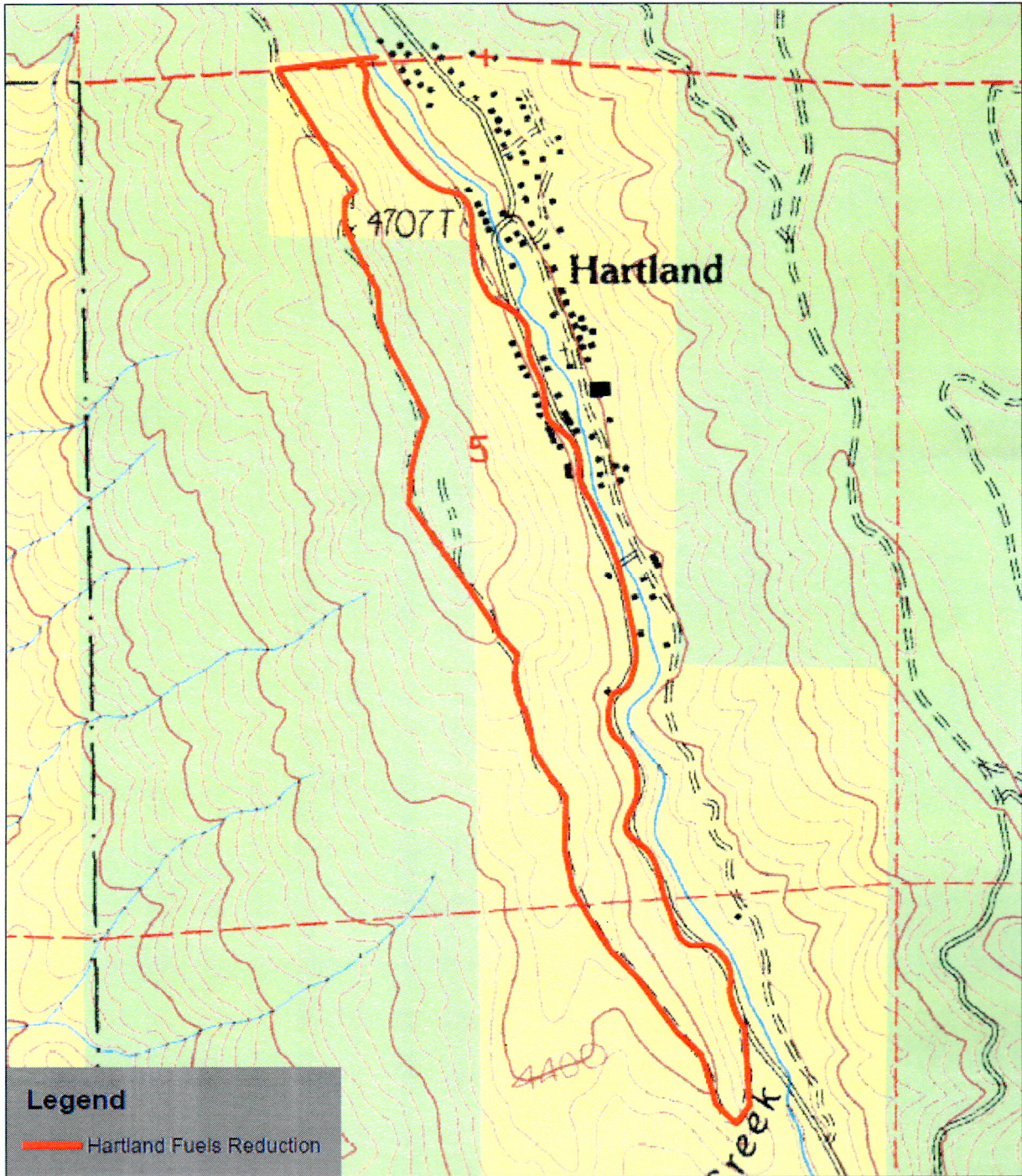
Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: Environmental Assessment Officer
Reed Schenke P.E. RMA Director

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: N/A

Signed by Applicant

Hartland Hazard Fuel and Tree Reduction Project #17-FP-TUU-0017



0 340 680 1,360 2,040 2,720 Feet

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Date: 4/30/2018