

Printout

Thursday, August 21, 2025

9:46 AM

Notice of Exemption**Appendix E**

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk

County of: Tehama
633 Washington Street, Room 111

Red Bluff, CA 96080

From: (Public Agency): RCD of Tehama County

PO Box 1232

Red Bluff, CA 96080

(Address)

Project Title: Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership (Phase 3)

Project Applicant: Resource Conservation District of Tehama County

Project Location - Specific:

Located on United States Forest Service lands, within that portion of the South Coast Range within Western Tehama County.

Project Location - City: Paskenta

Project Location - County: Tehama

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Please see the attached Scope of Work.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Resource Conservation District of Tehama County

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Resource Conservation District of Tehama County

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));
- ☐ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: _____
- ☒ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: 4799.05(d)(1)

Reasons why project is exempt:

Per 4799.05(d)(1) of the California Code, CEQA does not apply to prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands that reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under provisions established in the National Environmental Protection Act. This exemption is contingent upon whether the primary role of a state or local agency is to provide funding or staffing for such projects. In connection with Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership Project (Phase 3) efforts, the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County is providing project funding obtained through the California Climate Investments Forest Health Grant Program in order to conduct fuel reduction activities on federal lands within the Mendocino National Forest. The RCDTC is also providing project management and other personnel necessary to implement project work. The Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership Project (Phase 3) scope of work described under Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project, shown above meet the conditions of California Code 4799.05(d)(1) in that those portions of the project area located on Mendocino National Forest lands have been analyzed under US Forest Service environment analysis processes as described in a NEPA Environmental Assessment document and USFS Categorical Exclusion prepared for each project component described above.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Seronica Biggs

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 530-727-9983

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: Seronica Biggs Date: 8/20/25 Title: District Forester

■ Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing an OPR:

FILED 30

AUG 21 2025

SEAN HOUGHTBY

TEHAMA COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER

BY Naqera Revised 2011



Tehama Mendocino Fuels Reduction Partnership Phase 3 Scope of Work

The **Tehama Mendocino Fuels Reduction Partnership (Phase 3)** will improve Mendocino National Forest (MNF) lands within Tehama County that have been negatively impacted by the 2020 August Complex Fire. Combined, the components of this landscape-scale, post-fire restoration and reforestation forest health project will encompass 1,142 acres of conifer forests, chaparral lands and grassland meadows. This collaboration includes the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County (RCDTC), and the MNF. Who will work together to co-create a cohesive climate resilient, fire adapted landscape. All **Phase 3** activity is anticipated to be completed by March 30, 2030.

BACKGROUND

Phase 3 is a continuation of the CAL FIRE CCI grant funded Tehama Mendocino Fuels Reduction Partnership Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects that, collectively, will increase the pace and scale of forest health resiliency efforts within the National Forest. This phase is composed of the production of biochar and reforestation that contribute to the objectives of this grant. The variation of treatments reflects the broader goals of **California's Forest Carbon Plan** and has the potential to "Innovate solutions for wood products and biomass utilization to support ongoing sustainable forest management activities. Protect and enhance the carbon sequestration potential and related benefits of urban forests." The project also specifically supports **goals three and four** of the **Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, which emphasize improving forest health, reducing wildfire risks, and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Various environmental factors were considered by MNF staff when identifying the **Phase 3** sites and the array of work to be completed. These include the high mortality/high fire severity areas due to the 2020 August Complex Fire; site quality required to successfully reestablish forest stands (aspect, slope, elevation, soil composition); location to an existing road, site soils and geology. Currently, there is significant tree mortality (dead and dying trees) within **Phase 3** largely due to the August Complex, as well as increased insect infestation and drought conditions. This creates significant fuel loading and consequently, an increased risk for future wildfires and stand conversion. To address these management needs, the collaboration is requesting \$6,996,578.38 of CAL FIRE Forest Health Program funds to complete the Phase 3 treatments within 1,142 acres of mixed forestland to improve habitat for wildlife and aquatic species and support biodiversity.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Phase 3 is comprised of 571 acres that will receive biochar production and reforestation treatment objectives that contribute to fire adapted conditions, watershed restoration, and carbon stabilization. Treatments will significantly reduce the amount of dead and dying trees within the **Phase 3** area. Excess ground fuels and dead understory vegetation caused by the 2020 August Complex Fire will be reduced within forest stands. Forest health within both burned and unburned sites will be improved through a combination of treatments as outlined below:

Fuel Reduction: Treatments will follow the MNF thinning guidelines.

- **Thinning:** An LTO will thin using mechanical logging techniques all dead and dying conifers leaving all green conifers or ensure tree spacing of 25'-35'. All hardwood 4" DBH or less will be cut. Hardwoods 5-8" DBH will be thinned to a 25'-35' spacing. No hardwoods greater than 8" DBH will be cut. Stumps shall be level and no greater than 4" tall, or 4" above natural obstacles. The order of species preference for conifer leave trees are (high to low preference): ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, incense cedar, white fir, and sugar pine.



The best leave trees will be the most vigorous (tallest, fullest crown, free of disease and damage) priority will be given to leaving the best trees over exact spacing. Average leave tree density after treatment will be 40-70 trees per acre. Cut material will be taken to a designated area where it will then be processed through a carbonizer to produce biochar. The Biochar will then be distributed back to the landscape using a compost spreader.

Reforestation:

- Manual planting of conifer saplings will occur across 571 acres.

Timeline of Treatments:

- The Project will begin in July 2025.
- Manual Piling of 571 acres will be completed by March 2030.
- Thinning of 571 acres and the production of biochar of those acres will be completed by March 2023
- The Project will be completed by March 2030.

To be clear, **Phase 3** work includes mechanical site preparation and manual labor (including hand crews, skidders, dozers, loaders, carbonizer, grapplers, rippers, tractors and hot saws). Through these efforts, long-term functioning reestablishment of landscape will be created and subsequently maintained through periodic maintenance. This phase will thin overstocked green forest stands and reduce a significant number of dead/down overstory trees as well as both ground and ladder fuels that were created through natural reproduction and the 2020 August Complex Fire. Where green healthy trees still exist, thinning guidelines have been developed to aid in the removal of excess trees in both the crown and understory.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The MNF will serve as NEPA lead utilizing a newly drafted forest wide NEPA document. The RCDTC will act as the Project CEQA lead and file a SB 901 waiver. Operations within the riparian areas will adhere to CA 14 CCR 936.5: Procedures for Determining Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones Widths and Protection Measures. All areas within **Phase 3** must be treated, and if machines are not capable of treating the ground, hand work will be implemented. Per the guidelines listed in the NEPA document tribal monitoring will take place by the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki's. This including monitoring of known cultural resources as well as surveys within the project units prior to and during site preparations.

SIGNIFICANCE

Phase 3 shows that agency and public sectors can successfully co-contribute to fire adapted forestlands. The goal of **Phase 3** is to reduce fuel loading and reestablish USFS forestlands. Reestablishing forestlands requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates ecological, social, and economic considerations. By focusing on soil health, native species restoration, sustainable land management, and adaptive practices, forest restoration can create resilient ecosystems that benefit both the environment and local communities for years to come. It's important to view forest restoration not just as replanting trees but as a holistic process of ecosystem recovery.