

FILED

JAN 15 2026 #2

SEAN HOUGHTBY
TEHAMA COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER
By Ariana Repeda



NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To:	County Clerk Tehama County, CA 633 Washington St., Room 111 Red Bluff, CA 96080	FROM: Resource Conservation District of Tehama County 202 Walnut Street Red Bluff, CA 96080
------------	--	---

PROJECT TITLE	Manton WUI Protection Project (#1838)
----------------------	---------------------------------------

PROJECT LOCATION	Project Location: North - Eastside Tehama County. – In/adjacent to Manton, Ca. Various Roadside Right-of-Way/Easements and private landowner parcels adjacent to Hazen Road (Reference included Maps)	County: Tehama
-------------------------	--	-----------------------

**DESCRIPTION OF NATURE,
PURPOSE, AND
BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT**

The Manton WUI Protection Project (Project) serves to create strategic interconnected fuel breaks to provide a defensible perimeter around the Manton WUI community located in Northeast California. This project will mitigate the rural communities' susceptibility to high intensity wildfire and also enhance ingress/egress routes in the event of a natural disaster. Fuels Reduction efforts will be achieved through treating 630 acres via mastication, hand thinning/chipping and herbicide. Project activities will be conducted on 3 landowners' property including: Tehama County, Shasta County, and Battle Creek Trout Farm (P. Mackey). Project Partners include: Tehama County Transportation Commission, Manton FireSafe Council, Manton Education Council, and Manton Parks.

The purpose of the project is to:

1. Create a defensible perimeter to the WUI – Hand thinning and Chipping at least 310 acres – Reducing ladder fuels and creating canopy spacing to decrease risk of crown fire.
2. Establishing a network of connected fuel breaks – Masticating at least 120 acres – Creating defensible lines up to 400ft in width that strategically protect the South (from historical wildfires fed by Southwesterly winds in the area).
3. Maintaining essential ingress/egress routes – Herbicidal treatment at least 200 acres to prevent resprouts and resurgent growth to leverage prior projects in the area and ensure their efficacy and perpetuity.

The project is composed of several sub tasks including:

Task A: Hand thinning/Chipping - 310 acres

- Task A will focus on hand thinning and chipping along six strategic roadways that will create a defendable perimeter surrounding the Manton WUI Community (see "Project Site Plan – Map). This Task will additionally treat the single road that bisects the town (Forward Road).

Task B: Mastication – 120 acres

- These 120 acres will convert tall, continuous fuels into low, compact fuels. Currently the conditions South of Hazen road are composed of shrubs, saplings, and ladder fuels that form a continuous "fuel wall." Mastication will disrupt fuel continuity and slow and lower the intensity of wildfire, making it significantly easier to stop.

Task C: Herbicidal Treatment – 200 acres

- The vegetation type in Manton is predominantly fast-growing trees and shrubs that are incredibly adapted to the area. Following mechanical treatment: Buckbrush, Coyote Bush, Valley Oak, Willow, Eucalyptus, and Ailanthus (Tree of heaven) can all resprout 2-3ft within a year.

This multi-component Project was developed in collaboration with the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County (RCDTC), CALFIRE, Tehama County Transportation Commission and Manton FireSafe Council. Beneficiaries include: WUI community in/adjacent to Manton, Ca. Including: private landowners, public infrastructure, canal water system, rangeland, timberland, and essential habitat located in the Battle Creek Watershed.

LEAD AGENCY	Resource Conservation District of Tehama County		
CONTACT PERSON	Drew Hunter Barnhart	PHONE	530-727-1294 ext. 104
ADDRESS	202 Walnut St. Red Bluff, CA 96080		

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

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:

Based on the scope of work, project context, environmental controls, and location, this project qualifies for a CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) under Public Resources Code, Division 13, Chapter 6, Article 19, Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land. This decision is justified due to the fact that the project involves minor changes to the land that don't have a significant or adverse environmental impact.

The rationale to qualify for this exemption criteria is all work occurs within prior disturbed landscapes that have been subject to either County Maintenance, land/community development, rangeland grazing or prior fuels reduction activity. These areas have already been subject to historical maintenance, fuels reduction activities, sporadic use of herbicide and prior disturbance. Although the Project includes up to 630 acres of treatment, activities are dispersed across non-contiguous sites and implemented over time, rather than as a single intensive disturbance.

The proposed treatments qualify under Section 15304 because:

- The Project involves minor alteration of vegetation and does not include grading, land conversion, or development – No ground disturbance beyond existing disturbed areas.
- No new structures, roads, or utilities will be constructed.
- Treatments will retain existing land uses and will not change the underlying landform, drainage patterns, or topography.
- Fuel reduction methods are selective and non-intensive, consistent with routine resource management and fire hazard reduction activities.
- Herbicide use will be targeted: Herbicide application will be limited to targeted spot or cut-stump treatments only, conducted by licensed applicators in compliance with California Department of Pesticide Regulation and County Agricultural Commissioner requirements, including completion of all applicable pesticide use reporting.
 - Utilization of herbicide will not result in substantial adverse environmental effects.
- The Project does not involve removal of healthy, mature scenic trees, nor does it affect environmentally sensitive habitat in a manner that would exceed the scope of a Class 4 exemption. (Only brush and trees under a 14 DBH and/or dead/dying/diseased are identified for removal)

Additionally, the Project is designed to reduce wildfire risk, protect public safety, and enhance emergency access routes, which further supports its classification as a minor and beneficial alteration to land.

None of the exceptions to categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply. Fuel reduction projects of this type are common throughout fire-prone regions of California and do not constitute unusual circumstances.

The Project will not have a cumulative impact, will not have a reasonable possibility of significant environmental effects due to unusual circumstances, will not affect scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, or historical resources.

Therefore, the Manton WUI Protection Project is appropriately exempt from CEQA review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 (Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land).

To ensure adherence to the guidelines stipulated above:

- A CNDDDB Search has been conducted for identification of relevant sensitive environmental species. Areas with sensitive or listed species have been strategically omitted from project area to ensure no incidental take. Additionally, RCDTC internal qualified staff will conduct pre implementation surveys to ensure Elderberry/ VELB are appropriately flagged.
- An archaeological records search has been conducted, and standard CEQA inadvertent discovery procedures consistent with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 will be implemented.
 - Appropriate tribal consultation and/or monitoring will be conducted during portions of the Project where fuels reduction activities occur adjacent to known cultural resources.
- The NWI inventory was consulted for watercourse identification. Watercourse flagging and buffers will be placed so implementing crews are aware of Riparian area.
- RCDTC and RBFD personnel will be auditing project operations to ensure no additional ground disturbance is conducted.

IF FILED BY APPLICANT:

1. Attached certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ yes

SIGNATURE: _____

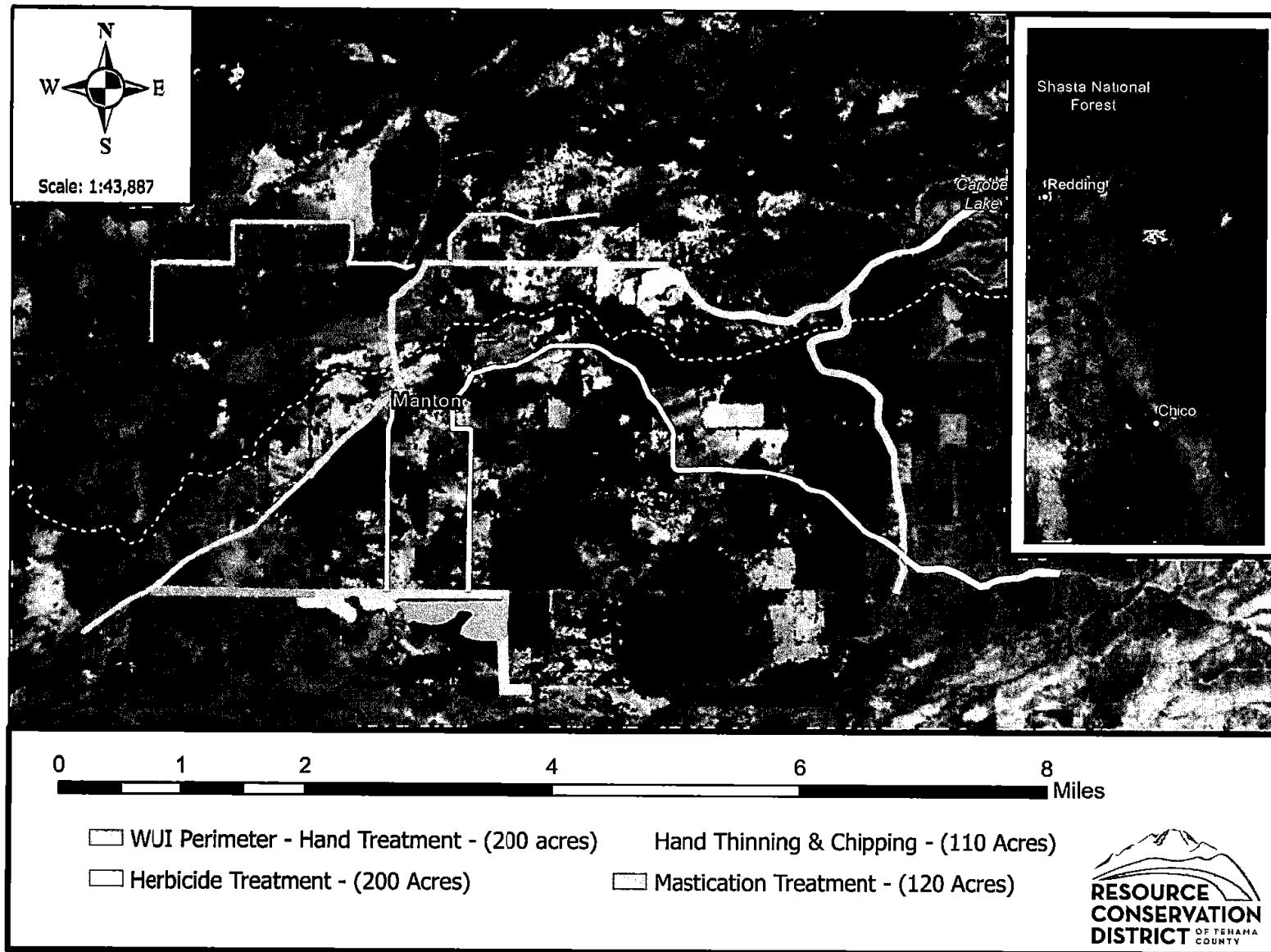
DATE: 1/15/2025

TITLE: Resource Conservation District of Tehama County - Project Manager II, Drew Barnhart

☒ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR:

Manton WUI Protection Project - Project Site Plan



CEQA Guidelines §15304 Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land

Regulatory Authority

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
CEQA Guidelines §15304 (14 CCR §15304)
Categorical Exemption – Class 4

Description of Exemption

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation that do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and do not result in significant environmental effects. The exemption applies to activities that are limited in scope and intensity, do not involve land conversion or development, do not alter landforms, drainage patterns, or topography, and retain existing land uses.

Examples of Activities Covered (§15304)

- Minor alteration of vegetation, including fuel management activities, selective vegetation removal, and fire hazard reduction.
- New gardening or landscaping.
- Minor trenching or backfilling where the surface is restored.
- Minor temporary use of land with negligible effects.
- Minor alteration of land within public rights-of-way.
- Minor maintenance dredging, subject to applicable limitations.

Applicability to Fuels Reduction Projects

Class 4 is commonly and appropriately used for wildfire fuel reduction projects, including hand thinning and chipping, mastication, selective removal of brush and small trees, maintenance of fuel breaks and defensible space, and vegetation management along roadways and access routes, provided such activities do not include grading or development, are selective and non-intensive, maintain existing land uses, and incorporate environmental safeguards.

Limitations of the Exemption

- Removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees.
- Conversion of land use or development.
- Ground disturbance beyond previously disturbed areas.
- Applicability of any exception under CEQA Guidelines §15300.2.

Exceptions to the Exemption (§15300.2)

- Location in an environmentally sensitive area.
- Cumulative impacts of successive projects.
- Unusual circumstances creating a reasonable possibility of significant effects.
- Impacts to officially designated scenic highways.
- Location on a hazardous waste site.
- Effects on historical resources.

Key Legal Notes for Lead Agencies

The applicability of Class 4 is based on the nature and intensity of project effects rather than acreage alone. Dispersed or phased projects may qualify even when total acreage is substantial, provided impacts remain minor. Operational controls such as buffers, surveys, and monitoring support defensibility. Filing a Notice of Exemption triggers a 35-day statute of limitations.

Commonly Used Citation Language

"The project is categorically exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines §15304 (Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land), which applies to minor alterations of vegetation and fuel management activities that do not involve land conversion, grading, or removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees."