

Notice of Impending Development

For: The Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project

Pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 30606 and California Coastal Commission (Commission) Regulations Section 13358 and Section 13359, this letter is presented to provide Notice of Impending Development (NOID) for the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project in Big Sur, Monterey County. Such notice must be submitted to the Commission before a public agency proposing a public works project pursuant to a certified Public Works Plan (PWP) may commence the project.

The RCDMC's Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience PWP was certified by the Commission in December 2022. The PWP requires adherence to the Coastal Vegetation Treatment Standards (Coastal VTS) as part of the PWP and additional information about project design within the Monterey County Coastal Zone. The PWP also provides a streamlined mechanism for Coastal Act compliance in combination with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance process facilitated by the CalVTP Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).

The CalVTP PEIR was certified by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in 2019. It evaluates the potential environmental effects of implementing qualifying vegetation treatments to reduce the risk of wildfire throughout the State Responsibility Area (SRA) in California within the CalVTP Treatable Landscape. It was designed for use by many state and local agencies and special districts to accelerate vegetation treatment project approvals by finding them to be within the scope of the PEIR through the preparation of a Project Specific Analysis (PSA). The PSA must demonstrate that the proposed activities align with those in the CalVTP, the effects of proposed vegetation treatment were analyzed in the PEIR, and Standard Project Requirements and (SPRs) and mitigation measures from the PEIR will be integrated into the treatments to avoid and minimize impacts. The CalVTP PEIR provides a streamlined mechanism for CEQA compliance for vegetation treatment projects.

A PSA was prepared that evaluates this project as an activity covered by the CalVTP PEIR as required pursuant to CEQA and includes information that demonstrates consistency with the CVTS as required pursuant to the Coastal Act and PWP. Specific project adherence to the Coastal VTS for the project can be found in Attachment C of the PSA.

Project Description:

The Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project is proposed by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County to enhance forest stand health, create a heterogeneous vegetation mosaic structure, augment wildlife habitat, remove invasive French broom, reduce wildfire spread rate and intensity through increasing horizontal and vertical spacing in the understory, and provide an area for fire personnel to defend the Rancho Rico community in the event of a wildfire. This project will use a

combination of mechanical and manual treatments and pile burns to increase forest health and wildfire resiliency on approximately 101 acres on Rancho Rico property in the Coastal Zone.

This project will primarily use manual and mechanical treatments to mimic the effect of historic fire occurrences, by removing lower limbs on mature trees and ladder fuels (shrubs and trees less than 8-inch DBH) and mowing to reduce the accumulation of fine fuels along the main road (Rancho Rico Rd.) to the community. The selective reduction of forest stand density and removal of French broom will help to create the desired stand structure while addressing the issue of non-native plants impacting native vegetation and increasing wildfire risk. Small piles (not exceeding 4 ft in height, width or depth) of cut French broom may also be burned during appropriate weather windows at the top of the ridge in open, flat areas as a means of biomass removal. Treatments will be utilized to achieve the desired condition of a less dense stand structure, which will provide the aforementioned benefits as well as decrease the risk of pathogens and disease affecting Rancho Rico's overstocked forest, including Sudden Oak Death (SOD).

The Final Project Specific Analysis (PSA) for the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project can be found at <https://www.rcdmonterey.org/public-notices-alerts>.

Approval of the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project: The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County Board of Directors adopted a local resolution dated May 18th, 2023 that approved of the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment PSA; it can be found at the RCDMC website: <https://www.rcdmonterey.org/public-notices-alerts>

Anticipated date for project commencement: Project implementation is anticipated to start on November 13th, 2023 and continue for approximately four months. Maintenance treatments will then occur as needed (most likely annually or biennially) over the next nine years.

Contact information for the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project: Please contact Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program Manager for the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, email: jtlewis@rcdmonterey.org, phone: 831-975-7775.

California Coastal Commission Review: The California Coastal Commission is currently reviewing the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project per the Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Public Works Plan (PWP) Project Review and Authorization under the PWP, pgs. 30-32 (the Monterey County PWP can be viewed at <https://www.rcdmonterey.org/public-notices-alerts>). Consistent with the requirements of the PWP, the Monterey County RCD notified the Commission in advance of its intent to submit a NOID for the project. After receiving the NOID, the Commission has five days to deem the NOID complete and filed or request additional information. The Commission is also responsible for reviewing the PSA and response to the Coastal VTS, and for determining whether the project is consistent with the PWP. Commission review of a proposed project is deemed complete on the date that the project is determined to be consistent with the PWP. The proposed Commission hearing to approve the PSA and act on the NOID for this project begins on October 11, 2023 and extends through October 13, 2023. The Commission staff contact for this project is:

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