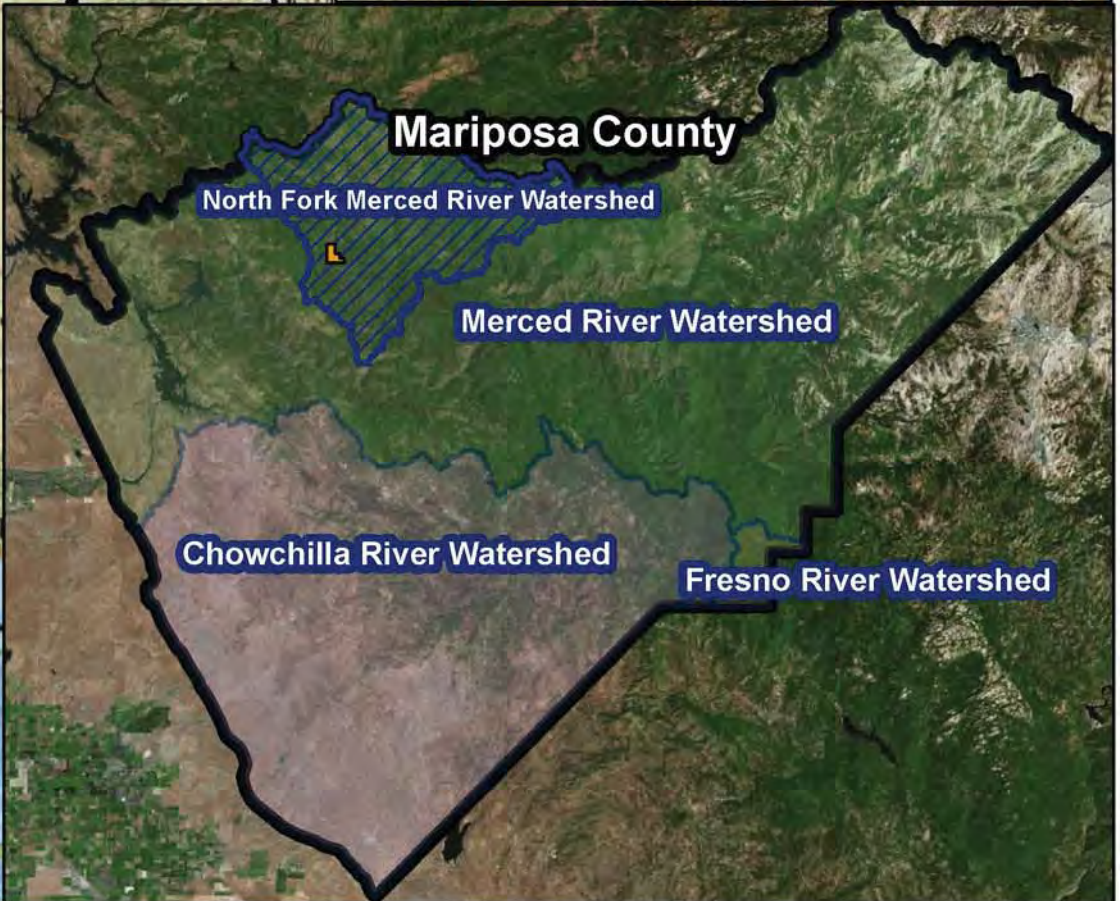
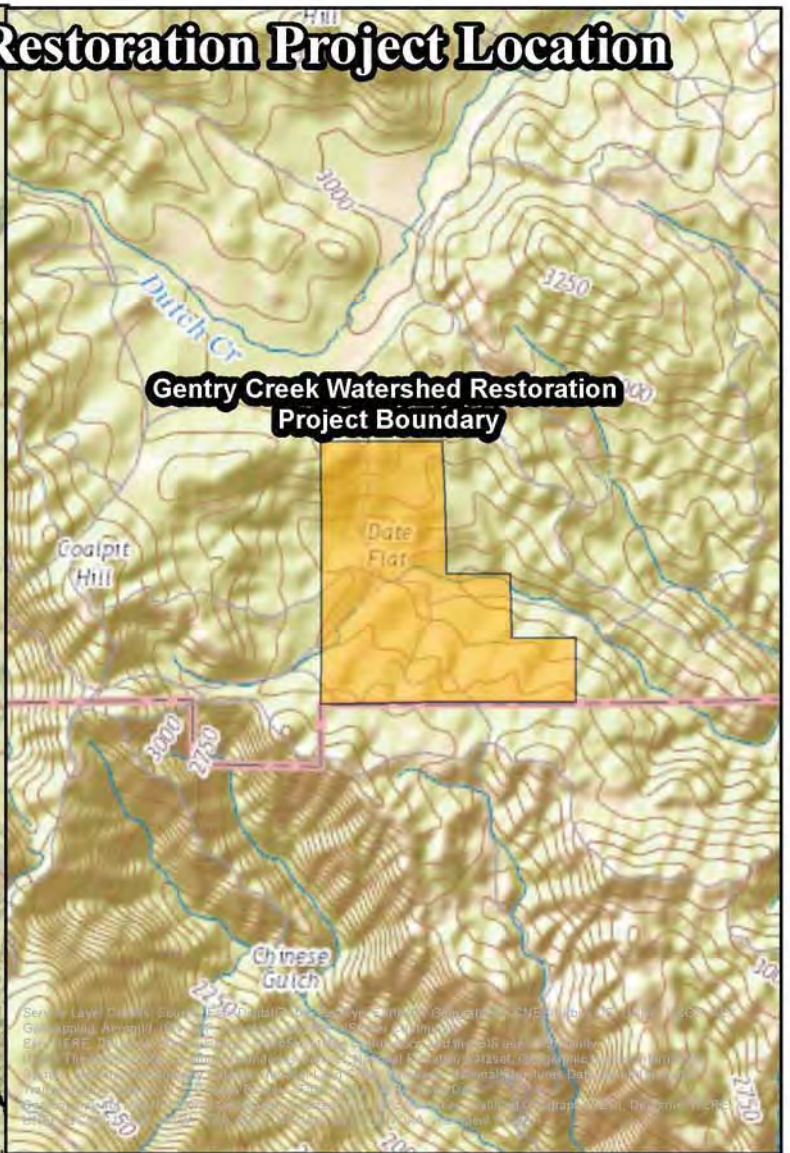
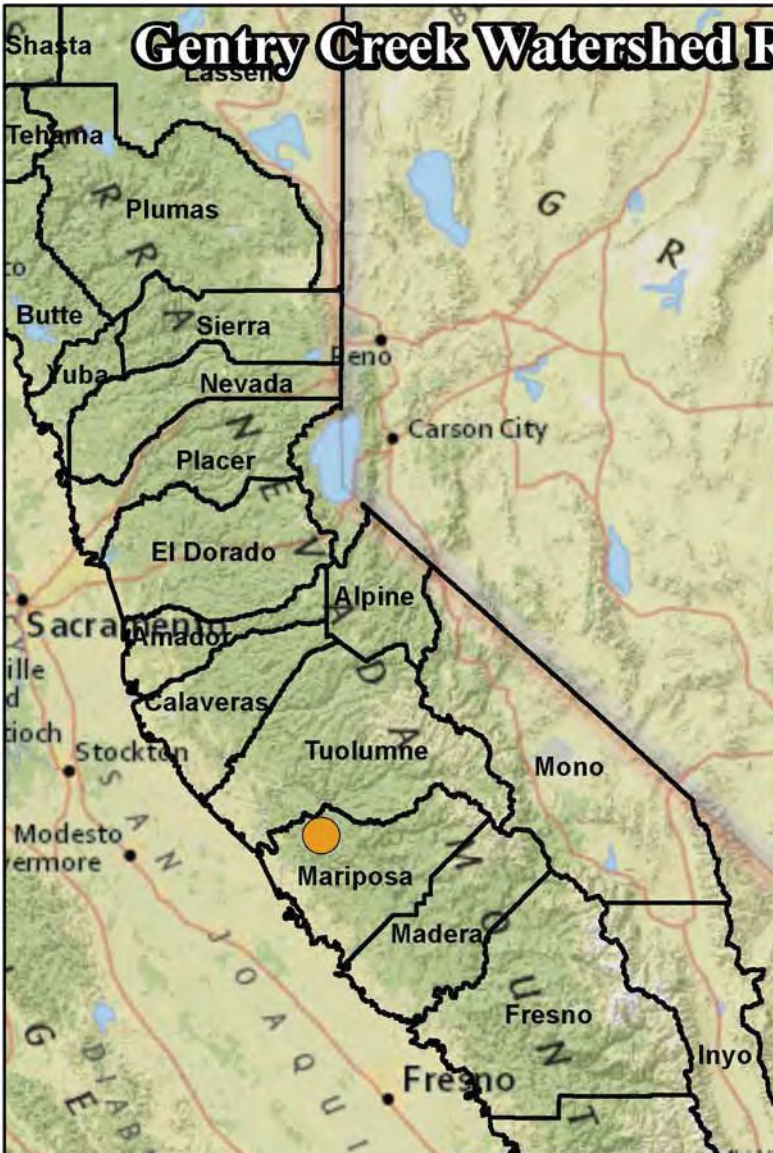


Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project Location



STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)*

SNC ID Number: 911

Applicant: Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation
and Development Council

Project Title: Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration
Project

SNC Subregion: South Central

County: Mariposa

Funding Amount Requested: \$498,985.00

Funding Amount Recommended: \$498,985.00

Total Project Cost: \$512,909.00

Final Score: 85

PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION

The Gentry Creek Watershed Improvement Project is a Category 1 Project located in northern Mariposa County, near the community of Greely Hill and within the North Fork of the Merced River Watershed. The Project is surrounded on all sides by the Stanislaus National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management. The Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (YSRC&DC) is looking to reduce fuel loading and increase wildfire resiliency by felling and removing beetle-killed pine trees on 300 acres of privately owned forestland split between 24 different landowners.

The Project is located in an area that has been hit hard the drought and is suffering extreme bark beetle infestation with approximately 75-80 percent pine mortality. This high fuel loading has left the landscape dangerously prone to catastrophic wildfires that could ultimately move onto neighboring public lands and damage the upper watershed. Pacific Gas and Electric has already felled trees that are adjacent to power lines, however, there still remains a staggering amount of dead/dying trees within the project site. The Project will be completed under a Drought Mortality Exemption (1038K) and has been reviewed for archeological and sensitive species habitat to ensure that there will be no unnecessary environmental damage. Treatments include felling and removal of dead/dying pines and mastication of all slash within the project site. Replanting is

being planned to follow with potential funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Similar conditions exist on the neighboring national forestland and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) properties, and high mortality levels have left the landscape susceptible to catastrophic wildfire. Both the US Forest Service and BLM are working to save their forestlands and protect public infrastructure. Other groups such as the Mariposa County Firesafe Council and the Southwest Interface Team are actively working in the region creating and maintaining strategic fuelbreaks and running fuel reduction programs. The Project adds to the effectiveness of the Stanislaus National Forest's Red Tsunami Project which connects with the Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project (GCWRP) on multiple sides. Additionally the Project ties into the Mariposa County Firesafe Council's nearby Texas Hill wildfire mitigation projects.

The Project takes place on private properties, with assistance from YSRC&DC. This local nonprofit is dedicated to natural resource conservation and economic development in the rural and foothill communities of Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Mariposa Counties. The Council has extensive experience managing and administering grants and watershed programs and works with a wide variety of partners. The YSRC&DC is currently managing a project funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and has successfully completed two projects all funded by SNC's Proposition 84 Grant Program.

The GCWRP leverages investments made by the group of participating landowners who have collectively hired a Registered Professional Forester to write the prescription.

This project supports both Proposition 1 and the goals of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. The GCWRP helps protect upper watershed stream courses and springs that flow into Lake McClure. This water is used for water supply for multiple communities and irrigation in the Central Valley and flows into the San Joaquin River, a tributary to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Site Preparation and Layout	Jan. – June 2017
Timber Felling and Removal	Apr. – Sep. 2017
Slash Mastication	Apr. – Nov. 2017
Site Review	November 2017
Six-Month Progress Reports	June, Dec. 2017
Final Report	December 2017
Estimated Project Completion Date	January 1, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

BUDGET CATEGORIES	SNC FUNDING
Project Costs:	
Timber Felling	\$180,000.00
Log Removal	\$112,500.00
Slash Mastication	\$157,500.00
Project Management	\$16,276.00
Administrative:	
Administrative Costs	\$32,709.00
TOTAL:	\$498,985.00

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION

SUPPORT:

- Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
- Stanislaus National Forest
- Mother Lode Field Office, Bureau of Land Management
- CAL FIRE
- Southwest Interface Team
- Mariposa County Firesafe Council
- Mariposa County Fire Department
- John Gray, District 4 Supervisor, Tuolumne County
- Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council

OPPOSITION:

- None

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

(Address)

County Clerk
County of Mariposa
PO Box 247
Mariposa, CA 95338

Project Title: Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in Mariposa County; centered at approximately 37.700079, -120.096645

Project Location – City: Approximately 6 miles east of Coulterville Project Location – County: Mariposa

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide approximately \$499,000 funding to the non-profit Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council to fall and remove dead timber affected by bark beetle infestations, sustained drought, and higher than normal temperatures in order to reduce wildfire risk and protect water quality on 296 acres of private property. (see attached)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council

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: 15304: Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project would result in minor alterations to the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation associated with forest management and restoration activities on 296 acres, including removal of dead trees and mastication of slash that would improve forest health and fire resistance and protect water quality. The project includes best management practices that would avoid significant impacts on the environment and would conform with forestry regulations for emergency timber operations.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

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: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

- Signed by Lead Agency
 - Signed by Applicant
- Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Revised 2005

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 911
Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Description of Activities

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding to the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council for site improvement/restoration activities on 296 acres. The proposed project would fall and remove dead timber, and transport it to either a decking facility or commercial sawmills. The project would also remove timber previously downed by PG&E. All slash would be masticated and spread to prevent soil erosion and add nutrient value back into the forest floor. The project site contains numerous springs and tributaries and is considered the headwaters of Gentry Creek, a major branch of the North Fork of the Merced River. The project area contains 75 – 80 percent visible bark beetle mortality. The State Tree Mortality Task Force has deemed the area immediately around the project as a Tier 1 hazard, which makes this project area a Tier 2 watershed and therefore a priority for treatment by the State of California. The proposed project also ties into similar projects on adjacent lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to increase forest and watershed resiliency as well as provide safe ingress and egress.

The project would aid in the protection of existing water storage capacity through reduced erosion and ultimately affect the downstream water supply to the communities of Don Pedro, La Grange, Snelling, and the Central Valley areas served by the Merced River. The project would also enhance carbon storage and rate of sequestration as this area would be less prone to catastrophic wildfire and would eventually return to functional forestland. The project would provide added protection to its USFS and BLM neighbors.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Gentry Creek Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the removal of dead and downed trees for forestry purposes, and mastication of slash that would be spread to prevent soil-erosion. This forestry work would not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project.

**Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)**

Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.</p>	<p>The goals of this 296-acre forestry project are to restore health to the forested areas east of the community of Coulterville, preventing catastrophic wildfires and protecting drinking water supplies, and improving downstream aquatic resources.</p> <p>The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of dead and downed trees. The project work would not occur on areas know to contain hazardous substances, nor would project activities occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources.</p>
<p>(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.</p>	<p>The forest management activities would not adversely affect environmental resources, and would therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. In fact, the project would result in beneficial effects to the project area forest, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and adjacent forested areas by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection. Consequently, the proposed project, in combination with other nearby forest management treatments, would not result in significant cumulative impacts.</p>
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. See Recreation and Scenic Resources.</p> <p>Agriculture/ Forestry. The project area does not contain any agricultural resources. The project operations would be short-term, temporary and would not affect the land’s ability to support grazing. The project would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on 296 acres by removing dead trees and thinning dense conifer stands, thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire. The project would have no permanent impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities would</p>

result in nominal fugitive dust, particulate, and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions would be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project area. Activities that emit fugitive dust and particulate (i.e., smoke) would not be conducted. Nearby sensitive receptors would not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and would not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources would be affected by the project.

The project area was evaluated for sensitive biological resources through a review of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database.

The western red bat is a species of special concern that may be present in the project area. This species roosts primarily in trees in edge habitats adjacent to streams, fields, or urban areas. Due to extensive tree mortality, much of the potential habitat is severely limited. Timber operations would not occur during wet conditions, and would not occur within flagged Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones that exclude heavy equipment.

The western pond turtle is a species of special concern that may be present in the project area. The project area does contain a pond, but without abundant vegetation. No turtles have been observed in the pond. However, the flagged Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone would exclude heavy equipment in case turtles are utilizing the pond.

No listed or sensitive species were observed in the project area during field reconnaissance or by landowners. However, the Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and Licensed Timber Operator (LTO) would be alert for their presence during pre-operations and active timber operations.

If evidence of these species is detected during project operations, work would be suspended until a CDFW Biologist is consulted.

The proposed action alternatives would slightly increase the risk of noxious weed introduction by creating conditions that favor noxious weed establishment; however, implementation of standard management practices and monitoring would result in a low risk of introduction and spread.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils, and would conform with forest practice regulations in accordance with the approval of emergency timber harvest operations issued by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in August 2016. The work planned as part of the project would not occur in wetlands or stream courses. Slash would be masticated and spread to prevent soil erosion and add nutrient value back into the forest floor. Project best management practices and design features would assure that significant impacts to water quality and beneficial uses would not occur. The watercourses and springs within the project area would, at a minimum, be provided a 50-foot protection zone surrounding the feature. Moreover, removal of dead trees would reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire that would otherwise threaten water quality and aquatic habitat.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).

Hydrology/Water Quality. See Geology/Soils.

Noise. Forestry activities would generate temporary noise. However, given that project activities would be limited to daytime (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project would not cause significant noise effects.

Recreation and Scenic Resources. No specific recreational developments or improvements are proposed as part of the forest management activities. The property is currently under private ownership and so public access is restricted. The project would have some temporary negative effects on visual quality resulting from

	<p>project activities. The project would have long-term benefits to the forest as a result of fuels reduction and therefore a reduced risk of catastrophic wildfire.</p> <p>Transportation. There would be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat would occur. The vehicles would not block traffic and no traffic delays would occur due to project activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project would have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, or utilities and service systems.</p>
<p>(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>The project area is not visible from a scenic highway, and would not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>The project is not located on a site which is included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources would be affected by the project.</p> <p>A literature review, records search, and information requests of Native American Tribes and the Native American Heritage Commission were conducted for the Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project. Based on this review, two historic sites and one prehistoric site were identified within the project area. These sites are protected by an equipment exclusion zone that would be flagged prior to operations. The RPF would also conduct a pre-operations meeting on site with the LTO prior to operations to assure these sites as well as other natural resource attributes would be afforded adequate protection. For these reasons, there would be no effects to any historic or prehistoric resources in this project area.</p> <p>If previously undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted</p>

	<p>immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals. No work would occur in the vicinity of sensitive cultural resources. The project would not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and would not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>
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