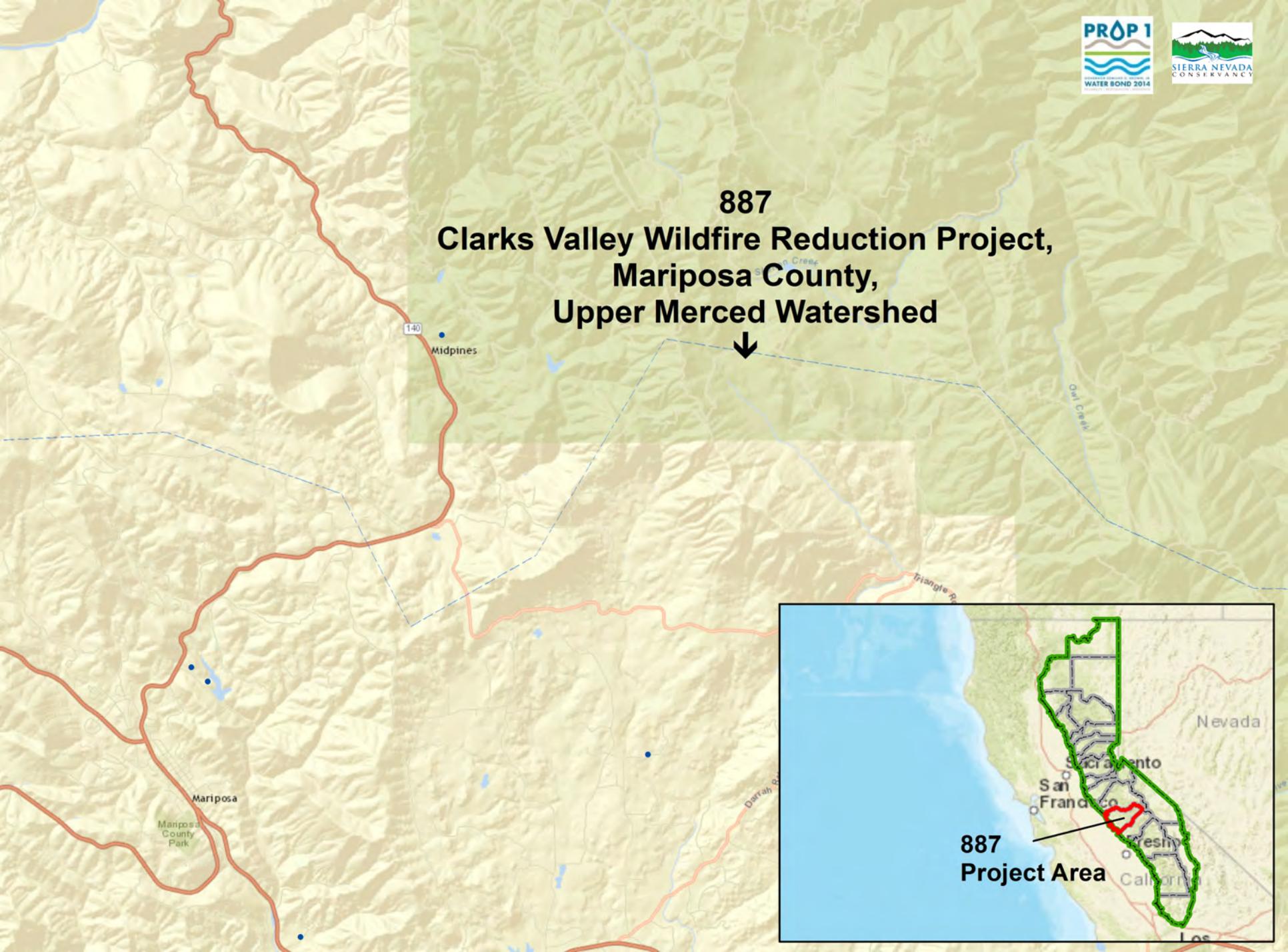


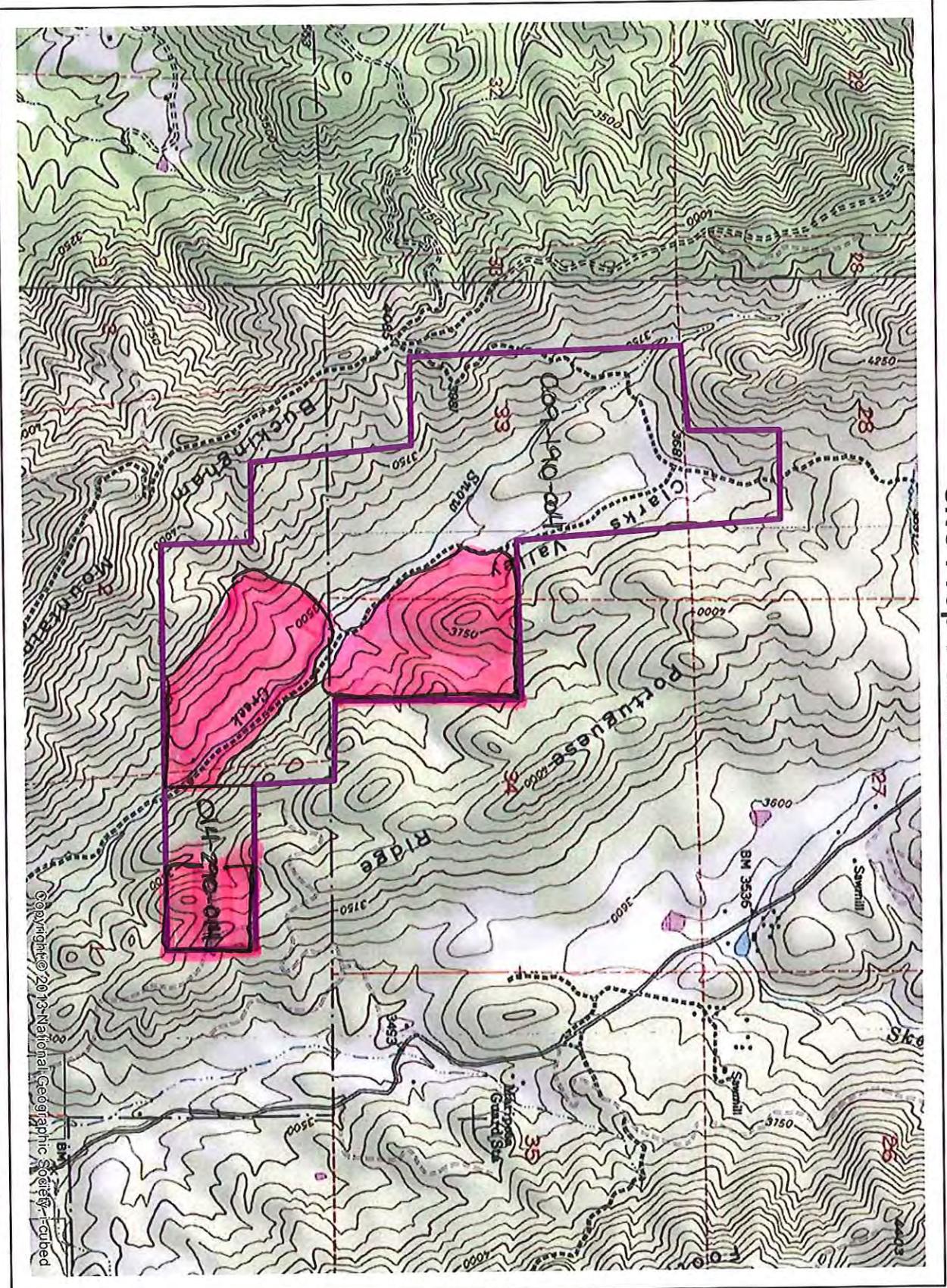
**887**  
**Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project,**  
**Mariposa County,**  
**Upper Merced Watershed**



**887**  
**Project Area**

# Topographic Map Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project SNC Prop 1 Grant

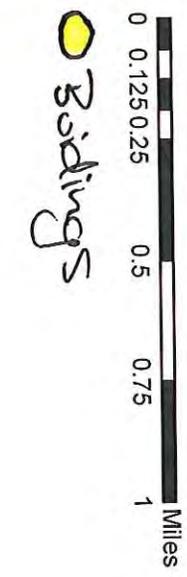
1:24,000



## Legend

- Clarks Valley Conservation Easement
- Parcel lines 009-190-004  
014-290-014

- Clarks Valley SNC  
Wildfire Hazard Reduction  
Removal of dead/dying  
intended trees



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

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

**Applicant:** Sierra Foothill Conservancy

**Project Title:** Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project

**Subregion:** South Central

**County:** Mariposa

**SNC Funding:** \$419,359

**Total Project Cost:** \$613,034

**Application Number:** 887

**Final Score:** 85

**PROJECT SCOPE**

The 833-acre Clarks Valley Conservation Easement protects land in the wildland-urban interface between the Sierra National Forest and the community of Jerseydale in Mariposa County. In addition to containing endangered Great Grey Owl habitat and sensitive historic and cultural resources, the land includes a large portion of the Snow Creek watershed, a major tributary to the Chowchilla River. The project lies along the watershed boundary between the Chowchilla and Merced Rivers, both major water suppliers to large irrigation districts in the San Joaquin Central Valley.

The project will use an existing Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) and a CAL FIRE Drought Mortality Exemption (1038-K) to remove dead and dying trees within a strategically located 175-acre subsection of the easement while still maintaining critical owl habitat and protecting streamside riparian zones and water quality. Merchantable timber will be sold and shipped off-site while all slash will be chipped and scattered, or burned on-site. This treatment will reduce fuel loading and provide a buffer zone that will reduce potential wildfire intensity and protect US Forest Service and private lands, as well as reducing the potential of wildfires crossing into multiple watersheds.

The landowners have been vigilant in maintaining the property and reducing fuel loads through personal investment and various grant funding (CAL FIRE and NRCS). Despite the landowner's best efforts, the current tree mortality disaster that has befallen the Sierra has overwhelmed them and devastated their pine forest. With approximately 50 percent of the conifers on the property dead or dying, the forest and watershed values protected by the conservation easement are threatened.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
6-month Progress Reports	December 2016 June 2017 December 2017 June 2018
Final Report	June 2018
Site layout/ tree marking	July – September 2016
Harvest Dead/ Dying Trees	September – December 2016 September – December 2017
Avian and Veg Monitoring	September – December 2016, September – December 2017
Pile Burning	November 2016 – April 2017 November 2017 – April 2018
Educational Tours and Implementation Site visits	October 2016 May – June 2017 October 2017
<b>FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST</b>	<b>June 2018</b>

## PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
<b>Direct*</b>	
Project Management	\$6,257
Dead/Dying Tree Removal	\$328,125
CCC Contract	\$23,676
Monitoring/ Reporting/ Invoice Billings	\$4,929
Publications/Printing/ Education and Outreach	1,673
<b>Administrative**</b>	
Administrative Costs	\$54,699
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$419,359</b>

\* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

\*\* Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

## **PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION**

- Support
  - Mariposa Supervisor Rosemarie Smallcombe
  - Mariposa Supervisor Kevin Cann
  - Mariposa Biomass Project
  - The Gaia Foundation
  - The Central Sierra – San Joaquin Valley Partnership

## **PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

# 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: Mariposa  
4982 10th Street  
Mariposa, CA 95338

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

Project Title: Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project

Project Applicant: Sierra Foothill Conservancy

Project Location - Specific:  
Near the community of Jerseydale in eastern Mariposa County, centered on 32' 59.4739" N and 119 degrees 51' 56.3132" W

Project Location - City: \_\_\_\_\_ Project Location - County: Mariposa

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:  
The project involves the removal of mature standing dead conifers within a 175 acre project area on private land (see attached).

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sierra Foothill Conservancy

**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, class 4, Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons why project is exempt:  
The project would result in minor alterations in the condition of land and vegetation associated with the removal of dead and dying trees for wildfire hazard reduction purposes (see attached).

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

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

Date Received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**  
**CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 887**  
**Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project**

**Description of Activities**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding to the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC) for the removal of mature, dead standing timber on 175 acres of privately-held land. The project would occur on the Clarks Valley Conservation Easement, a 833-acre mixed conifer and mountain meadow range, and timber land property owned and managed by Al and Carlene Anderson, and located in Jerseydale, a mountain community in eastern Mariposa County. SFC, Mr. Anderson, and his Registered Professional Forester have strategically chosen the 175-acre project area in which to remove mature, dead standing conifers to reduce wildfire risk and enhance forest health.

The project would be conducted under the 1038K emergency permit from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) and would include forestry actions to remove trees that have suffered from drought and insect mortality or were killed by the 2013 Carstens Fire. The project site is also within an area subject to a Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) that was approved by CalFire in 2004. The NTMP identifies required resource protection measures including watercourse, wildlife habitat, and cultural resource protection best management practices. The NTMP also provides guidance on the harvesting, growth, regeneration and management of conifers; and dictates spacing of trees, age for harvesting, standards for height and size, and other details of the forestry actions.

For this project, a company of licensed timber operators would systematically remove dead and dying conifers. Specific practices would include: identification of snags for retention to provide wildlife habitat; harvesting of dead, dying, and insect-infested trees; treating resultant slash through biomass chipping or piling for burning; delivering logs to Mariposa County deck locations for disposal; and burning slash piles. Work performed by the timber harvest contractor would include the falling, skidding, loading, and trucking of the timber. The majority of slash would be chipped and disposed of off-site; and any slash not hauled off-site would be raked, piled, and either chipped or burned on-site. Staff and equipment required to accomplish this would include approximately two timber fallers, two skidders, one loader, one water truck, one landing man, one portable chipper, and necessary log trucks. A Registered Professional Forester would provide oversight during the process, and a Licensed Timber Operator would perform the tree removal work.

SFC would monitor the area to ensure compliance with scope of work and permits, and to collect data for performance measures. Additional monitoring would be conducted by CalFire, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Point Blue Conservation Science. Collected data would be analyzed by SFC and the landowner to understand the pre- and post- project implementation effects on wildlife, and would inform the ongoing management of Clarks Valley.

**Reasons Why the Project is Exempt**

The Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alternations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation that do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations are for forestry purposes, and they involve the removal of dead and dying trees, and chipping or burning slash.

**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 discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project.

<b>Table 1</b>	
<b>Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)</b>	
<b>Exception</b>	<b>Applicability</b>
<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 project site is within an area subject to a Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) that was approved by CalFire in 2004, and is also covered by a 1038k emergency timber harvest order from CalFire. These documents provide guidance on the harvesting, growth, regeneration and management of the property, and include measures to avoid environmentally sensitive areas, to protect wildlife, and to protect water quality.</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 forestry activities would not adversely affect environmental resources, and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other projects in the region. The NTMP evaluated the cumulative effects of forest treatments on the site and found no significant 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 project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p><b>Aesthetics.</b> The project would involve the removal of dead conifers which would result in an improvement to the site aesthetics. In addition, the project site is located on private property and is not readily visible from public gather places.</p> <p><b>Agriculture/ Forestry.</b> The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project would benefit forestry resources by removing dead trees consistent with Governor Brown’s EP for dead/dying tree removal in High Hazard Zones.</p> <p><b>Air Quality/GHGs.</b> The project activities will result in nominal fugitive dust and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions will be limited to those associated with vehicle trips</p>

to/from the site improvement/restoration areas, and mechanized equipment. Mechanized equipment will be used for restoration activities (i.e., small chainsaws and chipper). Any activities that release particulate matter (e.g., burning), would be conducted in compliance with a permit from the Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District, which would include measures to minimize impacts. Nearby sensitive receptors will not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The restoration will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

**Biological Resources.** No work would occur in the vicinity of sensitive resources. The project area provides habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife and management activities would preserve the variety of habitats on the property. The NTMP evaluated the site for the presence of special status species, and determined that forestry activities on the site would not impact special status species. The NTMP provides that, if evidence of nesting or denning of any listed species (defined pursuant to 14 CCR 895.1) is discovered, operations shall be stopped, and the California Department of Fish and Game shall be contacted to initiate consultation. Species that have been accepted for review under the Federal Endangered Species Act listing process, such as the California Spotted Owl, would also be covered by this process. With the implementation of best management practices described throughout the plan, no adverse effect on sensitive plants or animals would occur.

**Cultural Resources.** See (f).

**Geology/Soils.** Project activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. Standard watercourse protection widths would be observed. In addition, the NTMP includes specific design features to reduce the potential for effects that could result in erosion and degrade water quality.

**Hazards/Hazardous Materials.** See (e).

**Hydrology/Water Quality.** See (a) and Geology/Soils.

	<p><b>Noise.</b> Project activities will generate temporary noise. However, no sensitive receptors are within the vicinity of the project site, thus the project would not result in significant impacts related to noise.</p> <p><b>Transportation.</b> There will be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat will occur. The vehicles will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to restoration activities.</p> <p><b>Other CEQA Issues.</b> The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, 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 proposed project 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 site is not located on toxic sites listed 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>The project will not affect historic, cultural, or paleontological resources. Archeological surveys and consultation with Tribal groups occurred during preparation of the NTMP. Previous archaeological surveys have identified lithic scatter on existing roads. However, vehicle and equipment use of the roadways has occurred regularly and is not considered to effect the resource. In addition, the SNC used information from the Native American Heritage Commission and a map of ancestral tribal territories that was prepared for the CA Water Plan to identify tribal groups that may have information on cultural resources within the project area. The SNC contacted potentially knowledgeable tribal groups to solicit information on tribal resources potentially affected by the project. Potentially affected tribal groups did not identify tribal resources within the project area.</p>