



**State of California – The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Department of Parks and Recreation
Santa Cruz District
303 Big Trees Road
Felton, CA 95018

PROJECT TITLE: Portola Redwoods Forest Resiliency Project

LOCATION: Portola Redwoods State Park

COUNTY: San Mateo

DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PROJECT: This project proposes to restore ecological function, habitat resilience, and fire-adapted forest conditions within Portola Redwoods State Park, and adjacent Save the Redwoods League-owned lands in the Peters Creek watershed, to enhance habitat for special status species, such as marbled murrelet, Dudley's lousewort, coho salmon, and steelhead, and reduce future fire risk through a return to ecologically appropriate disturbance regimes.

Additionally, the project will enhance ecological resilience through restoration of a forest structure that supports long-term ecosystem health in both old-growth coast redwood and second-growth stands; reduce the risk and impacts of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) to maintain oak and mixed hardwood communities; maintain and restore meadow and hardwood habitats to support native plant diversity and associated wildlife; enhance native species diversity and structural complexity; promote watershed health; and reduce wildfire risk while maintaining key habitat features. Associated work will:

- Utilize prescribed fire, including both pile burning and broadcast burning, to restore the ecological role of fire, promote native plant diversity, reduce fuel accumulations, and create conditions that support healthy understory regeneration;
- Create and maintain control lines around burn units, prioritizing protection of old-growth redwoods and wildlife trees;
- Thin targeted areas of Douglas-fir encroaching into oak woodlands and meadows to promote native hardwoods and grassland diversity;
- Thin second-growth redwood and Douglas-fir stands to reduce stem density, improve forest structure, and accelerate development of late-seral characteristics;
- Use manual, mechanical and chemical techniques to control invasive species such as periwinkle (*Vinca major*), stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*), French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), and other non-native vegetation;
- Remove adjacent surface and ladder fuels to protect murrelet-suitable nesting trees, including those with large crowns, broken tops, platforms, or other structural features;
- Install accelerated large wood recruitment (AWR) projects in streams and riparian corridors to enhance habitat availability and complexity for steelhead trout and coho salmon; and
- Remove failing and deteriorating culverts along old legacy roads to reestablish natural hydrologic function, improve aquatic habitat connectivity and reduce sediment delivery.

PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVING THE PROJECT: California Department of Parks and Recreation

NAME OF DIVISION OR DISTRICT CARRYING OUT THE PROJECT: Santa Cruz District

EXEMPT STATUS:

☒ Statutory Exemption; California Public Resources Code 21080.56

REASONS WHY PROJECT IS EXEMPT: This project is exempt pursuant to CEQA guidelines section 15025 (a)(l), and this project meets all the requirements described in the California Public Resources Code, section 21080.56, because the project is exclusively a project to restore and enhance habitat for California native fish and wildlife. The project obtained concurrence from the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, that the project qualifies as a statutorily exempt restoration project on August 13th, 2026.

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Chris Spohrer

8/14/26

Chris Spohrer
District Superintendent
Santa Cruz District

DATE