

Background

In November 2006, California voters passed Proposition 84, which included an allocation of \$54 million of bond funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). In January 2007, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved \$17 million in grant funds for the SNC for Fiscal Year 2007-08. It is anticipated that the additional bond funds will be appropriated over the next two fiscal years.

During the first half of 2007, the SNC held a series of workshops to assist in the development of Program and Proposition 84 Grants Guidelines. At the July 2007 meeting, the Board approved final guidelines that define eligible project and grant types, grant size limits, availability of funds, selection criteria and how to apply for funding.

The Board also approved a plan to allocate the grant funds as follows: \$9 million for a Competitive Grants Program and \$8 million for Strategic Opportunity Grants (SOGs).

In March, 2008 the SNC Board authorized 13 competitive grants for \$6,831,922, leaving an available balance of up to \$2,168,078 for possible authorization at the June meeting. At that meeting the Board authorized staff to shift funds between categories if necessary in order to recommend the highest priority projects for Board approval at the June Board meeting.

Current Status

Project Evaluation

Following the March meeting, staff reviewed remaining Competitive Grant projects for possible consideration by the Board at this meeting. A number of high scoring projects were unable to be recommended based on the inability to resolve CEQA and appraisal issues. In addition, staff became aware of a pending Attorney General's opinion holding that it is inappropriate to use Proposition 84 funds for purposes of the retirement of debt. Based on this knowledge, two projects considered are not being recommended.

After extensive review, it was determined that a total of five projects are being recommended for a total of \$1,512,413. This leaves a balance of \$655,665. Staff is recommending the re-allocation of \$583,084 of Competitive funds among four Subregions to fund SOGs (Agenda Item XIII) as follows: \$18,404 be re-allocated to the North Subregion; \$81,270 be re-allocated to the Central Subregion; \$162,411 be re-allocated to the South Subregion; and \$320,999 be re-allocated to the East Subregion. This would result in an unspent balance of \$72,581 and when combined with remaining SOG allocation the unspent balance is approximately \$75,000.

Reviews of technical aspects, environmental documentation, and real estate appraisals were performed by experts in the Department of General Services, other state agencies and consultants.

As required by statute, the SNC consulted with city and county officials and appropriate water agencies regarding project proposals within their jurisdictions. No comments were received on these projects.

Summary of Applications Reviewed

For fiscal year 2007-08 a total of 32 Competitive grant applications requesting \$17,647,268 million were determined to be eligible for Proposition 84 Grant funding and were reviewed by staff.

Six applications were moved to the SOG category and 13 grants were authorized by the Board at the March meeting. The remaining list of eligible applications yielded five projects totaling \$1,512,413 for consideration at this meeting. There are a number of Competitive applications that are not being recommended for the reasons stated above or because staff believes that they would not result in significant contributions to the SNC mission or the purposes of Proposition 84.

Projects Recommended for Funding

A spreadsheet showing project specific information and individual summaries for projects being recommended for Board approval are included as a part of this report as Exhibit A.

The total amount being recommended for funding in this cycle is \$1,512,413. The recommended projects (Exhibit A) received the highest scores, are able to be implemented on a timely basis and meet all environmental review and documentation requirements. The five projects recommended for funding in this round of Competitive grants will contribute to erosion control measures on one acre of steep road-cut and treatment of 470 acres of forested land for fire prevention and watershed protection.

The projects directly leverage over \$320,000 being committed in funds and in-kind contributions by applicants and others.

CEQA Compliance

The projects being recommended each require the Conservancy to complete a Notice of Exemption, to be filed with the State Clearinghouse. Notices of Exemption have been prepared for review and will be filed upon Board approval Attachment B.

The Board packet contains all notices referenced above.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board authorize **Competitive Grants listed in Agenda Item XII Exhibit A**, and further authorize staff to enter into all necessary agreements and file the appropriate CEQA documentation with the State Clearinghouse for all projects.

Agenda Item XII Exhibit A
 RECOMMENDED COMPETITIVE GRANT APPLICATIONS
 June 5, 2008

Reference #	County	Project Title	Grantee Organization	Total	URL
SNC 070208	Placer	Alpine Meadows Community Consolidated Fuels Reduction Project	Alpine Springs County Water District/Alpine Meadows Fire Safe Council	\$ 176,375	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070208final.pdf
SNC 070235	Mariposa	Mariposa County Chipping Program	Mariposa County Firesafe Council	\$ 115,787	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070235final.pdf
SNC 070236	Nevada, Placer	Vegetation Management: Forest Thinning, Brush Mastication and Prescribed Burning	California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation	\$ 214,044	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070236final.pdf
SNC 070245	Placer	US Hwy. 40 (Donner Pass Road) Shoulder Rehabilitation	Placer County Department of Public Works	\$ 500,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070245final.pdf
SNC 070246	Placer	Hidden Falls Regional Park - Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities	Placer County	\$ 506,207	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070246final.pdf
Grand Total				\$ 1,512,413	

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, 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 _____

Project Title: US Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) Shoulder Rehabilitation (SNC 070245)

Project Location – Specific:

US Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) approximately one mile west of Donner Summit

Project Location – City: outside of Truckee

Project Location – County: Placer

Description of Project:

Placer County Department of Public Works is requesting \$1 million from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to rehabilitate a 1-acre section of eroding slopes within the Placer County right-of-way on Donner Pass Road with mechanical and/or native vegetation treatments to both improve water quality and the aesthetics of the roadway. Dilapidated drainage facilities will be replaced and/or upgraded to better contain and treat slope and road storm water runoff. See attached description.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Tule River Indian Reservation

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 2180(b)(1); 15285);
 Declared Emergency (Sec 21080(b)(3); 15269(2));
 Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
 Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15301, "Existing Facilities," and Section 15333, "Small Habitat Restoration Projects"
 Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project will involve native plant revegetation and mechanical slope stabilization measures to repair a 1-acre area of eroding roadway slopes. Donner Pass Road will not be expanded. The project will not result in significant adverse impacts to special status species or cumulative environmental impacts and there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site. No permits are known to be required other than ensuring compliance with the Regional Water Quality Control Board - Central Region Stormwater Construction General Permit. See attached description.

Lead Agency:

Contact Person: Marji Feliz Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

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: Executive Officer

Jim Branham

- Signed by Lead Agency
 Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

January 2004

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Sections 15301 and 15333

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Competitive Grant Application Number 070245
US Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) Shoulder Rehabilitation Project

Description of Activities

Placer County Department of Public Works is requesting \$1 million from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to rehabilitate an approximately 1-acre section of eroding slopes within the Placer County right-of-way on US Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) with rock slope protection, native vegetation treatments, and/or retaining walls to both improve water quality and the aesthetics of the roadway. Up to 200-feet of dilapidated culvert drainage pipe will also be replaced and upgraded to better contain and treat slope and road storm water runoff. The project is located in the Placer County right-of-way along Donner Pass Road, approximately one mile west of Donner Summit. This section of highway was built over 70 years ago in loose erodible soils and bedrock. Roadway cuts in this area are now as high as 65 feet and as long as 300 feet, with slope angles approaching 36 degrees (73 percent). These barren roadway cut slopes have been an ongoing source of erosion and sediment runoff onto the highway as well as downgradient properties and surface waters (South Yuba River and Lake Van Norden).

Temporary best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented during restoration/construction activities, including dry-season construction, erosion control devices and temporary area closures. The project will result in permanent BMPs in the form of slope stabilization, which will result in benefits to the watershed including improved drainage controls and reduced sediment runoff. Reducing erosion and sedimentation will improve the quality of runoff draining into the South Yuba River. No permits are known to be required for this project other than ensuring compliance with the Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Region Stormwater Construction General Permit, which will be completed as part of final project design.

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 15301: Existing Facilities

The Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1, which is defined as follows:

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. The types of "existing facilities" itemized below are not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of projects which might fall within Class 1. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of an existing use. Examples include but are not limited to:

...

(c) Existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety)

...

(h) Maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and water supply reservoirs (excluding the use of pesticides, as defined in Section 12753, Division 7, Chapter 2, Food and Agriculture Code);

...

The Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project will involve stabilizing eroding slopes and repairing drainage facilities within the Placer County right-of-way along Donner Pass Road. The road will not be expanded.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15333: Small Habitat Restoration Projects

The Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15333, Class 33, which is defined as follows:

Class 33 consists of projects not to exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife provided that:

- (a) There would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare, or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065,
- (b) There are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed, and
- (c) The project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects and the effects of probable future projects.
- (d) Examples of small restoration projects may include, but are not limited to
 - (1) revegetation of disturbed areas with native plant species;

...

The Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project will involve native plant revegetation and mechanical slope stabilization measures to repair an approximately 1-acre area of eroding roadway slopes. The project will not result in significant adverse impacts to special status species or cumulative environmental impacts and there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site.

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 a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The project will avoid adverse impacts through minimizing new ground disturbance, emphasizing slope stabilization through revegetation and self-sustaining native plants, and restricting construction to the summer period to minimize runoff during construction. The project will result in permanent BMPs in the form of slope stabilization, which will result in benefits to the watershed including improved drainage controls and reduced sediment runoff. Reducing erosion and sedimentation will improve the quality of runoff draining into the South Yuba River. No permits are known to be required for this project other than ensuring compliance with the Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Region Stormwater Construction General Permit, which will be completed as part of final project design. A storm water pollution prevention plan will be prepared.
(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.	Rehabilitation of the eroding road slope will not adversely affect environmental resources and will not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to projects in the area. The slope stabilization will result in beneficial effects related to reducing erosion and sedimentation, long-term protection of water quality in the South Yuba River watershed and revegetation with native plants.

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
<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 Donner Pass Road Shoulder Rehabilitation Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. Temporary disturbances to the visual quality of the site will occur during project construction. However, the stabilization and rehabilitation of the eroded slopes with native vegetation and mechanical measures will improve the visual quality of that section of Donner Pass Road and will help the transportation corridor blend with the surrounding undisturbed landscape.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. Restoration/construction activities will result in nominal fugitive dust and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions will be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project area. Some motorized equipment will be used for project implementation, but revegetation will be done by hand. Given the limited ground disturbance for restoration activities and lack of sensitive receptors in close proximity to work areas, 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.</p> <p>Biological Resources. See (a).</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. The purpose of the project is to stabilize an eroding slope along Donner Pass Road. The slope rehabilitation will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. The slope stabilization will involve repairing drainage facilities to better contain and treat slope and road storm water runoff. The project will stabilize eroding slopes to prevent ongoing sedimentation into the South Yuba watershed. A detailed storm water pollution prevention plan will be prepared and BMPs will be implemented during construction to prevent the discharge of soils into waterways. Due to the limited ground disturbance for restoration activities, it is unlikely that groundwater will be encountered; in addition, the project will have no other effect on groundwater supplies or recharge.</p> <p>Noise. Temporary construction activities will generate noise. However, given that slope stabilization activities will be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day) and the limited extent in which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling equipment and work crews to the site. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation. The vehicles will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to installation activities.</p>

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
	Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.
(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.	US Highway 40 is not designated as a state scenic highway. Therefore, the slope stabilization will 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. Additionally, the stabilization and revegetation of the eroded slopes will improve the visual quality of that section of Donner Pass Road
(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.	The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. In addition, the slope rehabilitation will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.
(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.	Due to the disturbed nature of the project site and the limited ground disturbance for restoration activities, the project will not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, 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 _____

Project Title: Vegetation Management, Forest Thinning, Brush Mastication and Prescribed Burning (SNC 070236)

Project Location – Specific:

Donner Memorial State Park, 12 miles northwest of North Lake Tahoe near the town of Truckee. The project site is on the east end of Schallenberger Ridge, bordered by Donner Memorial State Park campground, Teichert and Caltrans properties, Cold Creek, the Union Pacific Railroad and Coldstream Valley. The project site is located within the Emigrant Canyon watershed and the Donner Lake watershed.

Project Location – City: Outside of the town of Truckee **Project Location – County:** Placer and Nevada

Description of Project:

California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation is requesting \$238,184 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to complete three types of vegetation management: 35 acres of hand thinning and subsequent pile burning on a 50% slope in a White Fir dominant forest stand; 29 acres of brush mastication under an open Jeffery Pine stand with a Manzanita dominant shrub understory; and 23 acres of understory prescribed burning in open Jeffery Pine with sparse shrub and pine litter understory. See attached description.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation

Exempt Status: (*check one*)

- Ministerial (Sec. 2180(b)(1); 15285);
- Declared Emergency (Sec 21080(b)(3); 15269(2));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, "Minor Alterations to Land"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Donner MSP Vegetation Management Project will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels. The proposed vegetation management activities are not expected to generate any significant environmental effects. This project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and improve native forest composition and structure. See attached description.

Lead Agency:

Contact Person: Marji Feliz **Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** (530) 823-4679

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: Executive Officer

Jim Branham

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

January 2004

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Competitive Grant Application Number 070236
Vegetation Management, Forest Thinning, Brush Mastication, and Prescribed Burning Project

Description of Activities

California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation, (State Parks) is requesting \$238,184 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to complete three types of vegetation management in Donner Memorial State Park (Donner MSP). Donner MSP is situated near the town of Truckee, 12 miles northwest of North Lake Tahoe. The project will be implemented on the east end of Schallenberger Ridge, bordered by Donner MSP campground, Teichert and Caltrans properties, Cold Creek, the Union Pacific Railroad and Coldstream Valley. The project site is easily accessed by dirt road and lies within the Emigrant Canyon watershed and the Donner Lake watershed.

The restoration project includes three types of vegetation management: 35 acres of hand thinning and subsequent pile burning on a 50% slope in a White Fir (*Abies concolor*) dominant forest stand; 29 acres of brush mastication under an open Jeffery Pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) stand with a Manzanita dominant shrub understory; and 23 acres of understory prescribed burning in open Jeffery Pine with sparse shrub and pine litter understory. Project work shall be performed by a hand crew, and a masticator consisting of a State Parks excavator equipped with a masticating head. Purchase of the masticating head will be grant funded. Project oversight will be provided by State Park Forester I. State Park Archaeologist will perform PRC 5024 cultural review including a records search and site survey.

The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire, protect both the Emigrant Canyon and Donner Lakes watersheds, and improve native forest composition and structure. Overall goals of the forest management in Donner MSP include protecting forest resources from potential fire, insect disease threats, and long-term restoration of estimated native forest conditions. Active management is necessary due to past resource exploitation and fire exclusion in a fire-dependent ecosystem. Forest disturbances such as fire and insect attack now have a much greater potential to kill entire forest stands, as compared to under native disturbance regimes. A specific goal is protection from catastrophic wildfire causing significant damage to the watershed. The project is consistent with State Park's park-wide management goals and guidelines as outlined in the Donner Memorial State Park General Plan and it directly ties to the proposed changes to the Nevada County Fire Plan, which states that "the primary goals of the fire plan are to reduce fire severity and intensity through fuels management."

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 Donner MSP Vegetation Management Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which is defined as follows:

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

...

(d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.

...

The Donner MSP Vegetation Management Project will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels. The proposed vegetation management activities are not expected to generate any significant environmental effects. This project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and improve native forest composition and structure.

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 a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Donner MSP Vegetation Management Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	Vegetation management activities will be managed by a California Registered Professional Forester. Hand crews will perform forest thinning; brush mastication will be performed by a mechanical excavator. Best management practices will be employed to prevent soil erosion and areas where heavy equipment has disturbed soils will be restored to pre-disturbance conditions and mulched with native forest litter. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, protect both the Emigrant Canyon and Donner Lake watershed, and improve native forest composition and structure.
(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.	The fuel removal activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other fuels reduction work in the area.
(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>The project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. The presence of workers and equipment during fuel clearing work will be temporary. The project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the existing forest due to a more open understory. However, the intent of the project is to restore the forest to a more natural condition.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. Project work will be managed by a Prescribed Fire Burn Boss. Prescribed burning, including pile burning, shall be implemented in accordance with county and state regulations, including filing a Smoke Management Plan with the Placer County Air Pollution Control District and the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. A Prescribed Fire Burn Plan will be prepared and approved prior to understory burning. Prescribed Fire Complexity for pile burning is low.</p> <p>Biological Resources. See (a).</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. Use of heavy equipment for mastication may increase the potential for surface erosion. Twigs and branches will be chipped and broadcast onto the ground to act as a soil stabilization measure. Removal of fuels will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. Best management practices will be employed to prevent soil erosion. Disturbance of soils and topography due to heavy equipment (masticator) could disrupt natural water flow paths. All disturbed areas will be de-compacted</p>

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
	<p>and the natural topography and drainage patterns will be restored to pre-disturbance conditions and mulched with native forest litter. A Waiver of waste discharge requirements for minor timber harvest activities shall be filed with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. The removal of fuels will work to protect water quality by reducing the risk of erosion associated with fire. The project will have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge.</p> <p>Noise. The project will generate noise during fuel removal; however, this will be a temporary condition and will occur during normal working hours, the least sensitive hours of the day. Additionally, there is a limited extent to which the fuel clearing activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels. Therefore, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. All public roads and trails will remain open during operations. Information signs with a contact telephone number will be posted. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling thinning equipment and work crews. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</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.	Highway 80 in the vicinity of Truckee is an eligible state scenic highway. However, the forest thinning activities would not significantly alter, nor damage, views of the forest from the highway.
(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.	The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. In addition, the restoration will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.
(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.	A preconstruction archaeological survey and resource inventory will be completed for the project area, pursuant to PRC 5024. If evidence of potentially significant historical or archaeological resources is found, the District or Service Center archaeologist will be contacted. Identified cultural resources will be flagged no more than 30-days prior to the start of work and will be identified on a topographic map. Resource locations and protection measures will be communicated to the project manager and any fuel reduction in areas within/adjacent to recorded archaeological or cultural resource sites will be limited to hand clearing and no burning will be allowed. Vehicles and burning will be prohibited within the exclusion zones. This will ensure that the project avoids any significant effects to cultural resources.

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, 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 _____

Project Title: Mariposa County Chipping Program (SNC 070235)

Project Location – Specific:
Chowchilla River, North and South Fork of Merced River, and Fresno River watersheds

Project Location – City: n/a **Project Location – County:** Mariposa

Description of Project:
Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$115,787 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to implement forest fuels reduction on the Chowchilla River, North and South Fork of Merced River, and Fresno River watersheds and provide free residential chipping services and defensible space inspections for area private properties. See attached description.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Mariposa County Fire Safe Council

Exempt Status: (check one)
 Ministerial (Sec. 2180(b)(1); 15285);
 Declared Emergency (Sec 21080(b)(3); 15269(2));
 Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
 Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, "Minor Alterations to Land"
 Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:
The Mariposa County Chipping Program will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to chip and redistribute fire fuels removed from defensible space around residences. The chipping and redistribution of trees and brush will complete work necessary to reduce fire risk and will prevent regrowth of weeds and invasive plants. The proposed chipping activities are not expected to generate any significant environmental effects. See attached description.

Lead Agency:
Contact Person: Marji Feliz **Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** (530) 823-4679

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 Jim Branham Date: _____ Title: Executive Officer

Signed by Lead Agency
 Signed by Applicant Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Competitive Grant Application Number 070235
Mariposa County Chipping Program

Description of Activities

Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$115,787 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to implement forest fuels reduction on the Chowchilla River, North and South Fork of Merced River, and Fresno River watersheds and provide free residential chipping services and defensible space inspections for area private properties, thereby minimizing the threat of wildfires in a residential and recreational area. The Chowchilla River, North and South Fork of Merced River, and Fresno River watersheds are rural residential and recreational areas in the southwest portion of Mariposa County.

The major task of the project is to provide educational and chipping services to private properties in high risk areas. The program is designed to educate and assist residents in reducing the risk of losing their homes and property to wildfire, while encouraging them to practice proper conservation of historical, archeological, and natural resource and watershed values.

Residents will cut brush around structures and along driveways and routes of ingress/egress, and pile cut material within 10 foot easements along existing roads and driveways prior to the crew's arrival. The program will provide educational and chipping crews, and all necessary equipment, maintenance, and insurance. The crews will educate residents about 'defensible space' around their homes, structures, and fire escape routes. Chipped materials will be left in piles for future use as mulch or broadcast for weed abatement and erosion control per request of property owners.

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 Mariposa County Chipping Program is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which is defined as follows:

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

...

(d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.

...

(f) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions.

...

The Mariposa County Chipping Program will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels within a residential and recreational area as well as provide chipping services for private homeowners who complete fuel management activities around their homes.

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 a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Mariposa County Chipping Program.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The project involves chipping brush and wood for the purpose of reducing fire hazards. The project will occur in the perimeter around residential homes. The chipping will observe avoidance measures for special status species and sensitive environments. All work is short term. The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and restore balance to the area's natural habitat.
(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.	The fuel removal activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other fuels reduction work in the area.
(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>The project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. The project have no impact on aesthetic resources because chipping will not alter the baseline view or scenic resources.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. The project will not result in impacts on air quality. Fuels removal will be done by hand crews and the chipping will eliminate the need to burn woody debris removed from defensible space.</p> <p>Biological Resources. See (a).</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. The chipping activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. The chipping of fire fuel will not impact water quality and instead will protect water quality by reducing the risk of erosion associated with fire. The project will have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge.</p> <p>Noise. The project will generate noise during fuel removal and chipping; however, this will be a temporary condition and will occur during normal working hours, the least sensitive hours of the day. Therefore, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed to haul chippers and workers. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation.</p>

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
	Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.
(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.	Highway 140 in Mariposa County is an eligible state scenic highway. However, the forest thinning activities are not in the vicinity of Highway 140 nor would they significantly alter, or damage, views from the highway.
(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.	The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. In addition, the chipping activities will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.
(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.	The chipping activities will avoid disturbances to cultural resources and will not require excavation that could affect buried cultural, palaeontological resources or human remains.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Competitive Grant Application Number 070246
Hidden Falls Regional Park - Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities Project

Description of Activities

Placer County Department of Facility Services, Parks Division, is requesting \$517,859 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to create three shaded fuel breaks and a firebreak on 108 acres of Hidden Falls Regional Park. The park is located in the Sierra Nevada Foothills between Auburn and Lincoln. The principle vegetation types are mixed oak savanna, blue oak woodland, and annual grassland. The fuel load reduction and related fire safe activities will include the creation of shaded fuel breaks covering 94 acres of brush, annual grassland, and timberland; clearing a 15 foot wide, 8 mile access perimeter around the property (14 acres); mowing 10 acres of grasslands to create defensible space around the parking and staging areas; and the purchase of an all-terrain Mower for creation of and the on-going maintenance of the shaded fuel breaks and grasslands.

The shaded fuel breaks will range from 200 feet wide to 300 feet wide depending upon the degree of slopes. The project will entail a combination of thinning of the forest canopy by removal of trees so that no more than 40-60% of ground is covered by their canopy, trimming ladder fuels from the ground to a height of between 6 feet to 10 feet, and removing the understory vegetation. Twigs and branches will be chipped and the chips will be broadcast onto the ground to act as a soil stabilization measure, as well as a weed inhibitor. An All Terrain Mower will be used to mow slopes up to 34 degrees that are not accessible with conventional mowers.

Vegetation management and fuel load reduction will protect the Deadman Creek and Coon Creek watersheds. It will also reduce the risk of wildfire and protect neighboring communities, wildlife habitat, natural resources, and an archaeological site.

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 Hidden Falls Regional Park - Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which is defined as follows:

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

...

(d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.

...

The Hidden Falls Regional Park - Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities Project will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels.

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 a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Hidden Falls Regional Park - Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities Project.

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The project involves thinning common tree and brush species on parkland for the purpose of reducing fire hazards and restoring balance to the area's natural habitat. Work will be performed by a hand crew, the County's masticator, and an all-terrain mower. The shaded fuel breaks will be designed and cleared under the direction of a registered forester.
(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.	The fuel removal activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other fuels reduction work in the area.
(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>The project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. The presence of workers and equipment during fuel clearing work will be temporary. The project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the existing forest due to a more open understory. However, the intent of the project is to restore the forest to a more natural condition.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. The project may temporarily affect air quality during fuel reduction activities. Equipment used for fuel removal will use approved emission control devices.</p> <p>Biological Resources. See (a).</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. Use of heavy equipment for mastication and mowing may increase the potential for surface erosion. Twigs and branches will be chipped and broadcast onto the ground to act as a soil stabilization measure. Removal of fuels will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. The removal of fuels will work to protect water quality by reducing the risk of erosion associated with fire. Best management practices will be employed to prevent soil erosion. The project will have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge.</p> <p>Noise. The project will generate noise during fuel removal; however, this will be a temporary condition and will occur during normal working hours, the least sensitive hours of the day. Additionally, there is a limited extent to which the fuel clearing activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels. Therefore, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling thinning equipment, work crews, chipping fuels, and mowing vegetation. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</p>

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
(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.	The project will not alter visual resources that contribute to scenic views within a scenic highway or eligible segment of a state highway.
(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.	The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. In addition, the restoration will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.
(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.	A recent archaeological study of the project site identified nine historic-era cultural resources and nine prehistoric sites. One unique site has been determined to potentially be associated with spiritual rituals and may be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources. These cultural resources will be avoided and protected during fuel clearing activities. If any additional cultural resources are discovered during fuel clearing activities, work in the area shall be stopped and a certified archaeologist shall be consulted before work may continue. This will ensure that the project avoids any significant effects to cultural resources.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Competitive Grant Application Number 070208
Alpine Meadows Consolidated Defensible Space Project

Description of Activities

Alpine Springs County Water District (ASCWD) is requesting \$176,375 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Competitive Grants Program to reduce forest fuel loadings on 50 acres in the Alpine Meadows area and offer free residential chipping services and defensible space inspections to 200 private properties, thereby minimizing the threat of wildfires in a residential and recreational area. Alpine Meadows is a popular ski resort and summer recreational area located northwest of Lake Tahoe, along State Highway 89, just outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The Alpine Meadows area contains 770 private parcels with 650 private residences. Bear Creek runs through the community, creating a riparian area near many of the homes.

The first element of the project is the reduction of overgrown forest fuels on common properties owned by three homeowners associations and ASCWD that intertwine between private homes. These areas are identified in a Community Wildlife Protection Plan completed in 2005. The fuels reduction will be done by hand crews, but the disposal of vegetative materials will be completed using multiple methods, including pile burning and chipping. A registered professional forester will be contracted to conduct environmental review, mark trees for removal, and interact with responsible agencies during thinning operations. ASCWD will also work with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to create a work plan for pile burning in the Bear Creek riparian area.

The second element of the project is funding a community chipping program. The North Tahoe Fire Protection District has offered a community chipping program to the residents of the district for years, which runs entirely on grant funding. ASCWD is seeking SNC grant funding to support this effort in Alpine Meadows and complement the fuel clearing efforts on the common properties and open space areas. The goal is to inspire more defensible space treatments on private properties by providing free chipping services, public education, and inspections for homeowners.

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 Alpine Meadows Consolidated Defensible Space Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which is defined as follows:

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

...

(d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.

...

(f) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions.

...

The Alpine Meadows Consolidated Defensible Space Project will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels within a residential and recreational area as well as provide chipping services for private homeowners who complete fuel management activities around their homes.

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 a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Alpine Meadows Consolidated Defensible Space Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	A registered professional forester will be contracted to conduct environmental review, mark trees for removal, and interact with responsible agencies during thinning operations. The fuels reduction work will be implemented using hand crews. All possible options for fuels treatment have been examined to craft a plan that best protects the water quality and wildlife habitat within the project area and the Bear Creek riparian corridor. Each area’s logistics will dictate how vegetation is removed; some areas will involve chipping removed materials and some will include pile burning. A burn pile area is planned within the Bear Creek riparian area. ASCWD will work with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to create a work plan for the riparian area. Best management practices will be utilized to minimize erosion or other potential impacts. According to USFS, there are no wildlife concerns in the project area. The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and restore balance to the area’s natural habitat.
(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.	The fuel removal activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other fuels reduction work in the area.
(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.	The project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Aesthetics. The presence of workers and equipment during fuel clearing work will be temporary. The project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the existing forest in Alpine Meadows due to a more open understory. However, the intent of the project is to restore the forest to a more natural condition. Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources. Air Quality. Although fuels removal will be done by hand crews, the project may temporarily affect air quality due to burn piles. ASCWD will coordinate with the Placer County Air Pollution Control District and obtain burn permits as necessary. Burn bans will be followed and all measures will be implemented as required by the Air Pollution Control District to ensure less than significant air quality impacts. Biological Resources. See (a). Cultural Resources. See (f).

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

Exception	Applicability
	<p>Geology/Soils. The thinning activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. The removal of fuels will work to protect water quality by reducing the risk of erosion associated with fire. Best management practices will be employed to prevent soil erosion. The project will have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge.</p> <p>Noise. The project will generate noise during fuel removal; however, this will be a temporary condition and will occur during normal working hours, the least sensitive hours of the day. Therefore, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling thinning equipment, work crews, and chipping fuels. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. 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>Highway 89 in the vicinity of Alpine Meadows is an eligible state scenic highway. However, the forest thinning activities would not significantly alter, nor damage, views from the 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. In addition, the restoration will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.</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>A qualified archaeologist will survey the project site prior to implementation of fuel clearing activities. If any cultural or historical resources are identified during the survey, they will be identified and avoided/protected during fuel clearing activities. If any additional cultural resources are discovered during fuel clearing activities, work in the area shall be stopped and a certified archaeologist shall be consulted before work may continue. This will ensure that the project avoids any significant effects to cultural resources.</p>