

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Willow Creek Watershed Restoration Planning Project (SNC 317)

**Project Location – Specific:**

The project is located within the Willow Creek Watershed in the north-central part of the Sierra National Forest, just south of Yosemite National Park, in Madera County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Near the community of North Fork

**Project Location – County:** Madera

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:**

The project involves developing a project design for meadow restoration and the appropriate environmental documents needed to analyze the potential environmental effects of the restoration of approximately 290 acres of meadows (42 of which are high-priority meadows that are home to endangered and Forest Service sensitive species and some rare mosses) and ten miles of stream in the Willow Creek Watershed. Coarsegold Resource Conservation District is requesting \$60,764 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Grant Program for this preliminary project work. The goal of the restoration plan will be to promote watershed health by improving water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitat in the Willow Creek Watershed.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Coarsegold Resource Conservation District

**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 15306, “Information Collection”
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

The proposed Willow Creek Watershed Restoration Planning Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15306, Class 6, which consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The project will focus on developing a meadow and stream restoration plan and completing environmental documentation necessary to evaluate the potential environmental effects of repairing several high-priority meadows in the watershed. No changes in land use and no significant adverse impacts to natural resources will occur as a result of the project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Marji Feliz

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Webber Lake and Lacey Meadow Acquisition (SNC 325)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located in the Little Truckee River Watershed in the Jackson Meadows region of Sierra and Nevada Counties. The project site is approximately eight miles west of the FS07 intersection with State Route 89, and 15 miles northwest of the Town of Truckee, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 14-090-08; 14-110-03, -11, -12, -13; 14-150-02, -04; and 15-130-05.

**Project Location – City:** Northwest of the Town of Truckee

**Project Location – County:** Sierra and Nevada

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the acquisition of Webber Lake and Lacey Meadows properties in the Little Truckee River Watershed; Truckee Donner Land Trust is requesting \$1,000,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to apply to the acquisition. The goal of this acquisition is to protect significant wildlife and wet meadow hydrological conservation values, protect source water in the Little Truckee basin, and allow for continued conservation-based management of approximately 2,994 acres. The Truckee Donner Land Trust will acquire this property as a keystone piece of a larger conservation effort with The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land that would protect over 17,000 acres in the watershed, including Webber Falls, Perazzo Meadow, Independence Lake, Cold Stream Meadow, and Henness Pass Working Forest Conservation Easement.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Truckee Donner Land Trust

### 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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Webber Lake and Lacey Meadow Acquisition project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow The Truckee Donner Land Trust to preserve approximately 2,994 acres of land for wildlife and wet-meadow protection. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The proposed project would maintain the open space character of approximately 2,994 acres. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or

historical resources. The land acquisition will allow the Truckee Donner Land Trust to preserve existing natural conditions of the site consistent with Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. No changes in land use and no significant adverse impacts to natural resources will occur as a result of the project.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Bruin Ranch Property Acquisition (SNC 331)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is adjacent to the Auburn Valley Golf and Country Club at the western terminus of Auburn Valley Road, just west of the junction of Bell Road and Lone Star Road, northwest of the city of Auburn, in western Placer County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs): 026-020-009, 026-020-011, 026-020-012, 026-020-013, 026-061-001, 026-061-003, 026-061-007, 026-061-051, 026-061-068, and all but the eastern portions of the following APNs: 026-061-004, -005, -006 and -009; and 026-370-039.

**Project Location – City:** Northwest of the City of Auburn

**Project Location – County:** Placer

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the fee title acquisition of the 2,300-acre Bruin Ranch property on the Bear River; Placer Land Trust is requesting \$1,000,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to apply to the acquisition. The purpose of this acquisition is to protect wildlife habitat along the Bear River as part of a larger landscape of protected lands, and to implement conservation-based management of the property. Bruin Ranch is one of the largest remaining privately-owned ranches with intact oak woodlands in the Bear-Yuba foothills. In addition, acquisition of Bruin Ranch would conserve significant water quality and supply benefits, including three miles of Bear River frontage, 16 miles of tributary streams, and a half dozen ponds and wetland areas (a total of 29 acres of wetlands). This project will protect 20 acres (19.6 linear miles) of stream/river and an additional eight acres of wetlands and ponds on an historical parcel in the Sierra foothills, relatively untouched by mining and hydroengineering impacts.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Placer Land Trust

### 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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Bruin Ranch Property Acquisition project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow the Placer Land Trust to preserve approximately 2,300 acres of land for wildlife and wetland protection, and resource conservation management. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The proposed project would maintain

the open space character of approximately 2,300 acres. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow the Placer Land Trust to preserve existing natural conditions of the site, meeting the intent of Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. No significant adverse impacts to natural resources will occur as a result of the project. Possible future actions on the property related to the planning and development of public access may be subject to further CEQA evaluation, but are not currently proposed and are not a part of this project.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Topping Ranch Conservation Easement (SNC 346)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located approximately three miles northeast of Millerton Lake, and seven miles east of the intersection of Highway 41 and Road 200 in eastern Madera County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 051-130-023, 051-130-003, 051-130-008, 051-130-006, and 050-232-007.

**Project Location – City:** Near O'Neals

**Project Location – County:** Madera

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the purchase of a conservation easement on 1,362 acres of the historic Topping Ranch; the Sierra Foothill Conservancy is requesting \$875,890 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for the purchase. The major objectives for this project are to: 1) protect the physical, cultural, and natural resources of Topping Ranch; 2) expand land conservation and connectivity within the Fine Gold Creek Drainage and the San Joaquin River Corridor; and 3) preserve the viability of a working ranch and the local ranching infrastructure and economy. The Topping Ranch includes 1,962 total acres. Acreage that will be subject to the conservation easement will have its development rights removed, thus protecting the existing open space/agricultural uses. The protection of this portion of the Ranch would provide a protected buffer for vernal pool lands while ensuring the viability of the Ranch as a large intact property.

**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. 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: 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Topping Ranch Conservation Easement project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow the Sierra Foothill Conservancy to preserve approximately 1,362 acres of physical, cultural, and living resources of the Ranch. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The proposed project will place 1,362 acres under a conservation easement. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions

of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow the Sierra Foothill Conservancy to preserve existing natural conditions of the site, meeting the intent of Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownership from environmental review when acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. The proposed project has a goal of perpetuating grazing habitat and open space. No substantial changes in land use or significant adverse impacts to natural resources will occur as a result of the project

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012 (SNC 348)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located approximately six miles east of Shaver Lake, on Dinky Creek Road, off Forest Service Road #FS10S87, in Fresno County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Near Shaver Lake

**Project Location – County:** Fresno

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This is a forest improvement project involving minor alterations to land and vegetation. Sierra Resource Conservation District is requesting \$92,472 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 74 acres of forestland. The land is part of a 240-acre working forest conservation easement site. The purpose of this project is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on a 240-acre in-holding of private Sierra Nevada forest land known as the Grand Bluffs Forest. The project would include the following site improvement/restoration activities: 20 acres of precommercial thinning, mastication, and piling and burning; 23 acres of piling and burning; 12 acres of tree planting; 13 acres of seedling release; and six acres of noxious weed (bull thistle) removal by hand. Restoration activities will utilize hand crews and a low-ground-pressure Bobcat 341 C Series Excavator. Mastication shall produce a low profile of wood chip debris over the soil to prevent soil erosion. Burning of excess fuels will only be performed on approved air quality burn days. The goals for the project include fire risk reduction, resource management, and natural resources protection.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Sierra Resource Conservation District

### 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 proposed Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012 project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Trees will be removed and thinned to improve forest health and reduce fire risk using methods that will protect water quality and improve habitat values. The project consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of surface vegetation and the planting of conifer trees. Biological surveys were performed on the proposed project site in 2002, 2003, and 2006; and a search of the Natural Diversity Database was completed in September 2010 without finding sensitive or listed species present or dependent upon the project area. A State Certified Archaeological Surveyor surveyed the proposed project area for cultural resources, and no cultural or historic resources were found. No significant impacts to the environment will result from the project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Marji Feliz

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

*Revised 2005*

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

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 348**  
**Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012**

**Description of Activities**

The Sierra Resource Conservation District is requesting \$92,472 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 74 acres of forestland (part of a 240 acre in-holding of private Sierra Nevada forest land known as the Grand Bluffs Forest). The project will include heavy fuel load treatments, including: brush and small tree thicket mastication or pre-commercial thinning on 20 acres; hand and machine piling of excess downed woody material on 43 acres; pile covering and burning on 43 acres; pruning of retained conifers on 20 acres, removing ladder fuels; release work in 13 acres of previously planted plantation; tree growing and planting of an additional 12 acres; and exotic weed removal on six acres.

Specific site improvement/restoration work will include:

- 1) *Mastication of brush and small trees to 5"dbh, pre-commercial thinning:* Work to be done on 20 acres. Mastication (grinding, chipping) is to be done with a Bobcat 341C Excavator (rubber track) fitted with a mastication head on the end of the boom. Work to start after July 15th to avoid bird nesting and Pacific Fisher denning season. In this terrain, estimate 36 days or 278 hours of work.
- 2) *Lifting roots and piling excess downed woody debris:* Work to be done after mastication with Bobcat 341C Excavator fitted with a two-prong grapple rake with opposing 'thumb'. 20 acres previously masticated is included in this grant, estimate 14 days of work; for 23 acres previously treated summer '09, estimate ten days of work. Total acres 43, Total days 25, total hours 200.
- 3) *Pruning 'leave' trees:* On 20 acres of masticated and piled acres, work to commence after mastication as long as mastication equipment is safe distance away from pruners. Two-person pruning crew, one with Husquavarna chainsaw head pole saw, 8' length, and one Silky manual pole saw with extension to 20'.
- 4) *Pile covering and burning:* Piles to be covered on 43 acres with Kleen Burn kraft paper, to be done before the snow falls. Burning of piles will be in fall – winter, 2011 – 2012 & spring 2013 when conditions are safe, usually after 1-3" of snow has fallen, and when air pollution control board deems conditions are right for burn days.
- 5) *Release work in plantations:* Mastication & some root lifting in 13 acres of previously planted plantation. Estimate five days and 40 hours of work.
- 6) *Planting conifers:* Six acres will be planted with 1950 Ponderosa Pine & Sugar Pine seedlings grown in leach tubes, planted manually with dibble in fall 2011 or spring 2012 as conditions permit, such as adequate moisture in the ground in the fall and after snowmelt in the spring. Rate of planting will be 325 trees per acre. Another six acres will be planted as above in fall 2012 and spring 2013. Each year will take a two-person crew two days, or 32 hours per year, for a total of eight person-days, or 64 hours and 3,900 trees.

- 7) *Exotic weed removal*: Weeds will be removed on a total of six acres. In 2011, work will be done on four acres and in 2012 follow up work will be done on two acres within the previously worked four acres for a total of six acres treated. Cheat Grass (*Bromus tectorum*) will be hand hoed during spring 2011 before seed heads form and again in the same time frame in 2012. Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) will be hand hoed before purple flower heads appear in spring – summer 2011 and 2012. Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) will be hand pulled and hoed before seed formation in spring and early summer 2011 and 2012. Salsify (*Tragopogon dubius*) will be hand pulled before seed formation in summer 2011 and 2012.

This is an on-the-ground project to mechanically and hand treat accumulated forest fuels build-ups to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire. This project also includes reforestation, growing and planting trees, in areas previously treated. The project goal is to return the forest landscape to more historical conditions.

### **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 Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012 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 mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (A) Grading on land with a slope of less than ten (10) percent, except that grading shall not be exempt in a waterway, in any wetland, in an officially designated (by federal, state, or local government action) scenic area, or in officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard, such as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within an official Seismic Hazard Zone, as delineated by the State Geologist;
- (B) Issuance of a grading permit in conjunction with a project for which a design review approval has been granted and/or following any discretionary action which was subject to environmental review;
- (C) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping;
- (D) Filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site;
- (E) 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) Minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment, including carnivals, outdoor festivals/concerts, sales of Christmas trees, arts and crafts fairs, etc.;

- (G) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored;
- (H) Maintenance dredging where the spoil is deposited in a spoil area authorized by all applicable state and federal regulatory agencies;
- (I) The creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way.
- (J) 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 in writing, or by written policy or ordinance, that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions. (Ord. 5119-B (part), 2001)

The Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012 project consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning and removal of surface vegetation for forestry purposes (improved forest health and fire risk reduction) and the planting of conifer trees on approximately 74 acres; there are no hazardous materials on or around the project site; and the site improvement/restoration work will not result in significant adverse impacts. This project is similar in nature to the examples listed in Guidelines Section 15304.

#### **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 Grand Bluffs Forest 2011-2012 project.

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

Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact 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.</p>	<p>The main goal of this approximately 74-acre site improvement/restoration project within Grand Bluffs Forest is to restore the forest landscape to a healthy, more resilient condition where natural processes can occur. The project will directly benefit the land by planting trees, thinning brush, and eradicating invasive weeds. This project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of surface vegetation and the planting of conifer trees. The anticipated timeline for the project is from July 2011 through June 2012. The project would include the following site improvement/restoration activities: 20 acres of precommercial thinning, mastication, and piling and burning; 23 acres of piling and burning; 12 acres of tree planting; 13 acres of seedling release; and six acres of noxious weed (bull thistle) removal by hand. Restoration activities will utilize hand crews and a low-ground-pressure Bobcat 341 C Series Excavator. Mastication shall produce a low profile of wood chip debris over the soil to prevent soil erosion. Specifically, the project will:</p> <p><i>Improve watershed health:</i> Improving a working forest landscape improves watershed health by planting trees, pruning ladder fuels, masticating brush species, removing exotic weed species and releasing plantation trees. Removing decadent brush and overstocked tree thickets by mastication greatly reduces wildfire risk, which protects watershed health.</p> <p><i>Protect and enhance wildlife habitat:</i> Masticating decadent Ceanothus brush species that will re-sprout provides succulent browse for deer and opens up to wildlife these areas that were otherwise impenetrable. Mastication covers the open ground with wood chips that protects water quality for trout species living in Summit Creek.</p>

	<p><i>Improve forest health:</i> Mastication of brush and suppressed stands of trees and pruning of retained trees will improve forest health by reducing mixed conifer stand densities, increasing resilience to pine bark beetle infestation.</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 site improvement/restoration activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The site improvement/restoration will result in beneficial effects to the region's forests, creeks, watersheds, and associated lands by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection.</p>
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p><b>Aesthetics.</b> The site improvement/restoration will result in a minor change in the appearance of the Grand Bluffs Forest and/or streams due to precommercial thinning; the removal of surface vegetation, and the planting of conifer trees. The main goal of this approximately 74-acre site improvement/restoration project within Grand Bluffs Forest is to restore the forest landscape to a healthy condition where natural processes can occur. All intended management practices such as site preparation, trees and planting, thinning, pruning, and burning can be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. The project will directly benefit the land by planting trees, thinning brush, and eradicating invasive weeds.</p> <p><b>Agriculture.</b> Open-range cattle grazing occurs on parts of the property; however, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 74 acres (of a 240-acre site) by removing dense brush stands and thickets in the Grand Bluffs Forest. Approximately 200 acres of the total 240-acre site is forestland, and approximately</p>

40 acres is occupied with granite rock outcrop and rock land.

**Air Quality/GHGs.** 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 to/from the site improvement/restoration areas, and mechanized equipment. Although mechanized equipment will be used for restoration activities (i.e. low-ground-pressure Bobcat 341 C Series Excavator), given the lack of sensitive receptors in close proximity, 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. Burning of excess fuels will only be performed on approved air quality burn days. Smoke dispersal is anticipated to be excellent due to normal wind patterns and the absence of nearby residential populations.

**Biological Resources.** See (a). Biological surveys were performed on the project area in 2002, 2003, 2006, and a search of the Natural Diversity Database was completed in September 2010 without finding sensitive or listed species present or dependent upon the project area. The integrity of native plant communities will be protected by exotic weed removal, allowing more area for native species to thrive. In addition, wildlife habitat will be improved by removing decadent brush stands, the mastication of which triggers succulent browse growth. Wildlife habitat is protected by removal of exotic weed species.

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

**Geology/Soils.** Site improvement/restoration activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned at Grand Bluffs Forest will protect the water quality of the Summit Creek watershed by covering the soil with wood chips that protects the land

	<p>from erosion and the resultant sediment loading in the water courses. Wood chips covering the soil increase water infiltration, helping to recharge the Summit Creek water table. Valuable soils are retained on-site to grow trees and support wildlife.</p> <p><b>Hazards/Hazardous Materials.</b> See (e).</p> <p><b>Hydrology/Water Quality.</b> See (a) and Geology/Soils.</p> <p><b>Noise.</b> Site improvement/restoration activities will generate temporary noise. However, given that restoration activities will be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</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>Approximately 40 acres of the entire 240-acre site is occupied with granite rock outcrop and rock land; however, the proposed project (consisting of activities on approximately 74 acres) 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.</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>A State Certified Archaeological Surveyor has surveyed the project area for cultural resources. Archaeological resources have been located in an isolated location and remote from timber stands requiring</p>

	<p>management practices on the 240-acre site. However, they have not been found within the approximately 74-acre site improvement/restoration area. 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.</p>
--	---

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Rodden Ranch Conservation Easement (SNC 361)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located near the Stanislaus-Calaveras County border, between State Highway 4 and the Stanislaus River, in the western portion of unincorporated Calaveras County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 50-038-012; 50-039-004; 53-017-001, -002, -004, -005 and -006; and 53-019-001, -002, -003, -004, -005, -006 and -009.

**Project Location – City:** West of Copperopolis

**Project Location – County:** Calaveras

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the purchase of a conservation easement over the approximately 5,868-acre Rodden Ranch property; The Trust For Public Land is requesting \$1,000,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to apply towards the purchase. The purpose of the conservation easement is to ensure the Ranch remains in agricultural/grazing uses and to protect the oak woodland values associated with the property. The Ranch is believed to harbor threatened and endangered species such as California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog, and several seasonal creeks run through the property. These natural water systems support productive habitat for aquatic as well as terrestrial species by serving as migration corridors and a water source. The proposed project will result in secured habitat connectivity and permanent protection of the multiple natural and scenic resources contained on the property.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** The Trust for Public Land

### 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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Rodden Ranch Conservation Easement project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow The Trust for Public Land to preserve approximately 5,868 acres of land for wildlife such as California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. With the purchase of a conservation easement, The Trust for Public Land will ensure that the open space character of the approximately 5,868-acre Ranch is preserved. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25,

which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow The Trust for Public Land to preserve existing natural conditions of the site consistent with Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. The project proposes the acquisition of a conservation easement in order to preserve the existing land use and natural conditions (cattle grazing and oak woodland values, respectively) of the subject property. No change in land use will result from the project, but once the easement is in place development rights will be limited and grazing and other agricultural activity will be managed to protect natural resources.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
                    Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

**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

**Project Title:** Sierra Crest Working Forest Conservation Easement Phase III (SNC 368)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located north of FS07/Jackson Meadows Road in the vicinity of Webber Lake, in the headwaters of the Middle Yuba, Middle Fork Feather, and Little Truckee River watersheds in the Tahoe National Forest, Sierra County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 018-110-001 and -007; 018-100-003, -004, -006, and -010; and 018-120-008.

**Project Location – City:** Northwest of the Town of Truckee

**Project Location – County:** Sierra

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the purchase of conservation easements over 2,720 acres of Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) alpine forestlands; The Trust for Public Land is requesting \$540,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program towards the purchase. Once acquired, the conservation easements will be held for permanent stewardship and monitoring by the Truckee Donner Land Trust, thereby permanently protecting watersheds important to California's water supply (including the Middle Yuba, Little Truckee, and Middle Fork Feather Rivers) because the conservation easements will prevent conversion of forest land to residential and other development. SPI will, however, continue to own the land in fee and manage the properties sustainably as productive timberland, subject to the terms of the easements held by the Truckee Donner Land Trust. This is the third and final phase of the Sierra Crest Conservation Easement Project that has already placed conservation easements over 4,365 acres of Sierra checkerboard lands.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** The Trust for Public Land

### 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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Sierra Crest Working Forest Conservation Easement Phase III project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow The Trust for Public Land to preserve approximately 2,720 acres of land for watershed and alpine forestlands protection. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. With the purchase of a conservation easement, The Trust for Public Land will ensure that the open space character of the approximately 2,720-acre site is preserved. The proposed project is also categorically exempt

from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow The Trust for Public Land to preserve existing natural conditions of the site consistent with Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. The project proposes the acquisition of a conservation easement in order to preserve the existing land use and natural conditions of the subject property. Future timber operations would be allowed and would be subject to environmental review as required under the Forest Practices Act.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** White Sulphur Springs Ranch Hydrologic and Spring Protection Plan (SNC 371)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located in the Sulphur Creek Watershed on the eastern edge of the Sierra-Nevada crest (Mohawk Ridge), abutting the headwaters of the North Yuba River to the west and the Carmen Creek watershed to the east, in Plumas County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Near the City of Portola

**Project Location – County:** Plumas

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the development of a spring protection plan that will identify and map all springs and water features within the approximately 39-acre White Sulphur Springs Ranch (WSSR), assess the quality and quantity of water of each feature, determine ecosystem functions, and develop best management practices to protect springs so that recreational use can occur while protecting water features at WSSR. The Mohawk Valley Stewardship Council is requesting \$75,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to develop the plan. Specifically, grant money will go towards the following: 1) documenting locations of springs and water features at the WSSR and providing a map of all features; 2) reviewing documents that describe water rights at WSSR and incorporating information into final report; 3) measuring water quality and quantity at each spring and water feature; 4) determining hydrologic role, springshed condition and connectivity of each spring and water feature; 5) determining existing use relative to fire suppression system, warm springs pool, potable water sources, and landscape irrigation; 6) mapping proposed recreation features (trails, amphitheater, pool, ethnobotanical gardens) relative to springs and other water features; 7) determining potential impacts of water use and recreation features; 8) formulating best management practices and avoidance measures that will maintain or restore springs and water features; 9) recommending restoration actions needed to restore springs and water features (e.g. that there are manmade ditches on the property that currently divert flows from springs out of natural drainage features); and 10) preparing a final report documenting all information collected, including mapped features.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Mohawk Valley Stewardship 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 15306, "Information Collection"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed WSSR Hydrologic and Spring Protection Plan project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15306, Class 6, which consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed project is requesting funding to identify springs and all other water features on the property, and to develop a spring protection and restoration plan that will protect water sources while allowing and managing for their responsible use for the public benefit. No changes in land

use and no significant adverse impacts to natural resources would occur as a result of the project.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
                    Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Cinnamon Ranch Agriculture and Resource Protection Project (SNC 387)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located in Hammil Valley in the eastern Sierra, southern Mono County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 25-200-05, 25-200-16, and 25-240-06.

**Project Location – City:** Near Bishop

**Project Location – County:** Mono

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement that will permanently protect a historic and organic certified working farm on approximately 602 acres of important farm and rangeland. The Eastern Sierra Land Trust is requesting \$735,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to apply to the purchase. This project will aid in the preservation of the region's threatened working landscapes while also protecting the significant natural and historical resources that exist at this site. The easement will prohibit future subdivision, limit development, and eliminate the potential for future water export, as the ranch holds surface water rights for three creeks. Overall, the project will protect scenic, historical, and important habitat resources, while protecting continued agricultural use.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Eastern Sierra Land Trust

### 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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Cinnamon Ranch Agriculture and Resource Protection Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow the Eastern Sierra Land Trust to preserve approximately 602 acres of land for wildlife and creek protection. Important special status species that occur within the project site include the Swainson's hawk, Casa Diablo deer herd, and desert bighorn sheep. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The Cinnamon Ranch Agriculture and Resource Protection project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow the Eastern Sierra Land Trust to preserve existing natural conditions of the site, meeting the intent of Categorical Exemption 15325 (b), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to allow continued agricultural use of the

areas, in addition to Categorical Exemption 15325 (e), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve historical resources. A conservation easement will protect the region's privately owned working lands from development and will encourage continued agricultural use. The project will also protect the natural and historical resources that exist on-site. This will be accomplished by limiting future development on the property to within a predesignated area away from the most productive soils, prohibiting subdivision, and ensuring that the water resources tied to the land remain on the property where they contribute to agricultural productivity, as well as the local flora and fauna, and replenish the aquifer below.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 399)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located in the South Ash Valley Watershed, Spooner Trough Canyon, approximately 20 miles southwest of Adin, in Lassen County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Adin

**Project Location – County:** Lassen

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This is a forest and watershed improvement project. The Lassen County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$142,082 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 625 acres (a portion of two parcels totaling approximately 1,178 acres) of private land consisting of wet meadow and sagebrush steppe habitat. The purpose of this project is to restore watershed functions (capture, storage of water in soil, and beneficial release) within the South Ash Valley Watershed at the headwaters of Ash Creek, a tributary of the Pit River. Primary site improvement/restoration activities will include the removal of invasive western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) through biomass utilization and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques. Fuel loads will be reduced by shear and chainsaw. After removal, most of the material will be chipped and hauled to an electrical power producing facility to be used as fuel. After the mechanical treatments are completed, hand crews will remove smaller junipers or other junipers that could not be cut mechanically. Watershed restoration through the removal of juniper and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques will restore water function and re-establish the native plant community. In addition, the reduction of hazardous fuel loads will reduce the threat of a catastrophic fire that could have a devastating impact on the South Ash Valley Watershed.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Lassen 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 proposed South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which exempts from CEQA projects involving minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. The project consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of invasive western juniper to allow for the restoration and maintenance of existing natural vegetation in order to improve wildlife resources including wildlife habitat, rangeland health, and watershed conditions. No significant impacts to the environment will result from the project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Marji Feliz

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

*Revised 2005*

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

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 399**  
**South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration Project**

**Description of Activities**

The Lassen County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$142,082 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 625 acres (a portion of two parcels totaling approximately 1,178 acres) of private land consisting of wet meadow and sagebrush steppe habitat. Primary site improvement/restoration activities will include the removal of invasive western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) through biomass utilization and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques. Fuel loads will be reduced by shear and chainsaw. After removal, most of the material will be chipped and hauled to an electrical power producing facility to be used as fuel. After the mechanical treatments are completed, hand crews will remove smaller junipers or other junipers that could not be cut mechanically. Watershed restoration through the removal of juniper and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques will restore water function and re-establish the native plant community. In addition, the reduction of hazardous fuel loads will reduce the threat of a catastrophic fire that could have a devastating impact on the South Ash Valley Watershed. The goal of the project is to restore watershed functions (capture, storage of water in soil, and beneficial release) within the South Ash Valley Watershed.

**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 South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration 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 mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (A) Grading on land with a slope of less than ten (10) percent, except that grading shall not be exempt in a waterway, in any wetland, in an officially designated (by federal, state, or local government action) scenic area, or in officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard, such as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within an official Seismic Hazard Zone, as delineated by the State Geologist;
- (B) Issuance of a grading permit in conjunction with a project for which a design review approval has been granted and/or following any discretionary action which was subject to environmental review;
- (C) New gardening or landscaping; including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping;

- (D) Filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site;
- (E) 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) Minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment, including carnivals, outdoor festivals/concerts, sales of Christmas trees, arts and crafts fairs, etc.;
- (G) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored;
- (H) Maintenance dredging where the spoil is deposited in a spoil area authorized by all applicable state and federal regulatory agencies;
- (I) The creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way.
- (J) 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 in writing, or by written policy or ordinance, that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions. (Ord. 5119-B (part), 2001)

The South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration Project consists of minor land/vegetation alterations involving the removal of invasive western juniper on approximately 625 acres for forestry purposes, which is similar in nature to the examples listed in Guidelines section 15304. There are no hazardous materials or sites on or around the project site; and the site improvement/restoration work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

#### **No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption**

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

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

Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact 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.</p>	<p>The primary action of the project will be reducing fuel loads by mechanical methods on approximately 625 acres. All of the work is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management administered public lands. The project area is primarily sagebrush steppe uplands with wet meadows that have been severely encroached by western juniper. The restoration of these ecosystems through the removal of juniper and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques will restore watershed function and re-establish the native plant community.</p> <p>The project is anticipated to begin during the field season of 2011, with all work completed before December 2011. Targeted fuel is approximately 98% juniper, 2% deformed, dying, or overstocked Jeffrey pine in need of thinning, and a small amount of decrepit mountain mahogany. All old-growth juniper will be retained (defined by the character of the juniper, not its size). Fuel will be removed by shear and chainsaw. Part of the treatment involves minimizing the development of skid trails by attempting to skid across the entire landscape. This results in a treatment where there is maximum shrub and perennial grass retention and less soil compaction overall. Maximum retention of shrubs and grasses also results in less soil erosion potential and faster reestablishment of native grasses and shrubs. After removal, most of the material will be chipped and hauled to an electrical power-producing facility to be used as fuel. All of the aforementioned work will be accomplished through a contract with a private Licensed Timber Operator who is regulated under the California Forest Practice Act.</p> <p>After the mechanical treatments are completed, hand crews will remove smaller junipers or other junipers that could not be cut mechanically. CalFire conservation</p>

	<p>crews will perform hand treatments within zones where mechanical equipment cannot operate. The entire project has been planned over a two-year period, and all environmental and permitting clearances have been obtained.</p> <p>The project area supports critical wildlife habitat. Project activities will not take place where sensitive resources have been identified. Restoration of the habitat will provide enhanced opportunities for hunting and non-take wildlife activities such as bird and wildlife watching. The project will restore the soil, plant communities, and watershed function, including improved water quality and quantity. The reduction of the hazardous fuel loads provided by the juniper removal will reduce the threat of catastrophic fire within the project area.</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 site improvement/restoration activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The site improvement/restoration will result in beneficial effects to the region's watersheds and associated lands by restoring the region's physical and living resources; aiding in the preservation of working landscapes; reducing the risk of natural disaster such as wildfires; and improving water quality.</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 will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p><b>Aesthetics.</b> The project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the watershed due to the removal of invasive western juniper on approximately 625 acres. However, the intent of the project is to restore watershed functions by removing an invasive species.</p> <p><b>Agriculture.</b> Although land within the project area and surrounding area is currently used for livestock grazing, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The cooperating landowner is a cattle rancher who will implement an adaptive management grazing system. The system will allow the rancher to</p>

control timing and grazing use of the project area to optimize restoration and sustainability. The Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Initiative (CSSRI), with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of California, Cooperative Extension, Lassen County Field Office, has developed a guide for livestock operators implementing juniper removal projects that includes adaptive management strategies.

**Air Quality/GHGs.** 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 to/from the site improvement/restoration areas, and mechanized equipment. Although mechanized equipment will be used for restoration activities (i.e. shear and chainsaw), given the lack of sensitive receptors in close proximity, 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.** See (a).

**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.

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

**Hydrology/Water Quality.** See (a).

**Noise.** Site improvement/restoration activities will generate temporary noise (primarily from mechanical equipment such as shear and chainsaw). However, given that restoration activities will be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise

	<p>levels, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</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 site improvement/restoration activities 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.</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 any 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 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. Additionally, project activities will not take place where sensitive resources have been identified.</p>

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Humbug Creek Watershed Assessment and Management Plan (SNC 407)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located in the Humbug Creek Watershed (an area of the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park), 21625 and 22270 N. Bloomfield-Graniteville Road, in Nevada County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Nevada City

**Project Location – County:** Nevada

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the development of a plan and the preparation of permit applications to implement recommended activities to address the problems of turbidity, mercury, and physical hazards in the Humbug Creek watershed that have resulted from historic mining activities. The Sierra Fund is requesting \$197,592 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for this work. The goal of the Humbug Creek Watershed Assessment and Management Plan is to develop a comprehensive plan to address the water quality and safety impairments in the watershed, while maintaining the cultural significance and integrity of the site. The watershed is located in an area of the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, which was home to the largest hydraulic mine in the world. Methods used to accomplish the project would include facilitated meetings, promotion of a collaborative working environment, historical research with State Parks and other local agencies, document draft and review process with expert advisors, and hiring of contractors for any necessary permitting activities. Land uses would not change as a result of this project.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** The Sierra Fund

### 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 15306, "Information Collection"
- Statutory Exemptions.** State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed Humbug Creek Watershed Assessment and Management Plan project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15306, Class 6, which consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The project consists of the development of a plan and the acquisition of necessary permits to implement recommended activities to address the problems of turbidity, mercury, and physical hazards in the Humbug Creek watershed that have resulted from historic mining activities. No changes in land use and no significant adverse impacts to natural resources would occur as a result of the project.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
                    Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Invasive Weed Management in the Merced River Corridor (SNC 410)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located along Incline Road, downstream from Foresta Bridge, along Briceburg Road, from Briceburg to the North Fork of the Merced River, in Mariposa County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Midpines

**Project Location – County:** Mariposa

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This is a weed removal and disposal project that will result in minor changes to land and vegetation. The Upper Merced River Watershed Council is requesting \$192,270 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to remove yellow starthistle (YST) and Italian thistle from riparian habitat along the Upper Merced River. The project includes approximately 80 acres of sensitive riparian habitat. The work will be accomplished by the manual removal (hand pulling and mowing by crews) and disposal of invasive weeds. No herbicides will be used. The goals of this project are to: remove YST and Italian thistle infestations along targeted areas of the Merced River corridor by crews using manual techniques; continue to manage areas of regrowth in previously treated sections of the river corridor; expand treatment to include a two-acre infestation along the North Fork, and another one-acre area a mile downstream from the confluence of the North Fork and the Merced; expand weed work to a hard-to-reach area between the river and the road along Incline Road in El Portal where herbicide cannot be used; continue to survey and map any new or existing YST and Italian thistle infestations in the river corridor that have not been documented; and provide opportunities for people to learn about invasive weed management.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Upper Merced River Watershed 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 proposed Invasive Weed Management project in the Merced River Corridor is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. The project consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of non-native plants by hand. No significant impacts to the environment will result from project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Marji Feliz

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

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

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 410  
Invasive Weed Management in the Merced River Corridor**

**Description of Activities**

The Upper Merced River Watershed Council is requesting \$192,270 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to remove yellow starthistle (YST) and Italian thistle from riparian habitat along the Upper Merced River. The project includes approximately 80 acres of sensitive riparian habitat. The work will be accomplished by manual removal (hand pulling and mowing by crews) and disposal of invasive weeds. No herbicides will be used. The goals of this project are to: remove YST and Italian thistle infestations along targeted areas of the Merced River corridor by crews using manual techniques; continue to manage areas of regrowth in previously treated sections of the river corridor; expand treatment to include a two-acre infestation along the North Fork, and another one-acre area a mile downstream from the confluence of the North Fork and the Merced; expand weed work to a hard-to-reach area between the river and the road along Incline Road in El Portal where herbicide cannot be used; continue to survey and map any new or existing YST and Italian thistle infestations in the river corridor that have not been documented; and provide opportunities for people to learn about invasive weed 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 Invasive Weed Management in the Merced River Corridor 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 mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (A) Grading on land with a slope of less than ten (10) percent, except that grading shall not be exempt in a waterway, in any wetland, in an officially designated (by federal, state, or local government action) scenic area, or in officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard, such as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within an official Seismic Hazard Zone, as delineated by the State Geologist;
- (B) Issuance of a grading permit in conjunction with a project for which a design review approval has been granted and/or following any discretionary action which was subject to environmental review;

- (C) New gardening or landscaping; including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping;
- (D) Filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site;
- (E) 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) Minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment, including carnivals, outdoor festivals/concerts, sales of Christmas trees, arts and crafts fairs, etc.;
- (G) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored;
- (H) Maintenance dredging where the spoil is deposited in a spoil area authorized by all applicable state and federal regulatory agencies;
- (I) The creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way.
- (J) 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 in writing, or by written policy or ordinance, that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions. (Ord. 5119-B (part), 2001)

The Invasive Weed Management project in the Merced River Corridor includes utilizing hand labor to manage invasive weeds. The work area will be on approximately 80 acres; there are no hazardous materials on or around the project site; and the restoration work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

### **No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption**

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Invasive Weed Management in the Merced River Corridor 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 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.</p>	<p>This project improves the Merced River watershed and land surrounding the project area by manual removal of yellow starthistle (YST) and Italian thistle seed sources. This project occurs on the extreme eastern edge of YST infestation in California. Stopping the spread of these noxious invasives at this point is critical for wildlife habitat and the survival of native landscapes. The project will remove YST and Italian thistle along approximately 80 acres of sensitive riparian habitat adjacent to the Merced River. The anticipated timeline for the project is 32 months (from March 2011 through 2013). The invasive work will be accomplished by manual removal (hand pulling and mowing by crews), which is especially suitable for the gulches and hillsides next to the Merced River.</p> <p>Invasive plants have impacted waterways, trails, and scenic landscapes along the Merced Wild &amp; Scenic corridor. These invasive noxious thistles crowd out natives and destroy habitat for wildlife, including endangered species. Because of its high water needs during spring and summer when human water use is at its highest, YST threatens human economic interests, as well as native plant ecosystems.</p> <p>Specifically, there are two badly infested areas of YST in the project area: one on the hillsides around and downstream from the National Park Service administrative area of El Portal, and the second from Briceburg downstream. In the cooperative effort to keep the invasives from spreading to the pristine area, the US Forest Service (USFS) and the National Park Service (NPS) have spent several seasons attacking YST on the hillsides of El Portal. The funding for the USFS work has been cut, and while the NPS has picked up some of the responsibility in El Portal, progress has been slow. The invasives' growth and regrowth have outstripped management. At the other end of the river corridor, the Upper Merced River</p>

	<p>Watershed Council (UMRWC) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have targeted the five-mile Briceburg Road and subsequent two miles downriver on the Wild &amp; Scenic Trail.</p> <p>This project is part of a large, on-going invasives project that started in 2003. No chemicals will be used for weed removal. Crews will be hired, trained and supervised by the staff from Upper Merced River Watershed Council (UMRWC) and participating agencies and will manually remove YST and Italian thistle from designated areas. New or undocumented infestations will be mapped using GPS and GIS. The project will follow removal and disposal protocols established by the Sierra National Forest (SNF) which include, when necessary, double-bagging [3-4mm thick plastic] and removing the weeds. As part of their in-kind support, the Bureau of Land Management transports the bagged weeds to the landfill when necessary.</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 restoration activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other riparian restoration in the region. The restoration will result in beneficial effects to the region's rivers, their watersheds, and associated lands by controlling invasives, preventing their spread, and encouraging the native biodiversity to prevail.</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 restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p><b>Aesthetics.</b> The restoration will result in a minor change in the appearance of the Merced River and/or streams due to weed removal; however, the goal of the project is to improve the Merced River watershed and land surrounding the project area by removal of invasive yellow starthistle (YST) and Italian thistle seed sources.</p> <p><b>Agriculture.</b> The project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project will help maintain river and watershed function, thereby protecting the streams and riparian habitat.</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 to/from the restoration areas. No mechanized equipment will be used for restoration activities. Given the limited ground disturbance for restoration activities and lack of sensitive receptors in close proximity, 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><b>Biological Resources.</b> See (a).</p> <p><b>Cultural Resources.</b> See (f).</p> <p><b>Geology/Soils.</b> Restoration will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.</p> <p><b>Hazards/Hazardous Materials.</b> See (e).</p> <p><b>Hydrology/Water Quality.</b> See (a).</p> <p><b>Noise.</b> Restoration activities are not anticipated to generate temporary noise, as weeds are proposed to be removed by hand. The project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p><b>Transportation.</b> There will be limited additional trips on local roadways during restoration 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</p>	<p>Although State Route 140 (in Mariposa County) is an officially designated state scenic highway, the restoration will not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings</p>

<p>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>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 any toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The project 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>With only limited ground disturbance from weed removal 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.</p>

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Complying with CEQA for Forest Management: Natural & Cultural Resource Surveys in Coldstream Canyon – Donner Memorial State Park (SNC 421)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located entirely within California State Parks property, in Coldstream Canyon within Donner Memorial State Park, southwest of the Town of Truckee, in Placer County, California.

**Project Location – City:** Southwest of the Town of Truckee

**Project Location – County:** Placer

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This project involves conducting wildlife, vegetation, and archeological surveys needed for CEQA compliance for future projects in Coldstream Canyon at Donner Memorial State Park. California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is requesting \$59,816 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to conduct the studies. DPR intends to eventually implement both forest management and floodplain restoration in Coldstream Canyon at Donner Memorial State Park. In order to commence work on these projects, DPR must comply with CEQA regulations and conduct wildlife, vegetation, and archeological resource studies in Donner Memorial State Park in compliance with applicable state and federal protocol requirements. The surveys will support all CEQA documentation needed for forest management on 125 acres in the Canyon, and for an already designed floodplain restoration project at the lower reaches of the Canyon on State Parks property. The surveys needed for CEQA compliance meet the end project goals for benefiting environmental resources in the region, including watershed-wide restoration and habitat and water quality improvements in the Park.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** California 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 15306, "Information Collection"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed project (Complying with CEQA for Forest Management: Natural & Cultural Resource Surveys in Coldstream Canyon – Donner Memorial State Park) is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15306, Class 6, which consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed project is requesting funding to conduct wildlife, rare and special species/vegetation, and cultural/archeological surveys on project areas planned for forest management, as well as for wildlife surveys on the planned floodplain restoration site within Coldstream Canyon at Donner Memorial State Park. The surveys will bring both projects near full CEQA compliance. No significant adverse impacts to natural resources would occur as a result of the project.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Rudnick Ranch Acquisition (SNC 434)

### Project Location – Specific:

The project is located at the intersection of the Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountains, near Caliente in Kern County, California. The Assessor's Parcel Numbers are listed in the table below.

179-150-02	179-150-19	179-150-08	179-150-07
179-150-03	179-150-18	179-150-06	179-150-05
179-150-04	179-150-09	179-150-10	179-150-11
179-150-12	397-110-09	397-110-06	397-110-05
179-140-01	179-140-02	179-140-03	179-140-05
179-140-04	197-140-06	179-140-07	179-150-16
179-150-20	179-150-21	179-150-22	179-150-23
179-150-24	179-150-25	179-150-26	179-150-27
179-150-28	179-150-29	179-150-30	179-150-31
179-150-14	179-140-13	179-140-14	179-140-15
179-140-16	179-140-17	179-140-11	179-140-19
179-140-18	179-140-08	179-170-04	179-170-05
179-160-01	179-160-02	179-160-03	179-260-01
179-170-06	179-160-07	179-160-06	179-160-04
266-140-02	266-150-05	266-150-04	266-150-03
266-160-03	266-160-01	266-170-01	266-170-02
266-160-02	266-170-04	266-170-03	266-180-01
266-180-02	179-180-02	179-180-22	

**Project Location – City:** East of Bakersfield

**Project Location – County:** Kern

### Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is the acquisition of approximately 15,000 acres in the Tehachapi Mountains. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is requesting \$500,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program to apply to the purchase. Rudnick Ranch supports nearly 15,000 acres of intact chaparral, grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian communities in the Middle Kern – Upper Tehachapi - Grapevine watershed. Land speculation, intensive agriculture, and mining to the east and west threaten the integrity of the Ranch and its watersheds. Protection of the Ranch eliminates the threat of subdivision, development, and associated water use, safeguarding local aquifers and allowing natural ground water recharge and runoff processes to continue. TNC's goal is to acquire the property and continue operations as a working ranch, ensuring grazing is carried out in a sustainable manner that maintains the important resources.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** The Nature Conservancy

**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 15313, "Acquisition of Lands for Wildlife Conservation Purposes", Section 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

The proposed Rudnick Ranch Acquisition project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, which consists of acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes. The land acquisition will allow The Nature Conservancy to preserve approximately 15,000 acres for fish and wildlife conservation purposes, as a broad matrix of plant and animal species is located in several habitat types found on the Ranch. In addition, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow The Nature Conservancy to preserve existing natural conditions of the site, meeting the intent of Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas is intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. The proposed project involves land acquisition to preserve natural conditions and protect natural resources, while allowing responsible grazing. No significant adverse effects on natural resources will result from the project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Marji Feliz

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR:

*Revised 2005*

# Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

**Project Title:** Stockton Creek Preserve and Trail (SNC 443)

**Project Location – Specific:**

The project is located in the Stockton Creek Watershed near Slaughter House Road and Highway 140, in Mariposa County, California. Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 012-011-001, 012-150-031, a portion of 012-150-052, and a portion of 012-150-056.

**Project Location – City:** Near the town of Mariposa

**Project Location – County:** Mariposa

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:**

The project is the fee title acquisition of approximately 425 acres of land adjacent to the existing Mariposa Public Utility District- (MPUD) owned Stockton Creek dam and reservoir. The MPUD is requesting \$1,000,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Grant Program for the acquisition. The primary purpose of the acquisition is to accomplish as much watershed protection as possible. The water from the Stockton Creek Watershed flows directly into the Stockton Creek Reservoir, which is Mariposa's primary public water source. The proposal also includes the acquisition of a public access easement overlying an existing water line easement.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Mariposa Public Utility District

**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 15317, "Open Space Contracts or Easements", and Section 15325, "Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

The proposed Stockton Creek Preserve and Trail project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317, Class 17, which consists of the establishment of agricultural preserves, the making and renewing of open space contracts under the Williamson Act, or the acceptance of easements or fee interests in order to maintain the open space character of the area. The proposed project would maintain the open space character of approximately 425 acres. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Class 25, which consists of the transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The land acquisition will allow the MPUD to preserve existing natural conditions of the site, meeting the intent of Categorical Exemption 15325 (a), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas are intended to preserve natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats, and Categorical Exemption 15325 (e), which exempts transfers of ownerships from environmental review when the acquisition, sale, or other transfer is intended to preserve historical resources. There are three recorded archaeological sites within the area proposed for acquisition. The

project proposes the acquisition of property in the Stockton Creek watershed to protect public water supplies and protect existing historical archaeological sites in the area. No significant adverse impacts to natural resources would occur as a result of this project. Any future actions on the property related to the planning and development of public access may be subject to further CEQA evaluation, but are not a part of this particular action.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: Executive Officer  
Jim Branham

Date Received for Filing at OPR: