

# Notice of Exemption

To:  Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Co. Planning Dept.  
P.O. Box 530  
Downieville, CA 95936

**FILED**  
SIERRA COUNTY CLERK

FEB 24 2016

BY: Heather Foster DEPUTY  
HEATHER FOSTER



County Clerk  
County of Sierra

**Project Title:** Sierra County Residential Chipping Program (14-SRA-HF-01-0137)

**Unincorporated Sierra County and the communities of Calpine, Sierraville, Sattley, Bassetts, Sierra City, Downieville, Goodyears Bar, Verdi, Alleghany, Pike, Sierra Brooks, Indian Valley and Forest City with emphasis on high and**

**Project Location - Specific:** very high fire hazard areas

**Project Location - City:** N/A **Project Location - County:** Sierra

Program under the administration of the Sierra County Fire Safe and Watershed Council to provide landowners, at no cost to them, chipping services for the vegetation that has been removed around their homes to provide defensible space, fuels reduction, removal of fire hazard biomass, and improve air quality to reduce the reliance on outdoor burning. Project will be in coordination with CalFire, US Forest Service, existing fire protection districts, and the County of

**Project Description:** Sierra.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** County of Sierra

**Name of Person, Address and Phone Number or Agency Carrying Out Project:** County Department of Transportation

**Exempt Status:** (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 2-15301 (c and h)
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The project proposes to remove hazardous vegetation from existing developed properties and highways/public facilities with the scope falling within routine property and road maintenance and involving no physical expansion of any development or physical activity. There is no likelihood of any physical impact, no permitting is required of any agency other than County encroachment permits and volunteer brush chipper agreements with the County Fire Safe and Watershed Council. Project will reduce emissions from avoidance of open yard burning and devastating wildfire fuels will be removed for the protection of life, property, and natural resources.

**Lead Agency**  
**Contact Person:** Tim H, Beals **Area Code/Telephone:** (530) 289-3251

If filed by applicant:

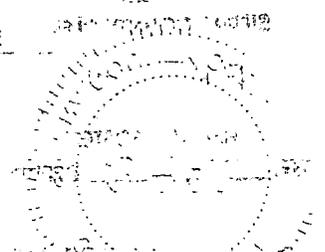
1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

**Signature:** [Signature] **Date:** February 19, 2016 **Title:** Director

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR:

Office of the Registrar  
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County Clerk  
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Subject: ...  
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County of ...  
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# Project Application Scope of Work

## Project identification

Enter the Proposal's Tracking # from the Invitation to Apply letter:

Project Name/Title:

Example: 14-SRA-HF01-XXXX

## 1) Current Setting

### a) Relation to Strategic Plans

Is the proposed project consistent with, or build on, a current strategic plan that addresses the risk and potential impact to habitable structures from wildfire in the SRA? Consider CAL-FIRE Unit plans, County Fire Department plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, FIREWISE Community Assessments, a local fire agency plan, the county General Plan's Safety Element, etc. If **Yes**, list the existing plans and describe the relationship of this project to that plan including ways that this project is consistent with or builds upon the projects that are part of the strategic plan. If **No**, is the proposal to facilitate the creation of such a plan? If yes, describe the elements of and what will be included in the plan.

Yes, The Sierra County CWPP identifies the implementation of defensible space as one of its key components for protecting residence from structure loss and the chipping program will be an incentive for the homeowners to get it done. It will also provide an opportunity for the FSC to educate individuals about the importance of hazard reduction by providing educational material as well to the homeowner. The Nevada Yuba Placer Unit Plan supports residential chipping programs throughout its plan to support the defensible space and CPR code 4291 programs.

### b) Demonstrated Experience and Capacity

Please describe your organization's experience in receiving and carrying out project related grants. Include in the discussion the source of funding (private sector grants, donations, federal, state or local grants), number of projects, when the projects occurred, and summary of accomplishments. If any of the grants were audited by the funding agency, summarize the findings of the auditor.

The following is a list of locations of completed or ongoing fuel reduction projects:  
Completed: Loylton Pines Sierraville, Calpine, Pike City, and Allegheny mastication treatments and hand treatments on 549 acres these projects were accomplished through grants from the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Ongoing: Cal Trans and Sierra County DOT have ongoing hand cut and chip adjacent to primary evacuation routes along the Hwy. 49 corridor. These projects were done in the communities on private property outside of the defensible space required by CPRC 4291 and were meant to support the defense zone around homes and structures in the community.

- Loylton Pines, 11-CA11051756-034
- Sierraville, 10USFS0519
- Calpine, 07USFS9550
- Pike City, 05BLM0195
- Allegheny, 08USFS0179

Treatments were mastication treatments and hand treatments on 549 acres these projects were accomplished through grants from the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Cal Trans and Sierra County DOT have ongoing hand cut and chip adjacent to evacuation routes and Hwy 49. The grants totaled \$644,316. All Grants were successfully completed and are now in the CWPP for maintenance over the next 5 to 7 years

**c) Habitable structures**

*How many habitable structures (Project Application Question 12) will be impacted by the project? Describe how the owners of the habitable structures will benefit. Be specific in how the proposed project will address the risk and potential impact of wildfire to these structures in SRA.*

All private homes and business could benefit if they apply for the service

**d) Community infrastructure**

*Does the proposed project address the risk and potential impact of wildfire to community assets-at-risk related to critical services provided to the habitable structures? Examples of assets-at-risk include, but are not limited to, community infrastructure such as public buildings, commercial buildings, domestic and community water supplies, power lines, and communications facilities, etc. Be specific in how the proposed project will address wildfire risk to this infrastructure.*

It does the intent of the chipping program is to give the homeowners an opportunity to dispose of vegetative material that would be left on site or piled and burned by the homeowner. This program would provide an incentive to the landowner to do their defensible space and reduce the problem associated with burning piles. Those problems being emissions and potential for an escaped burn pile causing a wildfire.

**e) Community Support**

*Is there a history of community and/or political support for wildland fire risk reduction projects? If so, please describe. If not, describe how support will be developed. If appropriate, include community support in the discussion of goals, objectives, and milestones.*

Sierra County has taken a strong interest in wildfire risk reduction projects they were one of the first communities to develop a wildfire reduction plan back in 2002 and have recently completed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan signed by the County Board of Supervisors, CAL FIRE, Local Fire Protection Districts and the US Forest Service

**f) CEQA Compliance**

*Projects that include on-the-ground work may require CEQA documentation. Prior to commencing work, CAL FIRE requires a review and acceptance of existing CEQA documentation. Describe the existing CEQA document for this project including the name of the Registered Professional Forester that prepared the CEQA document. If such documentation needs to be developed, then describe the method for obtaining compliance including who (if known) will be doing the CEQA report. Include CEQA in the description of goals, objectives, and milestones. This should also be reflected in the project budget.*

Does not apply

**2) Project Goals, Objectives, and Milestones**

**a) Project Goal**

*What are the goals of the project? Try to state the goals in a simple concise sentence. The goals should relate to the reduction of wildland fire risk to dwellings and/or improvement in fire safety to community assets. Example: This project will improve the Tabletop Road for use as a primary escape route for the Sunset community.*

The project goal is to provide landowners at no cost to them chipping services for the vegetation that they have removed around their homes. The objective is that through the use of the chipping services the compliance to CPRC 429. Use of the chipper to chip the material will also reduce emissions from burning and reduce the potential of pile burning to cause a wildfire.

**b) Project Objectives**

*Describe the objectives of the project. Example: if the goal is to educate property owners on techniques for reducing the ignition risk to their dwellings, then an objective may be to hold some number of 4 hour workshops.*

Providing the Chipping program to landowners will encourage the homeowners to provide the defensible space around the homes it will also provide the opportunity to distribute defensible space information to homeowners receiving the chipping service as well as those neighbors who

may need encouragement to treat their defensible space. The free chipping service has been successful in the past.

**c) Project Timeline and Milestones**

*Describe the timeline that shows when project activities will be carried out. Include key milestones and dates for the project, especially if achieving the milestone will trigger an invoice. Remember, project activities must be completed by March 15, 2017 and final billing submitted by April 15, 2017.*

The chipping service will be provided in the early part of the year from April through July and late in the year October through December. These would be the months when the homeowners would probably be more inclined to prepare the hazard reduction around their homes and is outside the summer season.

**d) Deliverables**

*Describe the deliverables that will be used to measure progress. The deliverables should be defined with sufficient detail for a grant inspector to confirm activity completion. For example, if the objective is to educate property owners of risk and the activity is a number of community workshops, then the deliverable might be the workshop advertising flyer and attendance rosters showing the date, location, and attendees.*

The chipping program will require the homeowner to request the chipper on a form that will identify: the landowner, address, parcel number, total size of the pile or piles, number of piles, approximate number of acres of property cleared, who cleared it, how many hours it took to clear the property, if hired how much did it cost to clear the vegetation. The contractor will be required to verify the completed work and that the information on the form is correct to the best of the contractor's knowledge. This information will be available to any inspector requesting it to be provided

**e) Project area**

*Describe the project area and why this area was chosen. If the project calls for fuels treatment, then provide the total acres in the proposed project area and the approximate acres to be treated as separate numbers. If the Project is NOT fuels treatment related, in approximate terms, describe that portion of State Responsibility Area that the project will cover.*

The project area would be all private property throughout Sierra County with primary focus on the high and very high hazard areas

**f) Special circumstances**

*What are the possible constraints on carrying out the project and how might these be mitigated in advance? Are there any special circumstances (location, types of vegetation, numbers or location of habitable structures or related community infrastructure impacted, equipment and/or staffing availability, weather, etc.)? Describe steps taken in advance, if any, to deal with these project risk factors.*

The scheduling for the chipper will be done by using the Fire Safe Council website. The chipper will be scheduled through the website and contact with the landowner to set up the chipper day will be done through a phone call or through an email.

**3) Budget**

**a) Describe budget elements**

*Attach your project budget. (Attachment 3) Explain the relationship between the budget and the project activities. Justify additions or deletions from the original concept proposal grant request. Attach the Budget as a separate document (the Excel .xls document) with the file name as described in the Project Application.*

Administrative cost the firesafe council will need to pay for a person to administer the program collect the chipper requests make sure the contractor chipping is doing their job by inspecting and fielding any homeowner concerns or conflicts. The contractor costs include the cost for a pickup truck to pull the chipper, three persons to operate the chipper and provide traffic control, and the chipper daily rate which was given to the fire safe council by a local contractor since the

concept paper was submitted.

**b) Activities funded**

*Describe specific activities to be funded and the associated costs. How will these costs be divided between administrative, non-administrative personnel, and operating costs? If applicable, include estimates for project-related contracts, such as for a Registered Professional Forester or for a mastication contractor, equipment rental, or equipment purchase*

The chipper, pickup truck, and chipper crew will be contracted out estimated number of days of chipping is 60 the cost is \$42,600 Contractor costs will include all fuel for the equipment and personnel to chip the material piled by the landowner in a manner described by the fire safe council to expedite the chipping this cost is . A project manager will be used for administering the program PM costs will cover the cost of collecting the request forms, scheduling the chipper work with the contractor as well as following up to inspect the contractors work estimated hours of work is 240 at a total cost of \$6,000. An administrative fee of 10% will cover bookkeeping fees, banking, insurance for the volunteers, misc. documentation paper and required information to CAL FIRE for grants.

**c) Partner contributions**

*Projects often include partner organizations to achieve results. Does this project include partners? If so, who are the partners and what is their role in achieving the project goals/objectives? Are they included in the project budget? This section should fully discuss matching or leveraging entities and their contributions.*

The Sierra County Fire Safe and Watershed Council will provide the necessary forms and advertising of the program through community announcements and the Fire Safe Council website. The local Fire Protection Districts, Downieville, Sierra City, Sierra County Fire Protection district, Allegany and Pike will also inform residences through their contacts of the program and distribute forms to be filled out requesting the chipper. These form will then be picked up by the project manager.

There is volunteer time donated by the Fire Safe Council and the local fire districts to get the information out to the public about the program approximately 80 hours and an assumption that 1/3 of the homes in the county will take advantage of the service and that the hours that those individuals will put into the defensible space hazard reduction is 8 hours of work. That time will be considered contributed to the overall defensible space program. The homeowners time and expenses will be collected from the chipper request form.

**d) Equipment purchases**

*Is the purchase of equipment proposed in the budget? Purchases of items costing more than \$5,000 with a useful life of more than 1 year are considered equipment purchases. If so, describe the equipment being purchased. Describe options for completing the project without the purchase (equipment rental, contract, partner service, etc.) and why these alternatives are not viable for this project. If equipment is purchased with this grant, what will happen after the project is completed? Discuss ownership, maintenance, and the intended use, intended life, and disposition of the equipment.*

No equipment purchases will be necessary because all work will be contracted.

**4) Post Project Considerations**

**a) Accomplishment Longevity**

Fire risk reduction activities may not make a permanent change to the wildland fire risk environment. Trees and brush will grow back, new homeowners that move into a neighborhood may not be educated on defensible space, building codes may be updated as new materials and construction techniques are developed.

Please describe the probable longevity of this project. How long will the fuels treatment be viable before maintenance is needed? How long will an education program be "fresh" before a refresher is needed? How long is a planning document expected to be viable?

The Fire Safe council will continue to pursue funding for the chipper program so that it is available every year for the homeowners in Sierra county. Maintaining defensible space around homes is a continual project for homeowners and disposal of the material created will also be a continuing program

**b) Maintenance**

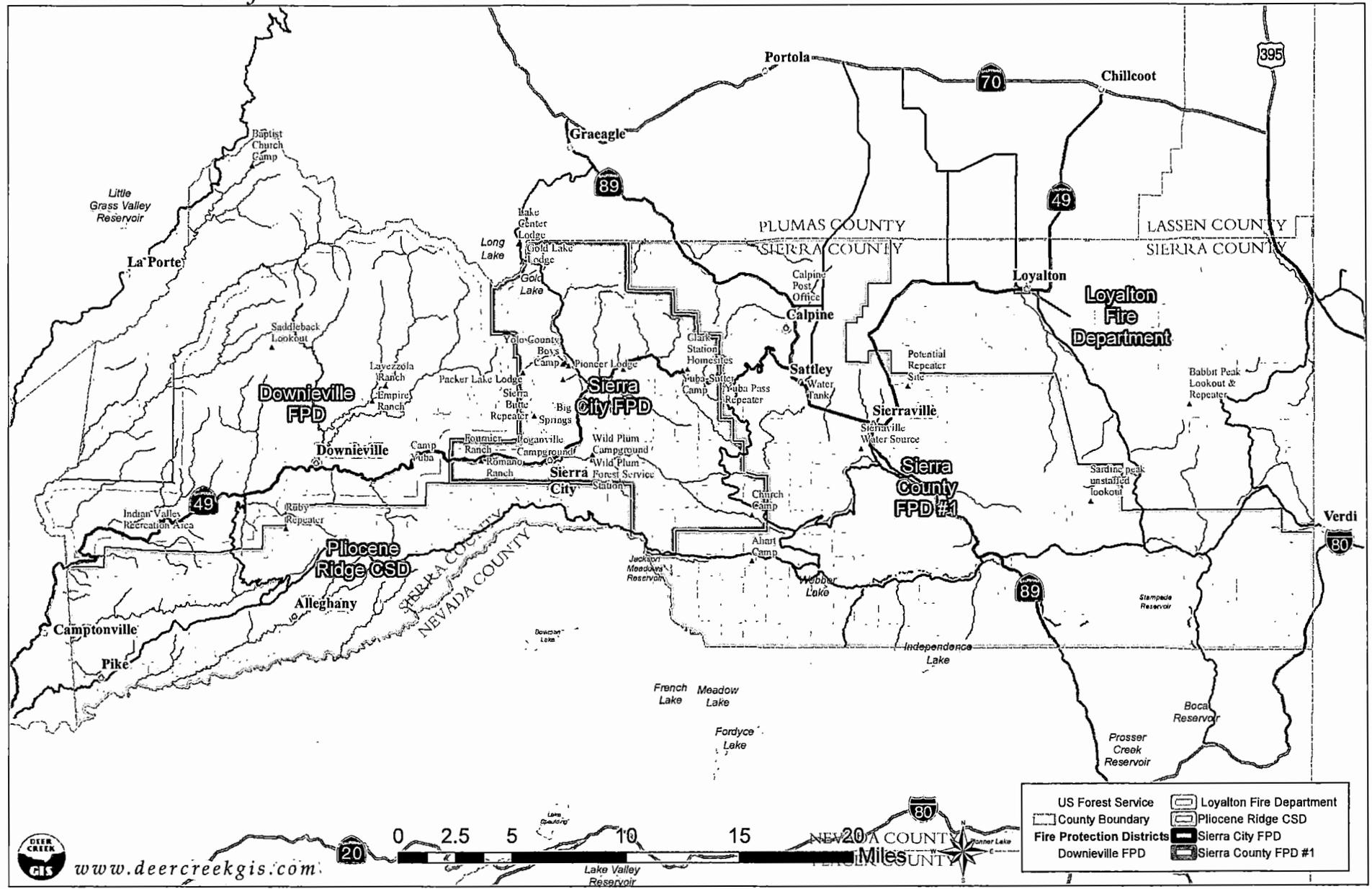
Please describe (briefly) likely actions that will be required in the future to maintain the benefits created by this project. Will maintenance activities be as costly or as in depth as the original project?

The costs would not change because of the continuation of the chipping program. Contractor costs for providing the chipper service may require additional funding if the program grows into the future.

**c) Lessons Learned**

One test of the validity of a project is how the area performs during a wildland fire. What measurements can CAL FIRE investigators look for in the event that a wildland fire burns in the project area? These measurement and/or observations should relate directly to the successful completion of the project. In other words, what can the investigators look at and say that the project made the difference?

The biggest measurement would be the number of structures lost and whether those structures had done their defensible space. The Chipper forms would also aid the inspectors in determining who had done their defensible space by having the contractors identify on the form if they felt the defensible space was complete this reducing the defensible space inspectors work load.



US Forest Service	Loyaltyon Fire Department
County Boundary	Pliocene Ridge CSD
Fire Protection Districts	Sierra City FPD
Downieville FPD	Sierra County FPD #1



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