

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| I. Mitigated Negative Declaration | 3 |
| Project Description and Environmental Setting | 3 |
| Project Location | 3 |
| Legal Description | 3 |
| General Plan Designation | 3 |
| Zoning | 3 |
| Introduction and Project History | 4 |
| Project Description | 4 |
| Timing | 7 |
| Surrounding Land Uses and Environmental Setting | 8 |
| Monitoring | 9 |
| Environmental Factors Potentially Affected | 10 |
| | |
| Maps | |
| Map A-Project Area Map Forbestown Shaded Fuel Brake | 11 |
| Map B-Photo Map of Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break Phase 3 | 12 |
| Map C-Photo Map of Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break Phase 5 | 13 |
| | |
| Conclusion of Mitigated Negative Declaration | 14 |
| Other Public Agencies Whose Approval Is Required | 14 |
| Mitigation Measures | 14 |
| Summary of Findings | 18 |
| | |
| II. Initial Study/Environmental Checklist | 19 |
| Environmental Factors Potentially Affected | 19 |
| Determination | 20 |
| Analysis of Potential Environmental Impacts | 21 |
| Aesthetics | 21 |
| Agriculture and Forest Resources | 23 |
| Air Quality | 25 |
| Biological Resources | 27 |
| Cultural Resources | 46 |
| Geology and Soils | 49 |
| Greenhouse Gas Emissions | 52 |
| Hazards and Hazardous Materials | 54 |
| Hydrology and Water Quality | 57 |
| Land Use and Planning | 60 |
| Mineral Resources | 61 |
| Noise | 62 |
| Population and Housing | 64 |
| Public Services | 65 |
| Recreation | 66 |
| Transportation/Traffic | 67 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Utilities and Service Systems | 69 |
| Mandatory Findings of Significance | 71 |
| III. Appendices | 73 |
| Appendix A | |
| Project Area Photographs | 74 |
| Appendix B | |
| Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) | 82 |
| Appendix C | |
| CNDDB Map Printout Spreadsheet | 89 |
| Appendix D | |
| Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities | 90 |
| List of Preparers of this Document | 91 |
| List of Experts Consulted | 91 |
| References Cited | 93 |

MIGIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

Project Title:

Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break

Lead Agency Under CEQA:

Butte County Resource Conservation District
150 Chuck Yeager Way, Suite A
Oroville, CA 95965
Attn: Kelli Miller

Contact person and phone number:

Martha Burk
Forester
Applied Forest Management
200 Litton Drive, Suite 310
Grass Valley, CA 95945
530-274-6450

Project location: Southeastern Butte County

The specific project sites under analysis in this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration include Phase 3 (91 acres) and Phase 5 (158 acres) of a larger multiphase project where fuel break work has been completed, is already in progress, or is under consideration for future funding opportunities (Related Phases 1, 2 and 4). The environmental impacts of these other components to the overall project were analyzed in separate analysis documents. Generally the project sites are a located along Forbestown Road, Lower Forbestown Road and Black Bart Road between Oroville and the community of Forbestown which is at the Butte County/Yuba County line (**see Map A and Map B**). The project area is approximately 15 miles East of the city of Oroville.

Legal Description: Portions of Forbestown Road, Lower Forbestown Road and Black Bart Road within T19N R6E Sections 17, 19, 20, 30

Project sponsor's name and address:

High Sierra RC&D
John Taylor, President
560 Wall St., Suite F
Auburn., CA 95603
Phone: (530) 272-6988
Email: jtaylor93@sbcglobal.net

General plan designation: Foothill Residential/
Timber Mountain

Zoning: Agriculture Rural Residential
Timber Preserve Zone

Introduction and Project History

In 2009, the High Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc., Yuba Watershed Protection and Fire Safe Council, Butte County Fire Safe Council, CalFire, local fire departments, Plumas National Forest and other interested stakeholders collaborated in the development of a comprehensive network of Defensible Fuel Profile Zones (DFPZs) in southeastern Butte County and northeastern Yuba County. This fire control infrastructure was designed around communities and individual homes located along major rural roads that are at a significant risk from catastrophic wildfire. A number of the area's large landowners and other stakeholders are participating as well. The Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break project was developed out of this collaborative process and once completed will tie together fuel treatments on various properties along 5 miles of road, to the existing Plumas National Forest's Slapjack Defensible Fuel Profile Zone (DFPZ) project (**See Map A and Map B**).

The communities that will directly benefit from fuel break treatments are Brownsville, Robinson Mills, Forbestown, Challenge, and Rackerby. Combined, these population centers and the developed areas in between them contain a population of approximately 2,820 and 962 homes that have a property value of approximately \$78,327,289. The fuel treatments proposed under the overall project will also help to protect the main evacuation routes for these communities which include Forbestown Road, Lower Forbestown Road, Black Bart Road, Ponderosa Way and Robinson Mill Road which intersects Forbestown Road. Through the control of wildfires moving upslope from developed areas and fire prone chaparral landscapes, public and private timberlands will be protected from impacts related to wildfire. In addition, the array of watershed resources of the Feather River's South Fork and various small tributaries including McCabe Creek New York Creek and Natchez Creek will be protected from wildfire impacts as well. The connectivity of private land treatments completed under this project to the Forest Service's extensive Slapjack fuels project will result in a landscape approach to changing fire behavior. This fuel break along with proposed future under burns on adjacent Forest Service lands will work in tandem to create a more natural mosaic of fuel types that will help prevent the development of large catastrophic wild fires and thus better protect communities and wildland resources.

Project Description

This project focuses on fuel loading and forest health conditions that contribute to the severity of wildfires within the watersheds of Butte and Yuba Counties. It includes constructing fuel breaks and fuel modification zones using a combination of hand cutting, mastication, and tractor pushing and crushing of vegetation in order to modify vegetative fuels and create fuel breaks. Understory fuels will be reduced as will the horizontal and vertical continuity of the forest stand structure. This should significantly change the behavior

of wildfire within this area. The fuel break is a tool used by fire fighters to access areas from which to attack or manage wildfire. Although no burning will occur in the execution of this effort, fuel breaks can be used to safely ignite prescribed fires that both reduce the volume of reoccurring wild land fuels in chaparral and forest stands as well as aid in the reestablishment of natural fire regiments within these landscapes. Finally, a reduction in the number of trees and volume of brush per acre within the project area will reduce vegetative competition leading to improved forest health. It will also open up large areas of forest and chaparral lands to sunlight and additional moisture. Consequently it is anticipated that an increase in germination and development of sensitive plant species' that are currently out competed by dense brush stands and overgrown forested areas will occur.

Portions of the Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break analyzed in this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration include Phase 3 (91 acres) and Phase 5 (158 acres) of a larger 6 phase project. In addition to treatments already planned, completed or currently in progress, a significant number of acres within the overall area have been identified for future fuel break project consideration under Phase 6. The environmental impact analysis described in this document includes the initial 5 phases of project work. Areas under consideration for future project work were not analyzed given the lack of firm commitment to continue efforts in those areas.

Generally, fuel treatments will occur along segments of Forbestown Road, Lower Forbestown Road, and Black Bart Road along with segments of Ponderosa Way and Robinson Mill Road near its intersection with Forbestown Road. The Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break will connect approximately 5 miles of private land fuels treatment to the Plumas National Forest's Slapjack Defensible Fuel Profile Zone. Project work entails mastication, dozer crushing and some hand cutting of small trees and brush in the understory of privately owned timberland located along the roads mentioned above. Vegetation treatments will be completed on both sides of the roadway; however, the width of treatments will be greater on the roads' downhill and steeper sides in order to reduce the intensity of upslope moving wildfires. Trees with diameters of 10" and smaller will be processed with a masticator or chipped as appropriate. The majority of the project will be treated by mastication. Phase 5 has been designed to utilize hand cutting as well as tractor pushing and crushing of brush stands.

Related Phases 1, 2, and 4

Phases 1, 2, and 4 have been previously funded by U.S. Forest Service National Fire Plan Grants administered through the California Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse and have been analyzed in separate project specific environmental documents. These related components of the overall Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break project are included in this analysis in order to better assess possible cumulative impacts related to the

execution of the entire project and to avoid segmenting the project in terms of environmental analysis. Phase 1 was funded in 2008 to masticate approximately 100 acres owned by two private landowners. This work was started in the fall of 2009 and completed in the spring of 2010. One of the owners completed their allocated 70 acres plus an additional 9 acres of “in-kind” contribution. Another owner completed their 30 funded acres plus an additional 8 acres as well. A total of 117 acres were treated during this phase of project work. This treatment area is located primarily on a southeast to southwest ridge just south of Forbestown Road between Black Bart Road to the west and Robinson Mill Road to the east.

Phase 2 was funded in 2009 in order to masticate approximately 78 acres on two private landholdings. A portion of the work was completed in the fall of 2010 and the remaining work was completed in January of 2011. This phase of the overall Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break is located to the east and the west of the Phase 1 project area. The 27 acre treatment area is located to the north and south of Forbestown Road near its intersections with Robinson Mill Road and Lower Forbestown Road. The 51 acre treatment area is generally located along a major ridge and ties to the work completed in Phase 1 and the proposed Phase 5.

Phase 4 was funded in 2010 and work will begin in fall of 2011. Once completed, this phase of the project will add an additional 56 acres of mastication treatments for a total of 253 acres using this technique throughout the overall project area. The Phase 4 work area is located adjacent to and down slope from Forbestown Road and upslope from Lower Forbestown Road. Phase 4 is surrounded by 942 acres of private timberland and open space that is under consideration for future treatments. This possible future work may be designed and submitted for funding as deemed appropriate by the Yuba Watershed Protection and Fire Safe Council or the Forbestown Fire Safe Council.

Project Site and Work Scope Phase 3 and Phase 5

Phases 3 and 5 are directly related to the analysis in this Initial Study Mitigated/Negative Declaration.

Phase 3

Phase 3 will help to link work on private lands in the Robinson Mill area below the Forbestown community to planned Forest Service treatments necessary to complete DFPZs outside the Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break project area. Project work on Phase 3’s 91 acres includes mastication of brush and trees 10” dbh and under in order to reduce understory fuels. In order to maximize habitat diversity and reduce the potential for stump sprouting, Oaks with diameters greater than 6” will be retained. As a result of these actions, fire behavior will be changed on the lower flank of Forbestown. Through treatments on the downslope side of Forbestown Road and Lower Forbestown Road, not only will there be a reduction in the intensity of upslope moving fires; but access and egress will be improved and made safer during wildfire events.

Phase 5

Completion of Phase 5 project work will require contracting with four landowners on whose property project work will be completed in order to dozer push and crush brush on 158 acres. The Phase 5 project impact area is located along a southeast to northeast trending ridge that parallels Black Bart Road. Slopes on the ridge top area are very moderate, typically less than 20 percent. Pushed material will remain on site until dried over the summer season, then crushed by the dozer and incorporated into the soil profile. This treatment effectively reduces the volume of standing brush vegetation and significantly improves the structure of these woody fuels. Over time this crushed material will be further reduced through decomposition and natural incorporation into the soil surface. A number of acres within the Phase 5 project area are located on ridge tops containing stands of hardwoods and brush with a relatively scattered conifer overstory. The soils in these areas are typically rockier than other portions of the project area, thus making dozer work very difficult. Consequently, a portion of the Phase 5 project area will be pretreated through hand cutting and removal of standing vegetation that will similarly be dried and crushed. Hand treatments will also be conducted immediately adjacent to large trees and other sensitive areas that could be impacted during crushing and push operations. Such hand thinning will be limited around trees exhibiting characteristics suitable for wildlife such as broken tops, deformities and those individuals showing evidence of wildlife use. The potential negative effects related to soil disturbance and erosion during brush crushing operations will be minimized as a cover of vegetative debris will be left on the soil surface cushioning dozer operations. The resulting woody material left at the surface will later provide protective soil cover that will reduce the potential for accelerated erosion during the wet season. Mitigation Measure #10 related to blade height during pushing operations will further reduce the potential for soil erosion.

Timing

Dozer pushing operations will occur in the early spring before March 1 bird nest survey requirements. Other operations will be completed during the early to mid fall months (late September and early October) although some work could occur in the very late summer (early September). If project work could not be completed as schedule in 2012, implementation would be postponed until the same time period during the following year. This project's work scope has been designed in a way that reduces impacts to both watershed resources and developed areas to a less than significant level through the timing of project work and changes made to the original work scope. Those impacts that could not be reduced to insignificant levels through project design will be rendered insignificant through the implementation of Mitigation Measures developed for this project.

Surrounding Land Uses and Environmental Setting:

The lands involved with the various phases of this project are located within the Sierra Nevada Foothills of southeastern Butte County and northeastern Yuba County. The Phase 3 and Phase 5 project areas which are the subject of analysis in this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration are exclusively within Butte County. Elevations within the overall project area range between 2,200' and just over 3,000'. The elevation range within the Phase 3 project impact area is between 2,200' and 2,700' while the range in Phase 5 is between 2,500' and 3,200'. Vegetation within the overall Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break project area's lower elevations consists of Ponderosa pine forests interspersed with chaparral species (largely Manzanita and ceanothus) and oaks in the understory. Solid stands of chaparral are located on several portions of the project area at lower elevations at its north end. At upper elevations near 3'000' vegetation transitions into dense second growth mixed conifer forests and associate brush species. Topography within the project's impact area varies from relatively flat to modernly steep slopes (20% to 50%).

The project area is located within the watershed of the Feather River's north fork. A number of its small tributaries are within, immediately adjacent to or near the project's impact area including several tributaries to Powell Creek and McCabe Creek, along with New York Creek, Natchez Creek and Forbestown Ravine. Various springs are located both within and outside of this project's impact areas. Any springs or streams found within treatment areas will be protected through the creation of flagged "No Treatment Zones". Other water features within or near the project area include the Oroville-Wyandotte Canal, a number of related flumes as well as a nearby pond. These man made aquatic features will be protected with "No Treatment Zones" as well. In addition to their use for timber, wildlife and water production, parcels within the project's impact areas contain numerous rural homes on large lots as well as commercial structures.

More specifically, the Phase 3 project area is located on a west facing slope containing dense stands of second growth mixed conifer forests with a significant oak component. Openings within these stands contain Manzanita, ceanothus and other Sierra Foothill chaparral species along with some grasses and forbs. The Phase 5 project area is located along a southeast and northwest facing ridgeline containing second and third growth Ponderosa pine stands which contain scattered large trees. The majority of understory vegetation in this area consist of tall mature Manzanita, some ceanothus, black oaks and live oaks. Small openings within these stands contain various types of grasses and forbs. The Phase 5 project area also contains several large openings one to four acres in size which contain solid stands of Manzanita.

Monitoring:

See “**Appendix B Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Butte County, California**”. This project will be monitored for adherence to project Mitigation Measures and infestation of noxious plants. The monitoring phase of project work will be completed by a Project Manager identified by the High Sierra RC&D as having the appropriate technical knowledge and skills to complete this portion of project work.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance | |

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by Mitigation Measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or Mitigation Measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

For

**Map A.
Project Area Map
Forbestown Shaded Fuel Break**

**Map B.
Photo Map of Forbestown Shaded
Fuel Break
Phase 3**

**Map C.
Photo Map of Forbestown Shaded
Fuel Break
Phase 5**

Conclusion of the Mitigated Negative Declaration

Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.)

- 1) Access Authorization will need to be obtained from the Butte County and Yuba County Public Works Departments in the event that equipment enters County road right-of-ways.*
- 2) A California Department of Fish and Game Streamside Alteration Agreement (1600 Permit) would be required if any project equipment crosses a stream zone or riparian area. *

**These actions are not anticipated*

Mitigation Measures

The following sixteen Mitigation Measures will be implemented by the project proponent in order to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Implementation of these Mitigation Measures will reduce the environmental impacts of the proposed project to a less than significant level.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure #1: All wet and dry stream courses will be protected by a 75' or to Break In Slope "No Treatment Zone" unless the slope within the inner riparian zone and core riparian zone have slopes of greater than 50%. In such instances all wet and dry stream courses will be protected by a 100' or to break in slope "No Treatment Zone". Ditches, canals and other man made water conveyance structures will be protected by a 25' "No Treatment Zone". All buffers will be established on both sides of stream channels and flow structures. All springs will be encircled by a 75' "No Treatment Zone". "No Treatment Zones" will be established and flagged as directed by the Project Manager prior to the implementation of any project work. Monitoring photographs will be taken by the Project Manager before and after completion of project work in order to document compliance with Mitigation Measure #1 and these will be incorporated into the project file.

Mitigation Measure #2: Personnel specifically trained in the identification of List 1, List 2 and List 3 species or a professional botanist will be required to evaluate potential habitat for these species prior to implementation of work within the project area during the appropriate blooming or identification period. Such personnel will also evaluate potential findings of any such plants within treatment areas during the execution of project work. If any Federal or State listed threatened or endangered species are detected in the project area that may be impacted by the project work, then all project related activities will immediately stop within that area which will be flagged with a 25' "No Treatment Zone". All sightings will be documented using the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB) field survey form a copy of which will be submitted to the CNDDDB and the USFWS. A copy will also be incorporated into the project files. Qualifications for personnel who will make evaluations of sites include those found in the California Department of Fish and Game's 2009 document

entitled “**Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities**”(Attached).

Mitigation Measure #3: USFWS 1999 guidelines will be followed if valley elderberry is encountered outside the “No Treatment Zone” described in Mitigation Measure #1 during the implementation of project work.

Mitigation Measure #4: In order to protect any species covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), no fuels treatment work will occur between March to August, unless the following is implemented: 1. A survey is conducted by a biologist or a person with knowledge of, and ability to recognize, species protected by the MBTA and it is determined that there are no occupied nests within the proposed activity area. 2. If an occupied nest is found, then a biologist or a person with knowledge of, and ability to recognize, species protected by the MBTA will determine if the birds present are those protected by the MBTA. 3. If an MBTA species is located then no activities will occur within 100 feet of the nest during the breeding season.

Mitigation Measure #5: In order to prevent the spread of invasive plant species all heavy equipment to be used in the execution of project work will be cleaned off site prior to use within the project area. The Project Manager will assure and document equipment cleaning. Documentation of cleaning will be incorporated into the project file.

Mitigation Measure #6: An individual knowledgeable in identifying cultural resources will be on site prior to all ground disturbing activities in order to assure that all archeological, prehistoric, historic or paleontological resource sites along the path of the fuel break or within 30 feet beyond the project boundary have been flagged and that equipment operators and others working in the project areas are informed about their locations. Such individuals may be an RPF with Cal Fire archeological certification, a professional archeologist or other individuals with appropriate training as determined by a professional archeologist.

Mitigation Measure #7: Within areas of ground or vegetation disturbing activities, if project work appears to expose any previously unknown archeological, prehistoric, historic or paleontological resource sites along the path of the Fuel break or within 30 feet beyond the project boundary, the site will be avoided. Work may continue elsewhere within the overall project area. Exposed cultural or paleontological resources will be appropriately flagged in order to immediately establish an exclusion buffer of at least 100 feet. A professional archeologist will examine the site, evaluate found objects and make a finding of their significance. The archeologist will also develop recommendations for the permanent protection of objects and site treatments as necessary. Identified sites will be permanently protected through avoidance. These sites will be made off

limits to both personnel and equipment. A professional archeologist will determine an appropriate permanent flagged exclusion zone once the site has been adequately assessed for significance. Findings of significance will be prepared and submitted to appropriate agencies as well as appropriate Native American groups at the discretion of the professional archeologist. As appropriate, findings will be recorded in the project files.

Mitigation Measure #8: If during the execution of project work human remains are found, the Project Manager will halt work at that location until a professional archaeologist visits the site in order to assess their significance and process the remains and the County coroner will be immediately notified. If the remains are determined by the County coroner to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and Native American groups at the discretion of the professional archeologist will be notified within 24 hours and the guidelines of the NAHC will be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains. Findings of significance will be prepared and submitted to appropriate agencies at the discretion of the professional archeologist. Findings will also be recorded in the project files by the Project Manager. Project work may continue on other non-impacted portions of the project area.

Mitigation Measure #9: No equipment operations will occur on slopes exceeding 50 percent and will not occur on any unstable areas, regardless of slope percentage. Slope and suitability for equipment operations will be determined by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) or the Project Manager.

Mitigation Measure #10: During the implementation of project work, dozer blades will be maintained at least 2 to 3 inches above ground throughout the project area. Periodic inspection of blade height will be made by the Project Manager during the execution of project work in order to insure dozer operator adherence

Mitigation Measure #11: Waterbars will be installed on slopes of 30% or greater where 500 sq. ft. or more of soil has been exposed by project activities. Waterbars are to be installed where vegetation treatments lead into or have access to a watercourse. An adequate number of waterbars as determined by a RPF, other suitably trained personnel, or the Project Manager will be installed per the provisions of California Forest Practices Act 934.6 in order to prevent the degradation of water quality. Waterbar installation will be inspected by the Project Manager during subsequent precipitation events throughout the following winter season in order to assure their adequacy. Condition and operation of waterbars will be recorded in the project files.

Mitigation Measure #12: Any newly-exposed soil of over 100 square feet in area will be mulched with brush to minimize the potential for erosion. Hand water bars will be installed to divert water onto stable vegetation and away from watercourses, as needed. Verification of proper installation and sufficiency of both mulching

and waterbars will be made by the Project Manager prior to and following the season's first precipitation event and recorded in the project file.

Mitigation Measure #13: The Project Manager will select refueling and maintenance areas for heavy equipment, chainsaws and other combustion powered hand tools on flat sites that are away from dry or wet waterways as well as areas that could potentially flow into a stream in the event of an accidental spill. Fuel containment equipment (i.e., absorbent sheets and waddles) will be made available and used at refueling and maintenance areas. Fuel spillage will be minimized by conducting these operations in flat areas. Equipment will be stored and maintained within properly cleared areas. The Project Manager will inspect refueling areas to assure compliance with this Mitigation Measure. These inspections will also verify the sites' adequacy in protecting riparian and terrestrial resources as well as the use and availability of containment equipment.

Mitigation Measure #14: Contractors or landowners providing operations equipment (dozers, etc.) will make daily inspection of equipment for leaks, correcting and repairing any such leaks prior to resuming their use. The inspection reports will be submitted to the Project Manager along with evidence of any repairs required and completed before returning equipment to project work sites. Inspection reports will be incorporated into the project files. In the event that equipment will need to cross live streams, a California Department of Fish and Game Stream Alteration Agreement may be required at the discretion of that agency.

Mitigation Measure #15: Contractors or landowners providing equipment will provide adequate fire protection equipment. This will include a water wagon located at equipment operation areas as well as fire extinguishers attached to all mechanized equipment. In addition, fire fighting hand tools will be made available at all areas where equipment is operated.

Mitigation Measure# 16: Any existing drainage features will be protected from project related impacts and will remain free of obstruction.

Summary of Findings

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared to assess the project's potential effects on the environment and an appraisal of the significance of those effects. Based on this IS/MND, it has been determined that the proposed project will not have any significant effects on the environment after implementation of Mitigation Measures. This conclusion is supported by the following findings:

1. The proposed project will have no effect related to Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, along with Utilities and Service Systems.
2. The proposed project will have a less than significant impact on Cultural Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Noise.
3. Mitigation is required to reduce potentially significant impacts related to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Material as well as Hydrology and Water Quality.

The Initial Study/Environmental Checklist included in this document discusses the results of resource-specific environmental impact analyses which were conducted by the Tehama County Resource Conservation District with assistance provided by various State agencies and other organizations. This Initial Study revealed potentially significant environmental effects that could result from the proposed project. The project's proponent, the High Sierra RC&D revised its project plans and has developed Mitigation Measures which will eliminate impact or reduce environmental impacts to a less than significant level. The Butte County Resource Conservation District has found, in consideration of the entire record, that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project as currently revised and mitigated would result in a significant effect upon the environment. The IS/MND is therefore the appropriate document for CEQA compliance.