



Memo

California State Parks
Bay Area District
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Date: August 22, 2024

To: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

From: Cyndy Shafer, Natural Resource Program Manager, California State Parks Bay Area District

Subject: **Notice of Impending Development for the Tomales Bay State Parks Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project (MAR-NOID-0003-24)**

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 30606 and California Coastal Commission (Commission) Regulation Section 13359, this letter is presented to provide Notice of Impending Development (NOID) for the Tomales Bay State Park Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project in Marin County. Such notice must be submitted to the Commission before a public agency proposing a public works project pursuant to a certified Public Works Plan (PWP) may commence with implementation of the Project.

Project Description

California State Parks (CSP) Bay Area District is proposing the Tomales Bay State Park (SP) Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project (Project or proposed Project). The Project is in Tomales Bay SP, a 2,433-acre park in Marin County within the ancestral lands of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR). The Project area encompasses all land within Tomales Bay SP, and the Project would prioritize implementation of treatments on approximately 1,590 acres of the Project area. The vegetation treatments would be consistent with Coastal Vegetation Treatment Standards (Coastal VTS) and the objectives and requirements of the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP).

Treatments would consist of the CalVTP ecological restoration treatment type to enhance natural habitats by restoring ecological conditions and natural processes that promote regeneration, healthy habitat structure, density, and composition and reduce wildfire impacts. The goals of the Project are to improve resilience of the vegetation in the park for ecological benefit and to reduce wildfire risk; preserve and steward the park's Bishop pine forests, mixed hardwood forests, grasslands and other habitats; and integrate FIGR Traditional Knowledge and perspectives into vegetation management in the park. To accomplish those goals, CSP, in consultation with FIGR, would implement ecologically driven management to restore native habitat composition, structure, and density; create a dynamic mosaic of vegetation types and age classes in the park; and renew the beneficial role of fire through prescribed and cultural burning.

The proposed Project's CalVTP treatment activities would consist of manual treatments, mechanical treatments, prescribed burning (broadcast burning, cultural burning, pile burning, air curtain burning), herbicide application (limited to discrete targeted application where it is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative), and prescribed herbivory (limited to treatment maintenance only). Proposed treatments would be implemented consistent with the Coastal VTS adopted in the Tomales Bay SP Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience PWP to protect sensitive coastal resources.

Prescribed burning is a method of introducing beneficial fire to the landscape and is the intentional application of fire to vegetation under specific conditions. Burning of vegetative material would occur to promote ecosystem health, restore fire resiliency in fire-adapted plant communities, and reduce biomass and fuels. Broadcast and cultural burning may occur on up to 401 acres within the Project area. Pile burning and air curtain burning are proposed to occur on up to 566 acres within the Project area to process biomass following vegetation removal using manual and mechanical treatment activities and to facilitate the opening of Bishop pinecones in the canopy. Manual treatment activities are proposed on up to 1,170 acres to cut, thin, remove, or prune trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation. Manual activities use equipment such as hand saws, brush cutters, pole-saws, and chainsaws, and would be preferred in specific areas including in or adjacent to identified natural, cultural, and tribal cultural resources and on slopes greater than 35 percent. Mechanical treatment activities are proposed on up to 428 acres and would be limited to areas with road or trail access points, generally within 500 feet of roads and on slopes less than 35 percent. The proposed Project may periodically use noisy mechanized equipment during daylight hours. Noise-sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, schools, places of worship) may want to close windows to reduce noise. Manual and mechanical treatments would selectively remove trees and shrubs to reduce fuels and promote species resilience and regeneration to a density that is characteristic of healthy stands of the vegetation alliance and would generally reduce biomass and fuel levels. Targeted herbicide treatment may occur on a maximum of 6 acres across the entire Project area in discrete targeted locations, primarily to prevent the growth and spread of invasive species when other treatment methods are not effective, feasible, or would result in greater potential impacts. Prescribed herbivory using goats or sheep to graze or browse target vegetation is proposed on a maximum of 40 acres within coyote brush shrubland and grassland habitats on the east side of Tomales Bay to maintain initial vegetation treatments.

Vegetation may be left on-site or burned on-site, and small amounts of biomass may be taken off-site to an appropriate treatment facility, if needed. Treatment maintenance could be ongoing and intermittent, as needed, using the same treatment types and activities as the initial treatment, and may also include limited use of prescribed herbivory. Implementation of initial treatments would require between 1 and 20 crew members (including FIGR tribal crews, if available) depending on the treatment activity, along with their associated vehicles to travel to and from the treatment areas. Up to four crews may be conducting treatments simultaneously within the Project area. Treatment activities would occur during daylight hours, typically between approximately 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, except for broadcast and cultural burning. Staffing levels during prescribed burns would be determined in a prescribed burn plan specific to each burn unit and would be sufficient to ensure that safety and burn objectives are met. Cultural burns would only occur in consultation and with the participation of FIGR. Staffing levels would be consistent with the number of workers assumed in the CalVTP Program EIR.

Treatments would be scheduled annually during the 10-year term of the PWP, scheduled to begin in fall of 2024 depending on funding, equipment/contractor availability, weather conditions, and other restrictions. Treatments could occur on any date that offers suitable conditions during the year, except during seasonal avoidance of sensitive resources. Herbicide application could also occur on any date that offers suitable conditions during the year, in accordance with the Coastal VTS, CalVTP Standard Project Requirements (SPRs), applicable laws, and regulations.

Maintenance treatments would be based upon real-time monitoring of site conditions. Maintenance treatment is anticipated to be required approximately every 5 years but may be required as soon as 1-2 years after initial treatment. Monitoring of treatment areas would occur annually at a minimum. Treatment areas would be monitored to ensure early detection and rapid removal of invasive plant species and to monitor vegetation regrowth. Maintenance methods would involve the same treatment type and treatment activities used in the initial treatments and may also include limited use of prescribed herbivory.

CSP will provide annual updates on the project website (https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=31231) of treatments implemented in the past year including the treatment type, acres treated, a map of where treatment has occurred, and will highlight anticipated treatments for the coming year.

Environmental Documents

The Tomales Bay SP Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience PWP was effectively certified by the Commission on May 9, 2024. The PWP provides an efficient mechanism for Coastal Act compliance in combination with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance process facilitated by the CalVTP Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) for vegetation treatment projects within the Coastal Zone portion of Tomales Bay SP. The PWP requires that projects adhere to the Coastal VTS approved as part of the PWP and that additional information about project design be provided.

The CalVTP Program EIR was certified by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in December 2019 to provide an efficient mechanism for CEQA compliance for vegetation treatment projects. It evaluates the potential environmental effects of implementing qualifying vegetation treatments to reduce the risk of wildfire throughout portions of the State Responsibility Area and the Local Responsibility Area in California. It was designed for use by many state and local agencies and special districts to accelerate vegetation treatment project approvals by finding them to be within the scope of the Program EIR through the preparation of a Project-Specific Analysis (PSA). The PSA must demonstrate that the proposed activities align with those in the CalVTP, the effects of proposed vegetation treatment are consistent with those analyzed in the Program EIR, and SPRs and mitigation measures from the Program EIR will be integrated into the treatment to avoid and minimize impacts.

Where differences between the Program EIR coverage and the proposed Project arise, they can be addressed in an Addendum to the Program EIR, if they do not result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in severity of significant impacts identified in the EIR. For instance, Tribal Cultural Resources SPRs developed in consultation with FIGR will be implemented during treatment with coverage by the Addendum. The PSA and Addendum can be prepared as a joint document.

A joint PSA and Addendum to the CalVTP Program EIR (PSA/Addendum) was prepared for the Tomales Bay SP Project that evaluates this Project as a later activity covered by the CalVTP Program EIR and includes information that demonstrates the Project's consistency with the Coastal VTS, as required pursuant to the Coastal Act and PWP. Direct response to the Coastal VTS for the Project can be found in Attachment B of the PSA/Addendum. The PSA/Addendum and supporting materials are available at: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=31231.

This NOID, as well as all supporting environmental documents, including the PSA/Addendum and the Coastal VTS, are available for public review, beginning August 22, 2024 and continuing through the Commission's hearing for this matter at its October 9-11, 2024 meeting, at the California Coastal Commission office located at 455 Market Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105. At least 10 days prior to the Commission's October 9-11 meeting, the documents will also be available for review and download online on the California Coastal Commission's Agenda webpage, found under Meetings, Monthly agenda online at: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/>.

Consistency with PWP

The Final Tomales Bay State Parks Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience PWP was effectively certified by the Commission on May 9, 2024. The Project will be carried out pursuant to and consistent with the PWP as documented in the PSA/Addendum and the Coastal VTS.

Approval Process

As defined in the CalVTP Program EIR and the PSA/Addendum, the project proponent is a public agency that provides funding for vegetation treatment or has land ownership, land management, or other regulatory responsibility in the treatable landscape and is seeking to fund, authorize, or implement vegetation treatments

consistent with the CalVTP. CSP meets the definition of project proponent and is facilitating the implementation of treatments in Tomales Bay SP. For Coastal Act compliance, CSP is responsible for consistency with PWP processes.

The CSP Bay Area District Superintendent approved this Project on July 8, 2024. The CSP staff contact for this Project is:

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Consistent with the requirements of the PWP, CSP notified the Commission in advance of its intent to submit a NOID for the Project. After receiving the NOID, the Commission has five working days to deem the NOID complete and filed or request additional information. The Commission is also responsible for reviewing the PSA/Addendum and response to the Coastal VTS, and for determining whether the Project is consistent with the PWP. Commission review of a proposed Project is deemed complete on the date that the Project is determined to be consistent with the PWP. The Commission meeting at which it will consider whether to approve the PSA and act on the NOID for this Project begins on October 9, 2024 and extends through October 11, 2024. The specific date that this item will be considered by the Commission can be found by viewing the California Coastal Commission's Agenda webpage, found under Meetings, Monthly agenda online at: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/>. The Commission staff contact for this Project is:

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