

NOID



UPPER SALINAS-LAS TABLAS
RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Upper Salinas-Las Tablas
Resource Conservation District
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Date: June 30, 2025

To: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

From: Spencer Gordon, Project Manager, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Subject: Notice of Impending Development for the North Coastal San Luis Obispo County Regional Ecological Strategy for Improving Landscapes Project (SLT-NOID-0006-25)

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 30606 and California Coastal Commission (Coastal Commission) Regulations Section 13358 and Section 13359, this letter is presented to provide Notice of Impending Development (NOID) for the North Coastal San Luis Obispo County Regional Ecological Strategy for Improving Landscapes Project in San Luis Obispo County (SLO-RESIL or proposed project). Such notice must be submitted to the Coastal 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

Under the proposed project, the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District (USLTRCD) is proposing vegetation treatments on up to 88,151 acres of USLTRCD's jurisdictional boundary within the California Coastal Zone, from the northern San Luis Obispo County line to Toro Creek near Morro Bay. Implementation of treatments would be phased over several years; implementation timing would be based on the availability of funding and other resources. The proposed project area encompasses both private and public lands, excluding federally owned and managed lands and excluding existing, previously approved vegetation treatment projects within its bounds (i.e., Hearst Ranch Forest Health Fuels Reduction Project, Covell Ranch Forest Health Fuels Reduction Project, and Cambria Reserves Restoration and Vegetation Treatment Project). An objective of the proposed project is to expand on and increase the efficacy of ecologically restorative forest health projects previously approved by the Coastal Commission and successfully implemented under the existing USLTRCD Forest Health and Fire Resilience PWP. Approval of the project would allow for the landscape-level planning needed to increase the pace and scale of vegetation treatments.

The proposed treatment types are ecological restoration and fuel break. The majority of treatments in the project area would be ecological restoration and could occur across 84,757 acres. Additionally, a mixture of shaded and non-shaded fuel breaks could be implemented across 3,394 acres. It is not expected that all acres in the project area would be treated; instead, treatments would be implemented in strategic locations across the project area as funding and other resources allow. Initial phases of treatments would focus on ecological restoration of Monterey pine stands near the towns of Cambria and San Simeon, and priority, strategic shaded and non-shaded fuel breaks identified by fire agencies and qualified professionals (e.g., CAL FIRE, San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council). The proposed treatment activities consist of mechanical treatments, manual treatments, prescribed burning (pile burning and broadcast burning), targeted

herbicide application, and prescribed herbivory. Portable biomass processing technologies (e.g., air curtain burners, carbonator) may be used in place of pile burning. These technologies are designed to consume biomass quickly and efficiently with a substantial reduction in smoke compared to pile burning. Targeted herbicide application may be implemented where nonnative or invasive species are present, or to maintain fuel breaks. Herbicides would be used only if this treatment activity is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative. Implementation of treatments may necessitate the periodic use of noise-generating mechanical equipment during daylight hours. Noise-sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, schools, places of worship) may want to close windows to reduce noise exposure. Ongoing maintenance of initial treatments would involve the same vegetation treatment types and activities used in the initial treatment, as funding and other approvals allow. Proposed treatments would be implemented consistent with the Coastal Vegetation Treatment Standards (Coastal VTS) and Project Standards under the USLTRCD Forest Health and Fire Resilience PWP to protect sensitive resources. In addition, the vegetation treatments would be consistent with the objectives and requirements of the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP).

Future vegetation treatments would be planned on an annual basis, to the extent feasible, or as far in advance as possible pending funding availability, landowner support, and operational feasibility. Treatment planning would be strategic and result in implementation of more treatments aimed toward achieving objectives primarily related to promoting forest health than treatments with objectives primarily related to preventing the ignition and spread of wildfire. USLTRCD would provide a public posting to the San Luis Obispo Monterey Pine Restoration Project (SLOMPRP) website (<https://slomprp.org/>) showing treatments implemented during the previous year (treatment type, acres, and a map) and the anticipated treatments to be implemented in the coming year.

Environmental Documents

The USLTRCD Forest Health and Fire Resilience PWP was certified by the Coastal Commission in 2021. 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 of a portion of San Luis Obispo County. The PWP requires that projects adhere to the Coastal VTS approved as part of the PWP.

The CalVTP Program EIR was certified by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in 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 and increase resilience throughout 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 treatment types and activities align with those in the CalVTP, the effects of proposed vegetation treatment are consistent with those analyzed in the Program EIR, and Standard Project Requirements (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. 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 proposed project that evaluates this project as a later activity covered by the CalVTP Program EIR. The proposed treatment types and the treatment activities are consistent with those evaluated in the CalVTP Program EIR. The PSA/Addendum 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 proposed project can be found in Attachment B of the PSA/Addendum. The PSA/Addendum and supporting materials are available at: <https://www.us-ltrcd.org/fire-prevention-and-forest-health>.

This NOID, as well as all supporting environmental documents, including the PSA/Addendum and the Coastal VTS, are available for public review at the Coastal Commission office located at 455 Market Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105, beginning June 30, 2025 and continuing through the Coastal Commission's hearing for this matter at its August 13-15, 2025 meeting. At least 10 days prior to the Coastal Commission's August 13-15 meeting, the documents will also be available for review and download online on the Coastal Commission's Agenda webpage, found under Meetings, Monthly Agenda online at: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/>.

Consistency with PWP

The Final USLTRCD Forest Health and Fire Resilience PWP was approved by the USLTRCD Board on September 16, 2021, and certified by the Coastal Commission on October 15, 2021. The project will be carried out pursuant to and consistent with the PWP as documented in the PSA/Addendum and the Coastal VTS. The PWP is available on the USLTRCD website here: <https://www.us-ltrcd.org/forest-health-and-fire-resilience-public-works-plan>.

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. USLTRCD is the lead agency pursuant to CEQA and the project proponent. USLTRCD will facilitate the implementation of the treatments. For Coastal Act compliance, USLTRCD is responsible for implementing the procedures in the PWP and is responsible for maintaining oversight to confirm consistency with PWP processes.

The USLTRCD Board approved this project at a Board meeting on June 25, 2025 (Resolution 2025-01). The USLTRCD staff contact for this project is:

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Consistent with the requirements of the PWP, the USLTRCD notified the Coastal Commission in advance of its intent to submit a NOID for the project. After receiving the NOID, the Coastal Commission has five days to deem the NOID complete and filed or request additional information. The Coastal 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 in its role as a responsible agency under CEQA. Coastal Commission review of a proposed project is deemed complete on the date that the project is determined to be consistent with the PWP. The Coastal Commission meeting at which it will consider the PSA/Addendum as well as whether to approve the proposed project and act on the NOID for this project begins on August 13, 2025, and extends through August 15, 2025. The specific date that this item will be considered by the Coastal Commission can be found by viewing the Coastal Commission's Agenda webpage, found under Meetings, Monthly Agenda online at: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/>. The Coastal Commission staff contact for this project is:

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