

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
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**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT STATUTORY EXEMPTION FOR  
RESTORATION PROJECTS  
CONCURRENCE NO. 21080.56-2025-074-R2**

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**Project:** Intertribal Ecocultural Restoration Crew and Land Guardianship Program  
**Location:** El Dorado and Placer Counties  
**Lead Agency:** California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)  
**Lead Agency Contact:** Shannon Johnson; [shannon.johnson@fire.ca.gov](mailto:shannon.johnson@fire.ca.gov)

**Background**

Project Location: The Intertribal Ecocultural Restoration Crew and Land Guardianship Program (Project) is located at four locations, which include Alta at Latitude 39.187040, Longitude -120.80091; Gun Range at Latitude 38.681563, Longitude -120.911584; Indian Creek at Latitude 38.708067, Longitude -120.867371; and Kanaka Valley at Latitude 38.745401, Longitude -121.031109, in El Dorado and Placer Counties.

Project Description: Cal FIRE (Lead Agency), in partnership with the Colfax Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe of the Colfax Rancheria and Koy'o Land Conservancy, proposes to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend, and restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife. The Project is designed to benefit the culturally sensitive black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), angelica (*Angelica* sp.), bleeding heart (*Dicentra* sp.), dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*), blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). The Project includes implementation of the Tribal Wildfire Resilience program across approximately 348 acres of land, within four different tribally owned areas. The Project aims to support California Native American tribes in managing ancestral lands and implementing and promoting Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) through wildfire resilience. Specific actions include cultural/prescribed fire as well as pre-and-post burning treatments to optimize the ecological benefits of landscape-level broadcast burning. Use of cultural/prescribed fire will improve habitat and benefit water quality while reducing hazardous fuels. Furthermore, many native plant species are expected to benefit from the low to moderate intensity fire included in the Project. Low to moderate intensity fire will also reduce understory vegetation, thus reducing the risk of environmental impacts associated with catastrophic wildfire.



This Concurrence is also based on a finding that the Project is consistent with and that its implementation will further CDFW's mandate as California's trustee agency for fish and wildlife, including the responsibility to hold and manage these resources in trust for all the people of California.

## Discussion

- A. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (a), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will exclusively conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

The Project will contribute to restoring historical fire regimes in areas of overgrown conifer forests that have encroached on oak woodlands and prairies, while removing invasive species through manual thinning and cultural burning. Restoring historical fire regimes will reestablish and improve forage and habitat for wildlife through revitalizing multi-age and multi-species trees to support nesting and denning.

- B. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (b), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project may have incidental public benefits, such as public access and recreation.

The Project may have incidental public safety benefits to neighboring residences and utility, transportation, and water supply infrastructure by reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The Project is designed to mimic historic low to moderate intensity fire events that commonly occurred in the past. By restoring a more natural fire regime in areas of overgrown conifer forests through cultural burning and hazardous fuel removal, the Project will incidentally reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire to neighboring property/infrastructure. The Project will also improve yields of basket materials, minimize pests that infect acorn crops, and increase the health and availability of traditional food sources and plant medicine.

- C. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (c), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery, and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

Long-term Net Benefits to Climate Resiliency: The Project will result in long-term climate resiliency by restoring habitat heterogeneity, promoting the development of larger conifer and oak trees that will be more resilient to disturbance, reducing the risk of high severity wildfire, re-establishing pre-colonial fire regimes, decreasing large-scale vegetation type conversion, and providing long-term carbon sequestration. Additionally, it is expected that the removal of overgrown fuel and reestablishment of native species may allow more precipitation to percolate, increasing groundwater availability, thus improving watershed function while increasing resilience to climate-

driven disturbances, including drought. Vegetation health, complexity, and diversity support more resilient wildlife habitats in a warming climate.

Long-term Net Benefits to Biodiversity: The Project will result in long-term net benefits to biodiversity by increasing heterogeneity across multiple communities, including mixed conifer forests, oak woodlands, and riparian areas that are currently being encroached by invasive and non-native species. Removal of dead and fallen conifers will increase average canopy gap size, which supports a more healthy and diverse understory community. Small diameter conifer removal will also enhance the health of the existing native plant communities and counteract current site conditions of known encroachment of invasive species such as spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*), yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), tall whitetop or perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), and barbed goatgrass (*Aegilops triuncialis*). The use of TEK on these properties is expected to promote the interconnectedness between native plant and animal species, including relationships between host plants, pollinators, and tribal uses. Many pollinators also depend upon resources found in recent fires, including plant flowers, exposed mineral soil patches, and dead wood that serves as nesting burrows, directly promoting an increase in long-term native species biodiversity.

Long-term Net Benefits to Sensitive Species Recovery: The Project ensures long-term benefits to sensitive species recovery through enhancing and restoring a variety of habitats. Removal of overgrown understory and invasive species allows for plant species ecological succession and an increase of groundwater percolation during precipitation events that supports riparian habitats. Additionally, post-burn restoration includes seed dispersal, propagation, and planting of native species, which will improve habitat and forage for sensitive wildlife.

Stebbins' morning-glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*), listed as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), has very few isolated occurrences. A known occurrence is in the vicinity of Gun Range, Indian Creek, and Kanaka Valley. Long lapses between fires have prevented the formation of openings necessary for Stebbins' morning-glory establishment. Fire can also serve as an effective seed scarification mechanism, which is necessary for germination. TEK methodologies will enhance suitable habitat at these locations and may provide additional locations for Stebbins' morning-glory establishment and recovery.

Suitable habitat for the foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei pop. 3*), listed as threatened under CESA, is identified in the vicinity of Alta, Indian Creek, and Kanaka Valley. It is expected that low-intensity fires outside of watercourses are likely to have no adverse effects and the Project will increase long-term beneficial habitat for the species within riparian corridors as a result of improved flows, decreased invasive species cover, and reduced potential for catastrophic wildfire to result in injury or mortality to frogs sheltering in riparian habitat.

Procedures for the Protection of the Environment: The draft burn plan for the Project outlines procedures for conducting prescribed fire activities and measures to protect

sensitive resources. Avoidance and conservation measures include, but are not limited to:

- Sensitive resources will be identified, marked, and protected prior to Project implementation.
- Nesting bird surveys will be conducted pre-Project implementation.
- Identified sensitive plant species will be identified and flagged to direct crew away from the site(s) and avoid trampling.
- Best management practices will be implemented for erosion control and watercourse protection and prevention of release of sediment into watercourses.
- Fire ignition will be restricted to outside 50 feet of riparian habitat.
- Heavy machinery use will be prohibited.

Ongoing Management for the Protection of the Environment: The Project is currently funded by CAL FIRE's Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant program through March 2029 and includes several phases of treatments on each property, including post-burn restoration and invasive species monitoring and maintenance. The Colfax Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe of the Colfax Rancheria and Koy'o Land Conservancy plans to continue treatments, while following resource protection designs, beyond the current grant agreement to increase biodiversity and heal their lands. The ongoing management of the Project aims to restore the Project areas by maintaining the mosaic of vegetation types, prioritizing burn units according to community and ecosystem values, and re-establishing traditional fire regimes to Project areas.

Fire effects monitoring will be ongoing to observe treatment outcomes with the goal of maximizing plant diversity. Data collection includes completing native plants, invasive plants, rare plants, and culturally sensitive plants surveys; completing pre- and post-treatment monitoring; and identifying or confirming game trails, waterways, and culturally sensitive sites for long-term management and stewardship of the landscape, including ongoing invasive species treatments and additional native plant care to enable overall ecosystem restoration.

All ongoing Project management treatments will include the same treatment types and activities used in the initial treatments and would continue to support long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species and communities.

- D. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (d), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project does not include any construction activities, except those solely related to habitat restoration.

The Project does not include any construction activities except for those solely related to habitat conservation. All Project activities are solely related to the overall goal of the Project to restore forest habitat heterogeneity and improve wildfire resilience and forest conditions.


**Scope and Reservation of Concurrence**

This Concurrence is based on the proposed Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request. If there are any subsequent changes to the Project that affect or otherwise change the Lead Agency Determination, the Lead Agency, or any other public agency that proposes to carry out or approve the Project, shall submit a new lead agency determination and request for concurrence from CDFW pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56. If any other public agency proposes to carry out or approve the Project subsequent to the effective date of this Concurrence, this Concurrence shall remain in effect and no separate concurrence from CDFW shall be required so long as the other public agency is carrying out or approving the Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request.

**Other Legal Obligations**

The Project shall remain subject to all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and this Concurrence shall not weaken or violate any applicable environmental or public health standards. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21080.56, subd. (f).)

**CDFW Director's Certification**

By: 

Date: 8/8/25

Charlton H. Bonham, Director  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife