

PUBLIC NOTICE
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment
Town of Paradise Wildfire Mitigation Projects
FEMA-DR-4407-CA

The Town of Paradise (Paradise) has applied through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for funding assistance, under the Presidentially Declared Disaster FEMA-DR-4407-CA, to perform four wildfire mitigation projects. In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) of 1969, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for four wildfire mitigation projects, including defensible space code enforcement, the Residential Ignition-Resistant Improvement Program, the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program, and hazardous, burnt tree removal.

In 2018, Paradise was devastated by the Camp Fire, the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history. The fire burned over 153,336 acres, resulting in at least 85 fatalities and destroying 18,804 structures, emphasizing the need for wildfire hazard mitigation projects within the town. The Camp Fire in Butte County, along with fires in Los Angeles and Ventura counties, was declared a disaster on November 12, 2018.

A significant contributor to the destructive nature of the 2018 Camp Fire were fuels on roofs and in eaves of homes and the hazardous fuel loads present along the town's rights-of-way. In the wake of the Camp Fire, thousands of hazardous, burnt trees remain as a public health and safety issue. As such, FEMA proposes to fund wildfire mitigation projects throughout Paradise. The wildfire mitigation projects are needed to protect life, reduce the likelihood of fire damage to property, and augment completed and ongoing post-fire mitigation work in Paradise.

Alternatives discussed in this EA include four wildfire mitigation projects proposed throughout the town limits. Under the Alternatives, Paradise would refine building codes and standards, improve awareness about defensible space requirements, and code enforcement (Alternative 1); provide incentives for homeowners to apply ignition-resistant materials to existing houses and create defensible space (Alternative 2); reduce hazardous fuels along town rights-of-way (Alternative 3); and remove hazardous burnt, standing or downed trees on private property left from the 2018 Camp Fire (Alternative 4). The Town of Paradise intends to implement all four Alternatives, and collectively the four Alternatives are referred to as the Action Alternatives in the Draft EA.

Under Alternatives 2 and 4, the specific properties that would be included would remain undetermined until applications have been accepted, and the effects of the alternatives on potential historic properties cannot be fully determined prior to approval of the Undertaking. Alternative 3 has the potential to affect historic properties within the town rights-of-way due to the physical disturbance or alteration of potential information-bearing archaeological deposits [36 CFR § 800.5(a)(2)(i)]. A "historic property" is defined in the National Historic Preservation Act [54 U.S.C. § 300308] (NHPA) as any "prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register for Historic Places, including artifacts, records, and material remains related to such a property or resource."

FEMA presently carries out the four-step Section 106 process as described in 36 CFR Part 800 (Protection

of Historic Properties) through its *Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services* (Statewide Agreement), as amended on October 29, 2019. These steps include (1) Initiating Section 106 (800.3), (2) Identifying Historic Properties (800.4), (3) Assessing Effects (800.5), and (4) Achieving a Resolution of Adverse Effects (800.6). For this Undertaking, FEMA has determined to fulfill its responsibilities under Section 106 of the NHPA through the development and implementation of a Project-Specific Programmatic Agreement (PSPA) under Stipulation II.C.6.c of the current amended Programmatic Agreement. This PSPA will lay out a specific compliance strategy for the planning and construction phases including identification and evaluation processes; consultation protocols; monitoring and reporting requirements; determination of effect; identification of treatment measures to mitigate adverse effects; curation; and other requirements.

The public is invited to participate in the consultation to develop the Town of Paradise PSPA as required by 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(i)(C). FEMA will be holding a consultation meetings at a date to be determined in the future. Your participation will help inform the Section 106 compliance process for this town-wide mitigation project. If interested in attending the consultation meeting virtually, please email fema-rix-ehp-document@fema.dhs.gov, a Zoom calendar invite will follow.

The Draft EA has been prepared in accordance with all requirements of NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Executive Order 11988 ("Floodplain Management"), Executive Order 11990 ("Protection of Wetlands"), and the implementing regulations of FEMA, for the purpose of assessing the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on the human and natural environment. The Draft EA summarizes the purpose of and need for the project, alternatives considered, the affected environment, and potential environmental consequences of the project. It is available for review and comment and can be viewed on and/or downloaded from FEMA's website at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa-repository>. Printed copies are also available for viewing or photocopying at the following location:

Town of Paradise Main Office
5555 Skyway
Paradise, CA 95969
Monday-Thursday 8:00am – 5:00pm

The comment period will conclude 30 days after the initial publication of this Public Notice on August 30, 2023. Written comments on the Draft EA can be mailed or emailed to the contact listed below. If emailing, please remember to include "Paradise EA" in your subject line. If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA and associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will become final. Substantive comments received will be addressed as appropriate in the Final EA/FONSI.

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