

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the Stabilization and Revegetation of Hood Mountain Sonoma County, California

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program # 4344-0302-33 Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department Of Homeland Security

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) proposes to provide funding to the County of Sonoma Regional Parks Department (Subrecipient) to implement erosion and sediment control measures, along with revegetation, on land in Hood Mountain Regional Park, which was affected by the 2017 Nuns Fire in Sonoma County (Proposed Action). The Subrecipient applied for funding from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to underwrite the proposed project. HMGP is authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5133. HMGP assists communities in implementing long-term hazard mitigation planning and projects following a Presidential major disaster declaration.

The project is located in Hood Mountain Regional Park, a public park located in Sonoma County, California. The project area encompasses 22.5 acres of the park and straddles the watershed divide between Santa Rosa Creek and Sonoma Creek.

The purpose of the project is to prevent erosion by stabilizing soils exposed as a result of fire suppression activities during the October 2017 Nuns Fire. The 2017 fire burned more than 56,556 acres in Sonoma and Napa Counties, including more than 1,000 acres within Hood Mountain Regional Park. The fire burned 43 percent of the Sonoma Creek watershed and 29 percent of the Napa River watershed. A swath of land along a ridgeline in the park (the project area) was bulldozed as a fire break, successfully stopping further advancement of the wildfire.

The Proposed Action would revegetate and stabilize the bulldozer lines in the project area to prevent rainfall from mobilizing exposed soils, reduce the rainfall impact, and facilitate infiltration. Implementation of the Proposed Action would reduce the potential for flooding and debris flows. Because the work is along a ridgeline, the benefits would extend to the Santa Rosa and Sonoma Creek watersheds, benefiting 686 acres downstream of the ridgeline. The Subrecipient determined that the 686-acre area currently has a 20 to 40 percent likelihood of post-fire debris flow. The Proposed Action also would help to protect a water reservoir used to fight wildfires and two residences. The Proposed Action would involve the following activities:

- Supplemental seed collection
- Install erosion control measures and minor recontouring
- Distribute woody debris (slash)
- Create microberms around existing seedlings
- Broadcast and rake in herbaceous seed
- Direct seed, cage, and microberm woody plants
- Plant, cage, and microberm plants propagated off-site

Along with a detailed description of the project, the Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) describes the equipment, staging, and sequencing of the project implementation.

FEMA prepared an SEA pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347 (2000), as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 30 §§ 1500–1508) and in accordance with FEMA Directive 108-1, *Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements* and DHS Instruction Manual 023-01-001-01, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act*. The SEA evaluates the range of potential environmental impacts if the Proposed Action is implemented and evaluated the applicability of the December 2014 *Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Recurring Actions in Arizona, California, and Nevada (PEA)* and the March 2019 *Supplemental Environmental Assessment to the Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Recurring Activities in Arizona, California, and Nevada*.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

FEMA prepared an SEA because the type of action proposed under the Proposed Action does not fall under the range of actions evaluated in the PEA. However, FEMA determined that the activities conducted under the Proposed Action are similar to the activities evaluated in the PEA, and thus the potential impacts of the Proposed Action would be similar to the impacts described in the PEA. That is, even though the type of action is not described in the PEA, the means, and methods to achieve the action and the resulting impacts of those activities (e.g., soil disturbance, use of mechanical equipment, planting) are similar to those evaluated in the PEA. The SEA compares the impacts of the Proposed Action to the impacts described in the PEA.

The Proposed Action, as described in the SEA, would not result in any significant adverse impacts on geology, soils, topography, air quality, water resources, wetlands, floodplains, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, invasive species, historic properties, archeological resources, low-income or minority populations, public services and recreation, transportation, noise, hazardous materials and wastes, and visual resources. Based on a preliminary screening of resources and the project’s geographic location, the SEA found that the following resources were not present in the project area and did not require a detailed assessment: coastal resources, prime and unique farmland, sole source aquifers, and federally designated wild and scenic rivers.

During the construction period, short-term impacts on soils, air quality, terrestrial habitat, noise, hazardous materials and wastes, and public services and recreation are anticipated. All potential short-term impacts require conditions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts. With the implementation of these conditions, none of the potential impacts will be significant. In the long-term, the project will have beneficial effects on several resources.

FEMA consulted with the California State Historic Preservation Office and Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Tribal Historic Preservation Office (FIGR THPO) on the project. FEMA also contacted the following Tribes with a potential interest in the project: Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians; Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, California; Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria, California; Koi Nation of Northern California; Lytton Rancheria of California; Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California; Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians of California; and Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California.

PROJECT CONDITIONS

The Subrecipient is responsible for compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including obtaining any necessary permits prior to beginning construction activities, and adhering to any conditions laid out in these permits. Any substantive change to the scope of work would require re-evaluation by FEMA for compliance with NEPA and other laws and Executive Orders. The Subrecipient is responsible for implementing best management practices (BMPs) appropriate for this scope of work. A list of typical BMPs was included with the PEA and with the Record of Environmental Consideration.

The Subrecipient must adhere to the following conditions when implementing the Proposed Action. Failure to comply with FEMA grant conditions may jeopardize federal funding:

1. The Subrecipient will implement the standard BMPs provided with the PEA for:
 - a. Geology and Soils
 - b. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - c. Water Resources
 - d. Biological Resources – Special Status Species
2. To minimize impact from the seed collection efforts, the Subrecipient will implement the following BMPs:
 - a. Seed collection should be conducted at a minimum of five collection sites at least 0.5 to 1.0 miles apart. Many collection sites may be needed for inbreeding plant species to adequately sample genetic variation among populations.
 - b. Within-population genetic variability is sampled by collecting from several widely spaced or unrelated plant parents (30–50 or more plants is optimal).
 - c. Collection will be conducted in a manner that does not damage existing vegetation or other resources. Ideally, at least 50 percent of the seed crop at a given site is left intact to allow for natural recruitment and regeneration of the native population.
 - d. Seed must be collected and stored in such a way as to ensure its viability.
 - e. Field collection forms and geographic information system will be used to document collection area location, along with other important details such as collection dates and the number, distribution, and health of parent plants.
3. Before initiating ground-disturbing activities within the Area of Potential Effect, the Subrecipient will provide on-site personnel with a Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training in the event prehistoric or historic period cultural materials are encountered during project implementation. Personnel will be advised that upon the discovery of cultural deposits work in the immediate area of the find should cease and FEMA and Cal OES will be contacted immediately.
4. The project is subject to Stipulation III.B. of the *Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services*, executed on October 29, 2019, in the event of unexpected discoveries, previously unidentified properties, or unexpected effects to historic properties during project work.

5. The Subrecipient will contact the FIGR THPO to monitor project activities while the project is being implemented.
6. The Subrecipient will notify the public on project activities via blog posts, social media, and printed signage in the park before implementation of the project.
7. Vehicles that are needed to implement the project will only be allowed to park off of the access road in designated parking areas to limit impacts on hikers and inholding residents that use Pythian Road.
8. Project activities will comply with the *Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Noise Element* to minimize noise impacts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A notice announcing the availability of the SEA for public review and comment was published on FEMA's website and the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*. The 30-day public review period started on September 23, 2020 when the notices were published. No comments were received.

FINDINGS

Based upon conditions and information contained in the HMGP grant application and the SEA, and in accordance with FEMA's Directive 108-1-1, *Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements*; Executive Orders (EOs) addressing floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990), and environmental justice (EO 12898); the DHS Instruction Manual 023-1-1; and the CEQ regulations in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter V for implementing NEPA; and the Subrecipient's anticipated adherence to the standard and special conditions contained in this FONSI, FEMA has determined that the Proposed Action will not have significant impacts on the quality of the natural and human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared and the project, and as described in the grant application and the SEA, may proceed.

APPROVAL

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