

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION



CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH

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Laguna Beach, CA 92651

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Pursuant to the State of California Public Resources Code and the "Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970" as amended to date, this is to advise you that the City of Laguna Beach has prepared an Initial Study for the following project.

PROJECT: South Laguna Fuel Modification Project

LOCATION/ADDRESS: The proposed project consists of fuel modification zone (FMZ) 20 (South Laguna) and FMZ 21 (Sunset). FMZ 20 encompasses the canyons and hillsides bounded roughly on the west by Ceanothus Drive, Alta Loma Drive, Holly Drive, and Ocean View Street; on the south by West Street, Valido Road, and Paseo del Sur; and wrapping around East Georges Way, Mar Vista Avenue, and Eagle Rock Way. FMZ 21 is located on the hillsides to the east of the neighborhoods between Eagle Rock Way to the north and Vista Del Sol to the south. 3rd Avenue, Mar Vista Avenue, Sunset Avenue, and Hillhaven Ranch Way generally follow the orientation of FMZ 21. The north end of FMZ 21 ties into FMZ 20 and the west end ties into the existing FMZ 8.

APN(s): Various

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING:

General Plan: FMZ 20 (South Laguna) would traverse the following General Plan Designations: OS (Open Space), RHP (Residential Hillside Protection), and VLD (Village Low Density). FMZ 21 (Sunset) would traverse the following General Plan Designations: OS (Open Space), RHP (Residential Hillside Protection), VLD (Village Low Density), and PI (Public/Institutional).

Zoning: FMZ 20 (South Laguna) would traverse the following Land Use Zones: OS/C (Open Space/Conservation Zone), R/HP (Residential/Hillside Protection Zone), and R1 (Residential Low Density Zone). FMZ 21 (Sunset) would traverse the following Land Use Zones: OS/C (Open Space/Conservation Zone), R/HP (Residential/Hillside Protection Zone), R1 (Residential Low Density Zone), and I (Institutional Zone).

PROJECT APPLICANT: Laguna Beach Fire Department, 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The City of Laguna Beach Fire Department proposes to conduct vegetation removal in FMZ 20 and FMZ 21 (project site) to reduce fire hazards in South Laguna. Fuel modification would provide a defensible space adjacent to homes and commercial development to enhance residents' ability to evacuate and survive a severe fire event. All fuel modification activities would be conducted in accordance with the approved Treatment Protocols for Fuel Modification Zones Subject to Coastal Development Permitting (Treatment Protocol) prepared by the Laguna Beach Fire Department. Hand crews would reduce or clear vegetation load in 100-foot wide sections within these FMZs to reduce the risk of wildfire threat to residential and public structures. The majority of perennial root systems would remain, and native vegetation waste would be mulched and left on-site to minimize erosion. Non-native vegetation waste would be transported to a green waste recycling facility or landfill if not recyclable. Exclusion areas within both FMZs would be established to avoid disturbance of known cultural resources and sensitive biological resources, specifically big-leaved crownbeard and Coulter's Matilija poppy.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: FMZ 20 predominantly borders the northern portion of the South Laguna residential neighborhood as well as the South Coast Water District office and water reservoir. The natural landscape in this area consists of large portions of densely vegetated steep hillsides that are susceptible to wildfire hazards. The majority of FMZ 20 is located within the southern portion of Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park and includes the beginning of Valido Trail. FMZ 20 contains a variety of native and disturbed habitat and also contains an intact population of big-leaved crownbeard, a State- and federally-listed threatened species. Other plant species within FMZ 20 include coastal sagebrush, coastal sage scrub, lemonade berry, laurel sumac, bigpod ceanothus, bush rue, southern maritime scrub, and chamise. According to the City of Laguna Beach's GIS Constraints layers, large portions of FMZ 20 are designated as High/Very High Value Habitat and Seismic Hazard Landslide Areas.

FMZ 21 is located on steep, densely vegetated slopes that pose the risk of wildfire hazards to nearby structures. FMZ 21 is predominantly on the east side of residential single-family homes and Mission Hospital Laguna Beach between Eagle Rock Way to the north and Vista Del Sol to the south. Two portions of FMZ 21 are within High/Very High Value Habitat. The heavily vegetated steep slopes within and above FMZ 21 pose a risk of wildfire damage to adjacent homes, valuable habitat, and homes at the top of Niguel Hill and Monarch Crest. FMZ 21 is also moderately impacted by non-native ornamental plants as well as existing fuel breaks likely established by

homeowners. The areas with relatively intact native habitat contain bigpod ceanothus, spiny redberry, bush rue, southern maritime scrub, lemonade berry, laurel sumac, toyon, and chamise. The lower portions of existing drainages are largely disturbed and planted with ornamental vegetation, with small amounts of remaining native vegetation including mulefat, elderberry, and giant wild rye. One population of big-leaved crownbeard occurs in and adjacent to the north end of FMZ 21. Additionally, a small population of Coulter's Matilija Poppy (included in the California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants as limited distribution) occurs near 1 Hillhaven Ranch Way.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: From March 28, 2022 to April 29, 2021 (30 days), the public and all affected agencies are hereby invited to review the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study with mitigation measures, and submit written comments. Such comments may be submitted prior to or during the public hearing(s).

PUBLIC HEARING DATE: Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study and other supporting environmental documents are available for public review on the City website at www.lagunabeachcity.net/SoLagFuelMod and at the City of Laguna Beach, Community Development Department, located at 505 Forest Avenue, City Hall. Please note our City Hall hours: Mon – Thurs: 7:30am – 5:30pm; every other Friday: 7:30am – 4:30pm; closed alternating Fridays.

DECLARATION

Based on the Initial Study dated July 2021, staff has determined:

- X This project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment; substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered rare or threatened species; or eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.
- X This project does not have the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- X This project does not have possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of the individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of current projects and the effects of probable future projects.)
- X This project will not have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

The aforementioned findings are contingent upon the following mitigation measures (if indicated) which have been incorporated into this project:

See attached (or on-line) mitigation measures.

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION PREPARED BY

City of Laguna Beach
Laguna Beach Fire Department
505 Forest Avenue
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Contact: Aspen Environmental Group
Lisa Blewitt, CEQA Project Manager
Telephone: (818) 338-6759

Signature  Date 3-14-22

COMMENTS DUE BY April 29, 2022

The Mitigated Negative Declaration dated July 2021 is being provided to you for review and comment. Your written comments should be received prior to, or be submitted verbally during the Public Hearing. If you have any questions, please contact the Contact Person above.

ATTACHMENTS

Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study OR available online at: www.lagunabeachcity.net/SoLagFuelMod

SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS: See Source References within the Initial Study.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

CITY DEPARTMENTS

- Community Development
- Fire
- Marine Safety
- Police
- Public Works
- Recreation
- Water Quality

FEDERAL

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

STATE

- Air Resources Board
- California Coastal Commission
- California Coastal Conservancy
- Department of Conservation
- Department of Fish and Game – Region 5
- Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- Department of Health and Drinking Water
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Transportation District 12 (Caltrans)
- Department of Toxic Substances Control
- Department of Water Resources
- Governor's Office of Planning and Research
- Integrated Waste Management Board
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Office of Emergency Services
- Office of Historic Preservation
- Resources Agency
- Seismic Safety Commission
- State Clearinghouse
- State Lands Commission
- State Water Resources Control Board

REGIONAL

- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Southern California Association of Governments

COUNTY

- Orange County Clerk-Recorder
- Orange County Environmental Health Department
- Orange County Fire Department
- Orange County Flood Control District
- Orange County Harbors Beaches and Parks
- Orange County Integrated Waste Management Department
- Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission
- Orange County Planning & Development Services Department
- Orange County Public Facilities & Resources Department

LOCAL

- Aliso Water Management Agency
- City of Aliso Viejo
- City of Dana Point
- City of Irvine
- City of Laguna Hills
- City of Laguna Niguel
- City of Laguna Woods
- City of Newport Beach
- Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce
- Laguna Beach County Water District
- Laguna Beach Independent
- Laguna Beach Unified School District
- Laguna Beach Visitor's Bureau
- Laguna Beach Coastline Pilot
- Laguna News-Post
- Moulton Niguel Water District
- South Coast Water District
- South Orange County Wastewater Authority

UTILITIES

- Cox Digital Cable
- San Diego Gas & Electric
- Southern California Edison
- Southern California Gas Company
- Verizon

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California Environmental Quality Act

TO EXPEDITE SUBMITTAL OF YOUR COMMENTS, YOU MAY RESPOND BY FACSIMILE TO (949) 497-0771

This Agency/City Department has comments, see attached.

**This Agency/City Department has
no comments.**

NAME OF AGENCY/CITY
DEPARTMENT

SIGNATURE OF
REPRESENTATIVE

DATE
