

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: Lower Hobo and Diamond Crestview Fuel Modification Project

LOCATION/ADDRESS: Two fuel modification zones (FMZs) are proposed in the City of Laguna Beach, California: Lower Hobo (FMZ 16) and Diamond Crestview (FMZ 19).

FMZ 16 encompasses the canyons and hillsides abutting open space bounded roughly on the north by Nyes Place; on the west by Ashton Drive, Alexander Road, and Terry Road; on the south by Laguna Terrace North and M Street; and wraps around to the south side of K Street, ending just north of H Street. FMZ 19 is located on the hillsides generally between single-family neighborhoods northeast of Highway 1. The north end of FMZ 19 begins west of Summit Drive and is bounded roughly by Diamond Street, Crestview Drive, Moss Street, and Glenneyre Street to the west, Catalina Street to the south, and Summit Drive, Baja Street, Hermosa Way, and Lomita Way to the east.

APN(s): Various

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING:

General Plan: FMZ 16 would traverse the following General Plan Designations: OS/C (Open Space/Conservation and Recreation), RHP (Residential Hillside Protection), VLD (Village Low Density), VMLD (Village Medium Low Density), and PI (Public/Institutional). FMZ 19 would traverse the following General Plan Designations: POS (Permanent Open Space) and VLD.

Zoning: FMZ 16 traverses the following Land Use Zones: OS/C (Open Space/Conservation Zone), R/HP (Residential/Hillside Protection Zone), R1 (Residential Low Density Zone), and MH (Mobile Home Zone). FMZ 19 traverses the following Land Use Zones: OS/P (Open Space/Passive Zone), OS/C, and R1 (Residential Low Density 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 apply fuel management practices within the City of Laguna Beach, California. FMZ 16 (Lower Hobo) and FMZ 19 (Diamond Crestview) would consist of approximately 100-foot-wide zones of reduced vegetation. Removal and/or thinning of heavy vegetation would reduce potential wildfire ignition of primarily residential properties, increase the evacuation time for residents, and provide better access for firefighters to protect structures. In addition, the proposed project would reduce fire line intensity, reduce wildfire rates of spread, and improve occupant safety. Lastly, it would protect High and Very High Value Habitat containing special-status plant species. All fuel modification activities would be conducted in accordance with the City's *Treatment Protocols for Fuel Modification Zones Subject to Coastal Development Permitting* (City's fuel modification treatment protocols) prepared by LBFD. Fuel management methods would rely exclusively on hand crews due to the presence of special-status species and the steep topography. Fuel loads would be reduced or completely removed depending on species composition. Non-native vegetation would be completely removed first; if 50 percent reduction in wildfire fuel is achieved by removing non-native vegetation, vegetation clearing would stop. If further thinning or removal needs to occur, crews would follow the hierarchical list in the City's fuel modification treatment protocols to remove the least sensitive plants first. The project biologist may choose to adjust the order of species removal in order to preserve local diversity including, to the extent practicable, maintaining a plant community that supports sensitive and listed species likely to use the treatment area. To reduce the risk of erosion, the majority of perennial plant roots of native and non-native species would remain in erosion-prone areas. Non-native vegetation waste would be transported to a green waste recycling facility; green waste that is not accepted would be hauled to a landfill. Exclusion areas within both FMZs have been established to avoid disturbance to High and Very High Value Habitat and sensitive biological resources as well as drainage courses.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The overall landscape of both FMZs 16 and 19 is minimally developed at the edge of primarily residential development, and consists primarily of lemonade berry scrub and holly leaf cherry – toyon – greenbark ceanothus chaparral, along with populations of non-native and invasive plant species in highly disturbed areas. FMZs 16 and 19 include High and Very High Value Habitat located on steep canyon slopes, and large portions of FMZ 16 are designated as Seismic Hazard Landslide Areas.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: From **September 24, 2024 to October 24, 2024** (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: To be determined – Refer to the City’s website for meeting dates and agenda items (<https://www.lagunabeachcity.net/live-here/city-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes>).

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study and other supporting environmental documents are available for public review on the City website (<https://www.lagunabeachcity.net/government/departments/community-development/planning-zoning/public-notices>) 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 September 2024, 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 a rare or endangered 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 Robert Montaghani Date 09/17/2024

COMMENTS DUE BY October 24, 2024

The Mitigated Negative Declaration dated September 2024 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 are available online at <https://www.lagunabeachcity.net/government/departments/community-development/planning-zoning/public-notices>.

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
