

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: Bluebird Canyon and Park Avenue Fuel Modification Projects

LOCATION/ADDRESS: Two fuel modification projects are proposed in the City of Laguna Beach and unincorporated County of Orange, California: Bluebird Canyon Fuel Modification Project and Park Avenue Fuel Modification Project. The Bluebird Canyon Fuel Modification Project includes fuel management zone (FMZ) 17 (Upper Bluebird Canyon) and FMZ 18 (South Bluebird Canyon). The Park Avenue Fuel Modification Project includes FMZ 22 (Park Avenue).

FMZ 17 begins on the south side of Temple Hills Drive east of San Remo Drive, generally follows along Temple Hills Drive to the east to Dorn Court, then south along Zell Drive and Bernard Court, and ends near Sommet Du Monde. FMZ 18 includes three areas along Bluebird Canyon Drive: (1) east of Summit Drive, (2) south of Bluebird Canyon Drive and north of Rancho Laguna Road, and (3) north of Summit Drive and La Mirada Street. FMZ 22 extends along Park Avenue, west of Hidden Valley Canyon Road, ending east of Wendt Terrace and Temple Hills Drive.

APN(s): Various

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING:

General Plan: FMZs 17, 18, and 22 would all traverse the following General Plan Designations: POS (Permanent Open Space), RHP (Residential/Hillside Protection), and VLD (Village Low Density). A small portion of FMZ 17 would traverse unincorporated County of Orange-designated Open Space Reserve.

Zoning: FMZ 17 traverses the following Land Use Zones: AR (Agriculture-Recreation Zone), OSC (Open Space/Conservation Zone), OSP (Open Space/Passive Zone), R1 (Residential Low Density Zone), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection). A small portion of FMZ 17 would traverse Open Space zoned within unincorporated County of Orange. FMZ 18 traverses the following Land Use Zones: OSC (Open Space/Conservation Zone), OSP (Open Space/Passive Zone), R1 (Residential Low Density Zone), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection). FMZ 22 traverses the following Land Use Zones: OSC (Open Space/Conservation Zone), OSP (Open Space/Passive Zone), and RHP (Residential Hillside Protection).

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 in the Bluebird Canyon area and along Park Avenue primarily within the City of Laguna Beach, California, with a small portion of FMZ 17 within unincorporated County of Orange. Fuel modification would provide defensible space adjacent to homes and a crucial evacuation route to enhance residents' ability to evacuate and allow for safer emergency access during a wildfire. All fuel modification activities would be conducted in accordance with the approved *Treatment Protocols for Fuel Modification Zones Subject to Coastal Development Permitting* (Treatment Protocols) prepared by the Laguna Beach Fire Department. Hand crews, with the option of goat-grazing, would reduce vegetation load within FMZs 17 and 18 along 100-foot-wide sections extending approximately 1.6 linear miles for a total of approximately 17.8 acres to reduce the risk of wildfire threat to residential structures. Within FMZ 22, hand crews would reduce vegetation within a 50-foot zone on either side of Park Avenue, a local evacuation road, for a total of approximately 7.2 acres. The majority of roots of perennial plants 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 all three FMZs would be established to avoid disturbance to High and Very High Value Habitat and sensitive biological resources, such as coastal California gnatcatcher, big-leaved crownbeard, and intermediate mariposa-lily.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The overall landscape of both project areas is minimally developed at the edge of residential development and existing paved roadways, and consists primarily of chaparral and coastal sage scrub, along with populations of non-native and invasive plant species in highly disturbed areas. FMZs 17 and 18 include High and Very High Value Habitat. FMZs 17 and 18 are located at the lower elevations of relatively steep canyon slopes, with residences at the top. FMZ 22 extends along both sides of Park Avenue, and is bounded on the east and west by residences, with predominantly open space to the north and south. FMZ 22 includes High Value Habitat.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: From March 28, 2022 to April 29, 2022 (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 Hall 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/cityhall/fire 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 February 2022, 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 February 2022 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: www.lagunabeachcity.net/cityhall/fire

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
