



County of Santa Cruz

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

www.sccoplanning.com

149-25

44-11262025-177

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

RECEIVED
CLERK OF THE BOARD

NOV 26 2025

CLERK OF THE BOARD
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 500
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

To: Clerk of the Board

Attn: Juliette Rezzato

701 Ocean Street, Room 500

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE CLERK
OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OFFICE FOR A
PERIOD COMMENCING 11/26/2025
AND ENDING 12/31/2025

Project Name: Freedom Lake Acacia Removal and Vegetation Management for Access
for Planning Studies

Project Location: 369 Laguna Corralitos, Watsonville, CA 95076

Assessor Parcel No.: APNs 049-05-108, 109, 120 and 049-07-139

Project Applicant: Santa Cruz County Parks

Project Description:

Acacia Removal:

The project involves removing approximately 930 linear feet of invasive acacia trees (Acacia dealbata) within Freedom Lake County Park. Trees will be cut at the base, with stumps left in place to minimize soil disturbance. Stumps will be covered with weed fabric to prevent resprouting. After removal, the ground surface will be seeded with native species and covered with a 12-foot-wide biodegradable coco-fiber erosion control blanket secured with landscape staples. Native plants --including elderberry, wild rose, creeping wildrye, and California blackberry --will be planted through the blanket at 3-4-foot spacing. Invasive vegetation will be managed for two years following planting to ensure successful native habitat establishment.

Timing: Work will be conducted outside the bird nesting season (March--August)

Minimization and Avoidance Measures:

Work will be performed outside the bird nesting season (March–August). There will be Pre-construction surveys to ensure avoidance for sensitive wildlife identified in the area, worker education and training, and on-site supervision by a qualified restoration practitioner will be implemented to reduce potential impacts.

Vegetation Management for Access to Planning Studies:

To conduct bathymetric mapping, water quality sampling, and habitat assessments, additional access across the lake is required. Floating vegetation --including cattails, willow saplings, and invasive plants such as water hyacinth and water milfoil-- will be pushed aside and placed on adjoining vegetation mats to create approximately 10-foot-wide transects across the lake. Three transects will be established, covering an estimated 4,000 linear feet and 40,000 square feet of impact area. All vegetation will remain within the lake, and no material will be removed from the site.

Biological and Cultural Resource Summary:

Biological Resources: Desktop analysis conducted by RCD

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources identified

Purpose and Need:

The project aims to remove invasive Acacia tree species and restore native habitat, improve water quality, and provide safe access for scientific studies to guide future management and restoration efforts at Freedom Lake County Park.

Agency Approving Project: County of Santa Cruz Parks Department

County Contact: Mariana Colibri-Urgo Park Planner III

Mariana.Colibri-Urgo@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Telephone No. 831-454-7963

CEQA Exemption

Exempt status: *(check one)*

- ☐ The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
- ☐ The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).

☐ The proposed activity is exempt from CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

☐ **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.

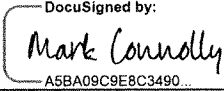
☐ **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).

Specify type:

☒ **Categorical Exemption**

- **Class 33 – Small Habitat Restoration Projects (§15333):** The project restores native habitat on a limited scale with minimal adverse impacts.
- **Class 6 – Information Collection (§15306):** Temporary access and vegetation manipulation are limited to scientific data collection and do not result in significant environmental disturbance.
- **Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land (§15304):** Selective vegetation removal and erosion control represent minor land alterations with negligible environmental impact.

Reasons why the project is exempt: The project involves restoration of native habitat and removal of invasive trees, as well as establishing temporary access for habitat restoration planning studies. The total impact area is less than 5 acres. All biological and cultural resources will be protected, and any impacted areas will be restored. The project purpose and design, combined with avoidance and minimization measures, ensure that no significant environmental or cultural resources will be adversely affected.

Signature:  Date: 11/26/2025

Mark J Connolly

Titled: Environmental Coordinator