Supplemental Documentation for Notice of Exemption for Vegetation Maintenance Within the Truckee Tahoe Airport Airfield

Prepared for:

Truckee Tahoe Airport District
10356 Truckee Airport Road
Truckee CA
530-608-2028

Prepared by:

Mason, Bruce & Girard, Inc.
701 High St. Suite 207
Auburn, CA 95603
530-745-9996

MASON BRUCE & GIRARD
Natural Resource Consultants

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I. Purpose and Need

The Tahoe Truckee Airport District (TTAD) seeks to conduct vegetation maintenance within the airfield for the purposes of airport safety. The total acreage covered by this NOE is approximately 915 acres (Attachment A-1). Vegetation maintenance may be necessary and/or mandated by law for the safety of planes entering and exiting the airfield, and may include but is not limited to herbicide application, hand cutting, chipping (tracked or tow-behind), piling, burning, and/or mastication of woody fuels and live vegetation. The airfield has been highly disturbed for many years for the construction of runways and associated grading, etc. These processes are covered under an existing Mitigated Negative Declaration that is unrelated to vegetation management (SCH No. 2015122021).

As a local agency, TTAD is required to comply with CEQA for any actions that have the potential to have an environmental impact. TTAD filed a Notice of Exemption (Minor Alterations to Land) on April 29, 2025 to certify that regular vegetation maintenance is exempt from CEQA. Removal of grass, weeds, brush and small trees (under 12 inches DBH) can be considered a "minor alteration to land" under CCR 14 §15304.

Commented [EM1]: I would briefly discuss the current level of ongoing 'disturbance' to the area due to associated maintenance of the golf course and homes.

Commented [AE2]: Update date

II. Project Description and Scope

The following methods may be utilized for vegetation management within the airfield.

A. Hand Cut and Chip

Brush and trees under 12 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) may be cut and chipped where necessary for airport safety.

1. All cut material shall be chipped and broadcast to a depth of no more than 6 inches
2. Chips shall not be piled at the base of residual trees.
3. Chips shall not be cast within 30 feet of structures
4. Chips shall not be cast into ditches, standing water, across property lines, or onto turf or active runways.
5. Downed woody debris larger than 1 inch in size up to the capacity of the chipper shall be chipped.

B. Masticate

1. Items 1-4 under Item A above shall also apply in mastication units.
2. Vegetation and dead woody debris (> 1 inch, < 14 inches diameter for dead woody debris) shall be masticated to an average piece size of 18 inches or less and a depth of 6 inches or less.
3. Where tree spacing prohibits entry of the masticator, or where masticating could cause residual tree damage, hand work shall accompany the machine to allow for entry and efficient mastication.

C. Herbicide Application

1. Herbicide shall be applied according to the label. Transport, handling, and use of all herbicides shall be in strict accordance with the manufacturer's label instructions and all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

D. Pilling/Burning and Prescribed Fire

1. Piling/burning and/or prescribed fire shall be conducted in accordance with all local smoke management ordinances and state/local permitting processes for burning.

III. Environmental Assessment

A. Biology and Botany

A query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, CDFW 2026) was run for a 1-mile radius of the project area. The National Wetlands Inventory Mapper was also consulted, and a delineated freshwater emergent wetland area is present in the southern portions of the project. The wetland area and CNDDB records are shown in the NOE coverage map (Attachment A-1). Refer to Item C, hydrology, for a summary of BMPs that will be employed to protect the wetland area.

Table 1 summarizes species with potential to occur in the project area, and an assessment of the proposed project's potential impacts to the species. Best management practices to protect biological and botanical resources are summarized below.

It should be noted that the area of the historic population of Plumas ivesia noted in Attachment A-1 was surveyed in May of 2026. No individuals were relocated in this area, which has been utilized as a parking area for many years. It is likely that this population is extirpated from this area.

1. Nesting Bird Surveys

    a. For project work involving the cutting of live or dead vegetation between May 1st and August 31st, a walking survey of all reasonably accessible areas of the treatment site and the immediate vicinity visible from the treatment site shall be conducted by a qualified individual within 72 hours of the start of work. This survey will include examination of suitable nesting trees for nests, whitewash, or any sighting/vocalization associated with nesting birds, including raptors.

    b. If an active raptor nest is identified, all vegetation-disturbing activities within 200 feet of the nest will cease and the RPF or biologist shall be notified. Buffers shall be established as recommended by the biologist before work can commence.

    c. For non-raptor nests subject to the Migratory Bird Treaty act (MBTA), a 50-foot no-activity buffer shall be established around active nests, and shall remain in place until nestlings have fledged or nest is determined to be abandoned.

Commented [EM3]: I think we should include the results of database queries (pdf) as an attachment.

Add what databases we run for the purposes of the this NOE. What buffer did you use around the project area for your search?

2. Botanical Surveys
    a. All areas proposed for work will undergo a botanical survey with a focus on Tahoe yellowcress, marsh skullcap, alder buckthorn, Santa Lucia dwarf rush, and Plumas ivesia. Surveys will be conducted during the blooming period when possible (May – August).
    b. If rare plant populations are discovered, population extent shall be flagged and no equipment shall enter the flagged areas. Trees and vegetation may be directionally felled away from rare plants and pulled by hand from the exclusion zone for chipping. Chips shall not be broadcast onto rare plants.
3. Other wildlife
    a. Each area proposed for vegetation management under the NOE will be evaluated by the RPF or a qualified biologist to assess the area for potential habitat for species noted in Table 1 below. If habitat for special-status species is present, habitat will be avoided with project activities or sufficient surveys shall be conducted to assure special-status species are avoided with project activities.

Table 1: Species with potential to occur in the project area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Listing Status	CA Listing Status	Rare Plant Rank	Habitat Summary	Project Impact
Bombus morrisoni	Morrison bumble bee	None	None		Flowering shrubs/chapparal	Impacts will be avoided by maintaining patches of flowering brush where feasible for airport safety.
Catostomus lahontan	Lahontan mountain sucker	None	None		Aquatic	No impacts anticipated. No work proposed in or near fish bearing streams.
Empidonax traillii	willow flycatcher	None	Endangered		Willow patches	No impacts anticipated. Work will not remove large patches of willow. Nesting bird survey will occur prior to work.
Erethizon dorsatum	North American porcupine	None	None		Upper montane	No impacts anticipated. Highly populated and disturbed nature of the project makes the presence of this mammal unlikely.
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	None	None	1B.2	Scrub, meadows and seeps, vernal pools	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Juncus luciensis	Santa Lucia dwarf rush	None	None	1B.2	Meadows, seeps, vernal pools, lower montane coniferouse forest, sagebrush	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Lepus americanus tahoensis	Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare	None	None		Montane riparian habitat, especially near meadows	No impacts anticipated. Montane riparian habitat will not be impacted by the project.
Lomatium grayi	Gray's lomatium	None	None	2B.3	Scrub, pinyon/juniper woodland	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Prosopium williamsoni	mountain whitefish	None	None		Aquatic	No impacts anticipated. No work proposed in or near fish bearing streams.
Rana sierrae	Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog	Endangered	Threatened		Perennial streams, lakes and ponds in montane riparian habitats	No impacts anticipated. No suitable habitat in the project area.

Commented [EM4]: I know you need to get this out this week, so we won't worry about it this time, but we should start splitting the table up between plants and wildlife. We should also reference the date of the most recent occurrence, its distance to the site, and approximate number of occurrences within a certain distance.

Rhamnus alnifolia	alder buckthorn	None	None	2B.2	Meadows, seeps, riparian scrub, coniferous forest	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Rorippa subumbellata	Tahoe yellow cress	None	Endangered	1B.1	Coniferous forest, meadows, seeps	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Scutellaria galericulata	marsh skullcap	None	None	2B.2	Coniferous forest, marshes, swamps, seeps	Botanical survey will mitigate project impacts.
Vulpes vulpes necator pop. 2	Sierra Nevada red fox - Sierra Nevada DPS	Endangered	Threatened		Upper montane habitat, generally above 7000 feet	No impacts anticipated. Highly populated and disturbed nature of the project makes the presence of this mammal highly unlikely.

B. Archaeology

Vegetation management with ground-disturbing potential (including prescribed fire/pile burning) will be preceded by a ground survey conducted by a professional archaeologist. Cultural resources will be recorded and a buffer will be flagged around the site. Equipment shall be excluded from the site except on existing roads and trails. Vegetation within sites shall be hand cut and carried out of the site for chipping or burning. Chips shall not be propelled onto existing sites.

C. Hydrology

Areas proposed for vegetation maintenance will be traversed prior to project activities to identify and classify watercourses. Watercourses shall be protected with buffers as designated by the RPF for protection of the beneficial uses of water, including wildlife habitat. Watercourse crossings shall not be constructed other than dry, perpendicular crossings of Class III watercourses.

D. Soils and Topography

Slopes in the NOE area range from 0-5%. The dominant soil type is the Martis-Euer variant complex, which is derived from alluvial plain remnants from weathered glacial outwash derived from volcanic rock. This is a well-drained sandy loam soil with a depth of 60- 80 inches to a restrictive layer. The Inville-Martis variant complex soil type is also present. This soil is similar to the Martis-Euer complex in that it is derived from alluvial plain remnants, though the upper soil layers have a more coarse cobbly texture.

The wetland areas as shown in the attached map are dominated by Aquoll-Cryoll soils. These areas should be avoided with equipment.

E. Noise Restrictions

Chipping and mastication will be limited to the hours of 7 am to 7 pm, in accordance with the Nevada County noise ordinance.

F. Hazard Reduction

Operations conducted under this NOE during declared fire season as determined by local fire agencies (generally May 1 thru October 1) will comply with California Public Resources Code 4428. Contractors shall maintain all required tools on site during operations.

IV. Summary

The proposed action will not have a significant impact on environmental resources and will result in increased safety within the airfield through regular vegetation maintenance.

Attachment A-1. NOE coverage area.

