



Mendocino County

Legislation Text

File #: 21-0907, Version: 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Services

Meeting Date: August 17, 2021

Department Contact: Julia Krog

Phone: 234-6650

Department Contact: Ignacio Gonzalez

Phone: 234-6650

Item Type: Consent Agenda

Time Allocated for Item: N/A

Agenda Title:

Acceptance of Informational Report Regarding the Issuance of Emergency Coastal Development Permit EM_2021-0006 (PG&E) to Remove 127 Trees along the Fort Bragg-Elk 60 Kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line

Recommended Action/Motion:

Accept the informational report regarding the issuance of Emergency Coastal Development Permit EM_2021-0006 (PG&E) to remove 127 trees along the Fort Bragg-Elk 60 Kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line.

Previous Board/Board Committee Actions:

In 1985 the Board adopted the Mendocino County General Plan Coastal Element. In 1991 the Board adopted Division II of Title 20 of Mendocino County Code through Ordinance No. 3785. Included in Division II is Section 20.536.055 which allows Permits for Approval of Emergency Work. In cases of a verified emergency, temporary emergency authorization to proceed with remedial measures may be given by the Director or his or her designee until such time as a Coastal Development Permit application is filed. The Director shall report in writing to the Board of Supervisors at each meeting the emergency permits applied for or issued since the last report, with a description of the nature of the emergency and the work involved. The report of the Director shall be informational only. The decision to issue an emergency permit is solely at the discretion of the Director. Notice of emergency permits shall be provided by phone or letter to the California Coastal Commission within three (3) days, following issuance of the emergency permit.

Summary of Request:

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) requested authorization to conduct emergency vegetation removal along approximately 6.3 miles of the Fort Bragg-Elk 60 kilovolt (kV) transmission line. PG&E must perform ongoing vegetation management to comply with existing state and federal laws and regulations. Doing so is crucial to maintain reliable service, especially during severe weather or disasters. PG&E's routine maintenance program for distribution lines specifies measures for maintaining compliance on overhead lines under GO95 Rule 35, Public Resource Code (PRC) §4293. California's wildfire season has increased substantially in both duration and severity. The increase in wildfire risk has resulted in a necessity for routine vegetation management efforts along PG&E's assets which, for the purposes of this project, are overhead electrical distribution lines. Increased wildfire risk, coupled with the drought conditions in Mendocino County, necessitate vegetation removal sooner than a standard Coastal Development Permit can be processed. PG&E's team of qualified arborists identified 127 trees on public and private lands that require emergency management (see Attachment

3 of the Emergency Permit). Of these 127 trees, 33 require removal, 92 require pruning, and two require topping. One hundred two (102) of the trees identified for maintenance are in state parks including Jug Handle State Natural Reserve (one tree), Russian Gulch State Park (six trees), Mendocino Headlands State Park (37 trees), and Van Damme State Park (58 trees). The remaining six trees are on private parcels within the project area along the transmission alignment. If the 127 trees that will be addressed by this project are not removed expeditiously, the identified vegetation hazards could result in:

- Reduced reliability or interference of delivery of essential electricity to customers
- Increased safety risks to the public, to private and public property, and to a variety of environmental resources

Vegetation management crews will use existing roads to bring vehicles and equipment close to the work areas. Vehicles will remain on those existing roads, and trees will be accessed on foot. Access will be along California State Highway 1, county roads, and private roads. Some locations will require access roads and footpaths, and some will require foot access via PG&E right of ways. Equipment will include hand tools, chippers, and lift trucks. There will be no ground disturbance. Herbicide will be applied on stumps of tree species that have the ability to re-sprout from the base. The emergency permit was issued on July 19, 2021 and will become null and void at the end of sixty (60) days. Prior to expiration of the Emergency Permit, the applicant is required to submit a standard Coastal Development Permit application for the work authorized by this permit.

Alternative Action/Motion:

None, informational item.

How Does This Item Support the General Plan? The Mendocino County General Plan Coastal Element is implemented through Division II of Title 20 of County Code. Mendocino County Code section 20.536.055 provides procedures for permits for approval of emergency work. The Director of Planning and Building Services may grant an emergency permit upon reasonable terms and conditions when an emergency exists and requires action more quickly than permitted by the procedures for administrative permits or for ordinary permits. Coastal Element Policy 3.11-19 provides that electrical transmission and distribution lines shall be permitted in all land use categories subject to certain standards and criteria, including that scarring, grading, or other vegetative removal shall be minimized. There are no policies in the Coastal Element that speak to maintenance of existing electrical transmission and distribution lines; however, it can be extrapolated that the Coastal Element encourages minimizing vegetation removal to the minimum necessary for safe operation of such facilities.

Supervisory District: District 4 & 5

vote requirement: Majority

Supplemental Information Available Online At: N/A

Fiscal Details:

source of funding: N/A

current f/y cost: N/A

annual recurring cost: N/A

budget clarification: N/A

budgeted in current f/y: N/A

if no, please describe:

revenue agreement: N/A

Agreement/Resolution/Ordinance Approved by County Counsel: N/A

CEO Liaison: Steve Dunncliff, Deputy CEO

CEO Review: Yes

CEO Comments:

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Executed By: Atlas Pearson, Deputy Clerk I
Date: August 17, 2021

Final Status: Approved

