



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

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TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Airlin M. Singewald, Senior Planner

DATE: October 22, 2015

SUBJECT: Emergency Permit (ZON2014-00693) authorizing the removal of hazardous trees in Cambria on parcels owned by the Cambria Community Services District

Per Section 23.03.045b(8) of the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO), when the Planning Director issues an emergency permit, it must be reported to the Planning Commission. On September 11, 2015, the Planning Director issued an emergency permit to the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) authorizing the removal of up to 300 dead or dying trees deemed hazardous by Cal Fire and located on parcels owned by the CCSD. As justification for the emergency permit, CCSD stated that the "trees pose immediate threat to life and property and are a falling hazard to homes and power lines and to people using roads and trails and working in the area." Under the emergency permit, Cal Fire's hazardous tree determination will serve as evidence verifying that the identified trees meet the tree removal criteria in Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance Section 23.05.064(b).

Removal of dead and dying trees on CCSD parcels will help mitigate the extreme fire hazard in Cambria. The fire hazard is described in a March 12, 2015 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury report entitled "In a State of Emergency? Assessing Fire Risk in Cambria." A key finding of the report states "The community of Cambria faces a severe fire threat due to a combination of environmental, geographical and demographic factors."

As recommended by the Grand Jury report, the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) declared a state of emergency based upon the risk of a catastrophic fire on March 26, 2015. This declaration notes that 30 to 40 percent of the overall forest in Cambria is either dead or dying. These trees are much more susceptible to burning and they significantly increase the risk of wildland fire spread.

The fire hazard in Cambria is exacerbated by severe drought conditions combined with Cambria's severely limited water supply. On January 17, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency for the State of California; on January 30, 2014, the CCSD Board of Directors declared a Stage 3 Water Shortage Emergency; and on March 11, 2014, the County Board of Supervisors proclaimed a local emergency due to drought conditions in San Luis Obispo County.

The emergency permit contains 8 conditions of approval, which were developed in consultation with the CCSD. These conditions include, but are not limited to: time limits for applying for a regular "follow up" Coastal Development Permit (30 days) and commencing tree removal (60 days), and a requirement to ensure proper disposal of hazardous materials. The emergency permit is valid for a period of 12 months from the issuance date.

Attachments:

1. Emergency Permit ZON2014-00693