

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

PROPOSED WINDY FIRE EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND SALVAGE SALE PROJECTS

COLD SPRINGS – PARKER FOREST MANAGEMENT AREA

TULE RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION

EA AND FONSI

Notice is hereby given that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Pacific Regional Office, has received an Environmental Assessment (EA), dated March 2023, to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended by Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 40, Section 1500; Department of the Interior (DOI) NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46); and the United States DOI, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) 59 IAM 3-H NEPA Guidebook Instructions. The EA analyzes the potential effects of a proposal by the Tule River Tribal Council. The Windy Fire was started by a lightning strike on the Tule Indian Reservation on September 9, 2021. The fire spread onto adjacent federal lands, ultimately burning 97,528 of Tribal, Forest Service, BLM, and private lands. Approximately 19,461 acres of trust lands located on the Tule River Indian Reservation (TRIR) burned at varying intensities. The fire burned through much of the higher-elevation mixed conifer stands and sequoia groves on the TRIR. Prior to the Windy Fire, the TRIR forest had experienced high levels of forest insect activity that coincided with severe drought conditions in central California. Beginning in 2013 conifer tree mortality began to rise. Tree mortality intensified during the next several years, continuing through 2021. Over the past decade the southern Sierra Nevada region has had the highest tree mortality rate in the state.

As a result of these events, the Tule River Tribal Council (TRTC) desires to mitigate identified land management, public safety, and forest health concerns by implementing a series of projects located within the east portion of the Windy Fire and on adjoining forest lands affected by the drought. The proposed activities are planned entirely on Tribal trust lands administered by the TRTC through the Tribal Natural Resources Department, with oversight provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). There are no Indian allotments or land assignments included in the project area. These are intended to be multi-year projects proposed for implementation beginning in 2023 and continuing for more than ten years.

This report, titled *Environmental Assessment Report for the Windy Fire Emergency Stabilization and Salvage Sale Projects* (referred to as the Windy Fire EA), analyzes the potential effects of implementing proposed activities on the biological, physical, cultural, and socioeconomic resources of the TRIR. The intent of this report is to explore options for mitigating identified concerns and to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Based on the analysis and impacts in the EA, any input received during this public review period, and the entire administrative record, the BIA will decide whether to reach a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), direct further work on the EA, or initiate the preparation of an

Environmental Impact Statement. A draft, unsigned FONSI has been prepared and is available for review along with the EA.

The EA and unsigned FONSI are available for review as of **May 15 thru June 14, 2023** on the **Tule River Indian Tribe Website:** <https://tulerivertribe-nsn.gov/rsp/>. More information on how to comment, including a planning map of the Cold Spring - Parker Peak, forest management area, can be obtained by contacting the Tribal Forestry Office at 559-853-6163 Ext. 5 or the Natural Resources Office at 559-853-6163.

No further action will be taken on the environmental process for at least 30 days after the publication of this notice. For more information, please contact Eddie Dominguez, Environmental Protection Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central California Agency, 650 Capitol Mall Suite 8-500, telephone (916) 517-6340. Written comments should be emailed to eddie.dominguez@bia.gov and harley.long@bia.gov, Superintendent, Central California Agency.