



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services  
**GRADING AND CLEARING PERMIT  
APPLICANT'S GUIDE**  
*ZONING DIVISION*

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County Board of Supervisors' Ordinance No. 9997 requires an Administrative Permit for brushing, clearing and grading of land to protect San Diego County's native vegetation as wildlife habitat, scenery, and for erosion control. San Diego County is known nationwide for the tremendous diversity of its plants and animals and for the number of species that would be considered rare or endangered. Limitations have been placed to eliminate clearing that destroys sensitive habitat and other biological resources and to prevent interference with archaeological resources and areas of high aesthetic concerns prior to the issuance of land development permits.

An Administrative Permit for brushing, clearing and grading is not required if the project is:

- Clearing for fire protection within 100 feet of a house.
- Conducting very limited clearing for landscaping, surveying, geotechnical exploration, percolation tests, or wells. However, clearing for an agricultural well may require approval of an Administrative Permit for Agricultural Clearing.

Applicants are cautioned **NOT** to grade or clear land for development unless permits have been issued.

**For more specific information on exemptions please refer to the [Grading Ordinance](#).**

See submittal requirements for an [Administrative Permit: BRUSHING AND CLEARING](#) and/or an [Administrative Permit: AGRICULTURAL CLEARING](#).

**Stiff penalties have been instituted for failure to comply with this ordinance. Penalties include a fine of up to \$1,000 per day and potential prohibition of land use permits on the site for a period of five years.**

**Pursuant to the Grading Ordinance, clearing is defined as** removal or destruction of natural vegetation by any means, including brushing and grubbing.

For example, if a subject parcel is vacant and a proposed well permit is not associated with a Single Family Dwelling, or an existing Agricultural business – it may require approval of an Administrative Permit for Agricultural Clearing or an Administrative Permit for Brushing and Clearing before the well permit can be issued.

Clearing to be performed in preparation for land development shall not be undertaken until all discretionary approvals for the land development have been issued.