

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

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To: Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Friant Water Authority  
854 North Harvard Avenue  
Lindsay, CA 93247

Tulare County Clerk's Office  
221 S. Mooney Blvd. Ste 105  
Visalia, CA 93291

Kern County Clerk's Office  
1115 Truxtun Ave.  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

**Project Title:** Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project – Geotechnical Investigation (Phase 3)

**Project Applicant:** Friant Water Authority

**Project Location – Specific:**

145 small, bore-hole locations for soil sample collection within Tulare and Kern Counties as follows: 126 within Bureau of Reclamation right-of-way (Reclamation ROW), 9 within Tulare County and Kern County right-of-way (County ROW), 10 on private parcels outside of both Reclamation ROW and County ROW (see Figure 1).

**Project Location – City:** +/- 25 miles from Porterville **Project Location – County:** Tulare & Kern

**Description of Project:**

The Project is limited to geotechnical investigation to collect soil samples to characterize the geotechnical conditions along the approximately 30-mile Middle Reach of the Friant-Kern Canal (FKC) where corrective repair actions are being developed. Information obtained from the investigation will be used to inform the design and environmental review of the proposed Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project (Project), which has not yet been approved, adopted or funded by Friant Water Authority.

The investigation/bore holes would be accomplished using truck-mounted hollow-stem auger drill rigs, track-mounted hollow or solid-stem auger drill rigs, solid-stem hand augers and Cone Penetration Test trucks. The truck-mounted drill rigs are 25 feet long and 8 feet wide. The track-mounted drill rig is 10 feet long and 6.5 feet wide. The augers to be used to create the bore holes are narrow and have outside diameters ranging from 3 inches to 8 inches. Support trucks measuring between 15 feet and 28 feet in length and 8 feet in width would be used for the drill rigs. The borings within White River and Deer Creek cannot be accessed with truck-mounted equipment due to terrain and the soft ground conditions. The borings for soil sample collections in these areas would be accomplished with rubber-track mounted drill rigs.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Friant Water Authority

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Friant Water Authority

**Exempt Status:** *(check one)*

- Ministerial [Section 21080(b)(1); 15268]
- Declared Emergency [Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)]
- Emergency Project [Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c)]
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: CEQA Guidelines Sections 15304 (Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land) and 15306 (Class 6: Information Collection).
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

**Reasons Why Project is Exempt:**

The Project falls under the Class 4 categorical exemption because Project activities consist of minor alterations (i.e., drilling of investigatory bore holes to take soil samples from select locations primarily within existing Reclamation and County rights-of-way and then restoring/backfilling bore holes) to both public and private lands that will not require the removal of any trees, let alone any healthy, mature, scenic trees. Because the bore holes will be filled and restored to pre-drilling condition, the project is akin to the minor trenching and backfilling example provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15304(f).

The Project also falls under the Class 6 categorical exemption because Project activities are limited to a geotechnical investigation for data collection purposes and will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The majority of the bores will occur within Reclamation and/or County rights-of-way, in areas that are heavily disturbed and are currently in use by Friant operations and maintenance vehicles or agricultural operations. The project area is not designated critical habitat for any threatened or endangered species and resource investigations (i.e., sacred land search, record searches and pedestrian surveys) did not identify any archaeological, cultural or tribal cultural resources within Project boundaries. Boring locations would be accessed via existing access routes and established roads and would require minimal to no ground disturbance. Borings would be minimally invasive, resulting in the removal of soil only within a 3- to 8-inch diameter at each bore location. Upon completion, each bore location would be backfilled and existing land uses would resume within and surrounding the bore sites.

Further, none of the exceptions found in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply because: no designated/mapped/adopted environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern is located within Project boundaries; no successive projects of the same type in the same place as the Project are known/planned; there are no unusual circumstances associated with the Project's routine geotechnical investigations to be performed primarily within existing rights-of-way using established access routes/roads; and no hazardous waste sites or scenic highways are within the Project boundaries. While the FKC itself has been identified as a historical resource, implementation of the Project would not impact or cause a serious or major disturbance to or substantial adverse change in the significance of the FKC pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. The Project activities will require the temporary removal of soil in bore locations adjacent to the FKC, and the soil will be replaced in-kind and these FKC-adjacent activities will not affect the character-defining features of FKC. The project will not result in any change in or loss of features or functions of the FKC and, at the completion of the Project, the FKC will remain as it was prior to the Project.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Douglas DeFlicht **Telephone:** (559) 562-6305

**If Filed by Applicant:**

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  
 Yes  No

**Signature:**

  
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Douglas DeFlicht, Chief Operating Officer

**Date:** August 21, 2019

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR:

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

**AUG 21 2019**

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**