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## State Water Resources Control Board

### Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research,  
1400 Tenth Street Room 113, Sacramento, California 95814

From: State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights,  
Post Office Box 2000, Sacramento, California 95812-2000

Subject: Filing of Notice of Exemption in compliance with  
Public Resources Code section 21108

### Public Agency Information

Name: State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights,  
Post Office Box 2000, Sacramento, California 95812-2000

Contact: Matthew McCarthy

Phone: (916) 341-5310

Is the Public Agency also the Lead Agency? No

### Lead Agency Information

Agency: Wildlife Conservation Board

Contact: Jennifer Norris

Phone: (916) 445-0137

Address: PO Box 944209, Sacramento, California 94244-2090

### Project Information

SCH Number: 2020040054

Title: Santa Rita Ranch Acquisition and Flow Enhancement Project

Applicant: The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County

Location: The Santa Rita Ranch, consisting of approximately 1,715 acres of land located on San Luis Obispo County Parcel 046-041-065 at 3520 Old Creek Road, Templeton, California, and Santa Rita Creek.

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | ERIC OPPENHEIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Description: The project involves the approval of Water Code section 1707 petitions filed by The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County for a permissive instream flow dedication for two water right licenses of up to 234 acre-feet of water per year in Santa Rita Creek.

## Exemptions

The Wildlife Conservation Board, as lead agency, determined the project was exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act and issued a Notice of Exemption on April 2, 2020. This is to advise that the State Water Board has approved the above-described project on November 27, 2024 and has independently concluded that such approval is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act for the following reasons:

1. The project meets the Class 1 categorical exemption for existing facilities. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301.) The project involves negligible or no expansion of use beyond what existed at the time the State Water Board approved the change.
2. The project meets the Class 4 categorical exemption for minor alterations to water and land. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15304.) This exemption consists of “minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, *water*, and/or vegetation.” (Id., italics added.) While the area is not an “officially designated wildlife management area” or “fish production facility” under the example listed in subdivision (d) of the regulation, it will “result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.” (Id.)
3. The project meets the Class 7 and 8 categorical exemptions for actions by regulatory agencies for the protection of natural resources and the environment (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§ 15307 & 15308). These exemptions apply to actions authorized under state law to assure the “maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection” natural resources and the environment. The very purpose of Water Code section 1707 is for “preserving or enhancing wetlands habitat, fish and wildlife resources” in the water. (Wat. Code, § 1707.)
4. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment. The release of stored water from the reservoir can mimic natural flow conditions. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15061, subd. (b)(3).)

Signature:

Name: Matthew McCarthy  
Title: Senior Environmental Scientist  
Date: November 27, 2024