

Notice of Determination

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To:

Office of Planning and Research
For U.S. Mail:
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Street Address:

1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

From:

Department of Fish and Wildlife
Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Blvd, Ste C220
Ontario, CA 91764
Contact: Jacob Skaggs
Phone: 951-218-0320



Lead Agency:

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
700 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, California 90012
Contact: Daniel Cardoza
Phone: 213-217-5602

SUBJECT: Filing of Notice of Determination pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21108

State Clearinghouse Number: 2020100400

Project Title: Colorado River Aqueduct Conduit Structural Protection Project (Streambed Alteration Agreement, Notification No. EPIMS-RIV-15087-R6)

Project Location (include county): The Colorado River Aqueduct Conduit Structural Projection Project (Project) comprises six separate "Work Areas" – Work Areas 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 24 – located respectively in West Thousand Palms Canyon, East Wide Canyon, Long Canyon, West Blind Canyon, Whitehouse Canyon, and Big Morongo Canyon, near the cities of Desert Hot Springs and Indio, unincorporated communities of Sky Valley and Chiriaco Summit, and unincorporated Riverside County, California. Generally, the Project's Work Areas are bordered by undeveloped land, including private lands, Bureau of Land Management lands, and the southern boundary of Joshua Tree National Park. All Work Areas under this Project are located within the Whitewater River Watershed.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has executed Streambed Alteration Agreement number EPIMS-RIV-15087-R6, pursuant to section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code to the Project Applicant, The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, as represented by Jennifer Harriger.

The Project is associated with impacts to stream habitat related to access road improvements to increase protection of the Colorado River Aqueduct siphons over Work Areas 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 24. Access road improvements involve the installation of low-water crossings which will impact desert streams. Existing unpaved roads provide access to each of the Project site locations. The Project realigns segments of the existing unpaved access roads that are located directly on top of or adjacent to structurally vulnerable segments of the siphon. Low-water crossings will be installed where the realigned access roads cross drainage features. The low water crossings are designed as earthen crossings with approximately 30-inch diameter riprap placed downstream to dissipate energy and reduce erosion. The low-water crossings will require rough grading and excavation to prepare the site for the placement of geotextile fabric and the 30-inch riprap. The riprap will be placed immediately downstream of the low-water crossing. Imported fill material will then be placed upstream of the riprap and graded to ensure adequate grade for the low-water crossing ingress and egress points, as well as match the elevation of the drainage. The riprap and earthen fill material will be sourced from a nearby supplier and imported to the Project sites. Temporary Work Areas have been included around each project site to allow for the ability to maneuver the equipment that will be used to construct the low-water crossings. Vegetation removal within the temporary work area may be required in order to maneuver equipment. No grading, or compaction within the temporary work area is anticipated. Construction crews will avoid established shrubs, as feasible. If avoidance is not practicable, crews will crush vegetation and leave the subsurface root structure intact, as feasible.

The Project will permanently impact 0.61 acres and temporarily impact 1.15 acres of fish and wildlife resources subject to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et. seq. To compensate for these impacts, the Project shall complete one of the following: 1) purchase no less than 0.61 acres of stream habitat re-establishment and 3.56 acres of stream habitat rehabilitation credits through a CDFW-approved mitigation bank within Wester Riverside County, 2) purchase no less than 5.35 acres of ephemeral /intermittent stream preservation credits from The Mojave Desert

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Tortoise Conservation Bank, Site 6, or 3) acquire, rehabilitate, and perpetually conserve a mitigation site containing no less than 2.98 acres of streambed or riparian habitat within the Whitewater River Watershed.

This is to advise that CDFW, acting as a Responsible Agency, approved the above-described project on January 20, 2022, and has made the following determinations regarding the project pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 15096, subdivision (i):

1. The project will / will not have a significant effect on the environment. This determination is limited to effects within CDFW's permitting jurisdiction as a Responsible Agency.
2. CDFW considered the Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by the Lead Agency for this project pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 15096, subdivision (f).
3. Mitigation measures were / were not made a condition of CDFW's approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan was / was not adopted by CDFW for this project.
5. A statement of overriding considerations was / was not adopted by CDFW for this project.
6. Findings were / were not made by CDFW pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 15091.

The Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for the project is available to the general public at the office location listed above for the Lead Agency. CDFW's record of project approval as Responsible Agency is available at CDFW's regional office.

DocuSigned by:

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1/20/2022

Signature

Date:

Scott Wilson, Environmental Program Manager

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____