

**SOUTH COAST WATER DISTRICT
Notice of Exemption**

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

From: SOUTH COAST WATER DISTRICT
31592 West Street
Laguna Beach CA 92651

County Clerk Recorder
County of Orange
PO Box 238
Santa Ana CA 92702

Project Title: Joint Transmission Main (JTM) U2R3-R4 Cathodic Protection System Improvements

Project Location – Specific: JTM Easement from City of Laguna Hills to City of Aliso Viejo, CA.

City: Laguna Hills and Aliso Viejo, CA County: Orange

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: *The Joint Transmission Main (JTM) is a 60-inch water pipeline that was constructed in 1961 to convey potable water from a Metropolitan Water District (MWD) connection in Irvine, California to Bradt Reservoir and Schlegel Reservoir in San Clemente, California. Collectively, these facilities comprise the Joint Regional Water Supply System (JRWSS), a section of which is contract operated by South Coast Water District (“District”). The District plans to install or improve cathodic protection equipment at 13 locations within JTM easement along approximately three miles of the pipeline route. Improvements to the cathodic protection system would be completed at existing manways, vaults, air-vacs, or similar pipeline access locations. All project work would be within a 20-foot JTM easement. Six of the work locations are at “off-road” sites (Figure 1) and the remaining 7 sites are within or adjacent to paved roads in urban areas.*

Project work at each of the JTM cathodic protection system locations would generally be confined to a small work area of approximately 8x8 feet. Some locations will require an excavation to a depth of 10 to 12 feet and may require a somewhat larger work area. When completed, the surface equipment would be similar to the existing features. Construction is expected to take approximately four months, however work at any individual site would generally require only one to five days. Some locations along the JTM easement have become overgrown and may require vegetation removal within the work area. No trees would be removed for construction.

Exempt Status (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 15073)
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 15071(a))
- Emergency Project (Sec. 15073(b) and (c))
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: *Section 15302 (Class 2) (c) categorically exempt replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity. Section 15304 (Class 4) categorically exempt minor alterations to land.*

Reason why project is exempt: See Attachment A

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: *South Coast Water District*
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: *South Coast Water District*
Lead Agency Contact Person: *Rick Shintaku, General Manager*
Area Code / Telephone / Extension: *(949) 499-4555*

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

OCT 23 2020

STATE CLERK
Title: General Manager

Signature

10/19/2020

Date

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant
- Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Attachment A Supplemental Information

Biological Resources and Habitat

Six of the work locations are at "off-road" sites (Figure 1) and the remaining 7 sites are within or adjacent to paved roads in urban areas.

Off-Road Areas

All of the off-road sites are at existing manways, vaults, air-vacs, or similar pipeline access locations that are regularly maintained by the District. Access is provided by a maintained dirt road with no public access. Vegetation is regularly cleared for approximately 2 to 4 feet around the proposed work sites, however some locations have recently become overgrown with ruderal grasses and invasive mustard. All construction work will be located in areas that are clear of vegetation or have been previously disturbed. The work sites do not provide habitat for any sensitive species. No trees would be removed for the project. Several of the off-road work sites are adjacent to drainage features, however project plans include Best Management Practices to prevent polluted discharges from entering nearby drainages. Examination of the access road and work areas indicates there are no unusual circumstances associated with the project that would require further environmental review.

Urban Areas

Within urban areas the work sites are located within or adjacent to paved roads. Within the JTM easement some urban landscaping consists of curbing, grass, or hedge may be temporarily disturbed. Examination of the urban work areas indicates there are no biological resource or habitat associated with the project that would require further environmental review.

Protection Measures

The project includes preparation of a Storm Water Control Plan with specifications and measures to avoid potential water runoff and erosion from the construction equipment laydown, storage, and work areas. These measures include implementation of Best Management Practices to prevent polluted discharges from entering streets, gutters, or storm drains.

Work at the off-road locations will be close to vegetation presenting the potential for wildfires. Prior to construction activities on the project site, the District will verify that the following measures are incorporated into construction contracts:

- No welding or similar activities will occur near vegetation within and surrounding the work sites.
- Each support vehicle (pick-ups and others) used on the project site must be equipped with a Class A fire extinguisher readily accessible for use in the event of a fire.
- A Class A fire extinguisher must be maintained at each worksite where vegetation clearing is underway.
- The construction contractor must have a designated employee responsible for fire safety onsite during all construction activity.
- The construction contractor must closely monitor for ignited vegetation from equipment and tool use.
- The construction contractor must observe no-work days on Red Flag Days and during Fire Weather Watch warnings.
- The construction contractor must properly handle and store flammable materials, minimize potential ignition sources
- The construction contractor must prohibit smoking at all work sites.
- The construction contractor must have spark arresters on gasoline, diesel, and propane-powered equipment.
- The construction contractor must dispose of cuttings and debris promptly to reduce the amount of fire fuel on the project site.

Land Use and Site Access

Construction work will be temporary and there are no project activities that are incompatible with surrounding land uses. All project sites are accessible from a maintained access road or public streets. Prior to construction, the contractor will prepare Traffic Control Plans for approval by the governing agency.

Finding - CEQA (Exempt): The project is exempt from environmental review with the following findings:
(a) CEQA Guidelines list classes of projects that have been determined to not have a significant effect on the environment and are therefore exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

- Section 15302 (Class 2) (c) categorically exempt replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity. The improved cathodic protection equipment will not change the capacity or operation of the JTM in any way.
- Section 15304 (Class 4) categorically exempt minor alterations to land. The proposed project consists of only minor alterations to land. The work areas will be restored when work is completed.

(b) The work areas are without natural or native vegetation that does not provide habitat for any sensitive species. No sensitive habitat or special status species would be adversely affected by the project.

(c) Review by District staff indicates there are no unusual circumstances associated with the project or the property that would require further environmental review.

Site Photos



Figure 1. JR-31 and JR-36. Typical views of “off-road” sites.