

## Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** CA Dept. of Water Resources  
3374 E. Shields Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93726

**Lead Agency:** California Department of Water Resources

**Project Title:** Cholame Creek Stream Gage Installation and Operation Project

**Project Location City & County:** Shandon, CA San Luis Obispo County

**Project Location – Specific:** The California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) South Central Region Office (SCRO) proposes to install a stream gaging station on Cholame Creek approximately 1.3 miles upstream of the town of Shandon, CA in San Luis Obispo County. The proposed project location is in the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' Cholame quadrangle Township 26S Range 15E, latitude: 35°40'12.61"N and longitude: 120°21'30.15"W.

The Cholame Creek flows out of the Diablo Range in Monterey County down into an alluvial valley into the town of Shandon where it merges with the San Juan Creek to form the Estrella River. The Estrella River flows into the Salinas River and into the Pacific Ocean along the Monterey coast. This watershed is dry for most of the year.

**Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:** In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was signed into law. Under the hydrological collection objective of SGMA, DWR SCRO proposes to deploy a network of stream gages in high and medium priority groundwater basins to reduce data gaps in the existing stream gage network. Enhancing the network would provide essential data to improve water management and flood forecasting, potentially increasing groundwater recharge and protecting fish and wildlife. This proposed project would install a stream gage on Cholame Creek in a high priority basin, specifically, the Paso Robles Area sub-basin of the Salinas Valley basin.

The proposed gaging station equipment box would be welded to an existing steel railing just north of the existing bridge that crosses Cholame Creek. From the equipment box, one inch steel conduit would be secured to the private wooden bridge to the center of the Cholame Creek channel. At the end of the conduit, a radar sensor would be mounted to the bridge and pointed downward toward the flowing water. Due to this station utilizing doppler technology suspended from the bridge, there will be no ground disturbance during installation. Handheld power tools would be used to attach the equipment to the existing structure onsite.

The installation would take one day to complete and would be minimally intrusive, and would result in no impacts to habitat, wildlife, or to waters of the State or of the United States.

After installation, staff would visit the site after storm events to take depth and flow measurements necessary to develop a rating curve. DWR SCRO staff would operate and maintain the gaging station, visiting the site for routine maintenance and repairs and to download data manually for verification purposes, up to ten times in a year. Newer equipment will be installed and replaced as necessary. Access to the site will be by existing paved and dirt roads.

The data collected from the station will be available publicly through the California Data Exchange Center (CDEC) and the Water Data Library and shared with local agency partners as requested.

Once installed, this station would become part of DWR's stream gage monitoring program.

**Exempt/Suspend Status:**

- Ministerial (§21080[b][1]; 15268)
- Declared Emergency (Proclamation of a State of Emergency Due to Drought)
- Emergency Project (Public Resources Code §21080[b][4]; California Code of Regulations §15269[c])
- Categorical Exemption: 15306. Information Collection
- Statutory Exemptions:

**Reasons Why Project Is Exempt:** The proposed activities would take place on existing infrastructure. The installation of the stream gage would not disturb native vegetation or wildlife. No heavy equipment would be used and all ground disturbance would be minimal if any.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** California Department of Water Resources

**Contact Person:** Kevin Faulkenberry

**Telephone:**(559) 230-3300

**Signature:** Kevin Faulkenberry **Date:** 4/28/2021 **Title:** Chief SCRO

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant