

Notice of Exemption

To:

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

County Clerk
San Luis Obispo

From:

State of California Department of Water
Resources
770 Fairmont Ave, Suite 200
Glendale, CA 91203-1035

Project Title: Drilling and Construction of Monitoring Wells – Caliente Mountain, Caliente Ranch Cuyama (CRC) Site

Project Applicant: State of California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Projection Location – City: New Cuyama

Project Location – County: San Luis Obispo

Project Location - Specific: The proposed Project site is in San Luis Obispo County, on land owned by Caliente Ranch Cuyama LLC (CRC), and at a location generally described by latitude and longitude coordinates of 35.002897, -119.811909, within the United States Geological Survey 7.5' quadrangle "Caliente Mountain", and the Public Land Survey System T11N R28W S36, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian. The proposed well would be constructed on private land owned by CRC, approximately 0.5 miles north of the entrance to the property which is approximately 8.5 miles north on Highway 166 from the unincorporated city of New Cuyama.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The Department of Water Resources Technical Support Services Program proposes to install three nested monitoring wells in a single borehole at the location described above. The Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) and its stakeholders require groundwater monitoring data, collected from the proposed wells, to correlate existing geophysical survey data with the subsurface conditions at the proposed Project site through the interpolation of the subsurface conditions with the subsurface conditions at the nearest existing well.

To accomplish this objective, an exploratory borehole would be drilled to approximately 600' below ground surface (bgs) using a mud rotary drill rig. After conducting a geophysical survey in the borehole, three monitoring wells would be constructed. The depths of the completed monitoring wells would be dependent on drilling conditions, encountered lithology, and data from the geophysical survey; the estimated total depths of the proposed monitoring wells would be approximately 200' to 240' bgs, 380' to 420' bgs, and 550' to 590' bgs.

The proposed wells would be constructed within an area of about 250 ft² on CRC private property north of CA-166. Construction would consist of three phases. The initial phase would last about one week and be mobilization and transporting of equipment and supplies from Signal Hill, CA to the proposed Project site via I-5 and CA-166. Phase 2 would be to drill and construct the monitoring wells. Phase 3 would

entail development (cleaning) of each well. Overall, phases 2 and 3 would last approximately one month. Demobilization would take approximately one week to transport equipment and supplies back to Signal Hill, CA via CA-166, and I-5.

During drilling and well construction, the borehole water and drilling fluid would be processed to separate the heavy particles (i.e. sand, silt, gravel) from the lighter materials (clay, water, and fluids). The fluid fraction would be pumped back into the hole through the drilling rods. The heavier particles and drilling cuttings would be placed in a one cubic yard metal hopper. Periodically, a forklift would empty the hopper into roll-off bins stored on-site. When full, the bins would be hauled to an appropriate non-hazardous waste facility outside of New Cuyama for disposal or re-use. The haul trucks would travel via CA-166 to I-5 to CA-41 to Fresno to dispose of the cuttings and water at Caglia Environmental. Alternatively, samples of drill cuttings would be collected and analyzed for any constituents of concern. Pending sample results and CRC permission, drill cuttings may be spread on the property, instead of being hauled to Caglia Environmental for disposal. Disposed drill cuttings would be expected to be clean and non-hazardous.

The water used for the drilling operations would be siphoned from a private well on the property or from a municipal hydrant in New Cuyama, transferred into a water truck, and transported to the construction site.

After the completion of the well construction phase, each well would be developed using industry-standard methods, including bailing, surging-and-swabbing, and pumping. Initially, the development fluids from each well would be turbid, i.e. contain clay, silt, and sand particles. The turbidity of these fluids would progressively and rapidly decrease through continued development.

Upon completion of the wells' development, a piezometer for each would be enclosed within a riser monument cemented into the ground. The monument would rise approximately 3.5 feet above ground, be surrounded by bollards/crash posts painted yellow, be reflective, and have a lockable cover.

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

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: State of California Department of Water Resources

Exempt Status: Categorical Exemptions: Minor Alteration of Land, Class 4, 15304, Title 14 CCR; Information Collection, Class 6, 15306, Title 14 CCR

Reason why project is exempt: The proposed Project is categorically exempt under Class 4, Section 15304, because the construction activities consist of nonsignificant impacts to the condition of the land. The proposed Project is also categorically exempt under Class 6, Section 15306 because it consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a significant impact to an environmental resource.

A preconstruction survey was conducted which revealed no sensitive resources on the proposed Project site. A California Natural Diversity Database search indicates known populations of *Eremalche parryi* ssp.

Kernensis, Monolopia congdonii, Caulanthus californicus, Gambelia sila, Vulpes macrotis mutica, Ammospermophilus nelson, Dipodomys stephensi, Dipodomys ingens, Agelaius tricolor, Bombus crotchii, and Euproserpinus euterpe to exist within the USGS 7.5' quad. The proposed Project site was scouted for potential activity of these listed species and none was found on the site. The proposed Project site is heavily disturbed and unsuitable habitat for these species.

Vehicles would travel on unpaved roads at speeds not exceeding 20 miles per hour for dust control mitigation. Vehicles would operate in conformance with California Vehicle Code.

Drip pans would be placed under parked equipment and under the porta-potty. Water, fluids, and hazardous materials would not be expected to contact the ground.

Overall, no significant impacts would be anticipated for biological resources, air quality, visual impact, water quality, land surface, or historic and archaeological resources. Operation of the drill rig would create noise; the completed monitoring wells would be silent.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Albert Lu

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (818) 549-2330

If filed by applicant:

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

Signature: Thang Nguyen **Date:** 5/3/2021 **Title:** Chief, Southern Region Office

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

Authority Cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.