

# Notice of Exemption

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**To:**

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

County Clerk  
County of: Los Angeles, Business Filings  
12400 E. Imperial Hwy., #1201  
Norwalk, CA 90650

**From:**

Public Agency: LA County Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Location - Specific:

Project Location - City: \_\_\_\_\_ Project Location - County: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning proposes an updated community standards district for the unincorporated area of Leona Valley to preserve the existing rural character and nature in this area. Development standards applicable to this community will be more environmentally protective and will further limit changes to road design, commercial development, grading and removal of native vegetation; and subdivision in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. See attachment for additional information.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Los Angeles County

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Exempt Status: **(check one):**

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: \_\_\_\_\_
- Statutory Exemption. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_
- Exemptions for Agricultural Housing, Affordable Housing, and Residential Infill Projects. State type and section number: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons why project is exempt:

Lead Agency

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Area Code/Telephone/Extension: \_\_\_\_\_

**If filed by applicant:**

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

Signature:  Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Date Received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTACHMENT TO NOTICE OF EXEMPTION  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
LEONA VALLEY COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT

## **1. Project Description**

The Los Angeles County (“County”) Department of Regional Planning is undertaking the process of updating the Leona Valley Community Standards District (Chapter 22.330 of the Los Angeles County Code) and associated amendment to the County General Plan Chapter 9 (Conservation and Natural Resources Element) Figure 9.8 “Hillside Management Areas and Ridgeline Map” to document significant ridgelines within the community. The proposed update to the Leona Valley Community Standards District (“CSD”) will standardize new subdivisions in rural areas; preserve the existing narrow road design without curbs, gutters, or sidewalks; create additional development standards for commercial businesses and signage; and encourage vegetation protections and trails as part of discretionary development projects, where appropriate. These policies are more environmentally protective and restrictive than what is currently allowed within the Zoning Code (Title 22). No construction activities or specific developments are proposed as part of this project.

## **2. Description of Project Site**

The Leona Valley community is located just north of the Angeles National Forest<sup>1</sup> along Elizabeth Lake Road. The community spans both north and south of Elizabeth Lake Road and as far west as San Francisquito Canyon Road and east past Cherry Tree Lane where it abuts the City of Palmdale. An attached map depicts the boundaries of the proposed update to the Leona Valley CSD. Rural-commercial zoned parcels are located at the intersection of Elizabeth Lake Road and 90<sup>th</sup> Street West. Another main intersection for the community is Elizabeth Lake Road and Bouquet Canyon Road. The community is mostly split between the Sleepy Valley and Del Sur Quadrants of the USGS map pages, with a small portion on the eastern edge of the community located in the Ritter Ridge Quadrant.

Properties located within this area are mainly developed with single-family residences or are vacant. There are a just a few local businesses such as restaurants, hay and feed stores, veterinary services, a motorcycle restoration and repair shop, and a gas station/convenience market. There is also community center, a land mitigation bank/nature preserve, agricultural farms, a fire station, an elementary school, a post office, and faith-based organizations within the boundaries of this area. This community is served by private water and sewer systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping:

<http://rpags.hosted.lac.com/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=GISNET.GIS-NET>, Accessed September 14, 2020  
Layer: **National Forest** – (Angeles National Forest) information from the U.S. National Forest Service

The community is defined by its large, single family lots, surrounding hillsides and rural landscapes. The Angeles National Forest is located to the south of Leona Valley. The majority of properties in this community are in the San Andreas SEA<sup>2</sup>. The entirety of the community is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (“VHFHSZ”)<sup>3</sup> and the Rural Outdoor Lighting District (“ROLD”)<sup>4</sup>. Many properties also fall within a Liquefaction Zone<sup>5</sup> and Seismic Zone with the San Andreas Fault running throughout the community along Elizabeth Lake Road. <sup>6</sup> A 100-year Flood Plain<sup>7</sup> also runs through the center of the community along Elizabeth Lake Road.

### **3. Reasons Why This Project is Exempt**

The General Plan amendment action is not a “Project” pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act “CEQA” statute §21065 and guideline §15378, and are otherwise exempt pursuant to §15061(b)(3). The CSD ordinance update project qualifies for Class 1, Existing Facilities; Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction; Class 3 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures; Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land; Class 7, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources; Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment; Class 11, Accessory Structures; Class 20, Changes in Organization of Local Agencies; and Class 21 Enforcement Actions by Regulatory Agencies under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301, 15302, 15303, 15304, 15307, 15308, 15311, 15320, and 15321 as classes of projects that do not have a significant effect on the environment.

#### ***Section 15601.B.3 (Common Sense)***

*The activity is covered by the common-sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.*

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<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **Significant Ecological Area** – Department of Regional Planning General Plan 2035

<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **Fire Hazard – Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Only** – information from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP), CALFIRE, and the County of Los Angeles Fire Department

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **Rural Outdoor Lighting District** – Department of Regional Planning Ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors in November of 2012

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **Liquefaction Zone** – information from the California Geological Survey

(<http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=regulatorymaps>)

<sup>6</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **Seismic Zone & Fault Trace** – information from the California Geological Survey

(<http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=regulatorymaps>)

<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles County GIS interactive mapping (as previously cited); Layer: **100-Year Flood Plain** – information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency

The project includes an amendment to the County General Plan Chapter 9 (Conservation and Natural Resources Element), Figure 9.8 “Hillside Management Areas and Ridgeline Map.” The amendment will document significant ridgelines in Leona Valley so they can be protected by additional development standards, thereby further protecting the existing environment and natural resources. There will be no direct environmental impact as there will be no change to density or land use associated with this amendment.

***Class 1: Section 15301, Existing Facilities***

*Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use...Examples include, but are not limited to:*

*(c) Existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities...*

*(h) Maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and water supply reservoirs...*

The project will not alter or cause for removal any existing, permitted structures on property. The development standards will only impact new changes that are proposed to a site. For example, one development standard will exclude the addition of new outdoor advertising signs (billboards) within the community. There is an adopted ROLD Ordinance that is already in effect and applies to properties within this community. The project will refer to this ordinance for lighting requirements as they relate to signage.

The Leona Valley CSD update will include development standards that restrict the road widths and prohibit the use of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, unless deemed necessary by the County. These standards are intended to preserve the design of existing roads and therefore, the project will be consistent with the existing character and baseline condition of the community.

The project proposes consideration of trail easements and alignments for all new development or subdivisions requiring a discretionary land-use permit to be consistent with the County Trails Manual and the Trails Plan of the Antelope Valley Area Plan.

The project also proposes restrictions on vegetation removal. Currently, there are vegetation protections in the adopted SEA Ordinance and the Hillside Management Ordinance. The inclusion of these new standards would provide an additional layer of vegetation protection and allow for the maintenance of existing landscaping and natural growth on private property, including a handful of parcels that do not currently fall within the SEA boundaries.

### ***Class 2: Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction***

*Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to:*

*(b) Replacement of a commercial structure with a new structure of substantially the same size, purpose, and capacity.*

*(d) Conversion of overhead electric utility distribution system facilities to underground including connection to existing overhead utility distribution lines where the surface is restored to the condition existing prior to undergrounding.*

The project will not alter the current Zoning Code (Title 22) as it applies to replacement or reconstruction of structures as identified in Chapter 22.172 of the Los Angeles County Code. Development standards will be added for commercial projects and signage. However, these standards would only be applied when new construction or replacement is proposed and will be more stringent than the existing Zoning Code allowances. Road standards are meant to continue the existing narrow rural design without sidewalks, curbs, or gutters, unless deemed necessary by other departments. Therefore, the aforementioned standards will fit into this categorical exemption class.

The community is interested in requiring the undergrounding of utilities. This development standard may be applicable to new subdivision projects of a minimum size.

### ***Class 3: Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures***

*Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities and structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure...Examples of this exemption include, but are not limited to:*

*(a) One single-family residence, or a second dwelling unit in a residential zone...*

*(b) A store, motel, office, restaurant or similar structure not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, and not exceeding 2,500 square feet in floor area...*

The project will include development standards for ministerial projects, such as commercial development standards, to further restrict the height of new commercial structures when they are taller than 17 feet and require setbacks for commercial lots.

### ***Class 4: Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land***

*Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Examples include, but are not limited to:*

*(b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistance landscaping.*

This project proposes development standards to evaluate proposed removal of vegetation and require a discretionary permit with removal of a specified percentage of a lot or a minimum square footage, dependent on whichever is more restrictive. Although there are adopted ordinances (mentioned above) that protect vegetation, this CSD would add a new layer of protection for plants in areas that may not otherwise be protected. These standards will be more environmentally protective than the current Zoning Code.

***Class 7: Section 15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources***

*Class 7 consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies as authorized by state law or local ordinance to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of a natural resource where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment...Construction activities are not included in this exemption.*

This project will include a set of development standards that will be more stringent than the existing County Code and therefore, will be more protective of the environment. The development standards will include evaluation of vegetation removal and protections for significant ridgelines. The project will also prohibit drive-through services within the CSD, further protecting natural resources.

***Class 8: Section 15308, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment***

*Class 8 consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. Construction activities and relaxation of standards allowing environmental degradation are not included in this exemption.*

The proposed project will further protect the environment and prevent environmental degradation with the addition of standards requiring additional setbacks for commercial development, restricting commercial signage, limiting expansion of roads, prohibiting new billboards, further protecting significant ridgelines, dark skies, and mitigating vegetation removal as part of discretionary development projects. The CSD does include guidance for trail development; however, these trails are already identified and included on the existing, adopted Antelope Valley Trails Map and the Regional Trails System, adopted as part of the General Plan. The project will also prohibit drive-through services within the CSD, further protecting natural resources.

None of the proposed development standards will relax the existing code requirements or allow additional environmental degradation.

***Class 11: Section 15311, Accessory Structures***

*Class 11 consists of construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, including but not limited to:*

*(a) On-premise signs;*

Development standards related to commercial signage are proposed as part of this project. The project also proposes to include a prohibition on new outdoor advertising signs (billboards).

***Class 20: Section 15320, Changes in Organization of Local Agencies***

*Class 20 consists of changes in the organization or reorganization of local governmental agencies where the changes do not change the geographical area in which previously existing powers are exercised. Examples include, but are not limited to:*

*(a) Establishment of a subsidiary district;*

This project will modify an existing district with a revised layer of standards for a specific community. This community will remain within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles and will still be governed by the Board of Supervisors. This revision to the existing district will only apply development standards to this specified area with the intention of preserving its existing rural character and natural vegetation.

***Class 21: Section 15321, Enforcement Actions by Regulatory Agencies***

*Class 21 consists of:*

*(a) Actions by regulatory agencies to enforce or revoke a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use issued, adopted, or prescribed by the regulatory agency or enforcement of a law, general rule, standard, or objective, administered or adopted by the regulatory agency. Such actions include, but are not limited to, the following:*

*(1) The direct referral of a violation of lease, permit, license, certificate, or entitlement for use or of a general rule, standard or objective to the Attorney General, District Attorney, or City Attorney as appropriate, for judicial enforcement;*

*(2) The adoption of an administrative decision or order enforcing or revoking the lease, permit, license, certificate, or entitlement for use or enforcing the general rule, standard, or objective.*

This project proposes to add additional development standards to the Leona Valley community with the objective of preserving its existing character. These standards will

result in more environmental protections to the area. Any violation to these rules will be enforced pursuant to Chapter 22.242 of the County Code.

#### **4. Review of Possible Exceptions to the Categorical Exemptions**

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines identifies circumstances when a categorical exemption cannot be used. This project has been reviewed to determine if any of the conditions listed in this section might invalidate findings that the project is exempt under CEQA. None of these exceptions to the categorical exemptions are applicable:

- (a) Location:** This project qualifies for Classes 3, 4, and 11, which require analysis by location in order to ensure that a project is not located in a particularly sensitive environment where its impacts would ordinarily be insignificant, but circumstantially would be significant. This project includes the addition of development standards for commercial sites to further restrict the height of the buildings over 17 feet and require additional setbacks on commercial zoned property, limit the size and types of signage, and add vegetation protections. Although there are properties located within the boundaries of the project that are mapped as being located within a VHFHSZ, Flood Zone, Liquefaction Zone, Seismic Zone, and SEA, none of the proposed standards will create a significant impact on the environment due to the project's location being in one of these mapped areas. Additionally, all future development projects proposed within the area of the Leona Valley CSD will continue to be reviewed by the County Fire Department, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works to ensure compliance with County Code requirements.
- (b) Cumulative Impact:** The project will not have any adverse impact on the environment either individually or cumulatively since all development standards applied to this community will be more restrictive and environmentally protective than the current standards in the Zoning Code.
- (c) Significant Effect:** No unusual circumstances will cause this project to have a significant effect on the environment because the development standards are related to the addition of vegetation protections, limitations on signage and road design, stricter standards for commercial building and site design, restrictions on drive-through services, lighting restrictions, standards guiding new subdivisions, the design and dedication of trail easements, and the prohibition of new billboards. None of these standards will impact existing approved uses and will only guide future development with more environmentally protective standards.
- (d) Scenic Highways:** None of the highways located within the community of Leona Valley are officially designated as state scenic highways.<sup>8</sup>

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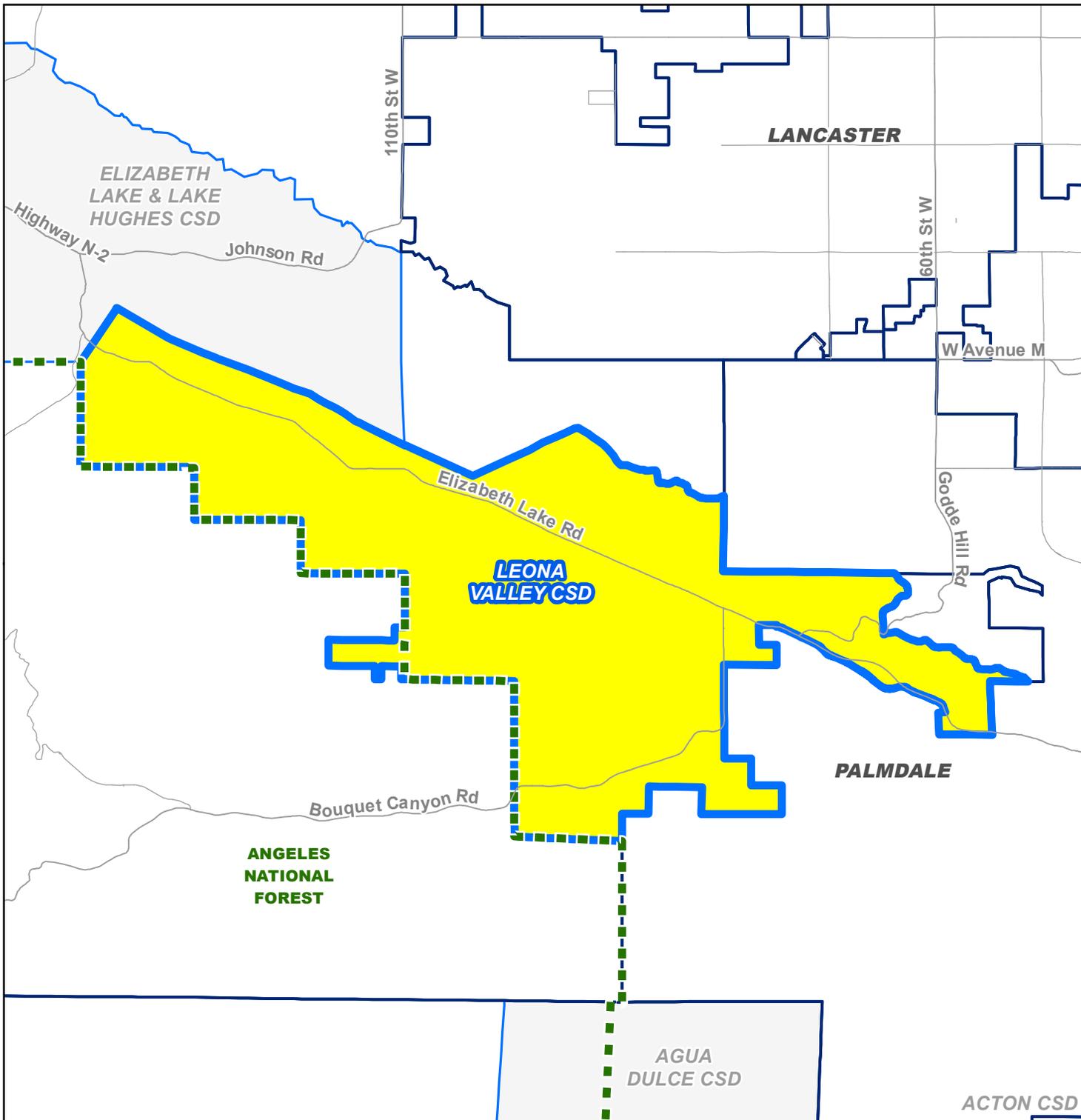
<sup>8</sup> Caltrans list of officially designated State Scenic Highways (from Caltrans website: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>, accessed September 17, 2020).

- (e) Hazardous Waste Sites:** The project is not located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. No active or open hazardous sites were identified at or adjacent to the project site.<sup>9</sup>
- (f) Historical Resources:** **The 1915 Leona Valley Schoolhouse located at 8367 Elizabeth Lake Road, Leona Valley, CA 93551 is a** California Point of Historical Interest.<sup>10</sup> The project's development standards that are proposed will not cause a significant impact to this resource as they will only apply to new development and will be more restrictive.

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<sup>9</sup> EnviroStor Database: <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/> and GeoTracker Database <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>, both accessed September 17, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> West Antelope Valley Historical Society; [http://avhistorical.org/1915\\_SCHOOLHOUSE.html](http://avhistorical.org/1915_SCHOOLHOUSE.html)



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

**Leona Valley  
Community Standards District**

**LEGEND:**

-  Community Standards District
-  City / Unincorporated
-  Forest Boundary

**Key Map:**



0 1,750 3,500 7,000  
Feet

Los Angeles County  
Dept. of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012