

## Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

<b>To:</b> Office of Planning and Research P.O. Box 3044, Room 113 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044	<b>From:</b> California Department of Water Resources 3374 E. Shields Ave. Fresno, CA 93726
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**Lead Agency:** California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

**Project Title:** San Joaquin River at Highway 152 Stream Gage Bubbler Installation and Operation Project

**Project Location City & County:** Approximately 6.5 miles northeast of the City of Dos Palos in Merced County (County), California

**Project Location – Specific:** The proposed Project would occur along the right bank of the San Joaquin River, in the Santa Rita Bridge U. S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographical quadrangle on Assessor's Parcel Number 071-170-021, Township 10S, Range 13E, in the Southeast  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 16, Latitude 37.055420, Longitude -120.548302.in the County. The proposed gaging station would be installed on the top of the levee on the right side of the San Joaquin River on private property.

**Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:** Under the hydrological data collection objective of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) signed into law in 2014, DWR 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. The enhanced network would provide essential data to improve water management- including groundwater recharge and to protect fish and wildlife. This proposed gage site on the San Joaquin River would assist Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) with meeting SGMA requirements for this High Priority groundwater basin. The proposed Project would also be used for the life of the Basin's groundwater sustainability plan to monitor San Joaquin River flows in this region of the basin.

Installation consists of a pre-made metal box (36"x36"x12") mounted on two metal 4" pipe footings 6' in length. Two 8"x36" holes would be dug with a handheld auger to install the footings. Approximately 80lbs of concrete would be poured in place to install the footings. The stream gage's plastic bubbler tube would be contained in a 1" galvanized pipe that would be daylighted and anchored with rebar and/or metal tee post driven approximately 24" into the ground spaced every 10 feet, from the station house to the lowest point of flow in the river. Equipment has self-maintaining purging option to prevent sediment accumulation/system failure. Setup includes a GOES satellite transmitter and solar panel to be installed on the metal stream gage box. As many as 4 staff gages would be installed adjacent to the 1" galvanized pipe containing the bubbler line. All project activities will be conducted using hand tools.

The installation would take no more than a few days, would take place on existing disturbed land, would be minimally intrusive, and would result in minimal impact to habitats, wildlife, and or to the waters of the State or the US.

DWR staff may visit this gage on a monthly basis to collect data. This will include downloading data from data logger and measurements of water level. Operation and maintenance activities will be minimal and will consist of monthly routine servicing of equipment and replacing batteries as needed. Operation and maintenance will be conducted by DWR. Visits between monthly scheduled visits may be necessary to repair or replace vandalized equipment.

Access to the gage location will be by existing dirt and paved roads.

Once installed, this facility would become part of DWR's network of stream gages and would also be used for the life of the Basin's groundwater sustainability plan to monitor San Joaquin River flows in this region of the basin.

**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:** No heavy equipment would be utilized, and ground disturbance would be minimal. No trees or habitat would be removed for the installation of the gage. Both a cultural and biological background investigation and field visit were conducted. No sensitive biological or cultural resources have been identified in the area. Existing roads would be used.

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

**Contact Person:** Kevin Faulkenberry

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

**Signature:**  \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** 8/15/2021 \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** SERO MANAGER \_\_\_\_\_

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant