

**Notice of Exemption**

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044  
County Clerk  
County of: Los Angeles  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**From:** (Public Agency): Water Replenishment District of Southern California  
4040 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, CA 90712  
(Address)

Project Title: LVL Advanced Water Treatment Facility Injection Well Project

Project Applicant: Water Replenishment District of Southern California

Project Location - Specific:  
7380 E. Willow Street, Long Beach, CA 90815

Project Location - City: Long Beach Project Location - County: Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:  
See Attachment A hereto.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Water Replenishment District of Southern California

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Water Replenishment District of Southern California

**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: CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 and 15304
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons why project is exempt:  
See Attachment A hereto.

Lead Agency  
Contact Person: Everett Ferguson, Senior Hydrogeologist Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (562) 275-4241

**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: 12/2/21 Title: General Manager

▪ Signed by Lead Agency    Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.  
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

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

## Attachment A

### Project Title

LVL Advanced Water Treatment Facility Injection Well Project

### Project Location and Description of the Project

The Water Replenishment District of Southern California (“WRD”) proposes installing a new groundwater injection well and two associated monitoring wells (“Project”) at WRD’s Leo J. Vander Lans Advanced Water Treatment Facility (“LVL AWTF”). The LVL AWTF is located at 7380 E. Willow Street, Long Beach, California, 90815 in the County of Los Angeles. The LVL AWTF provides advanced treated water (“ATW”) to the Alamitos Barrier in Long Beach and plays a vital role in the Central Groundwater Basin (“Central Basin”).

The facility was first constructed in 2003 and expanded in 2014. For the LVL AWTF’s initial construction and operation in 2003, WRD evaluated the potential environmental impacts under CEQA through a negative declaration dated 1998. As evaluated in the 1998 negative declaration, the initial plant effluent capacity was three million gallons per day (“MGD”), which would be operated at full capacity for 90% of the time and produce 3,024 acre feet per year (“AFY”) of reverse osmosis permeate. The 1998 negative declaration also evaluated the plant design to accommodate future expansion up to eight MGD of reverse osmosis permeate at a future date, should sufficient source water supply be available or barrier or other demands allow.

For the expansion of the facility in 2014, WRD evaluated the potential environmental impacts through a negative declaration dated 2012. The 2012 negative declaration evaluated the potential environmental impacts of expanding production capacity at the facility to eight MGD for recharge. The LVL AWTF currently operates below the full production capacity of eight MGD evaluated in the 2012 negative declaration.

The proposed Project will help WRD move closer to realizing the LVL AWTF’s full production capacity of eight MGD as analyzed and contemplated in the 2012 CEQA document and 2014 expansion. For the Project, WRD proposes to install a new groundwater injection well, capable of injecting up to two MGD or 2,016 AFY of excess water into the underlying drinking water aquifer for drought resiliency. In addition, two groundwater monitoring wells will also be installed and are included as part of the Project. No physical work will take place at the LVL AWTF to adjust the treatment capacity at the facility. The Project includes only the construction of the injection well and two monitoring wells for WRD to meet the facility’s eight MGD design capacity. Construction of the injection well and one monitoring well will take place completely within the boundaries of the LVL AWTF and will involve only minor drilling and trenching. Construction of the second monitoring well will take place downgradient of the LVL AWTF in one of the parking lots at El Dorado Park West.

The injection well will be operated for the sole purpose of replenishing the aquifer for drought resiliency. During drought conditions, groundwater users in the basin may access all of the water recharged and stored by this well. The Alamitos barrier has a demand which varies seasonally from 4-7 MGD. ATW from LVL AWTF will supply a minimum of approximately 0.5 MDG to the new injection well and feed the barrier the left-over ATW until the barrier demand is met. Any residual ATW will be injected onsite into the new 2 MGD injection well. For example,

if the barrier demand is 5 MGD, the goal is for LVL to produce a total of 7 MGD (5 MGD to the barrier and 2 MGD to the onsite injection well). In summary, WRD will inject the ATW into available capacity at the Alamitos Barrier. The volume of the excess, newly treated flows that is not needed to maintain the protective groundwater elevations required by the barrier system will be considered in excess of barrier demand and will be managed as drought resiliency water to increase basin reserves using the new injection well at the LVL AWTF. The excess wastewater (source water) that was not treated at the LVL AWTF has historically been sent into the ocean. In total, the Project will store an average of 2,470 AFY (or 74,100 acre feet over the 30-year life of the Project) entirely for drought resilience within WRD's service area. This water will be available for municipal indirect use to support drought resiliency and drought mitigation.

### **Reasons Why Project is Exempt**

Given the prior CEQA review that analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the LVL AWTF operating at its full 8 MGD design capacity and the limited scope of the proposed Project to construct the injection well and two monitoring wells, the Project fits within the Class 1 (Existing Facilities) and Class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land) exemptions under CEQA. (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 and 15304.)

The Class 1 Existing Facilities exemption applies to the "operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, 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." (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301; *see World Business Academy v. State Lands Com.* (2018) Cal.App. 5th 476, 496-97.) The key inquiry is whether "the project involves negligible or no expansion of use." The Project will consist of a minor alteration to the existing LVL AWTF with the construction of the injection well and two monitoring wells, and will not lead to any expansion of use beyond the capacity's current eight MGD design capacity.

The Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land exemption applies to "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 and agricultural purposes." (CEQA Guidelines Section 15304; *see Madrigal v. City of Huntington Beach* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 1375, 1386.) The exemption applies to activities that include "minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored." (CEQA Guidelines Section 15304(f).) The Project will involve minor alterations to the land, including trenching and drilling activities for the .

Given the Project's narrow scope and the prior CEQA review of the LVL AWTF's operations, the Project is not expected to result in a significant environmental impact and is not expected to have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c).)