

Attachment 1.

Project Description and CEQA Exemption

Project Description

As part of this information gathering process to support the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan project planning and design, three different exploratory testing and information gathering efforts are required. These proposed activities are geotechnical exploratory testing, methane probes, and archaeological testing. Geotechnical field explorations would include Oyo suspension logging at a depth of approximately 100 feet, sampling, and groundwater monitoring. Methane probes would consist of shallow soil gas probes installed below the surface at a depth of approximately 5 feet. Archaeological testing would consist of hand-excavating circular shovel test pits to a depth of approximately 1.5 meters. The location of the proposed activities is identified in Figures 1 through 3.

These research and testing activities are required to be completed in advance of the La Brea Tar Pit Master Plan Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in order for the engineering analyses, site design, and report recommendations to fully consider the geotechnical, methane and archeological constraints of the project site. The engineering design requirements, analysis of any potential hazards, and possible mitigation measures cannot be completed for the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan without these advanced testing activities. Therefore, the geotechnical exploratory testing, methane probes, and archaeological testing are considered a separate project from the La Brea Pits Master Plan EIR and are required to be performed in advance to determine the feasibility of planning, design, and construction the proposed Master Plan. The proposed research and testing activities do not apply to the adoption of the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan, which would have a legally binding effect on later activities and for which an EIR is currently being prepared. The results of the proposed activities would not compel the County to move forward with the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan and would not prevent the County from conditioning, changing, or failing to recommend approval of the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan Project.

Although the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not require public review for exemptions, the Applicant has notified the local community of the proposed activities covered under this Notice of Exemption.

Reasons Why Project is CEQA Exempt

CEQA Article 18. Statutory Exemption, Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies): The proposed activities are statutorily exempt under CEQA Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies, because the goal of the activities is to collect data in support of preparing feasibility studies for the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan project. The proposed activities involve only the planning studies that are needed for a possible future action, which has not yet been approved, adopted, or funded. The goal of the activities proposed is to collect geotechnical, methane, and archaeological data to support the planning and design of the of the proposed La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan Project. The proposed activities do not apply to the adoption of the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan, for which an EIR is being prepared. The proposed activities are considered exempt under Section 15262 because they involve only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which the agency, board, or commission has not approved, adopted, or funded does not require the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration but does require consideration of environmental factors. The geological, methane, and archaeological data collection would have a negligible effect on the environment, would not be permanent, and would not result in any significant impacts to environmental resources. All field explorations would be overseen by qualified engineers, scientists, and archeologists, equipped with the training and expertise required to ensure no significant impacts to the project site would occur during subsurface explorations. All minor alterations to the land would be restored to pre-surface conditions. The results of the proposed

activities would not compel the County to move forward with the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan and would not prevent the County from conditioning, changing, or failing to recommend approval of a proposed project at the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan project site. Therefore, further review under CEQA is not required.

CEQA Article 19. Categorical Exemption, Section 15304, Class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land):

The proposed activities would be considered exempt under the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land (Class 4), because they include only minor alterations of land and the data collected would be used to support the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan project planning and design. The geological, methane, and archaeological data collection would have a negligible effect on the environment, would not be permanent, and would not result in any significant impacts to environmental resources. All minor alterations to the land would be restored to pre-surface conditions. Therefore, further review under CEQA is not required. Feasibility and data collection activities do not include removal of trees.

CEQA Article 19. Categorical Exemption, Section 15306, Class 6 (Information Collection):

The proposed activities are categorically exempt under CEQA Section 15306, Information Collection (Class 6), because they consist of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The geological, methane, and archaeological data collection would have a negligible effect on the environment, would not be permanent, and would not result in any significant impacts to environmental resources. All minor alterations to the land would be restored to pre-surface conditions. Additionally, a Native American monitor and a representative from the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History would be present during archeological testing. All methane and geological probes would be performed and observed by a team of qualified specialists experienced in subsurface exploration and sampling, as described above, which would ensure no hazardous substances would be released during testing activities. The goal of the activities proposed is to collect geotechnical, methane, and archaeological data to support the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan project planning and design. The proposed activities are for information gathering purposes and are part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Therefore, further review under CEQA is not required.

The project is also exempt under County of Los Angeles Environmental Reporting Document Procedures and Guidelines -- Class 4 and Class 6 and does not trigger any of the exceptions for the use of a categorical exemption, under CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. Specifically, the project would not: (1) be located in a particularly sensitive environment; (2) have a significant cumulative impact; (3) have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; (4) result in damage to scenic resources; (5) be located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to state law; and (6) cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Additionally, there is no other evidence that the project could result in a significant environmental impact. Therefore, the proposed activities would not meet any of the exceptions for using categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Additional CEQA exemption background documentation for the research and information gathering for the proposed La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan is available upon request at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History, located at 900 W. Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90007.