

## Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

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

**From:** Dept. of Water Resources  
San Luis Field Division  
31770 Gonzaga Rd. CA 95322

**Lead Agency:** California Department of Water Resources

**Project Title:** O'Neill Dam Weir Box Drain Ditches Cleaning

**Project Location City & County:** Santa Nella, Merced County

**Project Location – Specific:** O'Neill Dam is in Reach 3A of the portion of the California Aqueduct known as the San Luis Canal, approximately 1.6 miles southwest of the City of Santa Nella in Merced County.

**Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:** On the east side of O'Neill Dam there are seven toe drains that flow into three separate drainage ditches. The ongoing accumulation of vegetation and sediment impedes the flow of water that can discharge into the ditches from the toe drains. To maintain flow capacity, the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) San Luis Field Division (SLFD) will use a backhoe, excavator, hand tools, and herbicides to remove accumulated vegetation and sediment in each of the drainage ditches where channel capacity is diminished. Each ditch will be cleared starting from the point where the ditch exits the toe of O'Neill Dam downstream to the point where the ditch is no longer in the San Luis Canal right-of-way. Six weir boxes are associated with this toe drain/ditch system; these weir boxes will be cleaned as needed. Approximately 1,000 feet of ditch will be cleaned. Removed sediment and vegetation will be stockpiled onsite or at the San Luis Dam maintenance yard. The California Conservation Corps may assist with this work; all herbicides will be applied according to manufacturer specifications. This work will occur annually. Removing vegetation and sediment is necessary to preserve the physical integrity of the O'Neill Forebay Dam. Adjacent landowners and California State Water Project Contractors will benefit.

**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: 15301 (m): Minor repairs and alterations to existing dams and appurtenant structures under the supervision of the Department of Water Resources
- Statutory Exemptions:

**Reasons Why Project Is Exempt:** DWR will conduct or supervise annual maintenance of toe drains, weir boxes, and drainage ditches appurtenant to O'Neill Dam. This maintenance will restore the capacity and operation of the toe drains, weir boxes, and drainage ditches to their original design specifications. The work will not result in an increase in the use of these structures. Categorical Exemption 15301 (m): Minor repairs and alterations to existing dams and appurtenant structures under the supervision of the Department of Water Resources applies to this annual work.

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

**Contact Person:** Eleuterio Diaz, Planner/Scheduler and Utility Craftswoman Supervisor, WR  
**Telephone:** (209) 827-5190

**Signature:** Eleuterio Diaz **Date:** 2/18/2022 **Title:** 1/20/22

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant