NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: □ Office of Planning and Research

P.O. Box 3044, Room 113 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

☐ County Clerk/County Recorder

County of Fresno P.O. Box 766 Fresno, CA 93712

□ County Clerk/County Recorder

County of Kings

1400 West Lacey Boulevard

Hanford, CA 93230

From: ☐ Westlands Water District

P.O. Box 6056 Fresno, CA 93703

Project Title: 2022-2023 Groundwater Pumping and Conveyance Project

Project Applicant: Westlands Water District

Project Location – Specific: District-wide, located in western Fresno and Kings counties.

Project Location - City: N/A Project Location - County: Fresno, Kings

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Project includes executing Warren Act contract(s) with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and State Water Project Analysis Office (SWPAO) Agreement(s) with the Department of Water Resources to convey up to 30,000 acre-feet of groundwater in the San Luis Canal (SLC) through February 2023, provided the allocation to south of Delta Central Valley Project water contractors is 20% or less, or until the Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation is lifted. The Project would allow well owners within the District that are more than 2 miles from the SLC to pump groundwater into the SLC, using existing or temporary surface pipelines and existing integration locations along the SLC, for delivery and use on other land in the District, or to temporarily store it in San Luis Reservoir to meet peak summer crop demands and guard against water shortages in 2022. Per USBR's Water Quality Monitoring Plan (usbr.gov/mp/nepa/includes/documentShow.php?Doc ID=46945; see Appendix B) for the Project, water quality testing and groundwater level monitoring will be performed routinely.

The District's implementation of the Project is in response to emergency conditions, which are demonstrated by, among other factors, the limited amount of water available from the Central Valley Project. The District anticipates the USBR will rely upon its recent approval of the Five-Year Warren Act for Westlands Water District Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (CGB-EA-2020-032 and CGB-FONSI-2020-032, respectively) to support execution of the one-year Warren Act contract.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

Westlands Water District, United States Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Water Resources

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

Westlands Water District.

Ministerial	(Sec.	21080((b)(1);	15268);
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□ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(a));

X Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(c));

X Categorical Exemption. (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15301);

X Statutory Exemptions. (Sec. 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(c));

Reasons why project is exempt:

On May 10, 2021, Governor Newsom declared a State of Emergency (Proclamation) to address the severe drought condition, in particular the Central Valley. Government Code section 8571 authorizes the Governor to suspend certain regulatory requirements, including CEQA, under emergency conditions. The Proclamation orders the State "to expeditiously consider requests to move water to areas of need, including requests involving voluntary water transfers, forbearance agreements, water exchanges, or other means," and suspends CEQA for purposes of carrying out or approving this and other directives. The Project will carry out this directive and will prevent or mitigate the impacts of the drought emergency.

The Project is an emergency project and is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080(b)(4) and CEQA Guidelines section 15269(c) because it involves specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate the drought emergency. The Project also is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 because it involves operation of existing facilities with no or negligible expansion of use.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Russ Freeman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (559) 241-6241

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

X Signed by Lead Agency **X** Signed by Applicant

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? □YES□NO

Signature: Date: 2/23/2022 Title: Deputy General Manager Resources

Authority cited: Sections 21083, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

Reference: Sections 21108(b), 21152(b), Public Resources Code.