

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**  
Coachella Valley Water District  
Post Office Box 1058  
Coachella, California 92236

County of Riverside  
County Clerk  
Post Office Box 751  
Riverside, CA 92502

County of Imperial  
Imperial County Clerk/Recorder  
940 West Main Street, Suite 202  
El Centro, CA 92243

State Clearinghouse  
Office of Planning and Research  
Post Office Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County of San Diego  
Recorder/County Clerk's Office  
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 260  
Post Office Box 121750  
San Diego, CA 92112-1750

**Project Title:** Sites Reservoir Project Agreement

**Project Location:**

No specific physical location. The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is a State Water Project Contractor and its service area includes portions of Riverside, Imperial and San Diego counties.

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:**

The Sites Reservoir project objective is to improve California's water supply and the State Water Project's (SWP) ability to continue to reliably deliver water south. The project is included as part of the proposed solutions to the State's water supply challenges in Governor Newsom's 2019 Water Resilience Portfolio. CVWD is a member agency of the SWP contractors. In recognition of the need to secure additional water supply for the Coachella Valley, CVWD began its membership in the Sites Reservoir project (Sites Project) after the Board authorized Phase 1 participation on January 24, 2017. CVWD proposes to continue funding as amended to complete the Phase 2 of the project.

The Sites Project currently is sized at 1.5 million acre-feet at an estimated cost of \$3.93 billion (B, 2021\$) consisting of the following four phases:

- Phase 1: calendar years (CY) 2015 - 19, Funding/ Proposition 1 Application
- Phase 2: CY 2019 - 24, Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Final Feasibility Report, Permits, Water Rights, Full Operation Analysis, Secure Federal and State Funding, Preliminary Engineering, Land Acquisition
- Phase 3: CY 2025 - 26, Right of Way and Final Design
- Phase 4: CY 2026 - 32, Construction and Close-Out

The annual cost for CVWD's total participation in the project over all phases is estimated to range between \$7.6 M to \$9.2 M (2021\$), contingent on grant funding, which includes debt service and average operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. CVWD's contribution to the Phase 2 task is based on CVWD's participation in SWP deliveries, and the expected water supply delivered by the Sites Reservoir project. The storage volume allocated to CVWD is 62.3 thousand acre-feet, to be used in a manner that best suits the organization's needs. CVWD has determined 10 thousand acre-feet annually is appropriate. It is anticipated that 36 months are needed to complete the Phase 2 work effort (January 2022 to December 2024).

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (Continued)

Additional tasks to be completed in Phase 2 to narrow the range and provide for more accurate costs include:

- Continue to secure Federal and State Funding
- Complete Final EIR/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Obtain environmental permits required for WSIP final award
- Advance engineering of project feature encroachments to 65% design level (in support of permitting)
- Complete preliminary engineering (30% design level) and Phase 1A/1B of Geotechnical Investigations
- Execute final operations agreement with Facility Partners, and Federal and State Agencies
- Receive Water Right Order and Permit
- Develop Mitigation Acquisition Master Plan
- Develop Land Acquisition Master Plan and ROW Manual
- Land Acquisition Planning

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** CVWD; Robert Cheng, Assistant General Manager

**Exempt Status:**

- Not a project: State CEQA Guidelines §15378
- Review for Exemption “Common Sense” Exemption: State CEQA Guideline §15061(b)(3)
- Ministerial (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(1)) State CEQA Guideline §15262
- Declared Emergency (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(3); State CEQA Guideline §15269(a))
- Emergency Project (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(4); State CEQA Guideline §15269(b)(c))
- Statutory Exempt: State CEQA Guidelines § \_\_\_\_\_
- Categorically Exempt: State CEQA Guidelines § \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

Approval of these actions are not subject to CEQA for multiple reasons. These actions do not qualify as a “project” subject to CEQA because the actions constitute: (1) continuing administrative or maintenance activities, such as general policy and procedure making; (2) government fiscal activities that do not involve any commitment to any specific project that may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment; and (3) organizational or administrative activities of a public agency that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment (State CEQA Guidelines §15378).

The recommended actions do not constitute project approval by CVWD of the Sites Reservoir Project, nor do the actions authorize or approve construction of the Sites Reservoir Project. In addition, the recommended actions do not authorize or approve any actions by the agreement parties that may cause direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect environmental impacts. As such, the actions recommended herein are not a “project” requiring environmental review under CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guideline §15378, subdivisions (a2) and (b)(2), (b)(4), and (b)(5).

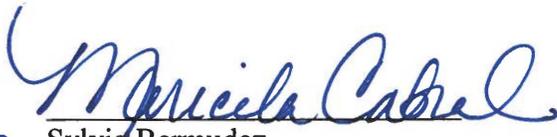
Second, even were the actions to be considered a CEQA “project,” these actions would be statutorily exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guideline §15262 because the actions merely call for the funding and completion of feasibility and planning studies, not including the completion of CEQA review itself.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (Continued)

Third, the actions are exempt under the “common sense” exemption in State CEQA Guidelines §15061, subdivision (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the actions may have a significant effect on the environment. None of the exceptions to the use of the “common sense” exemption as identified in State CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 exist with the recommended actions

**Contact Person:** William Patterson, CVWD Environmental Supervisor, Phone (760) 398-2651

**Date:** March 9, 2022

  
for Sylvia Bermudez  
Clerk of the Board