

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 Modifications and Drain Pipes Replacement

Project Location City & County: Merced County

Project Location – Specific: O'Neill Dam (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 unincorporated community of Santa Nella in Merced County. The work site is on the east side of the Dam.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Five toe drains and five associated weir boxes located at the Dam will be modified, and the pipes will be replaced. The toe drains scheduled for maintenance are identified as 132.45, 132.7, 132.8, 134.75, and 40.80. Each toe drain consists of up to two, 24-inch corrugated metal pipes that lead from the interior of the Dam to a cement weir box. These weir boxes are currently too large to accurately measure the amount of water seeping from the Dam and the metal pipes are rusting. To prevent further degradation of the pipes, and to regain the ability to measure water that, by design, seeps from the Dam, the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) San Luis Field Division (SLFD) will pothole using a vacuum trailer to locate the corrugated metal pipes. SLFD will then use hand tools to remove the wood lids on the existing weir boxes and a backhoe to lower a fiberglass weir box into each of the cement weir boxes. Hand tools will be used to secure the fiberglass weir boxes to the cement weir boxes. SLFD will then use a backhoe to dig up to ten trenches with maximum dimensions of 5 feet wide by 10 feet deep by 50 feet long to expose the rusting pipes. The pipes will be removed, new 12-inch or 15-inch diameter plastic pipes will be installed, and the trenches will be backfilled. Hand tools will be used to attach the new pipes to the weir boxes. This work is necessary to preserve the physical integrity of the O'Neill Forebay Dam and to accurately measure seepage. 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: 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 replace pipes and modify portions of five weir boxes associated with O'Neill Forebay Dam. This 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 work.

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

Contact Person: Eleuterio Diaz, Planner/Scheduler and Utility Craftworker Supervisor, WR

Telephone: (209) 827-5190

Signature: Eleuterio Diaz **Date:** 3/18/2022 **Title:** 1/20/22

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant