Public Notice
Notice of Exemption

Valley Water

To: Santa Clara County
Clerks Office, Business Division
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose CA 95110

From: Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose CA 95118-3686
Telephone (408) 265-2600

Project Title: Phase 2 Geotechnical Investigations for the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project

Project Location–Specific: Within, adjacent to, and near the existing Pacheco Reservoir. Pacheco Reservoir is located along Pacheco Creek and behind North Fork Dam, roughly equidistant between the cities of Gilroy and Los Banos. The reservoir is approximately one-half mile north of State Route 152 (SR-152) in southeast Santa Clara County.

Project Location-City: Unincorporated **Project Location-County**: Santa Clara

Project Purpose: The proposed project consists of investigations and surveys to characterize materials available at potential borrow sites for dam materials and to identify seismic risk, foundation conditions, and existing geologic data for use in preparing more detailed design plans for components of Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project (PREP).

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water)

Name of Agency or Person Carrying Out Project: Valley Water

Exempt Status: (*check one*)

- ☐ Ministerial [Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268];
- ☐ Declared Emergency [Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)];
- ☐ Emergency Project [Sec. 21080(b)(c)];
- ☒ Categorical Exemptions [Section 15304, Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land, and Section 15306, Class 6, Information Collection]
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions [*State code number*].

Reasons Why Project is Exempt: The proposed project would consist of basic geotechnical investigations and survey data collection for information gathering purposes in support for PREP. Proposed activities would not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource, and no vegetation removal activities would involve healthy, mature, scenic trees The Project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Class 4, Section 15304, “Minor Alterations to Land,” and Class 6, Section15306, “Information Collection.” None of the exception conditions noted under the CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 would occur.

> “Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve the removal of healthy, mature scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.”
>
> “Class 6 consists 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. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.”

Description of Project: In support for the PREP, Valley Water proposes to conduct geotechnical investigations to include geotechnical borings, test pits, potholes, electrical resistivity surveys, and seismic refraction surveys. The proposed project would include investigations at multiple locations in the general vicinity of and within Pacheco Reservoir, and to the east along the proposed PREP transmission line alignment. The investigations include:

- Drilling 166 geotechnical borings within the reservoir and upland areas. This includes the installation and monitoring of 24 piezometers and two inclinometers. These borings are intended to support design of the PREP site access road, shell borrow area, core borrow area, conveyance line, tunnel foundation, shaft

foundation, pipeline foundation, pumpstation foundation, SR-152 interchange improvements, reservoir rim landslide, transmission line, spillway foundation, dam foundation, outlet, and channel restoration.

- Drilling up to 15 additional borings that have not been assigned locations at the PREP SR-152 interchange site.
- Drilling an additional 15 geotechnical borings in upland areas that have not been assigned locations to accommodate up to 15 additional poles for the PREP eastward electrical transmission line extension.
- Drilling up to 30 additional contingency geotechnical borings that have not been assigned locations. These borings are intended to fill in data gaps that may still exist after the completion of the planned Phase 2 investigations, or where the results of Phase 2 investigations raise new questions or create new uncertainties.
- Implementing surface geophysical surveys to include approximately 11,700 feet of seismic refraction survey lines and 1,550 feet of electrical resistivity survey lines.
- Implementing an additional 2,800 feet of either seismic refraction lines and/or electrical resistivity lines for the PREP channel restoration.
- Excavating 57 backhoe/excavator test pits.
- Excavating three potholes with a vacuum truck or hand auger to locate the existing Pacheco Conduit.
- Providing for equipment access.

Approximately 226 planned borings (including rock core drilling, hollow stem auger drilling, and auger/rotary wash drilling) would be drilled within and close to the footprint of the proposed dam; at upstream and downstream borrow areas; on landslides upstream of the proposed dam site; along the conveyance pipeline alignment and pumpstation footprint; on the crest road of the North Fork Dam; along the access road and at the bridge crossing over North Fork Pacheco Creek; along the proposed SR-152 interchange and frontage road; within the proposed North Fork Pacheco Creek restoration area; and along the proposed new transmission line alignment. The locations of up to 15 of the 226 planned borings would be determined after the PREP interchange design has been selected. In addition, some 15 additional borings would be drilled in support of the PREP eastward electrical transmission line extension. An additional 30 contingency borings may also be needed within the same general exploration area as the dam site to fill in possible data gaps that may be identified following the completion of the planned borings. The borings would be drilled using portable drill rigs that would either be towed into place on trailers, transported by tracked rig, or flown in via helicopter for areas of steeper terrain.

Approximately 11,700 linear feet of seismic refraction surveys would be performed within the dam foundation, along the ridgelines of the upstream and downstream borrow areas, and across the landslides on the right abutment at the dam site. One 1,550-foot-long electrical resistivity survey would be performed across the valley bottom within the upstream portion of the proposed dam. No ground disturbance is required for these surveys.

Nine test pits are proposed to expose soil profiles for relative and possibly numerical age dating of alluvial surfaces along North Fork Pacheco Creek. Test pits excavated below the full pool line of the existing reservoir will place side cast material into a dump truck to reduce impacts to the reservoir bottom. Test pits would be 10 to 20 feet long, 3 feet wide, and up to 20 feet deep. Up to 48 additional test pits are planned to explore a possible downstream borrow area for dam core zone material. Following completion of logging and sampling, each test pit/pothole would be backfilled, the site restored to original grade, and seeded with an appropriate seed mix.

All equipment would be transported to the site on public highways and local roads using standard transport equipment. Valley Water would conduct investigations from existing roads or overland areas without grading or trimming of vegetation, where possible. Drill rigs would access the site either with a truck and trailer, via tracked rig, or via helicopter. A helicopter would be used to transport timbers for constructing temporary drilling platforms, drilling equipment and supplies, and drilling water to approximately 48 proposed investigation locations in instances where access cannot be completed by conventional means. Best Management Practices and additional project features will be incorporated into the proposed project.

Lead Agency: Valley Water

Contact Person: Todd Sexauer, Senior Environmental Planner (408) 630-3149

Signature: DocuSigned by: Todd Sexauer 643942D817574C1... Date: 4/21/2022

Todd Sexauer
Senior Environmental Planner

cc: CEQA Administrative Record