

# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**TO:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044  
Madera, CA 93637

**FROM:** Yosemite Unified School District  
50200 Road 427  
Oakhurst, CA 93644

County Clerk  
County of Fresno  
clerk-services@fresnocountyca.gov

**Project Title:** Coarsegold Elementary Groundwater Treatment and Water Systems Improvements Project

**Project Applicant:** Yosemite Unified School District

**Project Location:** Specific: 45426 Road 415, Coarsegold, CA 93614  
City: Coarsegold  
County: Madera

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

The proposed project would upgrade components of the Coarsegold Elementary School water system to support the long-term operation of the water system and meet federal water quality standards. Upgrades would include the replacement and addition of water piping, pumps, filters, and storage equipment. In addition, the proposed project would include construction of a new treatment process building, backwash storage tank, treated effluent storage tank, and associated appurtenances.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Yosemite Unified School District

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Yosemite Unified School District

**Exempt Status (check one):**

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 2 (Section 15302) and Class 3 (Section 15303)
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

The proposed project would involve the minor alteration of an existing utility facility through the introduction of health-preserving devices that would be used in conjunction with the existing facility. The proposed project would not increase the school's student capacity, and the proposed upgrades would not increase the current pumping capacity of the school's water system.

**Lead Agency:**

Contact Person: Randy Sharp

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (559) 683-8801 x1312

**If filed by applicant:**

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name & Title:** Brian Best, Superintendent

**Date:** 7-28-22

Signed by the Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

**Date Received for filing at OPR:** \_\_\_\_\_



CARLSBAD  
CLOVIS  
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LOS ANGELES  
PALM SPRINGS  
POINT RICHMOND  
RIVERSIDE  
ROSEVILLE  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 19, 2022

**TO:** Randy Sharp, Maintenance & Operations Manager  
Yosemite Unified School District

**FROM:** Kyle Simpson, Associate

**SUBJECT:** California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Categorical Exemption Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 and 15303 for the Coarsegold Elementary Groundwater Treatment and Water Systems Improvements Project

## INTRODUCTION

The proposed Coarsegold Elementary Groundwater Treatment and Water Systems Improvements Project (proposed project) is the subject of this memorandum in support of a Categorical Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed project includes upgrading two existing water wells through the replacement of existing pumps, and the installation of new filtering equipment, storage tanks, and service piping to improve water quality.

The proposed project would be located within Coarsegold Elementary School in the Census-designated community of Coarsegold, within Madera County. Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines identifies a list of classes of projects that are exempt from the provisions of CEQA because those classes of projects have been determined to have no significant effect on the environment. This memorandum has been prepared to serve as the basis for compliance with CEQA as it pertains to the Coarsegold Groundwater Treatment and Water Systems Improvements.

A full project description is included below. This memorandum also demonstrates that the proposed project qualifies for an exemption under CEQA as it involves repairs and minor alterations of an existing utility facility within a school, consistent with the provisions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302, and Section 15303. Furthermore, the proposed project would not result in an increase of student capacity of Coarsegold Elementary School.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following describes the location of the project site and the proposed components of the project.

### Project Site

The following section describes the project location, existing conditions, surrounding land uses, and the regulatory setting.

### *Project Location*

The project site is located within Coarsegold Elementary School, located at 45426 Road 415 in Coarsegold, a Census-designated place in Madera County (Assessor's Parcel Number {APN}: 054-472-036). Vehicular access to the project site is provided by Road 415, located west of the project site.

### *Existing Conditions*

Coarsegold Elementary School maintains a water system serving 464 students and staff. The existing water system is currently supplied by three groundwater wells. Well 01 and Well 03 provide potable drinking water and Well 02 provides water for irrigation systems within the school campus. Water quality testing conducted between 2017 and 2020 determined that the school's water system has exceeded the maximum contamination level (MCL) of 0.3 milligrams per liter (mg/L) for iron, 0.05 mg/L for manganese, and 0.010 mg/L for arsenic.<sup>1</sup>

### *Surrounding Land Uses*

The project site is surrounded by grazing land and open space uses to the north, east and west, and by rural residential uses to the south and east. Coarsegold Rodeo Grounds is located approximately 0.6 miles west from the project site. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Coarsegold station is located approximately 2 miles east of the project site on State Route (SR) 41. A church is located north of the project site, along Road 415.

### *Regulatory Setting*

The project site is located in an Institution Area (IA) Zoning District of Madera County. The IA zoning is intended exclusively for public facilities and institutional uses such as schools, churches, and other public buildings.<sup>2</sup> The project site is designated Public Institutional (PI) by the Madera County General Plan.<sup>3</sup>

### **Proposed Project**

The proposed project would upgrade components of the school's water system to support the long-term operation of the water system and meet federal water quality standards. The proposed project would include asphalt paving and infrastructure improvements to improve the school's water. Upgrades would include the replacement and addition of water piping, pumping, filtering, and storage equipment as described below.

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<sup>1</sup> MKN & Associates, 2021. Coarsegold Groundwater Treatment and Water System Improvements. Prepared for: Yosemite Unified School District.

<sup>2</sup> Madera County, 1995-a. Madera County General Plan Background Report. Available online at: <https://www.maderacounty.com/home/showpublisheddocument/2852/636480653566630000> (accessed January 10, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> Madera County, 1995-b. Madera County General Plan Final EIR. Available online at: <https://www.maderacounty.com/home/showpublisheddocument/2854/636480653569600000> (accessed on January 10, 2022)

The existing pumps in groundwater Well 01 and Well 03 would be upgraded with new submersible pumps. Above-grade well piping and accessories would also be upgraded to provide more reliable operation of supplying water to the filter vessels. A steel clamshell enclosure with adequate ventilation would be constructed at each wellsite to mitigate extreme weather impacts.

The project would also construct a treatment process building on the paved area located approximately 20 feet from Road 415. The treatment process building would house greensand filter vessels, a treated effluent booster pump station, a backwash and reclaim booster pump station, chemical storage and feed systems and residuals handling and dewatering equipment.

Additionally, a 12,000-gallon backwash storage tank and a 13,000-gallon treated effluent storage tank, located directly east of the new treatment facility, and a filter bottom roll-off bin, located directly west of the new treatment facility. Process and service piping would also be installed between the proposed water system on the project site and existing components of the water system, located outside the project site. Figure 1 shows the site plan and location for the proposed project.

#### *Site Access*

Vehicle access to the site would be provided by a 20-foot-wide access gate located along the western boundary of the project site. Vehicles would access the project site through an existing access driveway from Road 415. A rolled curb would be constructed along the northwestern corner of the project site.

#### *Fencing*

Security fencing would be installed along the boundaries of the project site, enclosing the new treatment process building and storage tanks.

#### *Lighting*

The project site currently has two, pole-mounted luminaires east of the proposed treatment facility. The project would include the installation of two pole-mounted LED luminaires around the proposed treatment facility to illuminate the approach driveway and southeast portion of the facility under low-visibility conditions. Furthermore, a total of four can-mounted lighting fixtures will be attached to the building (two on the south entrance, one on the west entrance, and one on the east entrance).

#### *Utilities and Infrastructure*

This section describes the water supply and use, solid waste collection, and electricity and natural gas use of the proposed project.

#### **Water Supply and Use**

The water system is currently supplied by three groundwater wells. Well 01 and Well 03 provide potable drinking water to the school campus, and Well 02 provides irrigation water for small irrigation systems within the school campus.



From 2019 to 2021, arsenic concentrations at Wells 01 and 03 have ranged from 0.01 to 0.02 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and 0.008 to 0.01 mg/L respectively. From 2018 to 2021, Iron and manganese concentrations have ranged from 0.450 to 11 (mg/L and 0.035 to 0.250 mg/L respectively at Well 01, and from 0.120 to 1.5 mg/L and 0.027 to 0.120 mg/L respectively at Well 03.<sup>4</sup>

Well production capacity data from 2016 and 2021 indicates that the sustainable production capacities of Well 01 ranges from 30 to 35 gallons per minute, while the production capacity of Well 03 ranges from 28 to 36 gallons per minute. The projected maximum day demand (MDD) for the active school period ranged from approximately 2,500 to 3,500 gallons per day (gpd), and the projected peak hour demand (PHD) ranged between 9 and 15 gallons per minute (gpm). The proposed project would not increase production capacities of the existing wells.

### **Solid Waste**

The water filtration process that would take place at the project site is expected to produce a small residual solids waste stream that would require disposal. Settling time for residuals is typically minimum of 2 to 4 hours. Following buildup of settled residual solids at the bottom of the backwash storage tank, residuals are typically disposed of through either liquid waste hauling, thickening, and/or dewatering. Dewatering of residual sludge is expected to occur annually.

### **Electricity and Natural Gas Use**

Electricity for the proposed project would be supplied by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). Although Coarsegold Elementary School is already serviced by PG&E, the addition of new pumps and equipment for the school's water system would potentially warrant the need for additional electrical services. The school would be required to coordinate with PG&E to obtain an appropriate electrical service for the proposed water system facility.

### *Construction Schedule*

Construction of the proposed project is expected to occur over a period of approximately 12 months, starting in the winter of 2023. Site preparation would include trenching/excavation, backfilling, clearing, grubbing, site leveling, and demolition of specified existing pipes and obstacles. Site preparation, including grading and trenching of utility lines, is not expected to result in soil off-haul.

### **Project Approvals**

A number of permits and approvals would be required for the proposed project. While the Yosemite Unified School District (YUSD) is the CEQA Lead Agency for the proposed project, Madera County would also have discretionary authority related to the project and approvals. A list of the potential permits and approvals that may be required is provided in Table A.

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<sup>4</sup> MKN & Associates, 2021. Coarsegold Groundwater Treatment and Water System Improvements. Prepared for: Yosemite Unified School District.

**Table A: Potential Permits and Approvals**

Agency	Potential Permits/Approvals
Yosemite Unified School District (Lead Agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project approval</li> <li>▪ Notice of Exemption adoption</li> <li>▪ Provision of grading and construction permits and approvals</li> </ul>
Madera County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amended Water Supply Permit</li> </ul>
State Water Resources Control Board Division of Financial Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Approval of Construction Funding Agreement</li> <li>▪ Approval of Construction Bid</li> </ul>
California Department of General Services Division of the State Architect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review and approval of final Engineering Plans.</li> </ul>

Source: LSA (2022).

**CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION**

Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines identifies a list of classes of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and which shall be exempt from the provisions of CEQA. This memorandum has been prepared to serve as the basis for compliance with CEQA as it pertains to proposed project, and to demonstrate that the proposed project qualifies for a CEQA Exemption, consistent with the provisions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 and Section 15303 outlined below.

Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction) of the CEQA Guidelines, states the following:

*Section 15302. Replacement or Reconstruction<sup>5,6</sup>*

*Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to:*

- (a) Replacement or reconstruction of existing schools and hospitals to provide earthquake resistant structures which do not increase capacity more than 50 percent.*
- (b) Replacement of a commercial structure with a new structure of substantially the same size, purpose, and capacity.*
- (c) Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.*

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<sup>5</sup> Public Resources Code, Section 21083  
<sup>6</sup> Public Resources Code, Section 21084

- (d) *Conversion of overhead electric utility distribution system facilities to underground including connection to existing overhead electric utility distribution lines where the surface is restored to the condition existing prior to the undergrounding.*

The proposed project would involve upgrading an existing water system in a school through the replacement and addition of water piping, pumping, filtering, and storage equipment. The purpose of the proposed project would be to reduce the level of arsenic, iron and manganese in the school's potable water supply, which currently exceed permitted federal maximum concentration levels (MCLs). The proposed project would involve the replacement and upgrading an existing facility, resulting in negligible or no expansion of capacity. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with the conditions of a Class 2 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to Section 15302 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) states the following:

*Section 15303. New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures<sup>7,8</sup>*

*Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. The numbers of structures described in this section are the maximum allowable on any legal parcel.*

The proposed project would involve upgrading an existing water system in a school through the replacement and addition of water piping, pumping, filtering, and storage equipment. The purpose of the proposed project would be to reduce the level of arsenic, iron and manganese in the school's potable water supply, which currently exceed permitted federal MCLs. The proposed project would occur within the existing school grounds and would only serve to improve the quality of the school's water supply. The proposed project involve the replacement and upgrading an existing facility by constructing new small structures to support the existing facility, and installing small new equipment and facilities in small structures. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with the conditions of a Class 3 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines.

## **SUMMARY**

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the proposed project is eligible for a Categorical Exemption in accordance with Section 15302 and Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project meets the criteria for a Class 2 and Class 3 Categorical Exemption, and it would not have a significant effect on the environment. As a result, a Notice of Exemption may be prepared for the proposed project.

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<sup>7</sup> Public Resources Code, Section 21083

<sup>8</sup> Public Resources Code, Section 21084



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