

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Lead Agency: Buttonwillow County Water District
P.O. Box 274 (289 North Main Street)
Buttonwillow, CA 93206

Contact: Ms. Regina Houchin
Board Secretary
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Project Title: WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT (WWTP) IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCH Number: To Be Assigned

Project Location: The Buttonwillow County Water District (BCWD or District) located in the southern San Joaquin Valley, is about 25 miles west of downtown Bakersfield. The proposed project consists of replacement of a small, poorly performing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and installation of support facilities required to allow the District to meet waste discharge requirements with the treated effluent.

The unincorporated community had a population of 1,337 residents in 2020, according to U.S. Census data. The WWTP is located on District-owned land about 0.5 mile north of the Buttonwillow community, in Section 13, Township 29 South, Range 23 East, MDB&M. The facilities will occupy a portion of 70 acres of District property. Historically, the District has grown feed and fodder crops on the western 40 acres using wastewater effluent for irrigation; in recent years, the effluent has been disposed of by percolation and evaporation from the existing ponds. The current WWTP site is bisected by electric transmission lines limiting use of much of the site for uses other than farming and/or ponds.

Project Description: **Existing Facilities.** The existing Buttonwillow WWTP consists of two side by side pre-engineered modular biological treatment systems constructed in 2010. The modular units are constructed of painted steel and sit on a concrete slab and are entirely above grade. The primary components include an equalization tank, rotating biological contactor, Bio-wheel followed by a flat plate membrane filtration system designed to remove biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and suspended solids. The system is also designed to nitrify/denitrify. Effluent from the membranes is distributed to one of two unlined recycled water ponds. These ponds provide for percolation of the effluent into the soil and sediments beneath the ponds and evaporation to the atmosphere. Effluent from the ponds may also be applied, if needed, to feed and fodder crops on the 40 acres adjacent to the WWTP, but the District has not used this disposal method in recent years. At the current flow of wastewater to the WWTP (0.091 MGD), effluent entering the ponds percolates and evaporates quickly, leaving little or no water available for irrigation. **Proposed Facilities.** The primary focus in the Project Report is the evaluation and selection of a treatment alternative to prevent future discharges that are out of compliance with the 2009 Waste Discharge Requirements. According to the Report, the existing WWTP has been plagued with operational issues since it was commissioned in 2010. Due to operational issues, the WWTP has consistently been out of compliance with the WDR limits. In short, the WWTP has not operated as originally designed and this has resulted in secondary treatment capacity not being used and discharge requirements, such as Total Suspended Solids (TSS), Electrical Conductivity (EC), and Total Nitrogen. The net effect of this situation is that the existing WWTP needs to be

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Project

Description (cont): upgraded or an alternative treatment system needs to be installed. After evaluating four alternatives in the Project Report, Alternative 2, the Biolac Extended Aeration System, was selected as the recommended alternative for treatment and disposal. The Biolac System can meet the nitrogen disposal requirements and eliminates the acquisition of additional crop land and access to supplemental irrigation water.

Finding:

Buttonwillow County Water District's (District or BCWD) decision to implement this proposed project is a discretionary decision or "project" that requires evaluation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). BCWD has prepared an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration to evaluate the project impacts and has concluded the project will not have any significant negative impacts on the environment upon implementation of the recommended mitigation measures.

Initial Study:

A copy of the Initial Study and all other material, which constitutes the record of proceedings upon which Buttonwillow County Water District based its decision to adopt this Mitigated Negative Declaration, may be obtained at BCWD, P.O. Box 274 (289 North Main Street), Buttonwillow, CA 93206 or at www.bcwd.specialdistrict.org. The proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration will be available for a 30-day public review and comment during the review period, which begins on December 9, 2023 and ends on January 9, 2023. Comments should be sent to Ms. Regina Houchin, Board Secretary at the address above (P.O. Box 274, Buttonwillow, CA 93206). For additional information, contact Ms. Houchin at (661) 764-5405 or rhouchin@agcenteraccounting.com.

Mitigation Measures:

All mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study are summarized under Summary of Mitigation Measures and are proposed for adoption as conditions of the project. These measures will be implemented through a mitigation monitoring and reporting program if the Mitigated Negative Declaration is adopted.

DRAFT
Signature

Title

Date