

# Notice of Exemption

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**To:**  Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Sonoma County Clerk  
585 Fiscal Drive, Room 103  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**Project Title:** Emergency Aquifer Storage and Recovery at Sebastopol Road Well Project

**Project Location - Specific:** 5590 Sebastopol Road (Highway 12), Sonoma County, California (Figure 1)

**Project Location – City:** Unincorporated

**County:** Sonoma

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:** The Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) is proposing a drought emergency project involving aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) at the Sebastopol Road Well Station (Well Station) to increase regional and community drought resiliency. ASR is the process of recharging the underground aquifer, when surface water is plentiful (typically during wet winter periods), for storage and use at a later time. The purpose of the project is to install ASR system components and conduct pilot testing to determine the functionality of the system to supplement water that could reduce ongoing current and future drought impacts to public water retailers (cities and water districts) and other beneficial users of groundwater within the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Subbasin. The project consists of installing ASR equipment at the existing Well Station, which is located along the Russian River-Cotati Intertie Aqueduct (Aqueduct), an underground pipeline. The project would retrofit an existing production well, including appurtenances and downhole well components for aquifer recharge. Surplus water from the Aqueduct would be used to test the capability of the ASR to recharge the aquifer. The proposed project would not change the designed capacity of the Well Station, Aqueduct, or impact mature trees or native vegetation.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sonoma County Water Agency

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Sonoma County Water Agency

**Exempt Status:** (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); and State CEQA Guidelines 15269(b)(c)): Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.
- Categorical Exemption: CEQA Guidelines §15304(f) Minor Alterations to Land.
- Exemption under Governor's Executive Order N-7-22 (Section 12): Government Code section 8571
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The proposed action is statutorily exempt under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute 21080(b)(4) and State CEQA Guidelines 15269(b)(c), which provide that specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency are exempt from CEQA; categorically exempt from CEQA under the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15304(f); and under Section 12 of the Governor's March 28, 2022, Executive Order (EO) N-7-22.

On April 21, 2021, Governor Newsom issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino counties due to drought conditions in the Russian River Watershed (Governor's Drought Proclamation). The Governor has continued that proclamation for Sonoma and Mendocino counties through further drought proclamations on May 10, July 8, October 19, 2021, and most recently with EO N-7-22 on March 28, 2022. Section 12 of EO N-7-22 suspends CEQA to advance groundwater recharge projects that address the impacts of drought.

On April 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors for the County of Sonoma proclaimed a local emergency for the Sonoma County Operational Area due to drought conditions, which was most recently continued on December 13, 2022. On June 16, 2021, the General Manager of Sonoma Water determined that due to drought conditions, an emergency exists that poses a clear and imminent danger, requiring immediate action to prevent or mitigate the loss or impairment of life,

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Signed by Lead Agency       Signed by Applicant      Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_

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health, property, or essential public services, necessitating immediate action pursuant to the authority of the County of Sonoma Resolution #06-0649. On June 18, 2021, the Sonoma Water Board of Directors adopted a resolution ratifying the General Manager's emergency determination and declaring the need to do emergency work related to drought and that such projects are exempt for the requirements of CEQA. The Board of Directors has since continuously renewed the emergency determination every two weeks.

Sonoma Water staff are proposing work necessary to install and test ASR at the existing Sebastopol Road Well Station. Section 12 of EO N-7-22 suspends CEQA to advance groundwater recharge projects and to demonstrate feasibility of projects that can use available high water flows to recharge local groundwater while minimizing flood risk and applies to any actions taken by local agencies where the state agency with primary responsibility for the implementation of directives concurs that local action is required. The State of California Department of Water Resources (DWR) provided grant funding for the Santa Rosa Plain Water Supply Resiliency Project, which includes funding for the Emergency Aquifer Storage and Recovery at Sebastopol Road Well Project, under the Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Grant on December 22, 2021. In addition to the suspension of CEQA provided by EO N-7-22, CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 provides, generally, that minor alterations in the condition of land and vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, is categorically exempt from CEQA. Section 15304(f) exempts minor trenching and backfill where the surface is restored.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Dave Cook

**Telephone:** 707-322-8176

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



**Title:** General Manager

**Date:** 1/30/2023

Kent Gylfe, Chief Engineer

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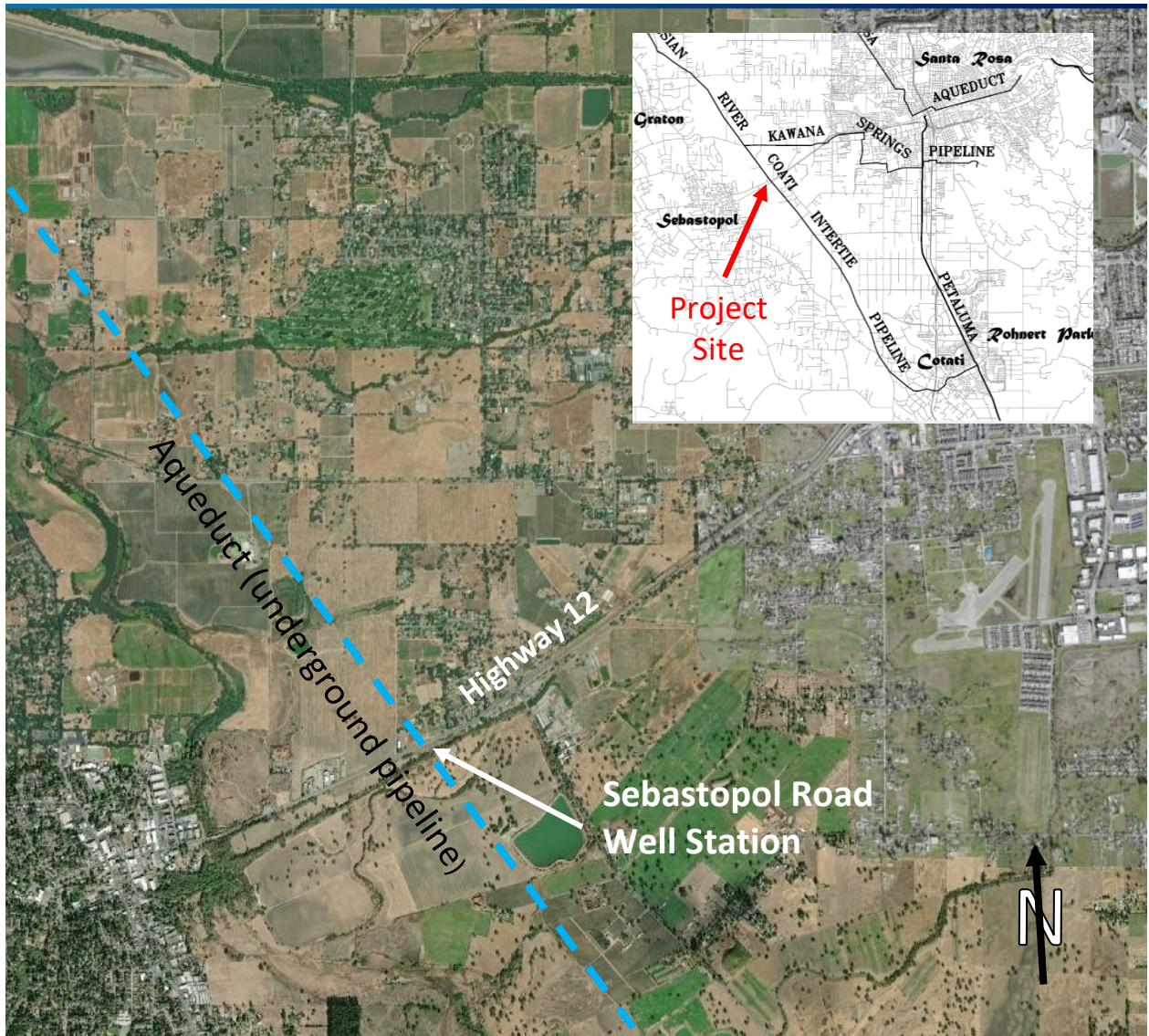


Figure 1: Location of Sebastopol Road Well Station along Russian River-Cotati Intertie Aqueduct.