

# The Notice of Exemption

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**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
Post Office Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, California 95812-3044

**From:** Central Coast Water Authority  
255 Industrial Way  
Buellton, CA 93427

Clerk of the Board  
County of Santa Barbara  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Room 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

County Clerk  
County of Kern  
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 1st floor  
Bakersfield, CA 93301-4639

County Clerk  
County of Los Angeles  
12400 Imperial Hwy  
Norwalk, CA 90650

County Clerk-Recorder  
County of Orange  
County Administration South Building  
601 N. Ross Street  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Project Title:** Central Coast Water Authority and Irvine Ranch Water District 2023 Short Term Water Exchange Program

**Location – Specific:** Existing State Water Project (SWP) facilities to existing turnouts in Santa Barbara and Kern Counties. The SWP includes facilities located throughout the State of California. The SWP is owned and operated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), headquartered in Sacramento, California. The Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) has assumed responsibility for the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SBCFCWCD)'s State Water Project (SWP) and CCWA's service area is located in Santa Barbara County. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWDSC) is a SWP contractor serving most of Southern California and headquartered in Los Angeles, California. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is headquartered in Sacramento, California. Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) receives SWP water from MWDSC through the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and is located in Orange County. IRWD owns the Strand Ranch Integrated Banking Project and Stockdale Integrated Banking Project (Water Bank) located in Kern County. IRWD, MWDSC and MWDOC have executed a Coordinated Operating and Exchange Agreement that allows IRWD to secure SWP water on MWDSC's behalf for the joint benefit of MWDSC and IRWD. The Water Bank is operated by Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District (Rosedale) which has an annual SWP Table A allocation through SWP contractor Kern County Water Agency also located in Kern County.

**Location – County:** Santa Barbara and Kern Counties

**Description of Activity:** The CCWA and IRWD 2023 Short Term Exchange Program (Transfer/Exchange) will provide for IRWD to store a portion of CCWA's unused SWP Table A water, Article 56 carryover water or schedulable Article 21 water in the Water Bank (Exchange Water) in the Water Bank for the benefit of both agencies. Within the first year of the execution of the Transfer/Exchange Agreement, CCWA may deliver up to 1,500 acre-feet of Exchange Water to the Water Bank at the IRWD point of delivery which will be the Strand Ranch and/or Stockdale West Turnouts on the Cross Valley Canal, other Rosedale diversion locations as specified by Rosedale, or thereabouts, or as directed by MWDSC. By the end of the sixth calendar year after CCWA delivers Exchange Water to the Water Bank, IRWD will remit water in return equal to one-half of the Exchange Water placed into storage less applicable losses (Return Water) by either (i) an

exchange of banked water for SWP water or other water already in the California Aqueduct, or (ii) recovery of water from the Water Bank wells with subsequent delivery through the Cross Valley Canal to the California Aqueduct. IRWD shall provide Return Water at a time when requested by CCWA at an annual rate not to exceed one-third of the portion of the Maximum Account Balance, or 583 AF due to be returned to CCWA after losses. The other one-half of the Exchange Water placed into storage less applicable losses shall be deemed transferred to IRWD.

**Name of Public Agency Approving or Carrying Out Activity:** Central Coast Water Authority. Other approving agencies include: California Department of Water Resources, Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Irvine Ranch Water District, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Kern County Water Agency, and Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District.

**Exempt Status:**

- Ministerial
- Declared Emergency
- Emergency Project
- Categorical Exemption
- Statutory Exemption (Not a Project Under CEQA)

**Reasons why activity is exempt:**

- a. The Transfer/Exchange is not a project under CEQA (Pub. Res. Code § 21065; 14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15061(b)(3), 15378) because it will not result in direct or indirect changes to the environment. IRWD has already conducted environmental review under CEQA for the Water Bank that takes into consideration the delivery of SWP water to the Water Bank. Rosedale and IRWD independently certified and approved the Water Bank Project on May 27, 2008 for Strand Ranch Integrated Banking Project and December 8, 2015 for Stockdale Integrated Banking Project. Moreover, the SWP long-term water supply contracts include provisions for delivery within the SWP place of use. Accordingly, the activity is simply a change in water management operations using existing facilities.
- b. CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 provides an "existing facilities" exemption to environmental review that exempts activities that include the "maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use." The water exchanged will be delivered to existing facilities, which include the Cross Valley Canal, Strand Ranch and/or Stockdale West Turnouts on the Cross Valley Canal, California Aqueduct, or other existing water banking or exchange programs (including the Water Bank) in which IRWD is a participant in Kern County. The Exchange is intended to meet existing uses of water and would not support new development or a change in land use. (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15061(b)(3), 15301.)
- c. CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) provides a "common sense" exemption to environmental review that CEQA only applies to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to review.
- d. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply because there will be no significant cumulative impact as there are no known successive projects of the same type in the same place that will occur over the same time horizon; there is no reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; and there are no scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, or historical resources in the area.

**Agency Contact Person:** Ray Stokes

**Telephone:** (805) 688-2292

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 3-8-23

Ray Stokes

**Title:** Executive Director, Central Coast Water Authority

Date received for filing OPR: \_\_\_\_\_