

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**To:** County Clerk  
County of San Diego  
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 260  
San Diego, CA 92101

**From:** Borrego Water District  
806 Palm Canyon Drive  
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**Project Title:** Borrego Springs Watermaster Monitoring, Reporting, and GMP Update for Sustainable Management in the Borrego Springs Subbasin

**Project Location:** The Project is located at various locations throughout the Borrego Springs Subbasin of the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin, for which a central point is generally within the unincorporated community of Borrego Springs in San Diego County. The generalized central point of the Borrego Springs Subbasin is located within Section 3, Township 11 South and Range 6 East of the Clark Lake USGS Quadrangle Map, San Bernardino Meridian at Longitude 33.245163N, and Latitude 116.337139W. The Borrego Springs Subbasin is mapped within the USGS – Clark Lake, Borrego Sink, Borrego Palm Canyon, and Tubb Canyon Quadrangles, 7.5 Minute Series topographic maps.

**Project Location - City:** Borrego Springs (Unincorporated San Diego County)

**Project Location - County:** San Diego

**Project Applicant:** Borrego Water District, 806 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004

### **Description of Nature, Purpose,**

**and Beneficiaries of the Project:** On 06/13/2023, the Board of Directors of the Borrego Water District (“District”) approved the Agreement for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program Between Borrego Water District and Borrego Springs Watermaster (“Watermaster”), Project Component No. 7 (“Agreement”).

On December 13, 2022, the District entered into a \$6,115,833 million dollar grant agreement with DWR for Proposition 68 funding awarded to the District. The grant will assist in financing projects associated with the SGM Grant Program on a reimbursable basis.

The District and Watermaster entered into the Agreement to assist in reimbursing Watermaster's Project Component No. 7 with funds provided on a reimbursement basis to the District by DWR for SGM Grant Program Implementation. Component No. 7, also known as the Monitoring, Reporting, and Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) Update for Sustainable Management in the Borrego Springs Subbasin (Basin) Project (“Project”), is a comprehensive monitoring, analysis, data management and reporting program that will ensure the effective implementation of the pumping rampdown, including filling data gaps identified in the Judgment (Stipulated Judgment adjudicating all groundwater rights in the Borrego Springs Subbasin of the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin) and GMP, and performing the required redetermination of the Sustainable Yield and GMP update due in 2025. This Project is made up of the following components:

- Task 1 - Groundwater Pumping Monitoring: The objective of this task to collect, compile, and manage all Basin pumping data to ensure successful compliance with the pumping rampdown.
- Task 2 - Groundwater Level Monitoring: The objective of this task is to implement a comprehensive groundwater-level monitoring program to track changes in Basin conditions (e.g., groundwater levels, storage, and flow directions) and the effectiveness of the Physical Solution.
- Task 3 - Groundwater Quality Monitoring: The objective of this task to implement a comprehensive groundwater-quality monitoring program to track changes in Basin conditions and evaluate the need for water quality optimization programs to achieve sustainability.
- Task 6 - Identify and address improperly Abandoned Wells: The GMP identified abandoned wells as a potential Project and Management Action (PMA). The objective of this task to identify improperly abandoned

wells, and if accessible through an easement or other access agreement, the wells will either be properly abandoned or converted to a monitoring well.

- Task 7 - Maintain and enhance the Basin Data Management System: The objective of this task to maintain and improve the Watermaster's Data Management System for efficient reporting in compliance with the Judgment and Grant requirements.
- Task 8 - Annual Reporting to Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Court: The objective of this task is to prepare the combined annual report of Basin conditions and the Physical Solution implementation progress.
- Task 9 - Redetermination of the Sustainable Yield by 2025.
- Task 10 - Prepare the 2025 GMP Update.
- Task 11 - Stakeholder Outreach: The objectives of this task are to facilitate public outreach and communications of Watermaster planned actions and provide a venue to receive public input prior to making Watermaster decisions.
- Task 12 - Project Management and Grant Reporting.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Borrego Water District

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Borrego Springs Watermaster

**Exempt Status:** (Check One)

- Categorical Exemption (Section 15306 and 15303)

**Reasons why Project is exempt:** The proposed Monitoring, Reporting, and GMP Update for Sustainable Management in the Borrego Springs Subbasin Project meets the criteria for a both a Class 6 Categorical Exemption (15306) and a Class 3 Categorical Exemption (15303). Class 6 consists of "Information Collection," outlined under Section 15306 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Class 6 exemptions consist 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."* The Project includes monitoring, reporting, and report updates that would consist of data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities that would not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource, and the data collected from the Project would be used as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Class 3 exemptions consist 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...(e) Accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences." The proposed Project is a monitoring, reporting, reporting update program that includes a component that would include well abandonment or converting existing wells to monitoring wells. This would consist of conversion of existing small appurtenances (wells) to either inactive status through abandonment or to monitoring wells thereby constituting a change from one use to another where only minor modifications are made to the structure. This activity is set to occur as part of the overall information collection for the Project, as discussed above. The Project has been evaluated against the Categorical Exemption exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2), and does not fall under any exception based on the lack of historical, archaeological, and scenic resources within the Project area of potential effects, and that no hazardous waste sites are located in the vicinity of the Project, and no cumulative or significant effects are anticipated to occur as a result of Project implementation. The Project activities have been determined **not** to have a potential to cause significant adverse environmental effects. Therefore, this proposed Project is not forecast to cause any potential for significant adverse environmental impacts and qualifies with the requirements for a both a Class 6 Categorical Exemption (15306) and a Class 3 Categorical Exemption (15303).

**Lead Agency**

**Contact Person:** Geoff Poole

**Telephone:** 760-767-5806

**Signature:** *Geoff Poole*

**Title:** General Manager

**Date:** 06/13/2023