



State Water Resources Control Board

August 11, 2023

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Aug 11 2023

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

North of the River Recreation and Park District
Attn: Ms. Steph Thisius-Sanders
3825 Riverlakes Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93312

NORTH OF THE RIVER RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT (NRRPD), INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (IS/MND) FOR THE MEADOW CREEK WELL WATER SUPPLY AND TREATMENT FACILITY PROJECT (PROJECT); STATE CLEARINGHOUSE #2023070417

Dear Ms. Steph Thisius-Sanders:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the IS/MND for the proposed Project. The State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water (State Water Board, DDW) is responsible for issuing water supply permits pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Project is within the jurisdiction of the State Water Board, DDW's Visalia District. DDW Visalia District issues domestic water supply permit amendments to the public water systems serviced with a new or modified source of domestic water supply or new domestic water system components pursuant to Waterworks Standards (Title 22 California Code of Regulations (CCR) chapter 16 et. seq.). A public water system requires a water supply permit amendment for changes to a water supply source, storage, or treatment and for the operation of new water system components- as specified in the Waterworks Standards. Vaughn Water Company will need to apply for a water supply permit amendment for this Project.

The State Water Board, DDW, as a responsible agency under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has the following comments on the District's IS/MND:

- The IS/MND states that Vaughn Water Company as the lead agency (PDF page 4 and 8). Vaughn Water Company is not a "public agency" and cannot therefore be the CEQA lead agency. Please update the document to reflect the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the Project (See Public Resources Code section 21067).
- The Project appears to be within the Almondale Park, in NRRPD's jurisdiction, according to the project location map (Figure 1, PDF page 19 & 78). However, the IS/MND states the "The Project site will be constructed on existing property owned by Vaughn Water Company" (PDF page 56) and "The project is adjacent to the Almondale Park and has a private easement through the southern portion

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | EILEEN SOBECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

of the park” (PDF page 65). If the project site and access are on private land, what is the NRRPD’s discretion over the project? The document does not state what the NRRPD’s discretionary approval is, nor is it described in PDF page 14 under H. Public Agency Approvals. Please explain the NRRPD’s discretionary approval for the Project. If the NRRPD doesn’t have a discretionary approval, please coordinate with one of the agencies listed on PDF page 14 that does have discretionary approval over the Project for them to be the lead agency.

- PDF page 44 says, “A water storage tank and granulated activated carbon treatment tanks will be located within the site as well.” The Project site design on PDF page 221 also includes the treatment tanks. This treatment is not included in the project description on PDF page 4-6 or PDF page 80 that describes a well, an ozone treatment facility for taste and odor, and a chlorination system for disinfection. Please explain if GAC treatment will also be needed for the Project, and if so, why.
- Please discuss potential operational impacts of the well, ozone treatment system, and the possible GAC treatment system.
 - Please state how often the site will need to be visited by Vaughn Water Company employees to service the system.
 - If the GAC treatment may be installed, please indicate if the spent resin will be hazardous, how often it will be replaced, and how it will be disposed of.
 - The IS/MND states, “There are no emissions into the air as part of the facility operation as there will be no gas or diesel driven equipment as part of the project once construction is complete” (PDF page 27). As part of the Project description, please indicate if there will be a backup generator on-site for the well. If so, be sure to clarify how often it will need to be maintained to keep it in working order, as part of the operation of the water system and include information on the generator in the air and noise section.
- The Project falls within the Kern County Subbasin of the San Joaquin Valley-Kern County Basin (5-022.14), a high priority and critically-overdrafted basin. Kern River is the Groundwater Sustainability Agency. No Kern River sustainability plan for the San Joaquin Valley-Kern County Basin is approved under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The construction and operation of the well will use water to provide municipal water supply to residences in the northwest part of Bakersfield (PDF page 62).
 - For Mitigation Measure HYD-1, please indicate at what level groundwater lowering will be considered excessive and what actions will be taken if it is determined that wells are excessively lowering groundwater levels in the area.
 - The IS/MND indicated the new well will be completed at a depth that is deeper than most wells in the area which will limit the impacts to shallower wells (PDF page 53). Please explain how this conclusion was reached. Is there a deeper aquifer disconnected from the shallower aquifer? If not, are nearby wells close enough to be affected by the cone

- of depression? Were any pump tests performed to determine effects on nearby wells?
- The IS/MND did not explain if the Project has sufficient water supplies available to be used by the well during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. Please indicate the increase in water use needed by the water system to meet demand and if there is enough water in the aquifer for the Project during normal, dry, and multiple dry years.
 - The IS/MND indicates the “Project is not anticipated to use or substantially deplete groundwater supplies or conflict with any future adopted groundwater management plan” (PDF page 55). Please indicate how much water can be extracted without having significant impacts and how much will be used. Please explain how the water will be recharged and/or the basin will not be significantly impacted. If it will be significantly impacted, provide mitigation measures to reduce the impacts to less than significant.
 - Please also discuss how it was determined the Project would not result in cumulative effects on the groundwater basin.
- The IS/MND states “The Project will not violate any water quality standards nor will it involve waste discharge” (PDF page 52). The well will be required to have a water line to discharge to waste. The Project may also have to discharge backwash water if there is GAC treatment. Please explain where this well waste line and backwash line (as needed) will discharge and what state, regional, individual permit, or waiver will be obtained. If the Project will be discharging to the storm drain and/or surface water a Statewide General NPDES permit 2014-0194-Division of Water Quality (DWQ) for Drinking Water Discharges may be applicable. For questions about the Statewide General NPDES permit please contact Renan Jauregui of the DWQ at (916) 341-5505 or Renan.Jauregui@waterboards.ca.gov. If the discharge line will be discharging to the ground the Statewide Water Quality Order 2003-0003-DWQ, Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges to Land with a Low Threat to Water Quality may be applicable. For questions on regional waste discharge permits, individual waste discharge permits, and/or waivers please contact Alexander Mushegan of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB), Fresno District at (559) 488-4397 or Alexander.Mushegan@waterboards.ca.gov.

If NRRPD is taking a discretionary action on the Project, once the MND is adopted, please forward the following items in support of Vaughn Water Company’s permit application to the State Water Board, DDW Visalia District Office at DWPDIST12@waterboards.ca.gov:

- Copy of the draft and final MND with any comment letters received and the lead agency responses as appropriate.
- Copy of the Resolution or Board Minutes adopting the MND, and
- Copy of the date stamped Notice of Determination filed at the Kern County Clerk’s Office and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse.

Please contact Lori Schmitz of the State Water Board at (916) 449-5285 or Lori.Schmitz@waterboards.ca.gov, if you have any questions regarding this comment letter.

Sincerely,

Lori Schmitz
Environmental Scientist
Division of Financial Assistance
Special Project Review Unit
1001 I Street, 16th floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Cc:

Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse

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