



Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To:

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

From:

Regional Water Quality Control Board,
Central Valley Region
11020 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Project Title: Waste Discharge Requirements for California Nuggets, Inc. and Golden Gate Nuts, Inc.

Project Applicant: Gico Management and Steve Gikas Trust (Owner)

Project Location: 3073 South Fredrick Road, Ripon
(APNs 228-130-21 and 228-130-200).

Project City: Ripon

Project County: San Joaquin County

Project Description:

California Nuggets and Golden Gate Nut (Facility) processes corn and almonds and has been in operation since 2002. The discharge of wastewater to land is regulated Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) Order No. R5-2014-0056, adopted by the Central Valley Region Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) on 28 March 2014. The Facility currently discharges process wastewater to 5.12 acres of land application areas (LAAs) cropped with various forage grasses. The Discharger recently purchased 7.88 acres of almond orchards, located immediately north of the facility, for use as additional LAAs. On 28 June 2022, the Facility submitted a Report of Waste Discharge requesting an update to its WDRs that would allow increasing the maximum annual flow limit up to 24 MG and expand the authorized LAAs to include the newly purchased 7.88-acre orchard area. The application included a water balance prepared by a registered professional, which demonstrated that the Facility's increased flow and LAA acreage will maintain compliance with the Facility's WDRs.

Wastewater is generated from food processing activities, including processing corn year-round and processing almonds seasonally during harvest. Wastewater is screened and passed through a dissolved air flotation (DAF) system, solid separators, and an

MARK BRADFORD, CHAIR | PATRICK PULUPA, ESQ., EXECUTIVE OFFICER

oil/water separator prior to discharging to a lined, aerated wastewater pond. From the pond, wastewater is used to irrigate the LAAs. All solids are transferred off-site for disposal or for use as animal feed and are not land applied. Groundwater at the facility has been monitored since 2005.

Revised WDRs adopted by the Central Valley Water Board require regular monitoring of the effluent and the receiving groundwater to evaluate any potential impacts caused by the discharge. There are no plans to alter the 7.88-acre almond orchard; the orchard is equipped with sprinkler irrigation, which the Facility plans to keep and adapt as necessary, to accommodate the Facility's increased discharge. Any future changes at the Facility may require additional permits and/or evaluation pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Exempt Status:

General Exemptions: Section 15061(b)(3)

Categorical Exemption: Section 15304

Exemption Reason:

The Facility's existing discharge of wastewater to land has not resulted in a significant impact on the environment. By expanding the total acreage of land application areas receiving the Facility's discharge and the several improvements in managing the wastewater treatment system, this project is expected to result in a reduction of annual average effluent constituent concentrations discharged to land, which reduces any existing threat to underlying groundwater quality.

This project is exempt from CEQA per CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption), which states, "A project is exempt from CEQA if...[t]he activity is covered by the common sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which 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 CEQA." There is no possibility that this project may have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, the project is not subject to CEQA.

This project is exempt from CEQA per CEQA Guidelines section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), which applies to minor private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, except for forestry and agricultural purposes. This exemption includes, but is not limited to, grading on land with a slope of less than 10 percent and new gardening or landscaping. This project entails only minor alterations to existing conditions by authorizing irrigation of existing orchards with the Facility's process wastewater.

Lead Agency Contact Person:

Scott Armstrong

916-464-4616

Signature: _____

Signed by Lead Agency

Authority cited: Public Resources Code sections 21083 & 21110.

Reference: Public Resources Code sections 21108, 21152 & 21152.1.