

Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

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

From: Department of Water Resources
San Luis Field Division, 31770 Gonzaga Road
Gustine, CA 95322

Lead Agency: Department of Water Resources

Project Title: Westside Detention Basin Embankment Repairs near West Gale Avenue

Project Location City & County: Fresno County

Project Location – Specific: The project will occur in an approximately 40-acre area of the existing Department of Water Resources (DWR) Westside Detention Basin (WSDB) located about 3.0 miles southeast of the City of Huron, in Fresno County. The work area starts at the intersection of West Gale Avenue (Gale) and South Madera Avenue (Madera Avenue), runs eastward to the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct), and then continues north to the Gale gabion weir basin staff gauge. Work will only occur within the WSDB, and no work will occur on the Gale rubber dam structure (rubber dam). **Figure 1** shows the project location.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Because of winter storms, the DWR's San Luis Field Division (SLFD) needs to make repairs in the Gale area of DWR's existing WSDB. All work will occur in the existing WSDB area. With the exception of increasing the size of two equipment turnaround areas to safely accommodate maintenance equipment, the project will restore the WSDB features to design specifications. The project will occur in an approximately 40-acre area located about 3.0 miles southeast of the City of Huron, in Fresno County (**Figure 1**).

Work includes constructing a temporary water fill station (fill station), restoring a staging area, providing a vehicle and equipment washdown area, pumping out water that seeped from the Aqueduct, modifying an existing embankment turnaround area and ramp to create a pad for equipment, repairing portions of the WSDB embankments, expanding an existing turnaround area that is adjacent to the rubber dam, armoring the repaired embankments with base rock materials and riprap, and covering the top of the repaired areas with a crushed rock cap. Where necessary, mowing and vegetation removal will occur to allow equipment access to the staging area and work areas. **Figure 2** contains a map showing project features.

A fill station will be installed for project water trucks. DWR is obtaining permission from Westlands Water District (WWD) to connect to an existing WWD water supply located about 100 feet north of the intersection of Gale and Avenues (**Figure 2**). To prepare for fill station installation, SLFD will grade an approximately 50-foot-long by 8-foot-wide area at the water supply and will place 4-inch diameter rock over the graded area to create a pad that the fill station will be installed on.

Water seeping from the Aqueduct through the inlet gate structures into the Gale gabion weir basin (gabion weir basin) needs to be removed so that equipment can enter the basin to repair the WSDB embankments (**Figure 2**). A crane will be used on the existing Aqueduct road to lift and position 1.5-inch diameter submersible pumps at each of the four inlet gates in the gabion weir basin. SLFD will secure the pumps to the gate structures. The ponded water will be pumped back into the inlet gate structures. Once the water is drained, the ground will be allowed to dry before other work in the gabion weir basin occurs.

An approximately 0.60-acre staging area directly north of the rubber dam will be restored. Because this area is currently covered by a dense stand of sunflowers, SLFD will use a tractor with a pull mower attachment to remove the vegetation, allowing access to the area. The mowed vegetation will remain on site. Following the mowing, the area will be graded. No work will occur on the rubber dam structure.

An approximately 50-feet long by 8-feet wide equipment washdown area will be installed in the WSDB, just north of the intersection of Gale and Madera Avenues and in the vicinity of the fill station (**Figure 2**). SLFD will grade the area and then add a layer of 4-inch diameter rock to create a track-out pad; grizzly rock screens will be installed next to the track-out pads.

Once the soil in the gabion weir basin is dry, the existing access ramp, turnaround area, and WSDB embankment on the north end of the gabion weir basin will be modified to create a pad that will be large enough for equipment to safely maneuver in, and it will also be large enough to accommodate a crane needed for future maintenance work in the area (**Figure 2**). Approximately 3,000 cubic yards (CY) of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter base rock will be imported and added to the existing ramp and embankment until the ramp is raised, extended, and compacted to match the height of the existing WSDB embankment; this material will be deposited in 2-foot-lifts, each lift will be compacted with a wheeled compactor and a bulldozer. The final dimensions of the pad will be approximately 100 feet long by 45 feet wide; the sides of the pad will have a 1:1 slope from the top of the pad down to the existing WSDB grade. The access ramp will be recreated by extending the newly constructed pad about 100 feet southwest from the edge of the pad into the gabion weir basin; the sides of the access ramp will also have a 1:1 slope. Once the pad and access ramp are constructed and compacted, a 6-inch-deep crushed rock cap will be placed on top of them.

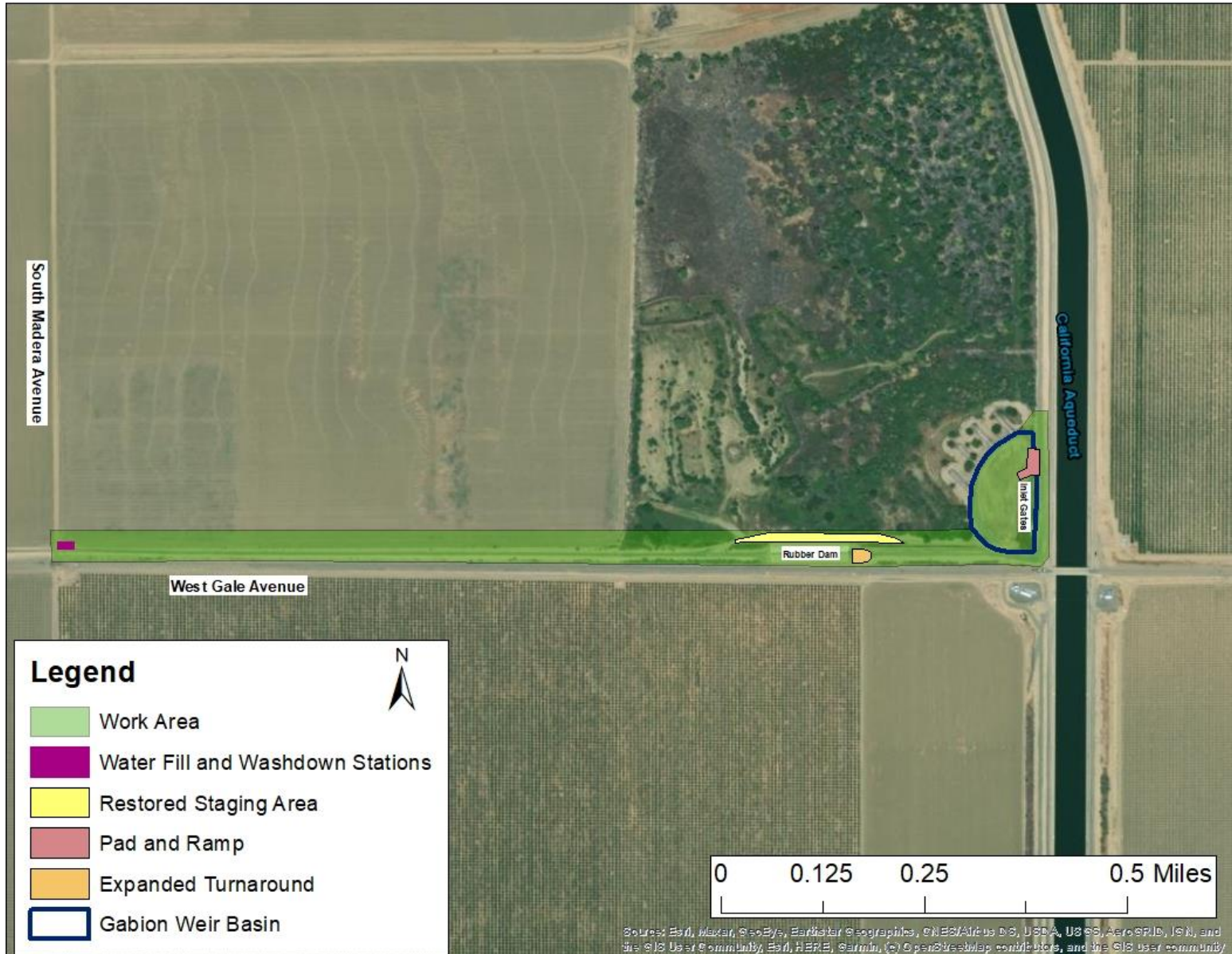
The WSDB embankment is eroded and requires repair. Repairs will occur from the intersection of Gale and Madera Avenues to the Aqueduct and from the intersection of the Aqueduct and Gale to the staff gauge north of the inlet gates (**Figure 2**). Even though the rubber dam is within the described work area, there will be no work on the dam. The following actions will be performed to repair the embankments:

- To establish access, SLFD will use a tractor with a mower attachment to remove dense stands of annual vegetation present throughout the work area; all mowed vegetation will be left in place. Up to 7 mature willows that are growing against the embankment, approximately 600 feet west of the rubber dam, will be removed. The removed trees will be placed elsewhere in the WSDB. Large, woody debris that accumulated on the embankments during winter flows will be moved elsewhere in the WSDB.
- Once access is achieved, material that eroded from the WSDB embankments into the WSDB will be used to repair the embankments. SLFD will use heavy equipment to retrieve approximately 10,000 CY of the eroded material and will shape and compact it back onto the embankments until they are returned to original specifications. The repaired embankments will be armored by adding $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter base rock to the faces and by adding a layer of 8-to-16-inch diameter rock riprap on top of the base rock layer. Armoring will occur only on the WSDB facing slope of the embankment. Following the armoring, a cap of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter crush rock will be placed on the top of the embankment in an approximately 6-inch deep layer. The base rock, riprap, and crush rock materials will be imported to the site.
- While the embankments are being repaired, SLFD will increase the size of the existing turnaround area on top of the embankment directly east of, and adjacent to, the rubber dam; this area will be enlarged to safely accommodate maintenance equipment. Approximately 1,500 CY of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter base rock will be mixed with existing soil and added in 2-foot-lifts to the perimeter of the existing turnaround. These materials will be shaped and compacted until it matches the contours and height of the existing turnaround and has increased the turnaround's length by about 50 feet and its width by about 30 feet. The turnaround will then be armored and capped in the same way as the embankments.

Figure 1. Project Location.



Figure 2. Project Components.



Exempt/Suspend Status:


- Ministerial (§21080[b][1]; 15268)
- Declared Emergency (Proclamation of a State of Emergency Due to Drought)
- Emergency Project (Public Resources Code §21080[b][4]; California Code of Regulations §15269[c])
- Categorical Exemption: Categorical Exemption 15301 – (Existing Facilities)
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: Work consists of repairing the existing WSDB embankment to return the embankment back to design capacity. To facilitate the embankment repairs, other existing WSDB features will also be repaired or improved including restoring an existing staging area and modifying an existing embankment turnaround area and ramp to create a pad for safely maneuvering and staging equipment. All work will occur within the existing WSDB boundaries, there will be no change in the use of the area, and the increase in the size of the turnaround areas will be negligible. No sensitive resources will be impacted by the project. Categorical Exemption 15301 (Existing Facilities) applies.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Department of Water Resources

Contact Person: Jake Grace

Telephone: 209-827-5190

Signature:  **Date:** 9/28/2023 **Title:** Planner Scheduler/UC Supv.

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant