



ATTACHMENT A BACKGROUND, PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR CEQA EXEMPTION

1.0 PROJECT LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

1.1 Project Location

The approximately one-acre project site is located in the city of San Clemente in south Orange County. The project site is in the southwest quadrant of Vista Hermosa Sports Park at 987 Vista Hermosa, which is at the southwest corner of Vista Hermosa and Avenida La Pata, in the northwest part of the city of San Clemente. Regional access to the site is from the Interstate 5 (I-5) freeway via Avenida Vista Hermosa. Site access is via two driveways from Avenida Vista Hermosa northwest of the project site; one of the driveways intersects with the second to form a loop. Refer to **Figures 1** through **3**, which depict the project site in a regional and local scale. **Figures 4 and 5** depict photos of the project site.

1.2 Existing Conditions Onsite

The project site is vacant and vegetated with grasses. Vista Hermosa Sports Park includes an aquatics center/swimming pool; lighted baseball/soccer/football fields; Courtney's Sandcastle children's play area; a walking/jogging loop; a grassy area; mountain view; picnic area/tables/benches; and restrooms/drinking fountains (City of San Clemente 2023).

1.3 Surrounding Uses

The project site is surrounded to the south by a landscaped slope, sloping up from the site; to the east by a photovoltaic solar array; to the north by two soccer fields opposite a driveway with parking spaces on both sides of the driveway; and to the west by a turf practice field opposite a driveway with parking spaces on the east side of the driveway.

Vista Hermosa Sports Park is surrounded by retail use and vacant land to the north opposite Avenida Vista Hermosa; vacant land and an Orange County Fire Authority station to the east; and vacant land to the south and west.

1.4 General Plan Land Use and Zoning

The project site and surrounding land both have a General Plan land use designation of Public Open Space (OS-1) and zoning designation of Foster Ranch Specific Plan (FRSP).

Forster Ranch Specific Plan

The Forster Ranch Specific Plan (FRSP) spans 1,982 acres (about 3.1 square miles) in the northwest part of the city of San Clemente, and is designated for mostly residential and open space uses.

1.5 Project Background

The City Council approved the La Pata/Vista Hermosa Park Master Plan ("Master Plan") in 2006; the Master Plan has been the guiding document for approvals of various improvements at the park. In 2009 the City amended the Park Master Plan, providing for the inclusion of Courtney's Sandcastle (an

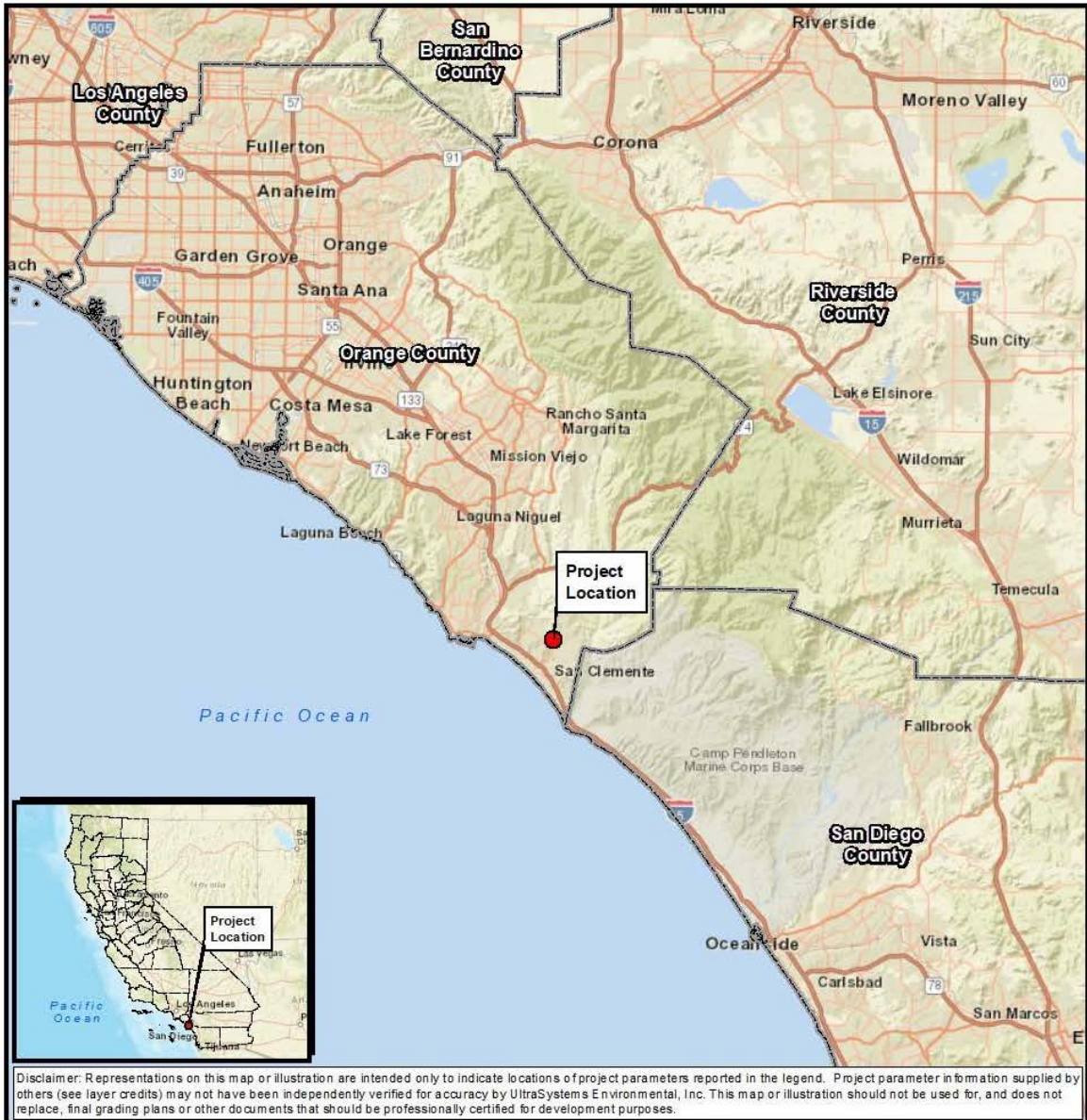


accessible playground) and a lease area to allow for private recreational offerings within the park. At that time, the City entered into a lease agreement. In 2014, the City Council terminated the lease with the previous leaseholder. Courtney's Sandcastle was built and is in the central part of Vista Hermosa Sports Park, east of the project site, opposite a photovoltaic solar array from the site. In the Master Plan, the project site was programmed as a children's play area that was not developed, and the site remains vacant.

Salty Turf, LLC, the project applicant, has offered to lease the project site and develop a miniature golf course on the site.



Figure 1
REGIONAL LOCATION MAP





Scale: 1:506,880



0 4 8 Miles

0 4.5 9 Kilometers

Legend

-  Project Location
-  County Boundary

**Salty Turf
Mini Golf Facility**
Regional Location





Figure 2
PROJECT VICINITY MAP

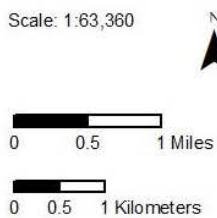
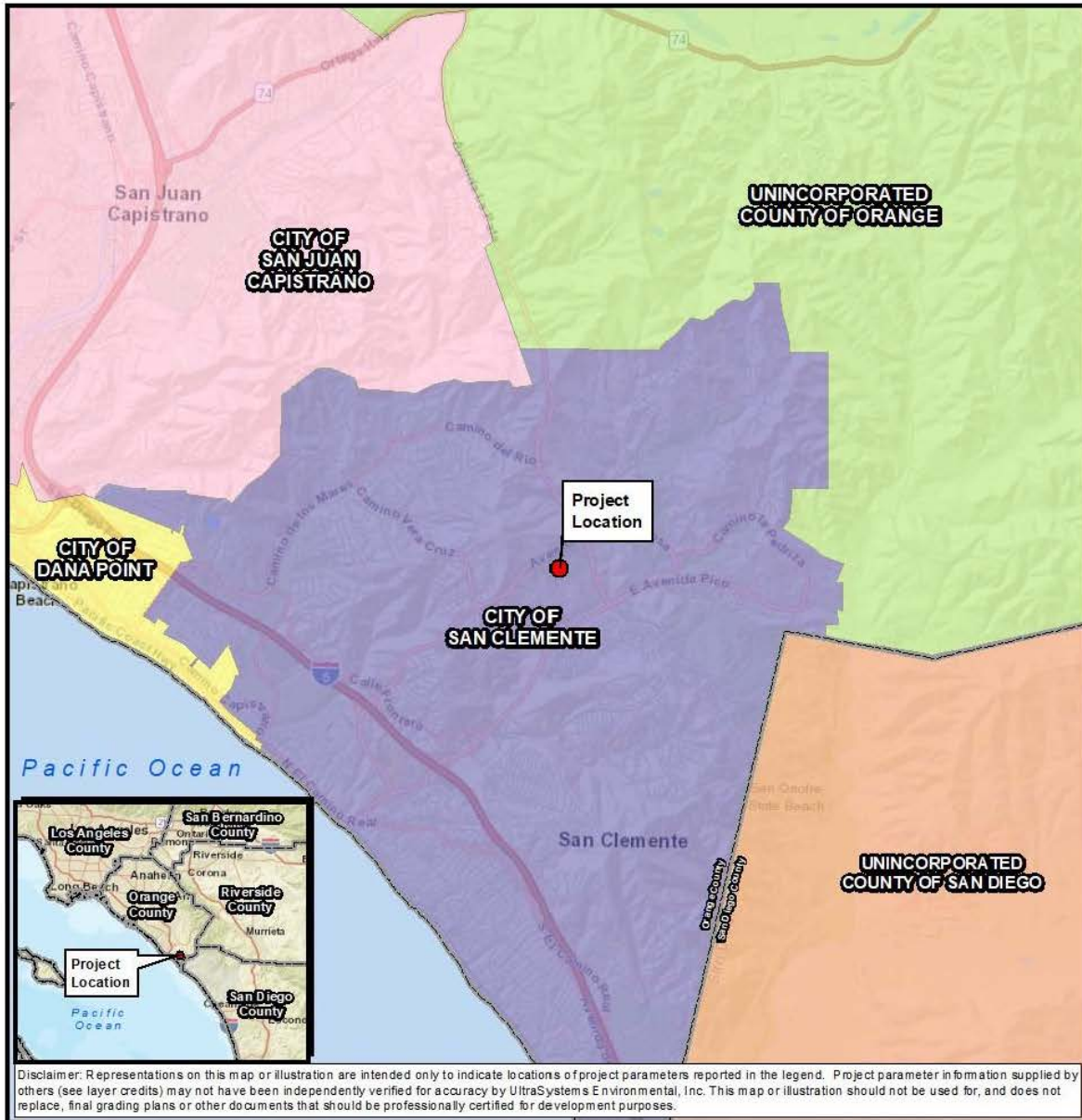




Figure 3
PROJECT LOCATION MAP



Path: \\GIS\Projects\7249_Salty_Turf_Mini_Golf_CE\MapDocs\7249_Mini_Golf_3_0_Project_Location_2023_12_01.mxd
 Service Layer Credits - Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, U.S.G.S., Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community; UltraSystems Environmental, Inc., 2023.

December 01, 2023


Scale: 1:1,200



0 50 100 Feet

0 15 30 Meters

Legend

 Project Boundary

**Salty Turf
Mini Golf Facility**
Project Location



Figure 4
PROJECT SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



PHOTO 1: View looking west, north of existing soccer fields.



PHOTO 2: View looking south toward the planted berm area.



PHOTO 3: View looking east toward the existing solar array.



PHOTO 4: View toward existing soccer fields, north.

Figure 5
PROJECT SITE PHOTOGRAPHS - CONTINUED



PHOTO 1: View looking west, existing parking lot in the foreground.



PHOTO 2: View looking west, existing parking lot and restroom facilities in the background.



PHOTO 3: View looking west, existing walk trail in the background.



PHOTO 4: View toward southern berm, along with tree plantings.



2.0 DESCRIPTION

The project consists of a 36-hole miniature golf course, entirely ADA compliant, with landscaping including water features. The course would include “sand traps” consisting of pale-colored turf. Miniature golf consists of putting only; most holes are within about 30 feet of the corresponding tees. The facility would include an uppers course and a lowers course. The uppers course would include numerous obstacles, including obstacles modeled after landmarks in the region such as Trestles Bridge, a railroad bridge in San Onofre State Beach immediately south of the city of San Clemente. The lowers course would be a golfer’s course with tees, holes, “sand traps”, and water features, but minimal obstacles. **Figure 6** shows the project site plan.

The project would include a 600-square-foot snack shack/clubhouse selling snacks and beverages and including restrooms. The course would operate 12 hours per day (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.) seven days per week throughout the year.

2.1 Landscaping

Most of the proposed course would consist of landscaping—using artificial turf—including water features.

2.2 Access

Project site access is via two driveways each with access from Avenida Vista Hermosa. One driveway extends east-west past the north site boundary; has access to Avenida Vista Hermosa northwest of the site; and terminates into a second north-south driveway east of the site. That second driveway is north-south, intersecting Avenida Vista Hermosa.

2.3 Parking

The Vista Hermosa Sports Park contains 742 parking spaces: 493 in the Main Lot in the southeast quadrant of the park; 152 spaces in the Baseball Lot in the northeast quadrant; and 97 spaces in the Soccer Lot—that is, perpendicular parking spaces on both sides of the driveway that extends east-west between the project site and the soccer fields to the north. The parking study for Amendment 1 to the Master Plan—approved by the San Clemente City Council in 2009—determined that 631 parking spaces were required for the approved uses in Vista Hermosa Sports Park, yielding a surplus of 111 spaces (City of San Clemente, 2009).

2.4 Site Clearance

Site clearance would involve removal of existing vegetation.

2.5 Construction

Construction is scheduled to extend from January to June 2024. Three construction phases are planned: 1. utilities installation and fine grading; 2. construction; and 3. installation of amenities. Construction would involve small equipment such as bobcats.

Figure 6
SITE PLAN



Disclaimer: Illustration provided by Saltyturf LLC, who has indicated that the information is true and correct. No other warranties are expressed or implied

Source: Saltyturf LLC, 2023.



Salty Turf
Mini Golf Facility
Site Plan



3.0 REASONS WHY THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT

Two categorical exemptions are invoked for this project: the Class 1 exemption, Existing Facilities, CEQA Guidelines § 15301; and the Class 3 exemption, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, CEQA Guidelines § 15303.

3.1 CEQA Guidelines Section 15301

The **Class 1** categorical exemption, **Existing Facilities**, consists of the operation, repair, 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 key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14 § 15301).

The project consists of development of a miniature golf course on a vacant 1.18-acre site within an existing sports park in the city of San Clemente. The miniature golf facility would conform with the General Plan land use designation onsite, Open Space (OS-1), and the zoning designation onsite, Forster Ranch Specific Plan. Therefore, the nature, scale, and location of the proposed project (within an existing sports park) fit a Class 1 categorical exemption.

3.2 CEQA Guidelines Section 15303

The **Class 3** categorical exemption, **New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures**, consists 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. Examples include single-family structures; multifamily structures not over six units; and commercial buildings (in urban areas) 10,000 square feet or less (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14 § 15303).

Development of the proposed miniature golf facility—to include obstacles and a 600-square-foot snack shack/clubhouse on a 1.18-acre site—meets the criteria for a Class 3 categorical exemption. The Class 3 exemption does not specify a limit to site acreage; however, the size of this site is taken to fit the scope of this exemption.

3.2.3.3 **Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions Set Forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.**

The following analysis addresses six exceptions to categorical exemptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.

- (a) **Location.** Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located -a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.



The project site is located within an urban portion of the city and is surrounded by urban development. The project site is vacant but is within a sports park spanning nearly 45 acres and that is nearly built out. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

The project is not part of a proposed series of projects in the same place over time. The nearest other project shown on the City of San Clemente's Development Projects Map is a small cellular facility on a streetlight pole next to a car wash at 901 Avenida Pico about 0.5 mile south of the project site (City of San Clemente, 2023). Construction and operation of the cellular facility would not cause impacts that would combine with impacts of the proposed project to result in significant cumulative impacts. This exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

Environmental Setting

Natural Setting

The project site is a 1-acre turf field within an approximately 45-acre sports park that is nearly built out. The site is mowed approximately weekly (Streett, 2023a), and is thus not suitable habitat for sensitive plant or animal species due to frequent disturbances. No unusual circumstances are present on or next to the project site that would give rise to a significant environmental effect.

Built Environment

The project site is maintained as a turf field and is otherwise vacant. The nearest sensitive receptors to noise are residences about 600 feet south of the project site with a hill 20 feet higher than the project site interposed between the site and the residences. No unusual circumstances are present on or next to the project site that would give rise to a significant environmental effect.

Proposed Project

The proposed project is a one-acre miniature golf facility.

Construction

Project construction would involve use of small construction equipment (such as bobcats) and is expected to take about five months. Project construction would be conducted within the hours that construction work is allowed under San Clemente Municipal Code Section 8.48.090, that is, between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Saturday, but not on Sundays or City-recognized holidays (Municode.com, 2023). The site has been rough-graded, and project development would not involve rough grading. No structures are present onsite, and development would not involve demolition. Project construction would not involve unusual circumstances that would cause significant environmental effects.



Operation

The project would operate 12 hours per day (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.), seven days per week. It is expected that project operational noise would not be audible at the nearest sensitive receptors due to the distance to the receptors and intervening topography. The project would add a commercial recreation amenity in a part of the city of San Clemente that is largely residential. The next nearest miniature golf facility is 27 miles away (Streett, 2023b). Therefore, it is expected that project development would yield a slight reduction in vehicle miles traveled compared to existing travel distances to similar facilities. Vista Hermosa Sports Park has an existing surplus of 111 parking spaces according to the parking assessment done for the Vista Hermosa Master Plan (City of San Clemente, 2009); thus, parking for the proposed facility is not anticipated to cause an adverse effect. Project development would add nighttime lighting to Vista Hermosa Sports Park. Several lighted facilities are present in the park, and proposed nighttime lighting would not detract from nighttime views in the area. Project operation would not involve unusual circumstances that would cause significant environmental effects.

(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

The nearest designated state scenic highway to the project site is State Route (SR)-91, the Riverside Freeway, about 28 miles to the north (Caltrans, 2023). The site is not visible from SR-91 due to distance and intervening topography. Project development would not damage scenic resources along SR-91 and the scenic highways exception would not apply to the proposed project.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

The following hazardous materials sites databases were searched on December 2, 2023 for hazardous materials sites on and within 0.25 mile of the project site.

- GeoTracker, State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB, 2023)
- EnviroStor, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC, 2023)
- Environmental Radius Report by National Environmental Title Research, LLC dated December 2, 2023 (NETROnline, 2023).

The project site is not listed on any of the hazardous materials sites reviewed. A Target store at 990 Avenida Vista Hermosa, about 700 feet north of the project site, is listed as a Large Quantity Generator of hazardous wastes (LQG) on the RCRAInfo database.¹ This listed hazardous materials site is not considered to be an environmental concern for the proposed project site, as it is known to

¹ large quantity generators of hazardous wastes generate more than 1000 kilograms (2,205 pounds) of hazardous wastes per month.



the USEPA; and it does not document known or likely releases of hazardous materials to the environment. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

No historic resources were identified in the 45.3-acre Vista Hermosa Sports Park (VHSP) site during preparation of the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for VHSP completed in 2005. The IS/MND noted that the VHSP site had been graded recently before a site visit in September 2004 (UltraSystems, 2005, pp. 2-1 and 4-12). The project site is maintained as a turf field, including mowing, approximately weekly (Streett, 2023a). No resources on or within 0.5 mile of the project site are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP, 2023); or as California Historical Landmarks or California Points of Historical Interest (OHP, 2023). Thus, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

3.33.4 Conclusion

As detailed in **Section 3.2** above, no exceptions to categorical exemptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the proposed project. Therefore, the Class 1 (Existing Facilities) categorical exemption applies to the proposed project.

4.0 REFERENCES

- Caltrans, 2023. California State Scenic Highway System Map. Accessed online at: <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>, on December 2, 2023.
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- National Park Service (NPS). 2023. National Register of Historic Places. Accessed online at: <https://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466>, on December 11, 2023.



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SWRCB (State Water Resources Control Board). 2023. GeoTracker. Accessed online at: <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>, on December 2, 2023.