NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: □ Office of Planning and Research P.O. Box 3044, Room 113

Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

□ County Clerk/County Recorder

County of Fresno P.O. Box 766 Fresno, CA 93712

From: □ Westlands Water District

P.O. Box 5199 Fresno, CA 93755

Project Title: Desalination and On-Farm Recycling Project

Project Applicant: Westlands Water District

Project Location – Specific: APN 028-030-32, 028-030-45, and 028-030-22

Project Location – City: N/A Project Location – County: Fresno

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

Westlands Water District (District) is proposing the Desalination and On-Farm Recycling Pilot Project (Pilot Project), which will use an existing groundwater well to supply a reverse osmosis (RO) treatment facility. Once operational, the RO treatment process will generate mineralized water as a byproduct. Using proprietary vegetation specifically engineered to uptake salts and other constituents, Westlands will apply the mineralized water to irrigate salt-tolerant crops, which will remove the salts and store in the plants. Due to this uptake of salts and minerals such as boron and selenium, the crop will be rich in nutrients, making a valuable source of bio-nutrients for livestock once harvested. The District will collect data from the proposed Pilot Project to determine if a large-scale project is feasible. If successful, this Pilot Project will demonstrate that poor quality groundwater extracted from the upper, unconfined aquifer can be treated cost-effectively and that the mineralized byproduct can be beneficially reused. This will provide another high-quality supply for Westlands and the communities it serves and promote State policy by reducing reliance on the Delta to meet future water demands. The long-term average annual water supply benefit could be up to 1,460 acrefeet per year.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

Westlands Water District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

Westlands Water District

Exempt Sta	ıtus: (c	heck	one)
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	Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
	Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(a));
	Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(c));
X	Categorical Exemptions. (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15301, 15304, and 15306)
	Statutory Exemptions. (Sec. 21080(b)(4): CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15269(c)):

Reasons why project is exempt:

The District determined that this Pilot Project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15301(Existing Facilities), 15304 (Minor Alterations), and 15306 (Data Collection) because it involves the rehabilitation of an existing facility (well), minor land alterations (new landscaping with halophytic plantings), and the collection of data to determine the feasibility of desalination of poorquality groundwater from the upper, unconfined aquifer.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Russ Freeman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (559) 241-6241

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? □YES□NO

Signature: Date: 2/2/2024 Title: Deputy General Manager Resources

X Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

Reference: Sections 21108(b), 21152(b), Public Resources Code.