

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044
1400 Tenth Street, Room 2
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Inland Deserts Region
Bishop Field Office
787 N. Main Street, Suite 220
Bishop, CA 93514

Project Title: Fish Slough Groundwater Monitoring Project, Fish Slough Site

Project Location: The project will be located in Fish Slough in Mono County, California. The Project will be located in Section 13, Township 5 South, Range 32 East MDM, USGS Chidago Canyon Quadrangle; approximate geographic coordinates: 37.520997, -118.408821.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (“CDFW”) proposes to construct one new groundwater monitoring site in northern Fish Slough for the purposes of obtaining subsurface geology information, conducting groundwater elevation monitoring, and water quality sampling and analysis. Work included in the project consists of borehole drilling, monitoring well construction, development and testing, and instrumentation. The proposed project is estimated to take a total of 30 days to complete once work begins.

Well drilling and construction will require the installation of a temporary well pad at the proposed well site of approximately 180 feet by 180 feet per well, where total projected impacts will occur. The temporary well pad will be located adjacent to existing roads. Temporary impacts may include extension of temporary access roads to the site, and temporary above-ground piping and tanks to direct discharge water. The well pad will accommodate the drill rig, material staging, equipment, and parking. A truck mounted Direct-Mud rotary drilling rig would be used to drill and construct the monitoring well. Target borehole depth in the deep aquifer is 1,200 feet.

Temporary equipment needed for the project includes a backhoe, crane, main and backup drill rigs, and vehicles to transport personnel, materials, mobilize and demobilize equipment, and transport waste. All equipment will be cleaned prior to being brought to the project site to prevent transportation of non-native plant material. Upon completion of construction and well development activities, the site will be cleaned up and all material and equipment will be removed from the site. Final well site completion will consist of the installation of a small concrete well pedestal and a steel well monument to house the monitoring well.

Mud-rotary drilling requires the use of a water/bentonite clay mixture. During drilling operations, the Contractor will temporarily stockpile residual drilling fluid and drill cuttings at the project site. During well development and testing, initial development water will be directed to settling tanks so that any drilling fluid and/or sediment may settle out within the tank prior to discharging at the project location.

If heavy equipment is used during the bird breeding season (May 15th-July 30th), a nesting bird survey will be conducted within 100 ft of the project area one week prior to scheduled activities to determine possible effects that the project will have on nesting birds. If nesting birds are discovered, sound barriers or buffers may be established as needed around nests to minimize impact from the proposed action.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Person or Agency Carrying out Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Exempt Status:

- Ministerial:
- Declared Emergency: Governor's Proclamation of State of Emergency, 10/19/2021.
- Emergency Project:
- Categorical Exemption:

Reasons why Project is exempt:

In an Emergency Proclamation issued October 19, 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom directed state agencies in Paragraph 6 of the Proclamation to enter into contracts to procure materials, goods, and services necessary to protect public health and the environment. Paragraph 12 of the Proclamation suspends CEQA for the purpose of carrying out this directive to the extent necessary to address the impacts of the drought to the environment.

This project is Categorical Exempt from CEQA review pursuant to Section 15306, Class 6, consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. The proposed project meets the requirements of this exemption; therefore, no further CEQA review is required.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Aaron Johnson (760) 872-117, Aaron.Johnson@wildlife.ca.gov

Signature: DocuSigned by:
Russell Black
101C46DEF85644F... **Date:** 4/3/2024
Russell Black, Environmental Program Manager

Signed by Lead Agency

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____