

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: County Clerk
County of Orange
601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Office of Planning and Research
1400 10th Street #100
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Moulton Niguel Water District
26161 Gordon Road
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

Project Title: Solar Panels at Headquarters

MNWD Project Number: 2023.031

Project Location		
Address	City	County
26161 Gordon Road	Laguna Hills	Orange

Exhibit? Yes No

Description, Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project will install new solar panels on existing buildings and existing carport structures at the District’s main headquarters. The project will also install new canopy structures with solar panels over the existing parking lot. The work includes installation of associated equipment to support the solar panels such as electrical conduits and a battery for energy storage.

The project will benefit the District and the Districts’ customers by reducing energy consumption and energy costs.

Project Applicant:

Moulton Niguel Water District
26161 Gordon Road
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

Moulton Niguel Water District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying out Project:

Moulton Niguel Water District

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (State Guidelines §15268)
- Declared Emergency (State Guidelines §15269 (a))
- Emergency Project (State Guidelines §15269(b) or (c))
- Categorical Exemption (State Guidelines §15301, 15303, 15311)
- Statutory Exemption (Pub. Res. Code § 21080.35)
- Feasibility or Planning Study (State Guidelines §15262)

Reasons Why Project is Exempt:

First, the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the statutory exemption outlined in Public Resources Code, section 21080.35 for installation of solar energy systems. Specifically, that section states that CEQA “does not apply to the installation of a solar energy system on the roof of an existing building or at an existing parking lot.” (Pub. Res. Code § 21080.35.) A solar energy system “includes all associated equipment.” (*Id.*) “Associated equipment consists of parts and materials that enable the generation and use of solar electricity or solar-heated water, including any monitoring and control, safety, conversion and emergency responder equipment necessary to connect to the customer’s electrical service or plumbing and any equipment, as well as any equipment necessary to connect the energy generated to the electrical grid, whether that connection is onsite or on an adjacent parcel of the building and separated only by an improved right-of-way.” (*Id.*) An “existing parking lot” is defined as “an area designated and used for parking of vehicles as of the time of the application for the solar energy system and for at least the previous two years.” (*Id.*)

The Project involves the installation of new solar panels on existing buildings and existing carport structures at the District’s main headquarters. The Project will also install new canopy structures with solar panels over the existing parking lot. The work includes installation of associated equipment to support the solar panels such as electrical conduits and a battery for energy storage. The associated equipment will take up less than 500 square feet of ground surface, will be located on the same or immediately adjacent parcel as the building and does not contain plants protected by the Native Plant Protection Act. Thus, the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to section 21080.35.

Second, the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to a Class 1 categorical exemption. (14 C.C.R. § 15301.) The Project qualifies for the Class 1 exemption because it involves the minor alteration of existing facilities at the Property with improvements that would lead to negligible or no expansion of use beyond the use existing at this time. (*Id.*) The Project would result in net environmental benefits by reducing traditional electrical energy consumption at the Property. Therefore, the proposed improvements would be exempt pursuant to a Class 1 exemption.

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PROJECT NO. 2023.031

Additionally, the Project is also exempt from CEQA because it involves the construction of minor structures accessory to existing institutional facilities. (14 C.C.R. §§ 15303 and 15311.) As explained above, the Project would involve the installation new canopy structures with solar panels. Therefore, the Project would be exempt pursuant to a Class 3 and 11 exemption. (*Id.*)

Finally, to the extent that the Class 1, Class 3 and Class 11 categorical exemptions apply to the Project, none of the exceptions to the categorical exemptions applies. (State CEQA Guidelines § 15300.2) Specifically, the Project is not located in a particularly sensitive environment. The improvements will be installed on existing structures in developed areas. The cumulative impact of successive projects of this same type in the same place over time would not be significant because the District facilities are limited in size. As explained above, the Project involves installation of solar panels on existing buildings and construction of new canopy structures with solar panels over the existing parking lot. These types of improvements are not unusual. Moreover, the Property is not located within an officially designated state scenic highway. Thus, the Project would not have an impact in this regard. Similarly, the proposed improvements are not located on sites designated pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5. Finally, the Project does not involve any improvements, modifications, or other changes to an historical resource. Therefore, none of the circumstances outlined in Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 15300.2 applies.

Lead Agency Contact

Person: Alex Thomas _____

Phone: 949-831-2500 _____

Signature:  _____

Title: Principal Engineer _____

Date: 3/19/2024 _____

FISH & GAME FEES: Pursuant to Section 711.4 (c)(2)(A) of the California Fish and Game Code, the project is exempt from fees, as it is exempt from CEQA.



Path: G:\GIS\Projects\Projects_Oranging\NOE_ Exhibits\F_Garner\ArcMap\SolarPanels\MNWDimxd



0 100 200 400 Feet

Scale = 1:3,000

**Exhibit "A" Location Map
Solar Panels at Headquarters
Contract No. 2023.031**