

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: CA Dept. of Water Resources
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

Project Title: Turlock and West Stanislaus Technical Support Services Well Installation Project

Project Location City & County: Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties

Project Location – Specific: The Project will occur in Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties, with five monitoring wells: ETGSA-01 (Beck Property) is approximately 2,300 feet northwest of Lake Road gate (37.6270785, -120.6772037). ETGSA-02 (Pareira Property) is approximately 250 feet south of HWY 59 property entrance. (37.4971433, -120.48936916). ETGSA-04 (Martella Property) is approximately 50 feet north of West Harding Road (37.4630359, -120.7267682). WSIDGSA-06 (West Stanislaus) is approximately 150 feet east of HWY 33 (37.6527512, -121.3109409).

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was signed into law requiring local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to manage groundwater in their service area that necessitates the development of an adequate network of appropriately spaced groundwater monitoring wells. With secured funding, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has established the Technical Support Services (TSS) program to help GSAs meet their SGMA requirements by providing services to install groundwater monitoring wells, conduct downhole video logging, and training on methods to accurately monitor groundwater levels.

The Turlock and Delta-Mendota Subbasin Well Installation project consists of installing four nested groundwater monitoring well. These sites will be marked by Underground Service Alert, then hand tools will be used to excavate a minimum depth of 5 feet. A driller will use a truck-mounted drill rig to drill a pilot hole while using a mud cleaner to filter out solids and return drilling mud to the drill bit. The pilot hole will be drilled to a depth between 300 to 600 feet below ground surface. Based on logging results, the driller will expand the borehole to the selected depth to a diameter large enough to accommodate nested well casings (approximately 14 inches). Within the borehole PVC casings, sand, and a bentonite seal will be constructed. For a final sanitary seal, neat cement will be pumped from the support truck to fill the annular space between the casings and the borehole wall to a depth required by the local well permitting process. A raised steel well protective cover and concrete pad, approximately four feet by four feet in area and four inches tall with four approximately 3-foot high metal crash posts, will be installed at ground level to protect the well from potential damage.

Well development will occur a minimum of 72 hours after completion of the sanitary seal. Well development is done to remove any fine-grained materials from the well. After completion of each monitoring well, battery powered pressure transducers and data loggers will be installed to measure continuous groundwater levels.

DWR anticipates that well installation will take approximately 6 months from June 2024 to November 2024. Construction equipment would include pickup trucks, forklift, drill rig, mud cleaner, and a generator.

DWR or GSA staff may visit the wells on a quarterly schedule to collect data. Operation and maintenance will be minimal and may consist of periodic servicing of equipment and replacing batteries as needed. Access to the well locations will be by existing paved and dirt roads.

Once installed, these facilities will become part of the GSA's monitoring program.

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: 15306. Information Collection
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: Work activities will consist of installation of a groundwater monitoring well. Project activities are covered under Categorical Exemption Class 6 Section 15306 (Data Collection) of the California Environmental Quality Act. No sensitive biological or cultural resources have been identified in the area.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Department of Water Resources

Contact Person: Jason Preece

Telephone:(916) 902-7164

Signature: Jason Preece **Date:** 5/20/2024 **Title:** Sr. Engineering Geologist

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant