Public Notice

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Valley Water
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118
Telephone (408) 265-2600

Project Title: Little Arthur's Dam Removal Project

Project Location–Specific:

The project is located on private property on the south side of Redwood Retreat Road, approximately 1.2 miles northwest of the intersection with Watsonville Road, in Santa Clara County. the dam is located on Little Arthur creek, a tributary of Uvas creek, approximately 1.2 miles upstream and northwest of the confluence with Uvas Creek.

Project Location-City: Gilroy **Project Location-County**: Santa Clara

Project Purpose: Valley Water plans to implement the Little Arthur's Dam Removal Project (Project), in partnership with Trout Unlimited. The project will remove Pickell's dam, an existing dam, that was originally constructed prior to 1924 and is composed of poured-in-place concrete. The project includes the removal of dam, fish ladder, and downstream concrete slab.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Valley Water

Name of Agency or Person Carrying Out Project: Trout Unlimited

Exempt Status: (*check one*)

- ☐ Ministerial [§21080(b)(1); 15268];
- ☐ Declared Emergency [§21080(b)(3); 15269(a)];
- ☐ Emergency Project [§21080(b)(c); 15269(b)(c)];
- ☒ Categorical Exemptions [Section 15333; Class 33, "Small Habitat Restoration Projects"]
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions [State code number].

Reasons Why Project is Exempt: The project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15333:

> "Class 33 consists of projects not to exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife provided that: (a) There would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to section 15065, (b) There are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed, and (c) The project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects."

None of the conditions noted under the CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 would occur.

Description of Project: The Project consists of removing Pickell's dam, an existing defunct dam, that was originally constructed prior to 1924 and is composed of poured-in-place concrete. The project includes the removal of dam, fish ladder, and downstream concrete slab. Pickell's Dam impedes migration of all Steelhead life stages to and from several miles of high-quality spawning habitat in the upper watershed, and it impacts the natural system processes required for stream functions and values. The dam removal will consist of demolition of all concrete, including

portions of the structure that extend beyond the active channel. This reach of Little Arthur Creek, defined as 775 feet upstream of the dam, is characterized as having an average slope of 1.25%, with stable banks, and sections of shallow, exposed bedrock. Based on these findings, removal of the dam is not anticipated to heavily impact the reach. If portions of the dam are found to be keyed deeply into the bedrock on the sides of the channel, those will be left in place to maintain bank stability.

The Denil fish ladder, installed in 1986, is founded on a linear concrete footing that was poured over a sloped rock ramp that spans the channel and follows the general slope of the ladder. These features will be demolished using a breaker mounted on a mid-sized or larger excavator. Appropriate materials, such as larger rocks from the ramp and the alluvium from the immediate vicinity, resulting from the demolition will be used to form a gentler slope of approximately 6.0%. Some excavated sediments will be left on site within the channel margins to naturally mobilize, while some will be redistributed and incorporated into the fill downstream of the ladder.

The channel grading will extend approximately 200 feet upstream of the dam, as required to allow a pilot channel to daylight upstream at 6.3%. Accumulations of woody debris currently lodged upstream of the dam will be redistributed along channel margins and within the pilot channel following the removal.

The demolition is estimated to generate approximately 200 cubic yards of concrete rubble. Following discussions with regulatory staff, experts, and review of previous projects the team plans to leave all concrete rubble that is six inches or smaller in the channel, and to recycle all reinforcement, steel ladder components, and larger pieces of concrete.

Access to the site will be provided from the river-left bank, just upstream of the dam by way of an existing dirt road that will require only minimal improvements to accommodate the proposed equipment. Staging will occur both upstream of the dam to excavate and within an open pasture area immediately adjacent to the project.

A Pedestrian Bridge (cable suspension bridge) will be installed to provide access for the landowner upon removing the existing dam/crossing. This bridge is 87 feet long and roughly aligned with the original dam crest. Because existing ground at the river-right abutment location is six feet higher than river left, the river-left abutment is raised on a concrete pedestal to allow a relatively uniform distribution of loads to each abutment. Both abutments are founded on exposed sandstone bedrock, allowing for shallow spread footings of relatively low cost. Each of the abutments will be anchored to the bedrock with steel dowels, which can be installed using hand equipment.

Lead Agency: Valley Water
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Date: 6/4/2024

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Deputy Operating Officer

cc: CEQA Administrative Record