

**Riverside County**  
**Office of Economic Development**  
3403 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 400, Riverside, CA 92501

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

November 15, 2024

**Project Name:** Mesa Verde Water Reservoir Replacement Project

**Project Number:** 20728-122

**Project Location:** 16720 West Hobbsonway, east of Mesa Drive, Blythe, California, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 824-080-006

**Description of Project:** The Office of Economic Development oversees the operation of sixty County Service Areas (CSAs) throughout Riverside County. Each CSA is authorized to provide services based on the needs of each community. The CSA collects special taxes and assessments depending on the services needed for the specific CSA, with potential services including streetlights, parks and recreation, landscaping, street sweeping, water and sewage, and road maintenance.

The County Services Area 122 was formed in 1978 to provide water and road maintenance in the unincorporated area of Mesa Verde, Riverside County. The Mesa Verde Water Production and Treatment Facility, located at 16720 W. Hobbsonway, Blythe, 92225, maintains two, above ground water tanks. The smaller of the two tanks was manufactured in 2002 and no longer is working and is beyond repair. In order to maintain reliability of water supply, a new replacement tank is being sought to up to 1,000,000 gallons to match the lone, existing operational tank, so in the event that one of the tanks is not functioning, the additional tank will have sufficient capacity to continue providing water to the community. The replacement of the 350,000-gallon water tank is identified as the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). No direct or indirect physical environmental impacts are anticipated.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Riverside County

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Riverside County Office of Economic Development

**Exempt Status:** State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15301 Class 1 Existing Facilities Exemption, and Section 15061(b) (3), General Rule or "Common Sense" Exemption, Codified under Title 14, Articles 5 and 19, Sections 15061, and 15301.

**Reasons Why Project is Exempt:** The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA specifically by the State CEQA Guidelines as identified below. The project will not result in any specific or general exceptions to the use of the categorical exemption as detailed under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. The project will not cause an impact to an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern nor would the project include unusual circumstances which could have the possibility of having a significant effect on the environment. The project would not result in impacts to scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, historic resources, or other sensitive natural environments, or have a cumulative effect to the environment. No significant environmental impacts are anticipated to occur with the replacement of the non-functioning water tank within the footprint of the existing Mesa Verde Water Production and Treatment Facility.

- **Section 15301 (b)–Existing Facilities:** This Class 1 categorical exemption includes the operation, repair, maintenance, leasing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures or facilities, provided the exemption only involves negligible or no expansion of the previous site’s use. The project, as proposed, is limited to the replacement of one of the two tanks comprising the Mesa Verde Water Reservoir facility. The new water tank which would contain up to 1,000,000 gallons to match the existing operational tank is being conducted to maintain the safe and reliable operation of the water system. The improvements would occur to the existing facility, within the existing footprint, and would not result in a significant increase in capacity. The use of the facilities would continue to provide public services and would not result in a significant increase in capacity or intensity of use. Therefore, the project is exempt as it meets the scope and intent of the Categorical Exemption identified in Section 15301, Article 19, Categorical Exemptions of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Section 15061 (b) (3) – “Common Sense” Exemption:** In accordance with CEQA, the use of the Common Sense Exemption is based on the “general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.” State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061(b) (3). The use of this exemption is appropriate if “it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.” *Ibid*. This determination is an issue of fact and if sufficient evidence exists in the record that the activity cannot have a significant effect on the environment, then the exemption applies and no further evaluation under CEQA is required. See *No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles* (1974) 13 Cal. 3d 68. The ruling in this case stated that if a project falls within a category exempt by administrative regulation or 'it can be seen with certainty that the activity in question will not have a significant effect on the environment', no further agency evaluation is required. With certainty, there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed improvements to the water system equipment will not result in any direct or indirect physical environmental impacts. The installation of a new water tank would occur within the footprint of the existing facility, and is being completed to create a more reliable and functional facility, so that water can continue to be provided in the event that one of the tanks is in need of repair. The use of the facility for public services would remain unchanged. Therefore, in no way, would the project as proposed have the potential to cause a significant environmental impact and the project is exempt from further CEQA analysis.

Based upon the identified exemptions above, the County of Riverside hereby concludes that no physical environmental impacts are anticipated to occur and the project as proposed is exempt under CEQA. No further environmental analysis is warranted.

**Signed:**  **Date:** 11-15-2024

Mike Sullivan, Senior Environmental Planner  
 County of Riverside