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## Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

### California Environmental Quality Act Notice of Exemption for Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**From:** California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Central Valley Region, Redding Office  
364 Knollcrest Drive, Suite 205  
Redding, CA 96002

**Date:** 11 December 2024

**Project Title:**

Big Chico Creek Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project  
(in-water) (Project)

**Project Location - Specific:**

Address: Big Chico Creek, Upper Bidwell Park, Chico.  
Latitude: 39.78489° and Longitude: -121.73943°

**Project Location - County:**

Butte County

**Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:**

The purpose of the Big Chico Creek Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project is to modify a fish passage barrier to allow two listed salmonid species and other native fish species access to optimal habitat upstream. This will be accomplished by removing and modifying the current existing instream configuration of boulders and minor regrading of the stream channel. In addition, 17 dilapidated concrete and rebar fish ladder weirs that were constructed in 1956 will be removed from the stream channel. The anticipated modifications will be designed to reduce channel velocity and vertical drops while enhancing existing pools and creating new holding pools.

**Name of Public Agencies Approving Project:**

**Federal Agencies:** The project requires authorization under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404, Nationwide Permit 27, Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment Activities.

**State Agency approval for Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification:**  
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, Redding Office.  
WDID No. 5A04CR00370.

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:**

Damon Goodman  
California Trout  
435 Pacific Ave, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94133

**Exempt Status:**

The Central Valley Water Board has determined that the Project is exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061.

Specifically, the Project was determined to qualify as a statutorily exempt restoration project under CEQA pursuant to California Public Resources Code, section 21080.56 (Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects). The lead agency, City of Chico, received concurrence of the statutory exemption from California Department of Fish and Wildlife on 5 January 2024 and filed a Notice of Exemption (NOE) at the State Clearinghouse (SCH) on 17 May 2024 (SCH No. 2024050797).

**Reasons why Project is Exempt:**

This project is statutorily exempt under CEQA section 21080.56 because the Project meets all of the following conditions: (1) the Project is exclusively to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or is exclusively to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife; (2) the Project may have public benefits incidental to the Project's fundamental purpose; (3) the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment; and (4) Project construction activities are solely related to habitat restoration.

**Federal Lead Agency Contact Person:**

Lillian Jepson  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento  
(916) 557-7759

**State Lead Agency Contact Person:**

Lynn Coster, Senior Environmental Scientist  
Chief Storm Water and Water Quality Certification Unit  
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Redding Branch Office  
(530) 224-2437

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Lynn Coster  
Senior Environmental Scientist  
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Redding

cc: Damon Goodman, California Trout, San Francisco  
Lilian Jepson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento  
Anthony McLaughlin, Gallaway Enterprises, Chico  
Kevin Sevier, Gallaway Enterprises, Chico  
Brooks Taylor, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Rancho Cordova