

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: California Department of Water Resources
San Luis Field Division, 31770 Gonzaga Road
Gustine, CA 95322

Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

Project Title: California Aqueduct Reach 5 Vegetation Management

Project Location City & County: Fresno County

Project Location—Specific: Work will occur in Reach 5 of the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct) in the Department of Water Resources (DWR) right of way (ROW) on the right (R) side of the Aqueduct. Work will occur in approximately 55 feet-wide areas along the Aqueduct toe roads from Aqueduct milepost (MP) 122.15R to MP 125.31R. The northernmost point of the work site, MP 122.15R, is about three miles northwest of the intersection of the Aqueduct and State Route (SR) 33. The southernmost point of the work site, MP 125.31R, is at the intersection of the Aqueduct and SR 33.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: San Luis Field Division (SLFD) will use a 320-excavator equipped with a standard digging bucket and a hydraulic thumb attachment to mechanically remove vegetation shorter than 8 feet in the work sites; the vegetation is predominantly honey mesquite (*Neltuma odorata*). Vegetation taller than 8 feet will be left in place, but limbs up to 8 feet off the ground will be removed. The removed material will be piled on site using a backhoe equipped with a clamshell bucket; the piles will be burned when there is an authorized burn day under SLFD's burn permit. The sites will be accessed using the existing Aqueduct asphalt and toe roads. All work will occur outside the nesting season.

Overgrown vegetation prevents SLFD from being able to visually inspect the Aqueduct embankments; work is necessary for SLFD to inspect and maintain the Aqueduct and DWR ROW. The State Water Project will benefit from this work.

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: 15301(h) (Existing Facilities – Maintenance of existing native growth)
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: Work involves maintenance of existing native vegetation in the DWR ROW to improve visual inspection of the Aqueduct embankments. There will be no expansion of existing or former use of the Aqueduct or toe roads. Categorical Exemption 15301(h) (Existing Facilities – maintenance of existing native growth) applies.

Contact Person: Mark McDaniel

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Signed by Lead Agency

Name: Mark McDaniel **Signature:** *Mark McDaniel* **Date:** 12/20/2024

Title: Planner Scheduler/UC Sup.