Print Form

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

County Clerk
County of: San Bernardino

From: (Public Agency): City of Redlands
35 Cajon Street, Suite 15A
Redlands, CA 92373
(Address)

Project Title: Mill Creek Water Influent Line Replacement Project

Project Applicant: City of Redlands

Project Location - Specific:
northeast of the Tate Water Treatment Plant (3050 Mill Creek Road) and south of New

Project Location - City: Redlands Project Location - County: San Bernardino

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Redlands

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: John Harris

Exempt Status: **(check one):**

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15302, 15304, and 15306
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Replacement/Reconstruciton, Minor Alterations Information Gathering

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Proposed Project meets all the conditions of Class 2, Class 4, and Class 6 Categorical Exemption. The Proposed Project does not have the potential to trigger any of the exceptions identified in CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. See attached Justification Report.

Lead Agency Contact Person: John Harris Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (909) 798-7658

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: J. K. Harris Date: 2/18/2025 Title: MUED DIRECTOR

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

Revised 2011

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Mill Creek Water Influent Line Replacement Project
Redlands, CA
Categorical Exemption (CE) Justification Report

Introduction

The City of Redlands (City), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), proposes geotechnical exploration work, which will consist of boring and test pits, and potholing work to support plans for a new pipeline which will cross Mill Creek west of the existing pipeline; see Figure 1 (Proposed Project).

Project Location

The Project site is located northeast of the Tate Water Treatment Plant (3050 Mill Creek Road) and south of Newport Avenue, across Mill Creek; see Figure 1.

Description of Project

Boring and Test Pits

Planned work will consist of two exploratory borings (B-4 and B-5) that will be drilled with a truck or track mounted CME 75 (or equivalent) drill rig using a standard hollow stem auger and/or HQ rock core drilling methods, and three test pits (TP-1, TP-2, and TP-3) that will be dug using a John Deere 75G (or equivalent) excavator. The borings will be performed to depths of 10 and 30 feet (or refusal) respectively, and the test pits will be dug approximately 10 to 15 feet deep and 10 to 15 feet wide using a 24- or 36-inch bucket equipped with a grabbing thumb. Each exploration will be performed at the approximate location shown in Figure 1. Temporary impact areas will be approximately 40 by 40 feet at bore and test pit locations. Efforts will be made to track in and out along a single set of tracks when accessing work locations to minimize disturbance. No work will be performed in the area immediately adjacent to the existing levee. The proposed exploratory work plan with the approximate locations of the existing pipeline, proposed alignment, proposed work locations, and potential access route is shown in Figure 1. Equipment anticipated to be used during the geotechnical exploration work include is described below.

Boring work – with a drill rig and support trucks:

- CME 75 drill rig – track mounted, 6.5-foot track to track width, 10-foot length, 12.5-foot operating height, and 14,000 pounds (lbs.) operating weight.
- Ford F-450 super duty flat bed – rubber tires, 30-foot length, 7-foot height, 7-foot width, and 8,000 lbs. curb weight.
- Ford F-150 pickup – rubber tires, 17-foot overall length, 6-foot height, 6-foot width, and 4,500 lbs. curb weight.

Test Pit Work – will require an excavator and support trucks:

- John Deere 380 excavator or similar – track mounted, 13-foot track length, 11-foot track to track width, and 85,000 lbs. operating weight.
- Ford F-250 Super Duty – rubber tires, 20-foot overall length, 7-foot height, 7-foot width, and 7,000 lbs. curb weight.
- Ford F-150 pickup – rubber tires, 17-foot overall length, 6-foot height, 6-foot width, and 4,500 lbs. curb weight.

Potholing

The Proposed Project includes performing six potholes within the Project area to explore potential subsurface utility conflicts. Potholes will range in depths from approximately 5 to 7 feet. Each pothole will

be performed at the approximate location shown in Figure 1. Temporary impact areas will be approximately 40 by 40 feet at pothole locations. Equipment anticipated to be used during the geotechnical exploration work include the following:

- Vacuum excavation truck – rubber tires, approximately 35-foot overall length, 15-foot height, 8.5-foot width, gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 25,500 lbs. Classified as a non-commercial driver's license (CDL) required truck.
- Ford F-250 Super Duty or similar- rubber tires, 20-foot overall length, 7-foot height, 7-foot width, maximum weight of 1,000 lbs. Used for geophysical investigation.
- Concrete saw.
- Traditional mid-size backhoe (if-needed) - rubber tires, approximately 17-foot overall length, 7-foot height, 4.5- foot width, maximum weight of 20,000 lbs. Delivery could be accomplished in non-weight restricted area.
- Pneumatic equipment:
  - Tamper
  - Jackhammer
  - Air lance

The proposed access routes are included in Figure 1.

On August 29, 2024, a site visit was conducted to review access for the planned geotechnical work. While on site, an active leak was observed from one of the pipe's welded joints at the northeast end of the pipe. The leak was substantial and based on the vegetation growth and pooling around the leak it was assumed that the pipe had been leaking for some time. Utilities Maintenance staff from the City assessed the leaking pipe the following day on August 30, 2024, and determined that two weld patches (one on each side of the pipe) were necessary to repair the pipe. The pipe was repaired in September 2024 once risk of the Line Fire burning just north of the pipeline was reduced and the area was safely accessible. In addition, the Line Fire may contribute to higher debris flows (due to erosion) in Mill Creek this coming storm season that could further damage the pipeline support footings or the supports themselves. This leak and the adjacent Line Fire further adds to the urgency to expedite the geotechnical exploration work in support of the pipeline's replacement before any weather events or further maintenance issues lead to catastrophic failure.

Project Schedule

The Proposed Project is expected to take one week to complete and will occur Spring 2025.

Reason Why Project is Exempt

The Proposed Project is subject to CEQA; however, it is exempt from further environmental analysis pursuant to § 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction), § 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) and §15306 (Information Gathering) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to:

a) Replacement or reconstruction of existing schools and hospitals to provide earthquake resistant structures which do not increase capacity more than 50 percent.
b) Replacement of a commercial structure with a new structure of substantially the same size, purpose, and capacity.
c) Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.

d) Conversion of overhead electric utility distribution system facilities to underground including connection to existing overhead electric utility distribution lines where the surface is restored to the condition existing prior to the undergrounding.

Class 4 Categorical Exemption consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to:

a) Grading on land with a slope of less than 10 percent, except that grading shall not be exempt in a waterway, in any wetland, in an officially designated (by federal, state, or local government action) scenic area, or in officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard such as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within an official Seismic Hazard Zone, as delineated by the State Geologist.
b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping.
c) Filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site.
d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.
e) Minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment, including carnivals, sales of Christmas trees, etc.
f) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored.
g) Maintenance dredging where the spoil is deposited in a spoil area authorized by all applicable state and federal regulatory agencies.
h) The creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way.
i) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters.

Class 6 Categorical Exemption consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

The Proposed Project meets all the conditions of Class 2, Class 4, and Class 6 Categorical Exemption. The Proposed Project does not have the potential to trigger any of the exceptions identified in CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. Consequently, as documented below, the Proposed Project is exempt from further CEQA review.

(a) Location. The Proposed Project will occur adjacent to the existing pipeline crossing Mill Creek, within the streambed. Minor ground disturbance would occur during construction but would be limited to the areas identified in Figure 1 and described above. As described further below, the Proposed Project would not impact environmentally sensitive areas or an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. This exception does not apply to the Proposed Project.

(b) Cumulative Impact. The Proposed Project would not have a significant cumulative impact on the environment, including those due to unusual circumstances. The Proposed Project is limited to the geotechnical work identified above. The work is anticipated to occur over a week in Spring

2025 and once complete no subsequent project actions or impacts off-site or on-site would occur. This exception does not apply to the Proposed Project.

(c) **Significant Effect.** The Proposed Project would not have a significant effect on the environment, including those due to unusual circumstances. Impacts to traffic, noise, biological resources, air quality, and water quality are described below:

Traffic: The Proposed Project would generate a temporary increase in traffic due the mobilization of equipment and construction workers. The increased traffic would occur for the one-week duration of the Proposed Project. Every effort will be made to limit the number of vehicles driven in the streambed and only vehicles/equipment that are essential for the geotechnical investigation will be mobilized. All nonessential vehicles/equipment will remain parked on the street above. All vehicles/equipment will track in and out following the same path as much as feasible (e.g., backing out as necessary to avoid having to turn around). In the event that turning around is necessary and will require driving outside of the proposed work limits, any potential travel areas will be cleared by a biological monitor prior to turning around. The proposed access routes are included in Figure 1. The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts associated with Traffic.

Noise: The noise generated by the Proposed Project would be limited to the one week timeframe for which the Proposed Project is scheduled to be completed. The Proposed Project is exempt from the City's noise regulations per Section 8.06.120 of the Municipal Code. The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts associated with Noise.

Biological Resources: Chambers Group conducted a desktop analysis of the potential sensitive resources that could be affected by the Proposed Project. The desktop analysis included US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) critical habitat and IPaC searches, a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) search, a California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rare Plant Inventory search, and a literature search for potentially relevant reports for projects in the vicinity of the proposed alignment. Chambers Group also consulted with USFWS 10a permitted biologists for SBKR, as the species is known to occur immediately west of the Southern California Edison (SCE) Powerhouse Station. The results of the desktop analysis are summarized below.

Sensitive Vegetation Communities

Based on the desktop analysis, the following sensitive vegetation community may have potential to occur within 1 mile of the Proposed Project:

- Riversidian Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub

Special Status Plant Species

Based on the desktop analysis, the following California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) List 1 and 2 plant species may have potential to occur within 1 mile of the Proposed Project:

- Parry's spineflower (Chorizanthe parryi var. parryi) CRPR 1B.1
- salt spring checkerbloom (Sidalcea neomexicana) CPRP 2B.2
- white-bracted spineflower (Chorizanthe xanti var. leucotheca) CRPR 1B.2

In addition, the following species were identified during the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory search for the Yucaipa USGS 7.5-minute Topographic Quadrangle, and may have potential to occur within 1 mile of the Proposed Project:

- California satintail (Imperata brevifolia) CRPR 2B.1
- Santa Ana River woollystar (Eriastrum densifolium ssp. sanctorum) FE, SE, CRPR 1B.1
- slender-horned spineflower (Dodecahema leptoceras) FE, SE, CRPR 1B.1

Special Status Wildlife Species

Based on the desktop analysis, the following special status wildlife species may have potential to occur within 1 mile of the Proposed Project:

- coast patch-nosed snake (Salvadora hexalepis virgultea) SSC
- coastal California gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica californica) FT, SSC
- San Bernardino (Merriam's) kangaroo rat (Dipodomys merriami parvus) FE, SE, SSC
- San Diego desert woodrat (Neotoma lepida intermedia) SSC
- western spadefoot (Spea hammondii) FPT, SSC

Critical Habitat

The Proposed Project falls within Final Critical Habitat for the following species:

- Santa Ana sucker (Catostomus santaanae) FT, SSC
- San Bernardino (Merriam's) kangaroo rat

No vegetation removal is proposed. Potential crushing of vegetation may occur; however, a biologist will survey ahead of the crew and determine the best pathway to minimize/avoid impacts to native vegetation. See Avoidance Measures below.

The biologist will also survey along the proposed access route for special status plant species. If found, the biologist will identify a route that avoids impacts to special status species. Proposed test pits, boring areas and pothole areas will be located outside of special status plant species areas, if present. No impacts to special status plant species are anticipated for implementation of the Proposed Project.

Based on the database review (CDFW 2024, USFWS 2024), no occurrences of Santa Ana sucker were recorded within 5 miles of the proposed alignment. This portion of Mill Creek is seasonally dry and may not support the species. In addition, the Proposed Project would not occur during high flows and would not occur in any wetted portion of the creek. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

While the Proposed Project falls within Final Critical Habitat for San Bernardino kangaroo rat (SBKR), database searches resulted in only one occurrence of SBKR within 1 mile of the of the Proposed Project, just west of the SCE Powerhouse Station (Figure 2). Known and potential habitat for SBKR in relation to the Project location is shown in Figure 3 attached. The biologist will survey for potential SBKR and sign (e.g., burrows, tracks) and if found, will identify an access route and work areas that avoid these areas. No impacts to special status wildlife are anticipated for implementation of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts associated with Biological Resources.

Avoidance Measures

- A biologist will conduct a site visit ahead of the Proposed Project work to scout out potential access routes and identify any sensitive areas that should be avoided. Any sensitive areas (e.g., sensitive vegetation communities, special status plants or animals

including but not limited to the species listed above, or areas with burrows) will be flagged for avoidance.

- Access routes and geotechnical exploratory work areas will fall within previously disturbed areas (e.g., existing OHV track), and areas that are free of vegetation as much as feasible.
- The biologist will work with the City to shift the locations of bore, test pit, and pothole locations along the proposed alignment (as feasible) to avoid native vegetation and any sensitive resource areas, if identified.
- Access is anticipated to occur from east of the existing pipeline. The City will conduct a site visit ahead of Proposed Project start to ensure all machinery, vehicles, and equipment can pass safely beneath the existing pipeline. If any clearance issues are identified, any machinery, vehicles, and/or equipment that are too tall will be swapped for a counterpart with suitable clearance.
- A biological monitor will be present during all geotechnical exploratory work to survey/walk ahead of crew, relocate or exclude any general wildlife from the work areas (as permitted), and monitor that work is being conducted within the proposed work limits. The biological monitor will record detailed monitoring notes on a daily monitoring log, including but not limited to a description of work activities and location, any sensitive species observed, and protective measures implemented (as appropriate), any impacts occurring to native vegetation, and site photographs including before and after photos at each work location.
- If work will occur during the bird breeding season (typically March 1 to September 30), the biological monitor will conduct a nesting bird survey within 3 days ahead of the start of work. In addition, daily pre-activity sweeps for nesting birds will be conducted at each active work location.
- The biological monitor will conduct a daily pre-activity clearance sweep for special status wildlife species at each active work location.
- If any work will occur in Riversidian Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub habitat, a Chambers Group botanist will conduct a survey for CNPS List 1 and 2 plant species, prior to the start of geotechnical exploratory work. If any special status plant species are identified the plants will be recorded and flagged for avoidance.
- If any work will occur in suitable habitat for special status wildlife (e.g., coast patch-nosed snake, coastal California gnatcatcher, San Bernardino [Merriam's] kangaroo rat, San Diego desert woodrat, and western spadefoot), a qualified and/or permitted biologist will conduct a clearance sweep and set up avoidance buffers to avoid any temporary disturbance. In this event, the proposed exploratory work area must be far enough from the special status resources to avoid disturbance, or the work area will not be allowed for this phase of work.

Air Quality: The Proposed Project would be limited in duration to one week. The Proposed Project would result in a temporary increase of emissions at the site; however, emission factors would be negligible and would cease once the Proposed Project is complete. The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts associated with Air Quality.

Water Quality: According to the Regional MS4 Permit (R8-2010-0033), construction sites less than one-acre are required to implement an effective combination of erosion and sediment control best management practices BMPs (e.g. wind erosion controls, perimeter controls, water

conservation practices, spill prevention and control) to prevent erosion and sediment loss and the discharge of construction waste. The Project site is less than 0.25 acres and would comply with Section 15.54.200 of the City's Municipal Code which requires owners or developers to implement stormwater pollution control requirements. With implementation of BMPs associated with MS4 Permit requirements and adherence to City requirements, the Project's construction-related activities would not violate any water quality standards or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality. The Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts associated with Water Quality.

(d) Scenic Highways. The Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly affect an officially designated scenic highway or scenic resources near a scenic highway. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. The Proposed Project has not been identified as a hazardous waste site pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (SWRCB 2025, DTSC 2025). There are no listed hazardous waste sites located immediately adjacent to the Project site (SWRCB 2024, DTSC 2024). Therefore, this exception does not apply to this Proposed Project.

(f) Historical Resources. The Proposed Project would not result in any impacts to historic resources. The Proposed Project is limited to exploratory geotechnical work. Therefore, this exception does not apply to this Proposed Project.

References:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
2024 California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). RareFind 5. Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch. Accessed online at: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Maps-and-Data. Accessed April 2024.

California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)
2024 Envirostor Database

California State Water Resources Control Board
(SWRCB) 2024 Geotracker database

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS Analysis Branch. Accessed online at: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/. Accessed April 2024.