



MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 17, 2025

To: Brian Peck, P.E., Senior Project Manager, Project Partners serving South Coast Water District

FROM: Pam Reading, Principal Environmental Planner, LSA
Laurel Huntzinger, Associate Environmental Planner, LSA
Ashley Honer, Environmental Planner, LSA

SUBJECT: Class 1 Categorical Exemption for the Proposed Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation Project in Dana Point, California

LSA is pleased to submit this memorandum in consideration of a Class 1 Categorical Exemption for the proposed Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation Project in the City of Dana Point, California.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The South Coast Water District (District) is proposing the Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation Project (proposed project), which consists of rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station (Lift Station 11) in the City of Dana Point (City). As shown on Figure 1 (Attachment A), the project site (Lift Station 11) is located in the Dana Point Harbor, east of Embarcadero Place, just north of the parking access gate, west of a dry boat storage area adjacent to Embarcadero Marina, and south of Embarcadero Place and dry boat storage.

Land uses in the vicinity of the project site primarily include commercial and recreational uses. The western portion of the project site is located within the public right of way and does not have an assigned City zoning designation or General Plan land use designation. The eastern portion of the project site is zoned Dana Point Harbor Planned Community (DPH-PC) in the City's Zoning Code and is designated as Harbor Marine Land (HML) in the City's General Plan. Surrounding areas are designated as Harbor Marine Land (HML) and Visitor/Recreation Commercial (V/RC) in the City's General Plan and are zoned Dana Point Harbor Planned Community (DPH-PC) in the City's Zoning Code. The project site is located within the Appeal Jurisdiction of the California Coastal Zone.

The proposed rehabilitation project would include the following elements:

- Reconstruction of the dry well floor including replacing the top five inches of concrete and reconfiguring the slope of the floor to a new partial sump;
- Repair of spalling in the ceiling of the cylindrical reinforced concrete structure (CRCS);
- Repair of the corroded metal plates between the CRCS and the vertical access pipe shaft (VAPS);
- Replacement of the dry well access ladder and related anchor bolts;
- Repair of the dry well interior coating system;

- Replacement of the sewage pumps, connecting piping and valving, and associated appurtenances;
- Replacement of the dry well drainage system including submersible pump and connecting pipe;
- Replacement of all electrical conduit within the dry well;
- Replacement of all conductors from the existing power supply panel to all devices;
- Replacement of the breakers in the existing panel for new sewage pumps;
- Replacement of an obsolete programmable logic controller;
- Replacement of corroded electrical panel framing; and
- Replacement of all lift station instrumentation primary elements including level sensors.

The proposed project would require a contractor staging and storage area within a 3,000 square foot area of the Embarcadero Marina that is currently used for long-term boat parking. Additionally, the proposed project would require the installation of a temporary bypass system to be installed and operated by the contractor. Any excavation or land disturbance activities would occur within land that was previously disturbed to construct the existing lift station and associated infrastructure. The proposed project is intended to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. Future construction of additional utility infrastructure would not be necessary as a result of implementation of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would not involve the expansion of the use of the District's utility infrastructure.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, SECTION 15301, CLASS 1 EXISTING FACILITIES EXEMPTION

Article 19 of the *State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines* includes, as required by Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21084, a list of classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and, as a result, are exempt from review under CEQA. This document has been prepared to serve as the basis for compliance with CEQA as it pertains to the proposed project, and to demonstrate that the project would be exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15301(b) of the CEQA Guidelines (Class 1, Existing Facilities), consistent with the provisions of *State CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15301 and 15300.2. Specifically, the information provided herein shows the following:

- a. The project qualifies for an exemption under *State CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15301 (i.e., Class 1) and, as a result, would not have a significant effect on the environment.
- b. The analysis shows there are no exceptions to qualifying for the exemption, as identified in *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15300.2.

Under *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15301, a Class 1 exemption is applicable to projects that consist of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing structures and/or facilities, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. The proposed project would closely align with *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15301(b):

(b) Existing facilities of both investor and publicly-owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services.

The proposed project includes rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. The proposed construction would constitute a minor alteration of existing facilities with no expansion beyond the existing condition to correct a sewer problem. The proposed project would be consistent with the existing use of the project site, and the proposed project would rely on, and be accommodated by, the existing infrastructure associated with the project site. Any excavation or land disturbance activities would occur within land that was previously disturbed to construct the existing lift station and associated infrastructure. The proposed project would repair and replace existing components of the lift station and therefore, would not change the purpose or function of the lift station, or result in the addition or expansion of uses associated with the lift station. Therefore, the proposed project would not involve any expansion of use beyond the District's existing utility infrastructure.

As the proposed project properly qualifies for an exemption under *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15301 (i.e., Class 1), the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment. Additionally, the following analysis shows there are no exceptions to qualifying for the CE, as identified in *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15300.2.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT CATEGORICAL EXEMPTIONS – EXCEPTIONS

In addition to investigating the applicability of *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15301 (Class 1) for the proposed project, this memorandum assesses whether any of the exceptions to qualifying for the CE are present. The following analysis compares the criteria of *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15300.2 (Exceptions) to the proposed project. As described in the analysis below, LSA has determined that none of the exceptions are applicable to the proposed project.

(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

The proposed project does not rely on the specific classes of exemptions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 called out at the beginning of exception 15300.2(a). Nonetheless, if this exception were applicable to a Class 1 exemption, the proposed project would still not qualify as an exception to the exemption.

As shown in Figure 1, the entire project site is located within a developed area within Dana Point Harbor, which itself is in an urbanized area of Orange County. There are no structures or vegetation present on the project site. No special-status species are expected to occur on the project site in its existing condition because there is no suitable habitat. The proposed project would not involve the removal of any trees on the project site or in the nearby vicinity and,

therefore, would not impact nesting birds. In addition, the proposed project would not result in any impacts to an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. Therefore, the exception under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) does not apply to the proposed project.

(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place over time is significant.

The proposed project includes rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. Future construction of additional utility infrastructure would not be necessary as a result of implementation of the proposed project. Any excavation or land disturbance activities would occur within land that was previously disturbed to construct the existing lift station and associated infrastructure.

The proposed project would rely on, and be accommodated by, the existing infrastructure associated with the project site. The proposed project does not, in and of itself, result in significant impacts. Additionally, no permanent or long-term effects, such as loss of wetlands or other sensitive natural communities, take of special-status species, increased vehicle trips, or creation of stationary sources of air and noise emissions, would occur as part of the proposed project. The proposed project would also not result in any long-term or growth-inducing impacts. Furthermore, there are no current or reasonably foreseeable projects similar in nature that are proposed in the project area; therefore, there are no project impacts that would be cumulatively considerable in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, or the effects of probable future projects.

Therefore, the proposed project's contributions to potential cumulative impacts would not be cumulatively considerable, and the exception under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) does not apply to the proposed project.

(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

No unusual circumstances have been identified in or around the project site that would result in significant environmental impacts. The proposed project includes rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. The scope of work would be limited to the boundaries of the project site. Any excavation or land disturbance activities would occur within land that was previously disturbed to construct the existing lift station and associated infrastructure. No amendments to an adopted planning document would be required for implementation of the proposed project. Given the urban and developed nature of the project site and the surrounding area, as well as its existing function and use, there is no evidence to indicate that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Therefore, the exception under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c) does not apply to the proposed project.

- (d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified Environmental Impact Report.**

The proposed project includes rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. The proposed project is approximately 1,500 feet south of the Pacific Coast Highway, which is an eligible State scenic highway.¹ However, the project site would not be visible to travelers on the Pacific Coast Highway. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in damage to existing scenic resources. Accordingly, the exception under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d) does not apply to the proposed project.

- (e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.**

The project site is not included on the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List or any lists compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.² Therefore, no impacts associated with locating a project on a site included on a list of hazardous materials would occur, and the exception under *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15300.2(e) does not apply to the proposed project.

- (f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.**

The proposed project includes rehabilitation work on an existing dry well style sewage lift station to resolve existing safety and reliability issues. The project site is fully developed and has undergone substantial surficial and subsurface disturbance. The areas immediately surrounding the project site are also fully developed. Ground disturbance associated with the proposed project would occur within an area with existing sewer facilities and no previously undisturbed land would be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f) does not apply to the proposed project.

¹ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2018. *California State Scenic Highway System Map*. Website: <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca> (accessed February 6, 2025).

² California Environmental Protection Agency. 2025. *Cortese List Data Resources*. Website: <https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/> (accessed February 6, 2025).

CONCLUSION

In summary, the proposed project will not result in any specific or general exceptions to the use of a Categorical Exemption as detailed under *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15301. No potential cumulative impacts or unusual circumstances would occur that may reasonably create an environmental impact. The project site does not have value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species. The proposed project would not result in damage to a scenic resource within a highway designated as a State Scenic Highway. Further, the project site is not on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. Additionally, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified by the *State CEQA Guidelines* identified above.

Attachments: A: Figure 1

ATTACHMENT A

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 1

LSA

● Project Site



0 300 600
FEET

SOURCE: Google Maps (2024)

I:\2023\20230929.05\GIS\Pro\Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation\Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation.aprx (2/10/2025)

Lift Station 11 Rehabilitation Project
Project Location