

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To:
Riverside County Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder
4080 Lemon Street
Riverside, CA 92501

From:
Western Municipal Water District
14205 Meridian Parkway
Riverside, CA 92518

Project Title: Mockingbird Pump Station Project

Project Applicant: Western Municipal Water District

Project Address: Intersection of Van Buren Boulevard and Mockingbird Canyon Road

Project City: Riverside **Project County:** Riverside

Project Description: Please see attachment.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Western Municipal Water District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Western Municipal Water District

Exempt Status (Check one):

- Ministerial (California Public Resources Code, §21080(b)(1); California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 18, §15268)
- Declared Emergency (California Public Resources Code, §21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (California Public Resources Code, §21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))
- Categorical Exemption (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 19, Class 1, §15301, Existing Facilities)
- Statutory Exemption (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 18, §(#))
- General Rule (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 5, §15061(b)(3))

Reason why project is exempt: This Project has been determined to be categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21080(b)(9); Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter 1, §15301 Class 1. Please see attachment.

Lead Agency: Western Municipal Water District

Contact Person: Cesar Carrillo, P.E.

Phone: 951.571.7231

Project Description

Project Background/Existing Conditions: Built in 1992, the Mockingbird Pump Station is located at the intersection of Van Buren Boulevard and Mockingbird Canyon Road in the City of Riverside and serves potable water to approximately 24,000 retail connections. The Pump Station is approximately 3 miles southwest of the Riverside Freeway (State Highway 91). The Mockingbird Pump Station moves an average of 10,000 acre-feet of potable water annually. The Mockingbird Pump Station uses seven vertical turbine pumping units driven by electric motors. The existing site includes a motor control center (MCC), located in the site electrical room and is connected to the utility power source. Additionally, this station is equipped with 2.5 horse-power chemical dosing units responsible for the delivery of chlorine and ammonia used for the disinfection of water to ensure public health.

In 2022, Western installed a TESLA energy storage system at the Mockingbird Pump Station in the MCC, which involved installing two Megapack batteries with an energy output rating of 572 kilowatt (kW). The batteries provide energy redundancy as well as generate energy cost savings at the Mockingbird site.

Project Description: The Project will involve construction of two 450 kW parallel backup generators and an automatic transfer switch for the Mockingbird Pump Station to provide emergency backup power during an outage, as the existing pumping units are currently served from utility power and do not have a form of backup power. The generators will have double walled tanks to provide their own secondary containment.

Upon power loss from the primary utility power source, the battery system will turn on for a brief period to support a portion of the loads in the time that it takes the proposed generator to turn on. Once the generator is running, the battery system will shut off and the energy loads will be supported by the generator. The Project will include a remote terminal unit to integrate the proposed generators with the existing site controls for the utility power and battery system.

Construction: Construction activities will require construction of two 5' by 16' at grade concrete slab foundations with deepened footings to make up for any existing slope. The generators are pre-manufactured off-site, and will be trucked in and placed on each concrete pad by crane. Additionally, the Project would involve placement of approximately 150 feet of conduit trenching, which would run from the proposed generators and switchboard to the existing MCC. The proposed switchboard would also be pre-manufactured off-site and placed on-site during construction by a small crane.

The equipment and conduit would be installed on-site prior to shutting off any existing equipment to minimize the loss of power. Once the generators, conduit and switchboard are in place, connections to the existing MCC will be made. A temporary generator will be provided to ensure critical pumps are kept online during the entirety of the construction work occurring in the existing MCC. No grading is anticipated for the Project, and the Project would not increase impervious area on-site.

Operations: During operations, the WMWD would require routine monthly maintenance activities, which include running the generators for approximately 30 minutes to ensure adequate working conditions. Additionally, diesel tanker fuel delivery trucks would access the site bi-annually to provide fuel deliveries to the generators.

Evaluation Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act

The City must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 when approving discretionary projects within its jurisdiction. The Mockingbird Pump Station Project is a discretionary project, and the appropriate CEQA compliance document for this Project would be a Categorical Exemption (CE) under Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

Exemption Requirements: Pursuant to Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines, a Class 1 CE consists of:

“The operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use.”

Among the examples of appropriate projects identified for this Class of CEs in Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines includes:

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

The Project would involve the minor alteration of the existing Mockingbird Pump Station to install emergency generators, a switchboard and conduit connections and ensure continuation of potable water to the service area. The Project would not involve expansion of the existing use, and would include minor site modifications to provide emergency backup power during an outage, as the existing pumping units are currently served from utility power and do not have a form of backup power. Construction activities, including installation of the concrete foundation, switchboard and conduit trenching would be minimal, and the emergency generators are pre-manufactured off-site. No grading would occur on-site. Routine maintenance activities would only occur once a month, and the existing Pump Station would continue to provide potable water services to the approximate 24,000 retail connections within the WMWD service area. As the Project would involve the negligible expansion of use, the Project would comply with the provisions as discussed under Class 1.

Exception Requirements: Section 15300.2, Exceptions, of the State CEQA Guidelines defines six exceptions to the application of a CE, including location, cumulative impact, significant effect, scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, and historical resources. Exemptions are subject to the additional conditions described in Section 15300.2, Exceptions, of the State CEQA Guidelines, as follows:

“(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 all instances, except where the project may impact on 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 Project is not considered under Classes 3, 4, 5, 6 or 11. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the 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 Project would be limited to the existing Mockingbird Pump Station area, and would require minor alterations that would not involve expansion of the existing use. Construction activities and access would occur on-site. Based on review of the City's Cumulative Projects Locator 2024, there are no active construction projects within a mile of the Project site (Riverside 2024a). This Project would be stand-alone and the City of Riverside is not contemplating similar, repeated projects in the area. No cumulative impact would result.

“(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.”

The Project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances, as demonstrated by the following discussion. The Project would involve minor alterations to the existing Pump Station to install emergency generators for emergency backup power during an outage. The Project would not involve the expansion of the existing use. Therefore, there are no unusual circumstances, and the Project would not have a significant environmental impact.

“(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 EIR.”

No officially designated scenic highways are located near the Project. The nearest is an eligible scenic highway, State Route (SR) 15, which is located approximately 8-miles west of the Project site (Caltrans 2024). Due to distance, the Project site is not visible from SR- 15. Therefore, the Project would not result in damage to scenic resources within a designated state scenic highway, and no impact would occur.

“(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 hazardous waste and substances list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the *California Government Code*, also referred to as the Cortese List, was consulted (CalEPA 2024). The Project site is not identified on the Cortese List, and therefore no impact would occur.

“(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.”

In the existing setting, the Project site is developed with the existing Mockingbird Pump Station. Based on review of the City's Historic Resources Inventory, the Project site is not identified within a historic district or as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit (Riverside 2024b). Therefore, the Project would not directly or indirectly cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and this exception does not apply.

Conclusion: Based on the above analysis, the Project would be consistent with the requirements of Section 150301 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and a Categorical Exemption is the appropriate CEQA documentation.

References

California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). 2024 (June 5, last accessed). Cortese List Data Resources. Sacramento, CA: CalEPA. <https://calepa.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/CorteseList/>.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2024 (June 5, last accessed). Scenic Highways. Sacramento, CA: Caltrans. <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>.

Riverside, City of. 2024a (August 16, access date). Cumulative Projects Locator 2024. Riverside, CA: the City. <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f6d644e1743942acbeacce4f92aa5a8e/>.

———. 2024b (August 16, access date). Historic Resources Inventory. Riverside, CA: the City. <https://mapriverside.riversideca.gov/GeocortexWV/WebView/?app=2d32ffc3b0f1409ea67a5023519d6f00>.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Cesar Carrillo, P.E

Area Code/Telephone Extension: 951.571.7231

Signature:  Date: 2/27/2025 Title: Senior Engineer
 Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.