

City of Blythe

Hidden Beaches Water Supply System Improvements Project CEQA Exemption Environmental Review Report and Certificate of Determination



Prepared for:

City of Blythe
235 N. Broadway
Blythe, CA 92225

April 2024



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California Environmental Quality Act – Categorical Exemption

Hidden Beaches Water Supply System Improvement Project

- 1. Project Title:** Hidden Beaches Water Supply System Improvement Project
- 2. Agency Name and Address:** City of Blythe
235 N. Broadway
Blythe, CA 92225
- 3. Contact Person and Phone Number:** Mallory Crecelius
Interim City Manager & City Clerk
(760) 922-6161
- 4. Project Location:** 4551 Hidden Beaches Drive
City of Blythe, California 92225
APN: 833-330-004
GPS grid coordinates: 33°39'38.30" North Latitude, 114°31'30.80 West Longitude.
- 5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:** City of Blythe
Mallory Crecelius
Interim City Manager & City Clerk
235 N. Broadway, Blythe, CA 92225
(760) 922-6161
- 6. General Plan and Zoning Land Use Designation:** Colorado River Corridor Plan Area,
Commercial / Residential

Purpose of the Categorical Exemption

As the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) the City of Blythe has undertaken environmental review and determined that the Hidden Beaches water supply system improvement project qualifies for Categorical Exemption (CE) as replacement and improvement of existing facilities (State CEQA Guidelines §15302). This CEQA CE document has been prepared to describe the proposed project and assess each of the criteria required to qualify for the CEQA exemption. The document also includes an assessment of the CEQA exceptions to use of an exemption to support the findings. Based upon this review, it has been determined that the project has no environmental sensitivity that would preclude use of an exemption.

The Project Description is detailed in the following section, followed by a record of the supporting analyses that were used to make the determination that the proposed action is exempt from CEQA. In summary, the City has determined that the water system improvement project is categorically exempt as reconstruction and improvement of existing facilities (CEQA Guidelines §15302).

Project Description

The City of Blythe received a Compliance Order for Non-Compliance (August 28, 2023) from the SWRCB regarding the manganese levels in the existing well. The City is required to demonstrate to the Water Board that with implementation of the water treatment system, the concentration of manganese in the water delivered to customers will meet the State water quality standard by no later than August 10, 2026.

The proposed project includes addition of a package water treatment system to an existing water supply system as required by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB or Water Board) to reduce manganese levels in the source water. The existing 330,000-gallon storage tank is more than 20 years old and is deteriorating and will be replaced with a new 330,000 gallon tank as a part of the water system improvements. The existing well and water tank and the proposed water treatment package plant lie within a one-acre parcel located on the north side of Hidden Beaches Drive within the Hidden Beaches community in the northeastern area of the City of Blythe. The City owns the property and operates the water supply system. (See **Figure 1: Location Map Within the City of Blythe** and **Figure 2: Project Site**).

Figure 1: Location Map Within the City of Blythe

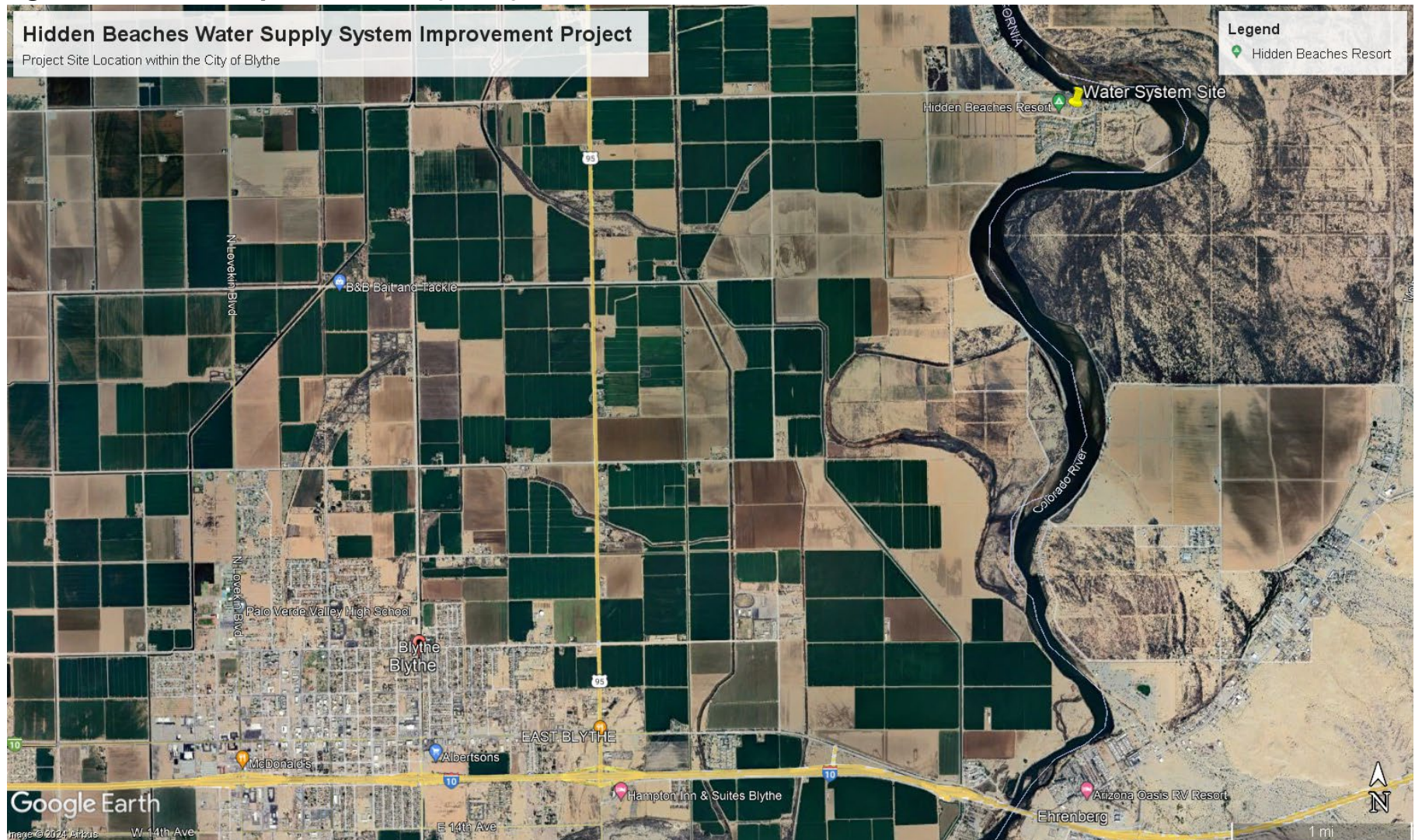


Figure 2: Project Site



Water Quality Treatment System and Related Improvements

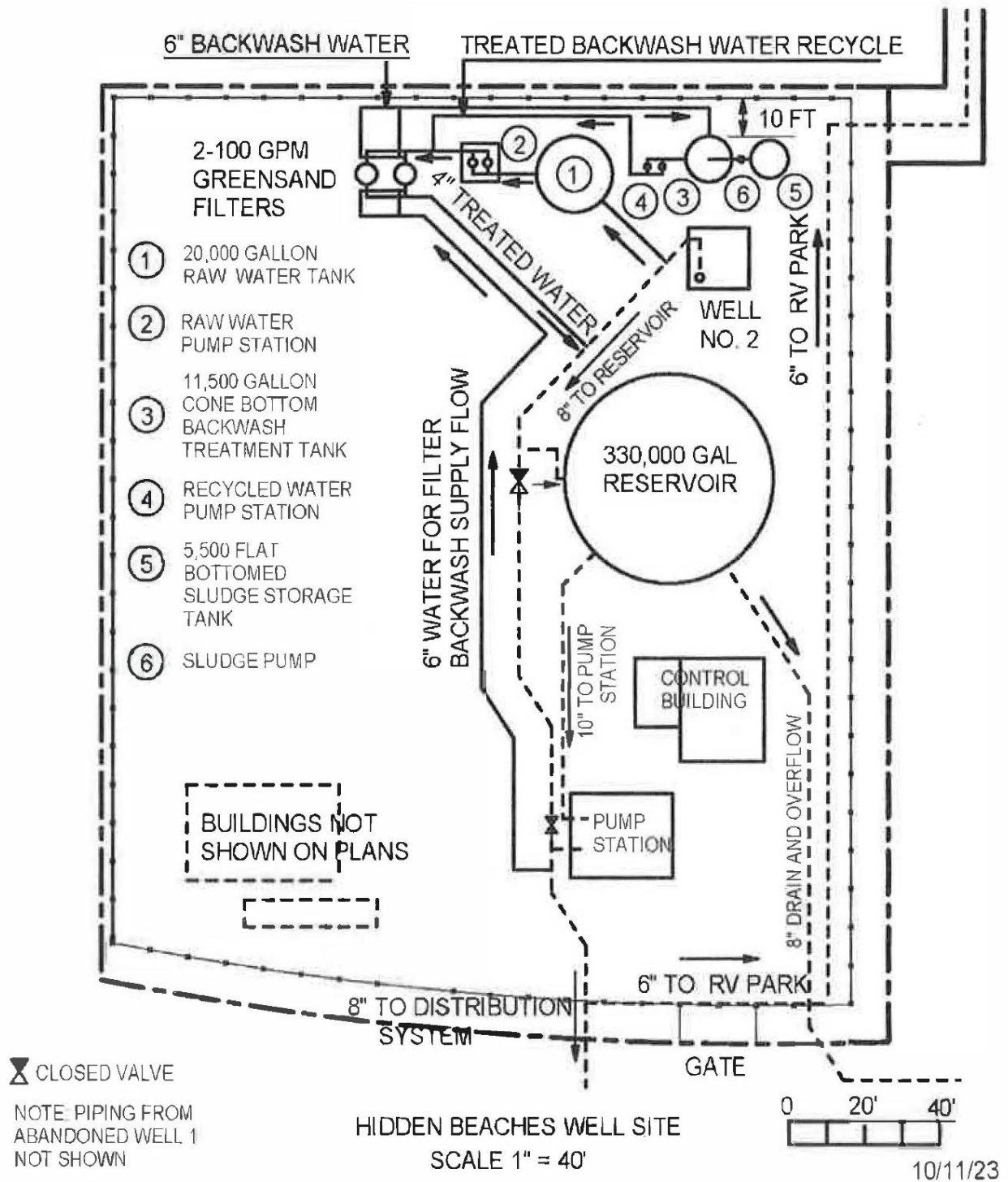
The proposed water treatment package plant to be added for manganese removal utilizes a sand filtration system to remove manganese and iron from the source well water in compliance with the State order. Iron and manganese are metals often found dissolved in water. Green sand filters use a specially formulated filter media made from a naturally mined form of glauconite greensand. The greensand filter media oxidizes dissolved iron and manganese on contact as the water flows through the greensand filter which causes these elements to precipitate as solids in the bed of the filter. The iron filter backwashes these small particles to drain periodically cleaning and restoring the filter media. The filter is automatically cleaned and restored during each backwash cycle. The filter cleaning fluid is only used to backwash and clean the greensand filter media and is not added to the filtered water.

The average daily flow at the existing Hidden Beaches well is 75,000 gallons per day (gpd) which is an average of 52 gallons per minute (gpm) with a peak day of about 150,000 gpd which is 104 gpm. The system will be designed for 200 gpm, which is 288,000 gpd using two 100 gpm green sand filters. The site design for the water supply system improvements is shown in **Figure 3: Project Layout**. As shown, the Raw Water Tank is connected to the well. Valves will be added to the piping between the well and the Ground Storage Reservoir to direct the source water to the Raw Water Tank. Another connection will direct the processed water into the ground reservoir.

A six-inch pipe will connect downstream of the booster pump station and direct clean water to the filters for backwashing. An adjustable valve will open and close to provide the desired water flow to the filters for backwashing. The backwash handling system consisting of the backwash settling cone bottom tank and recycle pump station are located west of the filters. The sludge holding tank can be accessed from the west or the north.

The well produces water at a maximum flow rate of 800 to 900 gpm, while the manganese removal system is designed for 200 gpm. To control the flow into the green sand filters a 20,000-gallon raw water storage tank is needed. The water will be pumped into the green sand filters using a 200-gpm pump station and the treated water will be discharged into the 330,000-gallon ground storage reservoir. The required backwash water will be taken from the pipeline downstream of the booster pump system and discharged into a cone bottom tank to provide settling of the oxidized iron and manganese. A pump station will pump the recycled water.

Figure 3: Project Layout



into green sand filter pump station at a rate of 20 gpm (10 percent of the water flow) into the green sand filters. Sludge from the cone bottom tank will be pumped into a 5,500-gallon sludge holding tank and will be trucked periodically to the wastewater treatment plant for processing.

The green sand filter pump station will turn on when the 330,000-gallon ground reservoir "pump on" level is met and will turn off when the reservoir is full. There will be two controlled Variable Frequency Drive pumps the operator uses to set the flow rate filling the tank. The pumps will be able to keep a constant flow through the filters by responding to the pressure losses as the filters capture the metal oxides. The green sand filters are fully automated, and automatic valves will allow one of the filters to go offline for the backwashing operation. The filter will backwash for eight minutes and then be rinsed for two minutes before returning to operation. The system will be controlled by a Programmable Logic Controller that monitors the pressures across each filter and starts the backwash cycle when required.

The backwash water supply will be taken from the distribution system downstream of the main booster pump station and will be controlled by a flow meter and adjustable valve. The backwash from the filters will flow into a 11,500-gallon cone bottom tank. The metal oxides will settle into the cone. The tank will allow 300 minutes delay after a backwash cycle before the recycle pump turns on. The pumping rate will be 20 gpm applied to the filters to meet California water quality requirements and the discharge will be downstream of the filter pumps. The recycle pump will only operate when the filter pumps are operating. Sludge from the bottom of the tank will be pumped by a small sludge pump into a 5,500-gallon holding tank. The sludge holding tank will be pumped out periodically as needed and taken to the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant for handling.

Replacement Water Tank

The replacement water reservoir project will include construction of a new 330,000-gallon bolted steel water tank, and removal and disposal of the existing tank. The new tank will be installed within the existing water facility site and connected to the existing distribution/pump system to ensure uninterrupted operation of the water supply system. The proposed tank will be of flat panel bolted steel construction on a structural concrete ring wall foundation. It will be a circular tank, approximately 40 feet in diameter and 24 feet in height. The interior and exterior surfaces will be treated with a high-quality coating system to ensure the maximum life expectancy of the tank. Construction of the new reservoir tank is expected to take five to six months.

CEQA Guidance

The City has qualified for a grant administered by SWRCB to fund the water system improvement project. SWRCB does require completion of environmental review documentation to satisfy requirements of CEQA. As a required improvement project for existing City infrastructure involving repair and upgrade of existing water utility facilities the project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption (CE) as provided in the State CEQA Guidelines §15302. This CEQA CE document has been prepared to describe the proposed project, assess each of the criteria required to qualify for the CEQA exemption, and assess the CEQA exceptions to use of an exemption (CEQA Guidelines §15300.2) to support the findings.

CEQA Categorical Exemption

Based upon review of the CEQA Guidelines, the City has determined that the Project is exempt under the categorical exemption as replacement and reconstruction of existing structures (CEQA Guidelines §15302). The applicable criteria for exemption are identified as follows.

15302. REPLACEMENT OR RECONSTRUCTION

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 or reconstruction 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.

Note: Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code.

Findings

Category (c) applies to this water supply utility system project. The proposed replacement of the existing City water tank and addition of a water treatment system in compliance with a State order is a minor alteration of an existing City facility. The project does not place any new demands on public services and facilities, and the project involves no expansion of use or capacity in terms of utility or service demands. The existing water tank and Hidden Beaches water system property has been in continuous utility use for decades and is surrounded by residential uses, and the property is not an environmentally sensitive site.

Replacement of the water tank and installation of a water treatment system will occur entirely within the same City property as exists at present. The water tank will have substantially the same purpose as the existing tank to maintain a safe and reliable water supply system serving the Hidden Beaches resort and surrounding residential community, with no expansion or change in the capacity of the water system. The site for the new water tank and water treatment package plant is directly adjacent to the existing water tank on level ground with no slope. The water system improvements project will not involve any waterway or wetland. The water system property is close to the Colorado River which has scenic value but is not an officially designated scenic area, and the proposed system improvements will not significantly change the appearance of the existing site.

Consideration of Exceptions from Exemption

Based upon review of the CEQA Guidelines, the City has determined that the proposed project has no conditions that would make it ineligible for the categorical exemptions identified above as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. The applicable criteria for exceptions from exemption are identified as follows.

15300.2. EXCEPTIONS

- (a) *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.*
- (b) *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.*

- (c) *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.
- (d) *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.
- (e) *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.

Note: Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; References: Sections 21084 and 21084.1, Public Resources Code; *Wildlife Alive v. Chickering* (1977) 18 Cal.3d 190; *League for Protection of Oakland's Architectural and Historic Resources v. City of Oakland* (1997) 52 Cal.App.4th 896; *Citizens for Responsible Development in West Hollywood v. City of West Hollywood* (1995) 39 Cal.App.4th 925; *City of Pasadena v. State of California* (1993) 14 Cal.App.4th 810; *Association for the Protection etc. Values v. City of Ukiah* (1991) 2 Cal.App.4th 720; and *Baird v. County of Contra Costa* (1995) 32 Cal.App.4th 1464.

Findings:

- (a) *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 site is within a portion of the existing Hidden Beaches community and does not encroach upon any sensitive environment. Replacement of the water tank and addition of the water treatment system will be a community benefit and has no potential to impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern designated, mapped, or adopted by any federal, State, or local agencies.

The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species. The site and surrounding lands have been in residential and community park use for decades. The Colorado River corridor nearby does have unique habitat and wetlands values and is covered by a special habitat conservation or management plan, but the project existing water system utility will not involve any encroachment or disturbance of the river or its banks and habitat areas. It is determined that the existing water system site has no meaningful habitat value for any special-status species.

The proposed water tank replacement and water treatment system plant is related to ongoing infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects throughout the City of Blythe but as a replacement and improvement of an existing part of the established water system it has no relation to any successive projects of the same type in the City that could result in adverse cumulative effects. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(b) *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 exist on or around this existing water supply system property and adjacent lands that could have a reasonable possibility to result in significant adverse effects on the environment. Traffic, noise, and air quality affects will be negligible and will not change in any way from the existing condition. No expansion of any other utility system is required or proposed. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(c) *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.*

No designated scenic highways are located in proximity to the existing water system property. As shown in Figure 1 above, Interstate 10 is located more than six miles south of the site and State Highway 95 is located more than two miles west of the site. Neither of these highways is an officially designated State Scenic Highway, and there are no State Scenic Highways from which the existing or replacement water tank or any other part of the property is visible. The Colorado River corridor nearby does have unique scenic values, but the water system utility improvements will not involve any encroachment or disturbance of the river or its banks, or visual qualities. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(d) *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 site is not on any EnviroStor list of known or reported contaminated sites maintained by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. There are sites listed in Riverside County, none of which are in or near the City of Blythe. On the hazardous materials Cortese list there are eight sites listed within 10 miles west of the project site which are listed as "Closed", "Inactive" and "No further

action". None of these sites is in proximity to the project site. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(e) *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.*

There are no historic resources located on or in the vicinity of the existing Hidden Beaches community within which the water supply replacement tank and water quality treatment package plant is located and there is no potential for such resources to be impacted by the water system improvements. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

Eligibility Conclusion

Based upon information contained in the administrative record, as reflected in the answers provided for exemption criteria for existing facilities and reconstruction and improvements to an existing water supply system, the City hereby determines the Project is eligible for the CEQA Guidelines §15302 categorical exemption from further review under CEQA, and none of the exceptions to these exemptions defined in Section 15300.2 apply.

Signed: Mallory Crecelius

Date: April 24, 2024

Name: Mallory Crecelius

Title: Interim City Manager & City Clerk

List of Sources and Agencies and Persons Consulted

Sources

Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP), *California Environmental Quality Act, Statute and Guidelines*, 2024

California Department of Toxic Substances Control, *Cortese List* and *EnviroStor list*, calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/, and envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=Blythe both accessed April 17, 2024

City of Blythe, *General Plan 2025 and Zoning Maps*; available on file at the City of Blythe, 235 N. Broadway, Blythe, California 92225, or online at: www.cityofblythe.ca.gov/27/planning-zoning

The Clean Water Store, *Greensand Filtration Systems*, www.cleanwaterstore.com, accessed April 17, 2024

Google Earth Pro, 2024, *Landscape imagery of Blythe California and the surrounding region*. Imagery date February 18, 2024, accessed April 16, 2024. URL: Google Earth

The Holt Group, Inc., *City of Blythe, Preliminary Design Report, Hidden Beaches Well Site Manganese Removal System*, October 11, 2023

Agencies and Persons Consulted

City of Blythe

Mallory Crecelius, Interim City Manager

The Holt Group

Rob Holt, P.E., Principal Engineer

Lindsay Holt, AICP, MPA, Principal Planner

Under contract with the City of Blythe, prepared the preliminary design report and project cost estimates.

Analysis and Report Preparation

Jeffrey G. Harvey, Ph.D., Senior Environmental Scientist, Harvey Consulting Group, Inc.,

Under contract with the City of Blythe, conducted site review and preparation of the CEQA environmental report documenting eligibility for the CEQA categorical exemption.



Peter Aldana
Riverside County
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder
2724 Gateway Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
(951) 486-7000
www.rivcoacr.org

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Product	Name	Extended
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	Document #	E-202400546
	Filing Type	7
	State Fee Prev Charged	false
	No Charge Clerk Fee	false
	F&G Notice of Exemption Fee	\$50.00
Total		\$50.00
Tender (On Account)		\$50.00
Account#	CEQACIOB	
Account Name	CEQACIOB - CITY OF BLYTHE	
Balance	\$200.00	



State of California - Department of Fish and Wildlife
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CITY OF BLYTHE

LEAD AGENCY EMAIL

MSUTTERFIELD@CITYOFBLYTHE.CA
GOV

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COUNTY/STATE AGENCY OF FILING

RIVERSIDE

DOCUMENT NUMBER

E-202400546

PROJECT TITLE

HIDDEN BEACHES WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PROJECT APPLICANT NAME

CITY OF BLYTHE

PROJECT APPLICANT EMAIL

MSUTTERFIELD@CITYOFBLYTHE.CA.GOV (760) 922-6161

PHONE NUMBER

PROJECT APPLICANT ADDRESS

235 N. BROADWAY,

CITY

BLYTHE

STATE

CA

ZIP CODE

92225

PROJECT APPLICANT (Check appropriate box)

☒ Local Public Agency

☐ School District

☐ Other Special District

☐ State Agency

☐ Private Entity

CHECK APPLICABLE FEES:

☐ Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

\$4,051.25

\$

☐ Mitigated/Negative Declaration (MND)(ND)

\$2,916.75

\$

☐ Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) document - payment due directly to CDFW

\$1,377.25

\$

☒ Exempt from fee

☒ Notice of Exemption (attach)

☐ CDFW No Effect Determination (attach)

☐ Fee previously paid (attach previously issued cash receipt copy)

☐ Water Right Application or Petition Fee (State Water Resources Control Board only)

\$850.00

\$

☒ County documentary handling fee

\$

\$50.00

☐ Other

\$

PAYMENT METHOD:

☐ Cash

☐ Credit

☐ Check

☒ Other

TOTAL RECEIVED

\$

\$50.00

SIGNATURE

X *J Rodriguez*

AGENCY OF FILING PRINTED NAME AND TITLE

Deputy

Irma Rodriguez

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO:

Riverside County Clerk
2724 Gateway Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
(951) 486-7000

FROM:

City of Blythe
235 N. Broadway
Blythe, CA 92225
Attn: Mallory Crecelius
Interim City Manager and City Clerk
(760) 922-6161

Project Title: Hidden Beaches Water Supply System Improvement Project, City of Blythe

Project Location: The Hidden Beaches water supply system is located in the eastern portion of the City of Blythe on the western side of the Colorado River, with street address of 4551 Hidden Beaches Drive Blythe, CA 92225. Grid coordinates 33°39'38.30" N Lat., 114°31'30.80 W Long.

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: The City of Blythe received a Compliance Order to add a water quality treatment system to the existing well and water supply system in the Hidden Beaches community. This proposed action is addition of water treatment equipment to remove manganese and iron from the source well water in compliance with the State order. The water system improvement project will include construction of a new 330,000-gallon bolted steel water tank, and removal and disposal of the existing tank. The new water treatment package plant system will be installed within the existing water facility site and connected to the existing distribution/pump system to ensure uninterrupted operation of the water. Beneficiaries include the residents of the Hidden Beaches community within the City of Blythe.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

City of Blythe
Approved by City Manager April 24, 2024

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

City of Blythe

Exempt Status:

- ☐ 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: Replacement and Improvement of Existing Facilities, CEQA Guidelines §15302
☐ Statutory Exemption: State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed project meets all criteria for exemption from CEQA as defined in the CEQA Guidelines §15302, with citation to Section 21083, Public Resources Code, and reference to Section 21084 Public Resources Code, and has no features or characteristics that would qualify as exceptions to the exemption.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Mallory Crecelius
Interim City Manager / City Clerk
(760) 922-6161

Lead Agency Signature: Mallory Crecelius

Date: May 15, 2024

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County of Riverside
Peter Aldana
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

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2024 CEQA Guidelines Appendices, Appendix E: Notice of Exemption

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