

**CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION  
AND  
SUPPLEMENTAL CEQA ANALYSIS**

**FOR THE  
NORTHRIDGE REPLACEMENT WELL #9  
PROJECT**

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**FAIR OAKS WATER DISTRICT**

10326 Fair Oaks Blvd.  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Prepared with the Technical Assistance of:



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October 2024

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# CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION AND SUPPLEMENTAL CEQA ANALYSIS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Fair Oaks Water District (FOWD), as Lead Agency, proposes to replace an existing water supply well with a new well in the unincorporated community of Fair Oaks in Sacramento County. This report serves as the technical documentation of an environmental analysis performed by Environmental Planning Partners Inc. for the Northridge Replacement Well #9 (project). The intent of the analysis is to document whether the project is eligible for a Class 2 Categorical Exemption (CE) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15300 and 15302. The report provides an introduction, project description, and an evaluation of the project's consistency with CEQA requirements for a Class 2 exemption. The report concludes that the project is eligible for a Class 2 CE.

## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

<b>Project Title:</b>	Northridge Replacement Well #9 Project
<b>Necessary Entitlements:</b>	Obligation of public funds; Construction Contracting
<b>Project Location:</b>	8251 Kaula Drive, Fair Oaks, CA 95628
<b>Assessor Parcel Numbers:</b>	249-0232-005/006
<b>Lead Agency Name and Address:</b>	Fair Oaks Water District 10326 Fair Oaks Blvd. Fair Oaks, CA 95628
<b>Contact Person / Phone Number:</b>	Tom R. Gray, General Manager Phone: (916) 967-5723
<b>Land Use Designations:</b>	<b>Existing Well Site/Replacement Well Site</b> LDR - Low Density Residential (Sacramento County General Plan) RD-5 (PQP) - Residential/Public-Quasi Public (Fair Oaks Community Plan)
<b>Zoning Designations:</b>	<b>Existing Well Site/Replacement Well Site</b> RD-5 - Low Density Residential (Sacramento County)

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## LOCATION

The existing Northridge Well #9 is located within a 1,500 square foot facility in the community of Fair Oaks in Sacramento County. The existing facility is sited at 8251 Kaula Drive (on the north side of the roadway) near the intersection of the roadway with Hinsey Way, identified as Sacramento County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 249-0232-005. Water Well #9 and its supporting equipment are established at the southeast corner of a 9.94-acre parcel, identified as APN 249-0232-006. This larger parcel has been developed with the campus of the Northridge Elementary School. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

The proposed replacement well project would be constructed within an additional 1,500 square foot (0.03-acre) site located immediately west of the existing Well #9 facility. The overall project area is located in Section 6, Township 9 North, Range 7 East at 38°39' 34.35"N, 121°15' 18.20"W. (See Figures 3 and 4.) The elevation of the project sites are approximately 220 feet above mean sea level (msl).

Additionally, a 200 foot by 50 foot (10,128 square feet) construction easement would be located to the west of the replacement site (see Figure 5.) After completion of the replacement well project, the area of the construction easement would be restored to its existing condition.

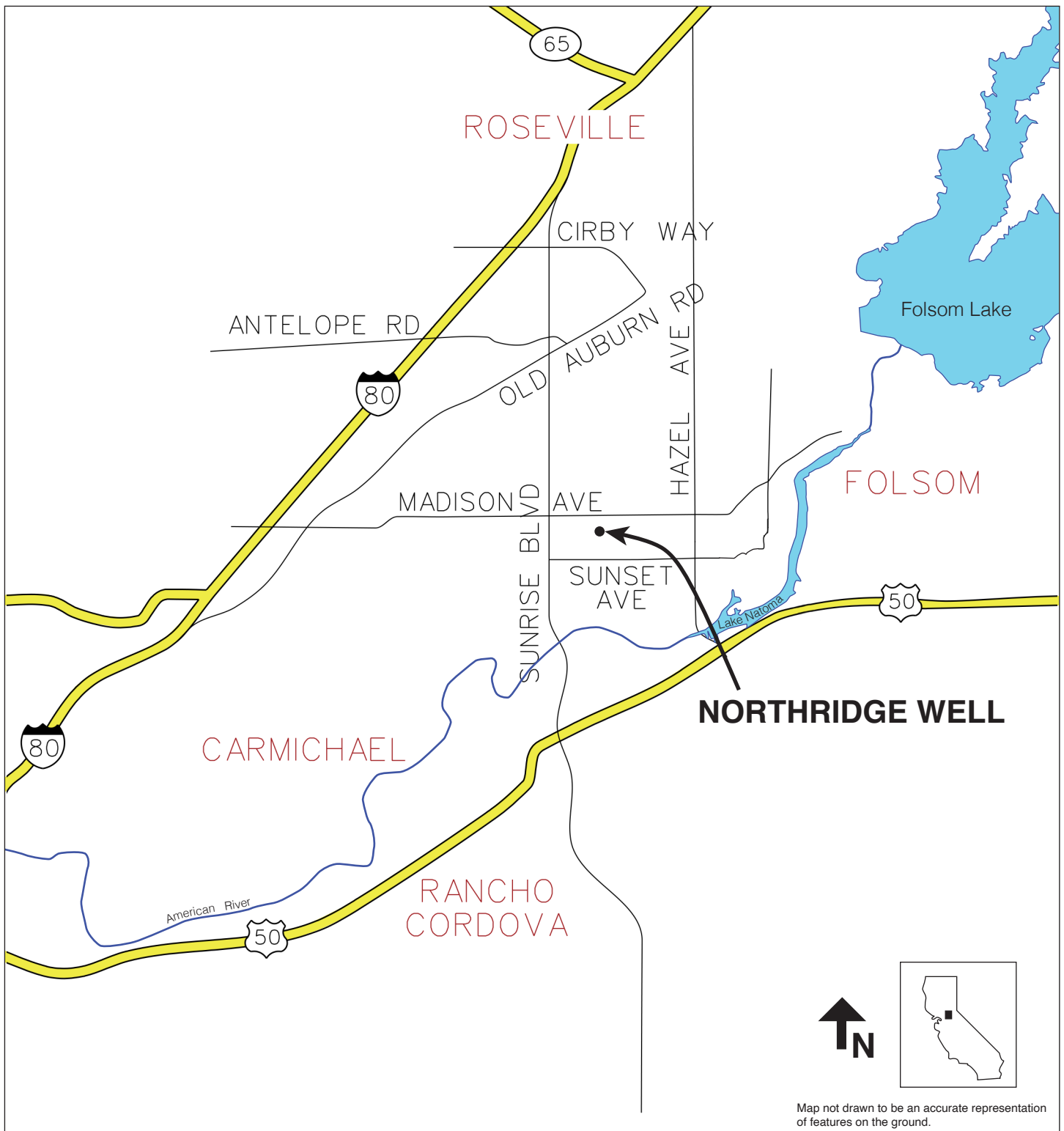
## EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The existing Well #9 facility consists of a graded and paved area developed with the existing water supply well, electrical panel, chemical storage building, access driveway, fencing, and storm drainage facilities. The east, west, and north sides of the existing parcel are planted with ornamental foliage. (See Figure 6.) The existing pumping unit for Well #9 has a design capacity of 1,100 gallons per minute (gpm) and is equipped with a 150-horsepower submersible well pump. However, the existing well's capacity has been decreasing over time. This existing well was reverse mud-rotary drilled in 1991 with a 14-inch steel casing installed to a depth of 550 feet.

The replacement well site consists of a 30 foot by 50 foot (1,500 square foot) area located immediately adjacent to, and west of, the existing well site. The replacement well site was obtained by the FOWD in January 2023 in the form of a utility easement over property owned by the San Juan Unified School District. At the time of preparation of this environmental document, the replacement well site is composed of an irrigated and mowed area in an otherwise unused portion of the Northridge Elementary School site. A baseball backstop is located approximately 20 feet north of the easement boundary. (See Figures 3 and 4.) Other than removal of 50 linear feet of a recently constructed chain link fence along the southerly property line, no developed school facilities would be subject to interference caused by well construction activities.

The location of the proposed construction easement is composed of an irrigated and mowed area within an otherwise unused portion of the Northridge Elementary School site. Potable water irrigation heads and 200 linear feet of recently constructed chain link fence along the southerly property line will be removed. Sprinkler heads within the temporary construction easement will be temporarily capped. Sprinkler heads within the new well site will be permanently relocated. No other developed school facilities would be subject to interference caused by construction activities.



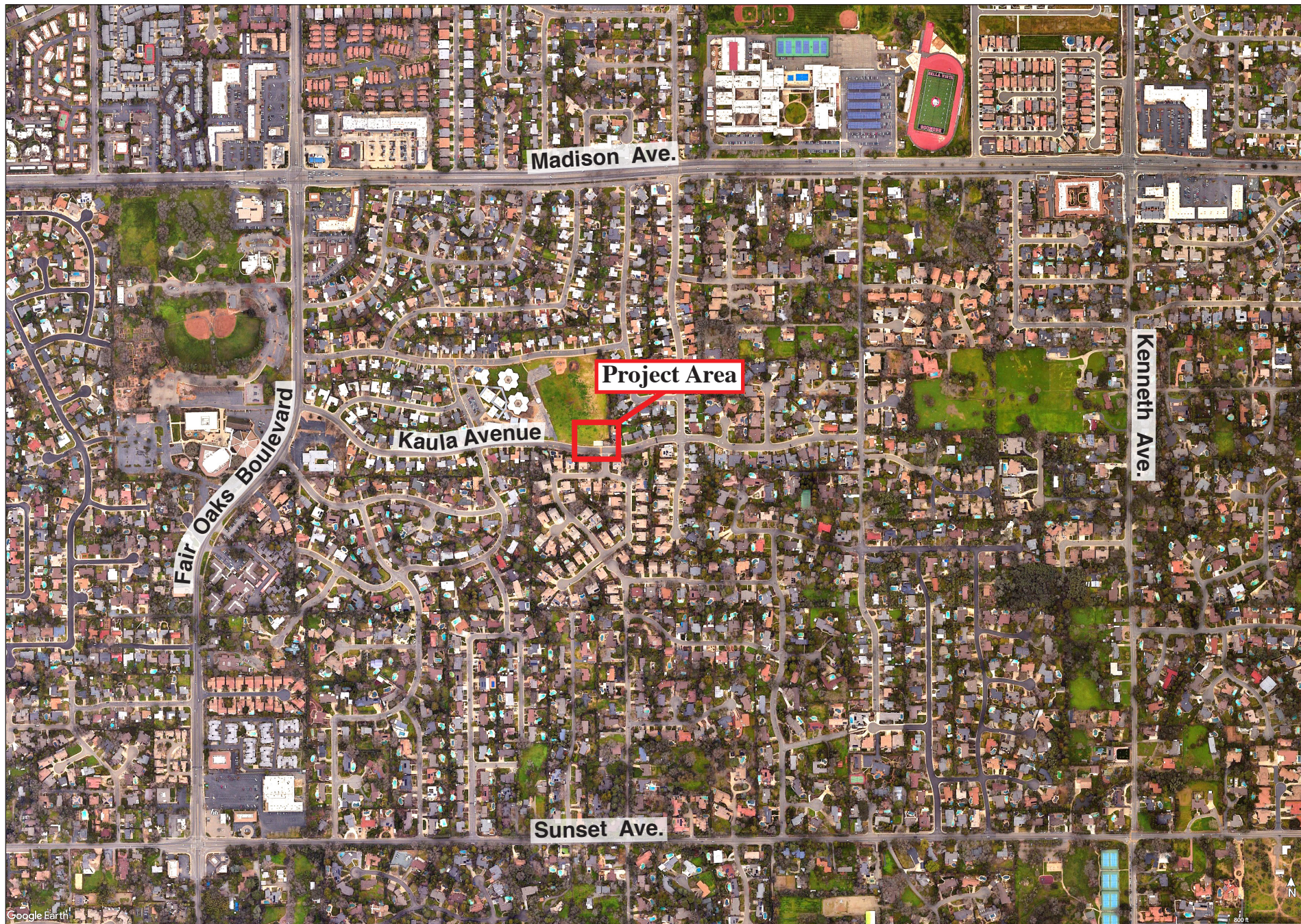


SOURCE: KASL Engineering 2024; Planning Partners 2024

FOWD Northridge Well Project

**Figure 1**  
Regional Location





SOURCE: Google Earth Pro 2024, Planning Partners 2024

FOWD Northridge Well Project  
**Figure 2**  
Project Vicinity





SOURCE: Google Earth Pro 2024; Planning Partners 2024

FOWD Northridge Well Project

**Figure 3**

FOWD Northridge Well Project Site



NORTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY  
SAN JUAN UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT  
APN: 249-0232-006

RESIDENTIAL  
APN: 249-0213-012  
LOT 62 PER  
BK 68 RM PG 3

EXISTING  
FENCE LINE

FAIR OAKS WATER DISTRICT  
WELL SITE  
EASEMENT AREA  
1,500.00 SQ ST. (0.034 ACRES)

FAIR OAKS WATER  
DISTRICT  
APN: 249-0232-005

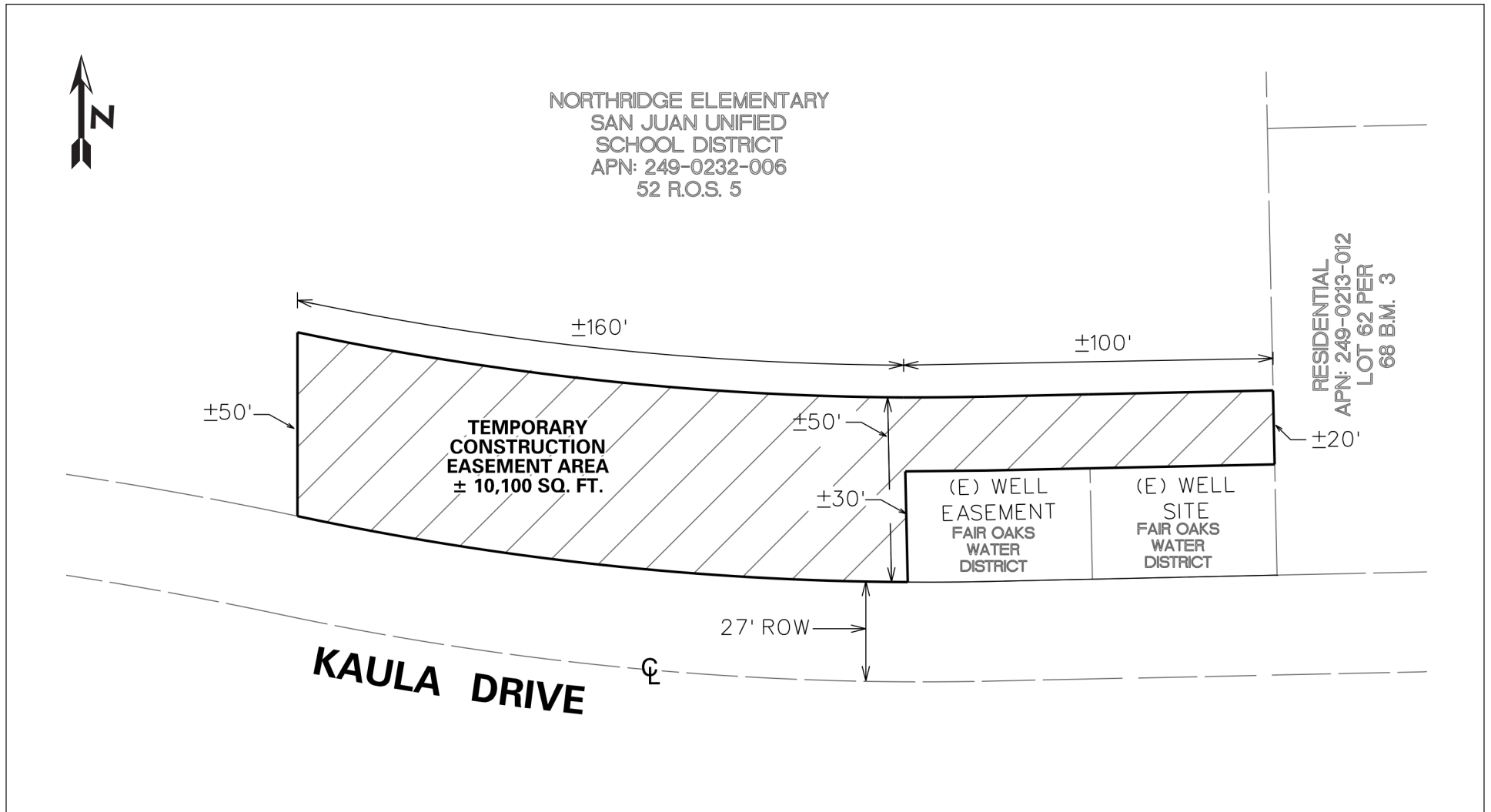
RIGHT OF  
WAY LINE

EXISTING  
FENCE LINE

**KAULA DRIVE**

27' ROW





SOURCE: KASL Engineering 2024; Planning Partners 2024

FOWD Northridge Well Project

**Figure 5**

Temporary Construction Easement





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## **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting**

The proposed project site is situated in an area of low-density residential housing to the south, east, and west. The developed facilities of the Northridge Elementary School are located approximately 425 feet west/northwest of the replacement well site. The nearest residence is located approximately 100 feet to the northeast of the proposed replacement well. (This would be an increase of 50 feet over current conditions.)

## **OBJECTIVES**

The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of a new municipal water supply well and well pump within the service area of the FOWD. The FOWD's goal is to provide a more reliable water supply system by replacing an existing, but failing, water supply well at the Northridge well site. Having a more reliable water supply system will allow FOWD to better serve their customers, especially during drought periods.

The proposed Northridge Well is intended to provide the FOWD directly, and the region indirectly, with additional water resources for typical municipal and industrial uses, or other purposes as determined by the FOWD to:

- Meet the December 31, 2025 grant deadline to have the project completed and accepted as a water supply source in the FOWD's Water Supply Permit.
- Increase water supply reliability for FOWD customers during period of drought and low availability of surface water supply.
- Maximize production capacity without compromising water quality from the new well under normal operating conditions.
- Meet all applicable US EPA and the State Division of Drinking Water potable water quality standards for groundwater wells.
- Maximize specific yield and reduce operation and maintenance cost of the new well under normal operating conditions.
- Utilize the best available technology in construction of the potable groundwater well.
- When deemed reasonable, utilize available existing infrastructure to minimize construction cost.
- Comply with all necessary State and County regulations for drilling of the new well and abandonment of the existing well.

## **PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

The proposed project would replace an existing water well and supporting facilities with a new well and support facilities (see Figure 6). The capacity of the replacement well is expected to be 1500 gallons per minute (gpm), which would be similar to the capacity of the existing well. Replacement facilities constructed within the western area of the project site include the new well, well head piping, sodium hypo-chlorite room, motor control center and well control panels, meter vault, and drainage piping.

The existing well in the eastern area of the site area would be abandoned in accordance with the well abandonment standards and requirements of Sacramento County and the State Division of Drinking Water. All existing above-ground appurtenances would be removed to clear the way for the new

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equipment. Once the existing equipment is removed, a new SMUD transformer pad and pull box, and a portable generator pad would be constructed.

Grading and paving of both the new well area and the former existing well site would be completed. The construction easement would be used for the temporary storage of well boring equipment and well casing material.

## **PROJECT CONSTRUCTION**

### **Construction Phase 1 - Well Construction and Testing**

It is anticipated that the replacement well would be drilled and constructed to a depth of 500 feet, the depth of the existing Northridge Well #9. Other existing FOWD water supply wells drilled and developed within the service area zone of the District have typically been drilled and developed to  $\pm$  500 to 600 feet below ground surface (bgs).

Before drilling operations begin, a noise abatement soundwall would be placed surrounding the well site. The soundwall would remain in place until all well drilling, development, and testing operations are complete.

Well construction would begin by drilling a 48-inch diameter borehole to a depth of approximately 75 feet. A 36-inch diameter steel blank conductor casing would be installed, and the annulus<sup>1</sup> would be sealed with cement grout. A 14-inch diameter (minimum) pilot borehole would be drilled initially to a depth of approximately 290 feet below land surface, which is approximately the depth to groundwater in the existing well. Borehole geophysical logs would be acquired and the pilot hole reamed to a diameter of 34 inches. A 30-inch diameter blank steel casing (the “intermediate casing string”) would be installed and the annulus sealed to the land surface with cement grout. The annular seals surrounding the conductor casing and intermediate casing would be installed in accordance with State and County regulations. Below the intermediate casing, the pilot hole would be advanced to the design depth of 500 feet. The final well design will be based on the samples of formation materials collected from the borehole, borehole geophysical logging and the isolation zone sampling conducted at depths between 290 and 500 feet.

The borehole below the intermediate casing would be then be reamed, with a diameter of 28 inches, down to the design depth. The well casing would then be installed. The casing assembly would consist of an 18-inch diameter blank Type 304L stainless steel well casing, with louvered perforations opposite water bearing strata identified within the borehole. A filter envelope installed around the well screens would serve to retain any unconsolidated aquifer materials (sand and gravel) and promote sand-free water production from the aquifer system.

Post-drilling efforts would include swabbing and airlift development using the drill rig, followed by developmental pumping using the test pump. Upon completion of well development, the well would be subjected to a battery of well-performance and aquifer-stress tests. The tests would be used to: assess well efficiency and specific capacity over a range of pumping rates; identify aquifer hydraulic characteristics that influence long-term well performance; and, provide the basis for the

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<sup>1</sup> An annulus is the region between two concentric circles, e.g., the space between a 48-inch borehole and a 36-inch conductor casing.



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selection of production pumping equipment. Well drilling and construction activities are expected to take approximately 10 to 14 days. Testing may add an additional 5 days.

Water for the well drilling and construction operations would be obtained from an existing fire hydrant located adjacent to the project site on Kaula Drive. During development, pump testing of the well, and during routine pump maintenance, all project discharge waters would be disposed of in accordance with the National Pollution Discharge System Elimination System (NPDES) permit obtained for the Northridge Well and discharge permits obtained from the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and Sacramento Area Sewer District. Waste discharges would be controlled to cause the least impact to the site and vicinity as discussed below and in compliance with the discharge permits obtained for the Northridge Replacement Well #9 project. During well development, water containing solids, including sand and silts, would be elutriated<sup>2</sup> in an on-site settling basin or tanks before being discharged to the sanitary sewer. Turbidity and total solids would be monitored and only “clean water” would be discharged to the sanitary sewer system in compliance with NPDES discharge requirements. Clean water produced during well testing would be discharged to the existing storm drain facilities using a stormwater drainage pump to waste piping and a drain box located within the project site. After well development and testing have been completed, solids contained within the settling basin would be collected for off-site disposal, and the settling basin would be backfilled, compacted, and reclaimed for further well site uses.

### **Construction Phase 2 – Well Equipping**

The second phase of the project would commence upon completion of the well as described above. The replacement well would be equipped with an electrically driven submersible pump and motor. Pump to waste piping and an onsite drain box with air gap will be constructed to convey pump to waste flows to the existing storm improvements in Kaula Drive. Well water produced to serve the District’s customers would be disinfected, metered and discharged to existing water distribution piping in Kaula Drive. An electrical service, including underground primary and secondary conduits and conductors from the existing on-site transformer pad to the new motor control center, would be installed to provide power for the pump. Well site improvements will include a new cast-in-place or precast perimeter wall and access gates. Intermittent construction activity during this phase could occur over a period estimated at 30 to 40 weeks.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS**

Based on the FOWD’s experience with similar projects and regulatory requirements, FOWD has included the following environmental commitments on the project plans and all construction documents. These commitments will be implemented in the design, construction, and operation of the proposed well project.

### **Air Quality**

Construction of the Northridge Replacement Well #9 will be subject to SMAQMD rules in effect at the time of construction. FOWD will implement, or require its contractors to implement, all of the following measures required by SMAQMD:

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<sup>2</sup> To elutriate is to separate lighter and heavier particles in a mixture such as stormwater.

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*Basic Construction Emission Control Practices (Guide Updated July 2019)*

1. Water all exposed surfaces two times daily. Exposed surfaces include, but are not limited to soil piles, graded areas, unpaved parking areas, staging areas, and access roads.
2. Cover or maintain at least two feet of free board space on haul trucks transporting soil, sand, or other loose material on the site. Any haul trucks that would be traveling along freeways or major roadways should be covered.
3. Use wet power vacuum street sweepers to remove any visible trackout mud or dirt onto adjacent public roads at least once a day. Use of dry power sweeping is prohibited.
4. Limit vehicle speeds on unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour (mph).
5. All roadways, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots to be paved should be completed as soon as possible. In addition, building pads should be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used.
6. Minimize idling time either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the time of idling to 5 minutes [California Code of Regulations, Title 13, sections 2449(d)(3) and 2485]. Provide clear signage that posts this requirement for workers at the entrances to the site.
7. Provide current certificate(s) of compliance for CARB's In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation [California Code of Regulations, Title 13, sections 2449 and 2449.1]. For more information contact CARB at 877-593-6677, [doors@arb.ca.gov](mailto:doors@arb.ca.gov), or [www.arb.ca.gov/doors/compliance\\_cert1.html](http://www.arb.ca.gov/doors/compliance_cert1.html).
8. Maintain all construction equipment in proper working condition according to manufacturer's specifications. The equipment must be checked by a certified mechanic and determine to be running in proper condition before it is operated.

## **Cultural Resources**

Prior to initiation of construction on the project site, FOWD will require that any construction or improvement plans contain a notation requiring that if any archaeological, cultural, historical resources, artifacts or other features are discovered during the course of construction anywhere on the project site, work shall be suspended in that location until a qualified professional archaeologist assesses the significance of the discovery and provides consultation with FOWD staff. Appropriate mitigation for curation or protection of the resources, as recommended by the archaeologist, will be implemented upon approval by FOWD. Further grading or site work within the area of discovery will not be allowed until the preceding steps have been taken.

In addition, pursuant to §5097.98 of the California Public Resources Code, and Section 7050.5 of the State Health and Safety Code, in the event of the discovery of any human remains, all work will stop and the County Coroner will be notified immediately. If the remains are determined to be Native American, guidelines of the Native American Heritage Commission will be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains.

## **Hydrology and Water Quality**

### ***Construction Water Quality***

Construction of the Well Replacement Project is exempt from complying with construction stormwater management and well testing requirements due to the size and nature of the project. However, the FOWD has adopted an environmental commitment to ensure that all construction activities shall implement stormwater pollution prevention Best Management Practices (BMP)

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designed to reduce potential impacts to water quality during construction of the project and in accordance with the guidelines of the Sacramento Stormwater Management Program as follows:

1. Comply with the requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board's "General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activity"<sup>3</sup>,
2. Protect adjacent properties and storm drainage facilities from the discharge of sediment or other contaminants from the construction site,
3. Schedule as much project work as possible during the dry season,
4. Protect storm drain inlets,
5. Use other Best Management Practices as necessary, including applying rainy season erosion controls, managing stockpiles, disposing of well development water properly, and correctly managing and disposing of construction wastes,
6. Maintain all Best Management Practices, and
7. Stabilize the site after construction is complete, including revegetating landscaped areas disturbed by construction.

## Noise

To reduce the effects of construction noise on affected residents, the FOWD will implement the following measures:

1. Except for drilling and constructing the well, all work necessary to implement the project will be performed between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.
2. Before drilling operations begin, a noise abatement soundwall (typically 20 feet high) will be placed surrounding the well site to reduce noise impacts during drilling and construction operations. The soundwall will remain in place until all well drilling, development, and testing operations are complete.
3. All equipment will be equipped with appropriate muffler devices to reduce the noise impacts of the drilling operations.
4. The FOWD may provide alternate nighttime accommodations to adjacent residents if needed to mitigate noise impacts during drilling.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION – ENVIRONMENTAL TOPIC AREAS

### Air Quality

During typical construction projects, the majority of particulate matter emissions (i.e., PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>) are generated in the form of fugitive dust during ground disturbance activities, most of which are generated during the grading phase. PM emissions are also generated in the form of equipment exhaust and re-entrained road dust from vehicle travel on paved and unpaved surfaces.

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD or District) uses PM emission screening level to assist agencies such as the FOWD in determining if PM emissions from constructing a project in Sacramento County will exceed the District's construction significance

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<sup>3</sup> Because the project disturbance area totals less than one acre, the FOWD would be exempt from Submitting a Notice of Intent to the State Water Resources Control Board to comply with the General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activity due to the small size of the project. Nonetheless, the FOWD has voluntarily agreed to comply with the substantive requirements of the General Permit.

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thresholds for PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Construction of a project that does not exceed the screening level, meets all the screening parameters, and implements the SMAQMD's Basic Construction Emission Control Practices would be considered to have a less-than-significant impact on air quality. (SMAQMD 2020) (Guide section updated April 2019)

In the case of the proposed Northridge Replacement Well #9, the project meets the SMAQMD screening parameters. However, based on FOWD's review of the proposed project, environmental commitments related to air quality will appear on the project construction plans for the purpose of minimizing potential effects. In order to meet SMAQMD requirements, FOWD will implement all of the District's Basic Construction Emission Control Practices as set forth above for the proposed project.

### **Biological Resources**

During project planning, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Natural Diversity Database was queried to determine the likelihood of occurrence for special-status species or sensitive and regulated habitats on the project site. Results showed no potential for presence of special-status species nor regulated habitats on the site. The nearest occurrence to the project site, at approximately 0.3 mile to the southwest, is for an andrenid bee (*andrena subapasta*). This bee species does not have any formal listing status under the California Endangered Species Act. This species is associated with grassland habitats; however, because of routine weed control and landscape maintenance, no grasslands are present on the project site. No habitat for this bee exists on the project site.

A query of the United States Fish and Wildlife's (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation database resulted in the identification of 1 reptile, 1 amphibian, 2 insects, and 2 crustaceans identified as proposed threatened, candidate, threatened, or endangered. Four of the six species identified are associated with water bodies (stream, lake, marshes) or vernal pools. No aquatic habitat or vernal pools occur in the project site or in areas that would be affected by project construction activities. Suitable habitat is not present on the site for monarch butterfly and Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle (VELB). VELB requires blue elderberry shrubs (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*), and no elderberry shrubs are present on the project site.

No critical habitats were identified by the USFWS in the project vicinity, and the National Wetland Inventory indicated that there are no known wetlands on the project site.

### **Cultural and Tribal Resources**

A record search for the project site was conducted by the North Central Information Center (NCIC) in June 2024 to assess potential historical and prehistoric resources on the project site. The investigation included background research that disclosed that there are no previously recorded archaeological or historic resources within the project area, nor within ¼ mile of the project site. The NCIC determined the potential for locating archaeological and/or historic cultural resources within the proposed project area to be low. (NCIC 2024)

A record search of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File was conducted in June 2024. Results indicated that no sacred sites nor tribal cultural resources were identified on the project site or in the vicinity of the project. Section 21080.3.1 (b) of the California Public Resources Code states that:

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“... the lead agency shall begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project if: (1) the California Native American tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed by the lead agency through formal notification of proposed project in the geographic area that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the tribe...”

The FOWD has received no written requests to be notified of projects in which the FOWD is the Lead Agency under CEQA (Chetcuti, *pers comm*, 2024). Accordingly, the FOWD has no further responsibility in regard to consultation under Section 21080.3.1.

There are no known cultural or tribal cultural resources on the project site, and the replacement well and associated facilities will be constructed on an existing site that has been leveled and graded. Based on the cultural and tribal cultural resources investigations and the low likelihood that such resources would occur on the project site, the FOWD has developed the environmental commitment set forth above that will be included on the project construction plans. Implementation of the commitment will protect unknown cultural and tribal cultural resources through the implementation of appropriate protocols in the event of any inadvertent discovery during construction.

### **Hazardous Materials**

A records search of the Envirostor database of the Department of Toxic Substances Control was conducted to determine the presence of any hazardous material sites on or in the vicinity of the proposed project. In addition to tracking federal, State, and local cleanup sites and facilities, Envirostor also provides data for hazardous sites tracked by the California State Water Resource Control Board's GeoTracker system. The Envirostor records search showed that there are no hazardous sites listed on or in the vicinity of the proposed Northridge Well project (DTSC 2024). The nearest site, a Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Cleanup Site, is located approximately 0.5 mile to the northwest of the project site. The status of that site, Former Unocal Station #5134, is “Completed – Case Closed” (Geotracker 2024).

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

Temporary increases in the erosion of exposed soils during construction of the facility could result in minor on- or off-site water quality impacts, particularly if rainfall events occur during an active construction phase. Additionally, chemicals used in construction (fuels, lubricants, paints, coatings) could be released to the environment if spilled. However, the FOWD has identified a number of requirements and stormwater management practices that would be instituted during the construction. The FOWD will implement the construction environmental commitments set forth above.

During development, pump testing of the well, and during routine pump maintenance, all project discharge waters would be disposed of in accordance with the National Pollution Discharge System Elimination System (NPDES) permit obtained for the Northridge Well and discharge permits obtained from the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and Sacramento Area Sewer District. Waste discharges would be controlled to cause the least impact to the site and vicinity as discussed below and in compliance with the discharge permits obtained for the Northridge Replacement Well #9 project. During well development, water containing solids, including sand

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and silts, would be elutriated<sup>4</sup> in an on-site settling basin or tanks before being discharged to the sanitary sewer. Turbidity and total solids would be monitored and only “clean water” would be discharged to the sanitary sewer system in compliance with NPDES discharge requirements. Clean water produced during well testing would be discharged to the existing storm drain facilities using a stormwater drainage pump to waste piping and a drain box located within the project site. After well development and testing have been completed, solids contained within the settling basin would be collected for off-site disposal, and the settling basin would be backfilled, compacted, and reclaimed.

## Noise

Construction would temporarily increase noise levels in the vicinity of construction activities intermittently over the construction periods that encompass both the well drilling and equipping phases of the project. Construction activities would be considered an intermittent noise impact throughout the construction of the project, and would vary in their effects on nearby residents depending on the presence of intervening barriers or other insulating materials. All work would be performed between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. No weekend or holiday work is planned.

The only exception to the designated work hours would be made for the purpose of drilling the well. For this operation, continuous work (up to 24 hours per day) would be necessary in order to protect the integrity of the well structure. It is expected that this phase of work would take three to six days to complete. Temporary sound walls up to 20 feet in height, and appropriate muffler devices would be used to mitigate the noise impacts of the drilling operation on the surrounding residential area.

In order to regulate noise, Sacramento County has established both General Plan and Noise Ordinance standards for noise levels from activities, including construction. Construction noise levels may be higher than Chapter 6.68.070 of the Sacramento County Code would normally allow (50-55 dBA). However, General Plan policy NO-8 and Chapter 6.68.090 (e) of the Sacramento County Code provide the following exemption from Chapter 6.68.070 for construction activities, such as those necessary to implement all phases of work for the proposed Northridge Well project. In addition to limiting construction activities to specified days and times, the exemption provides that:

... when an unforeseen or unavoidable condition occurs during a construction project and the nature of the project necessitates that work in process be continued until a specific phase is completed, the contractor or owner shall be allowed to continue work after 8:00 p.m.<sup>5</sup> and to operate machinery and equipment necessary until completion of the specific work in progress can be brought to conclusion under conditions which will not jeopardize inspection acceptance or create undue financial hardships for the contractor or owner.

This continuous work exemption would apply to the drilling of the proposed well. Although the construction project is exempt from local noise regulations, to avoid potential adverse effects due to noise, environmental commitments will be set forth on the project construction plans and be implemented during the construction period. FOWD will implement the noise commitments outlined above.

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<sup>4</sup> To elutriate is to separate lighter and heavier particles in a mixture such as stormwater.

<sup>5</sup> Although not required by County regulations, the FOWD will require that all work other than well drilling begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m., and cease by 7:00 p.m.

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### 3. CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

#### APPLICABILITY OF THE CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

Approval of the well replacement project would replace an existing structure and operations, and would not involve an expansion of the existing use at the project site - there would be no significant increase in capacity for water treatment or use. The capacity of the new well would be similar to that of the existing well. Further, as discussed below, none of the CE exceptions apply. Therefore, the proposed project meets the applicability requirements for a Class 2 CE pursuant to Sections 15300 and 15302 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

#### EXCEPTIONS TO APPLICABILITY OF THE CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

The State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) through (f) list exceptions to the applicability of a Categorical Exemption. The discussion below explains why each exception is inapplicable to the proposed project.

*15300.2(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 FOWD does not propose to adopt a Class 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11 CE, and these classes of CEs are not applicable to the proposed project. Further, as set forth in the background discussion as set forth above, there are no environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern in the project area or on the project site that are designated or mapped, such as critical habitat for listed threatened or endangered species. The project site is located in a residential area, and there are no critical environmental resources, such as wetlands or wildlife, on the site.

Therefore, since there are no critical environmental resources on or near the project site, and no contamination has been recorded on or near the project site, this exception to a CE does not apply to the Northridge Replacement Well #9 project.

*15300.2(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.*

Cumulative impacts are defined in the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) as “successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time.” In the case of the Northridge Replacement Well #9 project, the only successive project of the same type in the same place, over time would be the proposed project that would replace the existing well. However, construction of the proposed new well would reduce existing environmental effects related to the quality of water produced by the existing well and remedy the existing well’s deteriorated condition. The new well would have substantially the same purpose and a similar capacity to the well replaced, and there may be no substantial overall increase in the capacity of the well. Further, certain construction components would be compliant with local regulations for construction water quality and noise intended to be protective of the environment. Therefore the overall impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time would not be significant. This exception would not apply to the proposed project.

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*15300.2(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 proposed project involves the replacement of an existing well; it would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The circumstances of the proposed project are not considered unusual because the project site is the location of a currently operating well. The replacement well will be located within an existing disturbed area of the Northridge Elementary School campus, and the replacement well may not significantly result in an increase of well capacity. Also, while the project is in an area of, potentially unknown cultural and tribal cultural resources, and could result in construction phase impacts to air quality, water quality, and noise, the FOWD has identified environmental commitments to protect such resources. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts to natural resources or habitats, cultural resources, air resources, water quality, or noise with replacement of the well. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. This exception would not apply to the proposed project.

*15300.2(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.*

There are no state or locally designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the proposed project. (Caltrans 2024). Therefore, this exception would not apply to the proposed project.

*15300.2(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 any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (DTSC 2024). Therefore, this exception would not apply to the proposed project.

*15300.2(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 project site was the subject of Historic Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources inquiries to the North Central Information Center (NCIC) and the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). Neither information source identified any known historically or culturally significant structures or resources on the project site or in its vicinity. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. This exception would not apply to the proposed project.



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