

CEQA NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: County Clerk
County of Humboldt
825 5th Street
Eureka, CA 95501
Office of Planning Research
State Clearinghouse

FROM: City of Eureka, Lead Agency
Development Services - Planning
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PROJECT TITLE: Elk River Waste Water Treatment Plant Wet Weather Improvements 2025

PROJECT APPLICANT: City of Eureka Public Works – Engineering

PROJECT PURPOSE: The purpose of this project is to eliminate bypassing by making improvements to the Elk River Wastewater Treatment Plant (ERWWTP), including increasing secondary treatment capacity and providing a primary effluent equalization storage basin.

PROJECT LOCATION: This project is located at the City of Eureka's ERWWTP, 4301 Hilfiker Lane.

Permit History:

Original California Coastal Commission Coastal Development Permit (CDP) No. I-82-139
CDP Amendment No. I-82-139-A6

BACKGROUND:

The City of Eureka's Elk River Wastewater Treatment Plant (ERWWTP) discharges effluent to Humboldt Bay. Discharges are regulated by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) through application of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. In 2016, the RWQCB issued Cease and Desist Order No. RI-2016-0012, and the ERWWTP began operating under a new NPDES permit, Order No. RI-2016-0001, which specifically disallows the historical practice termed, 'blending'. Blending is the bypassing of primary-treated wet weather flows in excess of 12 million gallons per day (MGD) around the biological treatment system and directly to disinfection. The City's approach to eliminating bypass

is to make improvements to the ERWWTP, including increasing secondary treatment capacity and providing primary effluent equalization storage.

Eliminating bypass at the ERWWTP will result in increased pumping capacity to increase the biological treatment capacity of the Trickling Filters [which include additional pumping capacity to increase biological treatment from 12 to 23-24 Million Gallons per Day (MGD)], and increase biological treatment of the Secondary Clarifiers (SC) (which include increasing the Return Secondary Solids pumping capacity and SC biological treatment capacity from 12 to 23-24 MGD). Storage of peak wet weather flows will be provided via a new primary effluent equalization basin (which includes storage for approximately 8 MGD of primary effluent peak wet weather flows) by repurposing an existing Facultative Sludge Lagoon.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed project requires a new Trickling Filter wet well and pump station to be constructed to handle the peak wet weather flow for 24 MGD, including three (two duty and one standby) new pumps with Variable Frequency Drives. To accommodate peak wet weather flow of 24 MGD through secondary treatment requires upgrading the return secondary solids pumps to handle increased flows. For two secondary clarifiers, the return secondary solids pumps need a combined capacity of 7,500 Gallons per Minute (GPM) with both clarifiers and all four pumps in service, with each pump delivering 1,875 GPM. Redundancy would be provided by having redundant units in storage, available to be installed as needed. Up to 8 MGD of excess primary treated flows can be transferred to the newly converted lined equalization basin. This requires a primary effluent transfer station with a capacity of 5,600 GPM (8 MGD), an equalization basin Lift Station with a capacity of 5,600 GPM (8 MGD), and yard piping ranging in size between 14 and 20- inch diameters to transfer the excess flow to the equalization basin and back to secondary treatment.

All construction will be within the footprint of the existing plant. Excavated material will be temporally stockpiled on-site, then hauled off-site to a permitted disposal site, to be approved by the City prior to the start of construction. The bottom 10 inches will be backfilled with compacted Class 2 aggregate base material and paved to match the existing grade.

The contractor's staging areas are located next to the secondary clarifiers, behind the sludge holding tanks, and in front of the administration building, see attached site plan. The staging area behind the sludge holding tanks will allow for items needed for day-to-day operations, while the area near the secondary clarifiers will be for larger materials and storage. The area in front of the administration building will be a backup for any additional material storage. The proposed staging area is less than one acre, but if the contractor's staging area expands in total project disturbance of more than one acre, the contractor will be required to prepare and comply with a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan in accordance with Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ. All staging areas will be restored to original conditions once the project is completed.

This project has milestones based on when work can be completed in the wet and dry seasons. The Summer/Fall 2024 (dry season) will consist of dredging the sludge, dewatering, and haul off sludge in facultative sludge lagoon, trickling filter pump station structure construction, secondary pump station improvements, yarding piping and electrical conduits. The winter of 2025/Spring of 2026 will consist of installing pumps, fittings, and motor controls. Summer/Fall 2026 will consist

of equalization regrading, installing basin liner, pumps and piping. Winter of 2026 will consist of testing, training and start up.

Typical working hours will be Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm; if additional time is needed the contractor will coordinate with City staff to schedule working on Saturdays from 8 am to 4:30 pm. No work or use of equipment will be allowed at night.

CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT:

Construction equipment to be used on this project will include one or more of the following: backhoe, skid steer, generators, air compressor, Bobcat loader, cement truck, delivery truck and forklift.

EXEMPTION FINDINGS:

The ERWWTP Wet Weather Improvements 2025 is a project subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). However, the Lead Agency has determined the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to the following categorical exemptions in the CEQA Guidelines:

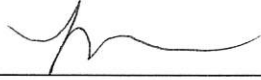
Class I Existing Facilities (§15301) and Class II, Accessory Structures (§15311):

§15301, Existing Facilities, Class I, of the CEQA Guidelines exempts 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 use. The proposed project qualifies for this exemption because there is no expansion of use or the ability to take in more wastewater. Rather, the City is expanding the treatment capacity to eliminate “bypassing” during peak wet weather flows, which ultimately improves water quality. The new equipment includes a new pump station to pump peak wet weather flows from the trickling filters and secondary clarifiers to one of two existing ponds (the “facultative sludge lagoons”) which will be repurposed (drained and lined) as the new “equalization basin” for the new primary effluent equalization storage.

§15311, Accessory Structures, Class II, of the CEQA Guidelines exempts the construction, or placement of, minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities. Three new pump stations will be constructed and one existing pump station will be replaced. The new and replacement pump stations are accessory to the existing wastewater treatment system.

Further, the Lead Agency has determined the use of the Class I and Class II categorical exemptions are not barred by one of the exceptions set forth in §15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines. No work will occur in a wetland or impact the adjacent wetlands as all work will be done on the existing roadway/berm or within the existing equipment area, and Best Management Practices will be employed to reduce the risk of any impacts to nearby wetlands resulting from construction work.

The material supporting the above finding is on file with City of Eureka Public Works – Engineering. Copies of the documents related to the evaluation of this project are available for review upon request at the City of Eureka, 531 K Street, Eureka, CA 95501.



Lisa Savage
Senior Planner, City of Eureka

January 3, 2025

Date