



ORANGE COUNTY
CLERK-RECORDER
CEQA FILING COVER SHEET

30-07116/2025-0536

202585000687

FILED

July 16, 2025

HUGH NGUYEN
CLERK - RECORDER

By [Signature]
Deputy clerk

Complete and attach this form to each CEQA Notice filed with the County Clerk-Recorder

TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY

Project Title

RANCHO SONADO OUTDOOR SCIENCE EDUCATION CENTER FIRE RESTORATION
PROJECT

Check Document being Filed:

- ☐ Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
- ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) or Negative Declaration (ND)
- ☒ Notice of Exemption (NOE)
- ☐ Other (Please fill in type):

**FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE ORANGE
COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER ON 07/16/2025**

Posted 07/16/2025 Removed _____

Returned to agency on _____

DEPUTY 483

Filing fees are due at the time a Notice of Determination/Exemption is filed with our office. For more information on filing fees and No Effect Determinations, please refer to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 753.5.

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Orange County Department of Education
200 Kalmus Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628

Orange County Clerk
601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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JUL 16 2025

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project

Project Title

BY: HN DEPUTY

8755 Santiago Canyon Road (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 105-201-32, -35, and -89, and 576-013-05)

Project Location – Specific

Silverado (unincorporated community)

Orange

Project Location – City

Project Location – County

The Orange County Department of Education proposes to renovate, repair, and reconstruct facilities for the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program at Rancho Sonado, which were damaged by a wildfire in 2020, and resume previous school and public operations. The Project will consist of the renovation of seven (7) outdoor teaching stations on existing graded pads along the hiking trails, five(5) of which would be covered, picnic areas, a multipurpose educational building containing restrooms, an administrative building, a covered lunch area, and an outdoor amphitheater, all constructed with non-combustible materials. The Project will also include sitework that includes improvement of the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, installation of a new on site fire hydrant, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, an improved parking lot, and new wayfinding signage.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

Orange County Department of Education

Name of Public Agency Approving Project

Orange County Department of Education

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project

Exempt Status:

- ☒ Categorical Exemption: Sections 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), 15302 (Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction), Class 3 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15314 (Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools)

Classes 1 and 2 apply because the project would involve the repair and reconstruction/replacement of the project site facilities after being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020, which resulted in closure of the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center. Class 3 applies because the project would, in part, involve the construction of approximately 2,400 square feet of new facilities/structures that were not present onsite prior to the 2020 wildfire, and the project would not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances. Class 14 applies because the project would involve the renovation, repair, and reconstruction/replacement of the onsite facilities since being damaged by a wildfire, and, once reopened, the outdoor school would continue to allow the same number of students onsite as pre-fire conditions. Additionally, none of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the project, nor are there any unusual circumstances that could result in significant environmental effects.

Reasons why project is exempt

David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services

(714) 966-4447

Lead Agency Contact Person

Area Code/Telephone

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption findings
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature:

David J. Jordan

☒ Signed by Lead Agency

☐ Signed by Applicant

Date:

7-15-25

Title:

Associate Superintendent,
Administrative Services

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JUL 16 2025

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

BY: HN DEPUTY

JUL 16 2025

BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 21-25

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

BY:  DEPUTY

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVING THE RANCHO
SONADO OUTDOOR SCIENCE EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT ("PROJECT"),
FINDING AND DETERMINING THAT THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY
EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, AND
FILING AND RECORDING A NOTICE OF EXEMPTION WITH THE ORANGE
COUNTY CLERK.**

WHEREAS, the Orange County Board of Education ("Board") owns certain real property and improvements located at 8755 Santiago Canyon Road in unincorporated Orange County, California (the "Property," APNs 105-201-32, -35, and -89, and 576-013-05, known as the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center ("Rancho Sonado")); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent administers and operates the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program, which offers science and social science educational programs at various venues throughout Orange County (the "Program"); and

WHEREAS, in December 2020, the Bond Fire, which burned 6,686 acres in the Santiago Canyon / Irvine Regional Park area, caused extensive damage to Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, Rancho Sonado is accessed via an access easement on APN 576-013-05 owned by Orange County Parks that may require an amendment to the easement; and

WHEREAS, prior to the damage caused by the Bond Fire, Rancho Sonado was a critical venue for the Program, offering environmental instructional programs at an outdoor school in a natural environmental setting for schools located in Orange County, as well as providing opportunities to the public for similar programming and other special events and activities, pursuant to the California Civic Center Act (Government Code Section 38130 et seq.); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent proposes to renovate, repair, and reconstruct facilities for the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program at Rancho Sonado, which were damaged by a wildfire in 2020, and resume previous school and public operations ("Project"); and

WHEREAS, the Project will consist of the renovation of seven (7) outdoor teaching stations on existing graded pads along the hiking trails, five (5) of which would be covered, picnic areas, a multipurpose educational building containing restrooms, an administrative building, a covered lunch area, and an outdoor amphitheater, all constructed with non-combustible materials; and

WHEREAS, the Project will also include sitework that includes improvement of the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, installation of a new on site fire hydrant, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, an improved parking lot, and new wayfinding signage; and

JUL 16 2025

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent proposes operation of similar Program VD DEPUTY activities as pre-fire conditions, including the participation of approximately 120 students each day between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, prior to constructing the Project, the County Superintendent must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA," Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the implementing regulations ("CEQA Guidelines," California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.); and

WHEREAS, Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines categorically exempts 33 classes of projects determined to not have a significant effect on the environment from extended environmental review; and

WHEREAS, the Class 1 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities), applies to 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; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 1 because the Project will involve the repair/restoration of Rancho Sonado and will not expand the former use of Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, the Class 2 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction) 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 existing streets, pedestrian trails, and similar facilities; and restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 2 because the Project will involve the reconstruction/replacement of Rancho Sonado structures and facilities and will not expand the former capacity or use of Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, the Class 3 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 3 because the Project will, in part, involve the construction of less than 2,500 square feet of new building/structure area at Rancho Sonado before the 2020 wildfire, and because the Project will not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances; and

WHEREAS, the Class 14 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section, Minor Additions to Schools) consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 14 because the Project will not increase the daily or annual student attendance beyond pre-fire conditions and will not result in an increase in building area that equates to the size of ten classrooms (9,600 square feet); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent has considered whether the Project is subject to any of the exceptions to the exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) because the Property is not located in a particularly sensitive environment that will cause the Project to result in a significant effect; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) because the Project will not contribute to any significant impacts resulting from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c) because the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d) because there are no officially designated state scenic highways in the vicinity of the Project site, and as such, the Project will not 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; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(e) because the Project will not be located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f) because the Project will not result in the substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of the Orange County Department of Education ("Board") hereby make the following findings:

SECTION 1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct and are a substantive part of the Resolution.

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SECTION 2. That the Board has determined after evaluating the Project through its own independent judgement and analysis that the Project is categorically exempt from CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), 15302 (Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15314 (Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools) and that none of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the Project.

SECTION 3. That the Board hereby approves the Project.

SECTION 4. That the Superintendent of Schools, or his designee, is instructed to file and/or record the Notice of Exemption prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, consistent with this Resolution, attached hereto as Exhibit "A," with any and all appropriate public agencies or entities, subject only to minor, non-substantive revisions, if necessary.

SECTION 5. The Notice of Exemption constitutes a record of these proceedings and will be kept at the Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Purchasing & Contracts Department at 200 Kalmus Drive, Building A, Costa Mesa, California under the control of the Executive Director, Business Operations; and

SECTION 6. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED and ADOPTED by the Governing Board of the Orange County Superintendent of Schools on July 9, 2025, by the following vote:

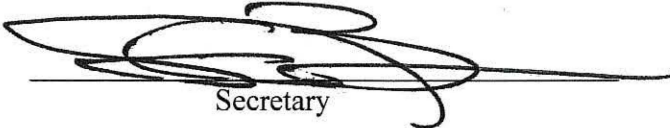
AYES: 5

NOES: 0

ABSENT: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

I, Stefan Bean, Secretary of the Orange County Board of Education, the Board, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of a resolution passed and adopted by said Board at a regularly scheduled and conducted meeting held on said date, which resolution is on file in office of said Board.


Secretary

FILED

JUL 16 2025

Resolution 21-25

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

BY: KD DEPUTY



State of California - Department of Fish and Wildlife
2025 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEE
CASH RECEIPT
DFW 753.5a (REV. 01/01/25) Previously DFG 753.5a

Print	SEARCHED	Save
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RECEIPT NUMBER:
30-07/16/2025-0536
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER (If applicable)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE. TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY.

LEAD AGENCY ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	LEAD AGENCY EMAIL	DATE 07/16/2025
COUNTY/STATE AGENCY OF FILING ORANGE COUNTY	DOCUMENT NUMBER 202585000687	

PROJECT TITLE

RANCHO SONADO OUTDOOR SCIENCE EDUCATION CENTER FIRE RESTORATION PROJECT

PROJECT APPLICANT NAME ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	PROJECT APPLICANT EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER (714) 966-4447
PROJECT APPLICANT ADDRESS 200 KALMUS DRIVE	CITY COSTA MESA	STATE CA
	ZIP CODE 92628	

PROJECT APPLICANT (Check appropriate box)

☐ Local Public Agency ☒ School District ☐ Other Special District ☐ State Agency ☐ Private Entity

CHECK APPLICABLE FEES:

☐ Environmental Impact Report (EIR) \$ 4,123.50 \$ _____
☐ Mitigated/Negative Declaration (MND)(ND) \$ 2,968.75 \$ _____
☐ Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) document - payment due directly to CDFW \$ 1,401.75 \$ _____

☒ 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 \$ 0.00**

SIGNATURE X 	AGENCY OF FILING PRINTED NAME AND TITLE Kaeli Do Deputy Clerk
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