

Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: CA Dept. of Water Resources
SLFD 31770 Gonzaga Rd
Gustine, CA 95322

Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

Project Title: California Aqueduct Reach 2B O'Neill Forebay Verizon Fiber Optic Line Repair

Project Location City & County: Merced County

Project Location – Specific: The project is in Reach 2B of the California Aqueduct in the Department of Water Resources (DWR) right of way (ROW). The work site is on the west side of the O'Neill Forebay and adjacent to San Luis Creek State Park, approximately 2.8 miles southwest of the unincorporated community of Santa Nella (Figure 1).

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Verizon requests encroachment permission to repair an existing fiber optic service line located in the DWR ROW. To repair the line, a Verizon contractor will first excavate an approximately 1,400-foot long by 4-foot wide by 4-foot deep trench to expose the existing handholes, trace wire, duct, and fiber optic cable. Once the trench is dug, the handhole at the northern end of the damaged line and the handhole at the southern end will be removed and replaced with new ones. The existing duct, trace wire, and damaged cable will either be removed and disposed of or left in place. A new high density polyethylene (HDPE) duct and a trace wire will be placed in the trench, and new concrete covers will be placed over the new handholes. The trench will then be backfilled and compacted, but the areas over the concrete covers will remain exposed as access points for the installation and splicing of new fiber optic cable. After the trench is backfilled, new fiber optic cable will be installed by removing the cover over one of the handholes, placing new cable into the duct and pushing it through to the other end. When the new cable is in place, the concrete cover will be placed over the handhole until Verizon personnel can do the splicing. Verizon will remove the covers, and the ends of the new fiber optic cable will be spliced in each handhole, joining them to the existing, undamaged portions of fiber optic cable. When the splicing is complete, the concrete covers will be placed over the handholes and the area over the covers will be backfilled, compacted, and recontoured to match the original topography. Verizon and its customers will benefit from this work.



Exempt/Suspend Status:

- Ministerial (§21080[b][1]; 15268)
- Declared Emergency (Proclamation of a State of Emergency Due to Drought)
- Emergency Project (Public Resources Code §21080[b][4]; California Code of Regulations §15269[c])
- Categorical Exemption: 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15305(b) (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations – Issuance of Minor Encroachment Permits)
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: Verizon requests encroachment permission to repair its existing fiber optic cable in the DWR ROW. The work will occur in an area with an average slope of less than 20 percent, no expansion of existing use will occur, and there will be no changes to land use or density. DWR will issue an Encroachment Permit for this work. Categorical Exemptions 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15305(b) (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations – Issuance of Minor Encroachment Permits) apply.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Department of Water Resources

Contact Person: Mark McDaniel

Telephone: (209) 827-5190

Signature: Mark McDaniel **Date:** 9/2/2025 **Title:** Planner/Scheduler/UC Supv

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant