THE CITY OF
EUREKA
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning

531 K Street • Eureka, California 95501-1146
Ph (707) 441-4160 • planning@eurekaca.gov

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
Henry Baker, Assistant Planner
531 K Street
Eureka, CA 95501-1165
(707) 441-4160
planning@eurekaca.gov

Project Title: Elk River Waste Water Treatment Plant Outfall Repair

Project Applicant: City of Eureka Public Works – Engineering

Project Location: The Elk River Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) outfall structure runs 4,030 feet west-northwest from the effluent pumping station under Elk River and the Elk River Spit to the terminus located in Humboldt Bay. Work will be performed along the diffuser section of the outfall structure: the 360-foot section nearest the terminus, located at a depth of 10–25 feet below Mean Lower Low Water Level (MLLW). The Elk River WWTP is located at 4301 Hilfiker Lane in Eureka, CA (APN: 018-271-005).

Project Description: The project involves maintenance and repairs to the outfall pipe at the Elk River WWTP. The outfall pipe runs west from the WWTP and discharges into Humboldt Bay. An underwater inspection identified necessary maintenance and repairs for the continued operation of the outfall. Maintenance and repairs will occur at the diffuser section of the outfall pipe. The diffuser section has 90 3-inch ports spaced every 4 feet with neoprene flap style check valves that function to prevent sediment intrusion into the pipe. The primary focus of the repairs is the replacement of 90 existing check valves. These valves are past their useful life span and no longer function properly. As a result, sand, sediment and shell have entered the diffuser pipe from the bay. Sediment that has entered the diffuser pipe will be removed during the replacement of the port valves. The neoprene flap style valves will be replaced with 3-inch elastomeric Tideflex check valves that will prevent sediment from entering the diffuser pipe during low flows. In addition to the port valve replacement, one nut and restraining bolt on the diffuser pipe will be replaced, and one 6-inch-wide area of spalling will be repaired with underwater concrete epoxy. Project work will be conducted during the Summer-Fall 2026 and scheduled to avoid periods of

anadromous fish passage or heavy waterfowl use.

EXEMPTION FINDINGS: The City of Eureka, as Lead Agency, has determined that the above-described activity is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Lead Agency has further determined that the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the Class 1 and Class 2 Categorical Exemptions (CEQA Guidelines §15301 and §15302).

Class 1 – Existing Facilities (CEQA Guidelines §15301):

Class 1 exempts the repair, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public structures involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The project consists of maintenance and repairs to the existing WWTP outfall structure, with no expansion of the structure's former capacity. Therefore, the project qualifies for a Class 1 categorical exemption because it involves maintenance and repairs of an existing structure with no expansion of use.

Class 2 – Replacement or Reconstruction (CEQA Guidelines §15302):

Class 2 exempts the replacement or reconstruction of existing structures where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced, and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity of the structure replaced, including but not limited to replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity. The project includes the replacement of 90 3-inch flap-style diffuser valves with 90 3-inch elastomeric check valves and the replacement of one nut and restraining bolt on the diffuser pipe. These components have the same capacity and serve the same purpose as the components being replaced, and involve a negligible expansion of capacity. Therefore, the project qualifies for a Class 2 categorical exemption because it replaces existing valves with comparable valves that do not expand the outfall's capacity.

Exception Analysis (CEQA Guidelines §15300.2):

Further, the Lead Agency has determined that use of the categorical exemption is not barred by one of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. The project will not result in a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The work consists solely of maintenance and minor repair activities on an existing submerged outfall diffuser and does not involve expansion of the facility, changes in discharge location, or changes in operational capacity. All work will be performed by divers using hand tools only; no pile driving, dredging, heavy construction equipment, or mechanized excavation will be used. Repairs are limited to valve replacement, minor hardware replacement, and localized epoxy repair of existing spalling, resulting in minimal and highly localized disturbance.

The timing of the work has been selected to avoid sensitive biological periods. Construction activities will be conducted during the summer–fall work window and scheduled to avoid periods of anadromous fish migration and peak waterfowl use in Humboldt Bay. As a result, the project will not interfere with fish passage, spawning, or migratory behavior, nor will it disrupt sensitive avian species.

The project site is not located on or adjacent to a hazardous waste site included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5 (Cortese List). The project does not involve a historical resource, is not located within a designated scenic highway corridor, and will not result in cumulative impacts when viewed in connection with other past, present, or reasonably

foreseeable future projects, as it involves routine maintenance of existing infrastructure with no expansion of use.

Accordingly, none of the exceptions to categorical exemptions under CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 apply, and the project remains eligible for the Class 1 and Class 2 categorical exemptions.

The material supporting the above finding is on file with the City of Eureka's Engineering Division of Public Works. 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.

Henry Baker - Assistant Planner, City of Eureka

12-15-2025
Date

(Project No.: ED-25-12)