

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: Santa Barbara County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department of Public Works – Resource Recovery and Waste Management

Based on a preliminary review of the project the following activity is determined to be exempt from further environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as defined in the State and County Guidelines for the implementation of CEQA.

APN(s): 081-150-032 **Case No:** Not Applicable

LOCATION: 14550 Calle Real, Goleta, CA 93117

PROJECT TITLE: Baron Ranch Post Storm Emergency Access Road and Bridge Repairs

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project consists of emergency repair and cleanup activities to restore access along existing paved and unpaved access roads and vehicle bridge at Baron Ranch following storm events that occurred between December 23, 2025, and January 3, 2026. These storm events resulted in the deposition of mud, silt, rocks, woody debris, severe erosion, and damage to existing access roads and an onsite vehicle bridge, restricting safe access throughout the ranch. The roads provide access for wildfire fire protection, powerline repair and maintenance, restoration and conservation areas, wells, and for public trail maintenance and emergency access.

Emergency repair activities will include the use of standard heavy equipment and hand operated equipment to remove storm-related debris from paved roadways, relocate heavy debris off of existing road surfaces, and grade existing dirt roads to restore pre-storm conditions. All work will occur within the footprint of existing roads/bridge and previously disturbed areas. No road widening, realignment, or expansion is proposed. Some localized work may be required at the vehicle bridge location within the creek channel to remove woody debris that has collected against the upstream side of the bridge and is wedged beneath the bridge structure. Work will be conducted during daylight hours and biological survey and/or monitoring will be conducted prior to or during the emergency repair work.

The project is necessary to maintain public and worker safety, restore emergency and operational access, and prevent further damage to existing facilities.

EXEMPT STATUS: (Check One)

- ☐ Ministerial
- ☒ Statutory [Sec. 15269]
- ☐ Categorical Exemption
- ☒ Emergency Project
- ☐ No Possibility of Significant Effect [Sec. 15061(b, 3)]

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Cite specific CEQA Guideline Section: The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(c), which applies to specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency caused by a natural disaster, including emergency repairs to public and private service facilities necessary to maintain service.

The proposed activities consist solely of emergency cleanup and repair of existing paved and unpaved access roads and a vehicle within their existing footprints, with no road widening, realignment, or expansion.

Reasons to Support Exemption Findings (attach additional material, if necessary): Multiple rainstorms were forecasted and did occur countywide starting December 23, 2025, to January 3, 2026, with few if any breaks between storm cells or systems. Specifically, at the County-owned Baron Ranch between December 24th and January 3rd almost 11 inches of rain was recorded including 4.7 inches on January 3, 2026. This followed a significant rain event in November 2025. Resolution No. 26-10 was approved by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors proclaiming a local emergency for the 2026-2026 holiday storms for Santa Barbara County. The Baron Ranch was also previously impacted by the Alisal Fire with more than 90% of the ranch burned. Downed trees and debris from the Alisal Fire were further mobilized and erosion worsened by the holiday storms resulting in Aroyo Quemado Creek overtopping its banks in multiple locations depositing mud, silt, rocks, woody debris on area roads and eroding the road surfaces and resulting in debris collecting within the creek and against and under the ranch's vehicle bridge. Examples can be seen in Attachment 1. Site Photos. In addition, the storm resulted in multiple landslides on the ranch several of which resulted in material blocking road access.

Pursuant to CEQA Guideline Section 15269, projects undertaken, carried out, or approved by a public agency to prevent or mitigate an emergency caused by a natural disaster, including storm events are statutorily exempt from CEQA. Consistent with this exemption the proposed project consists of emergency maintenance and repair consisting of debris removal, grading, and repair of existing paved and unpaved access roads at Baron Ranch that were damaged during the holiday storms and for which the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has issued a Proclamation of Local Emergency. The project will be initiated within one year of the damage occurring and it is necessary to restore safe access and prevent further damage to existing facilities. The project allows for public and worker safety-related emergency repair activities designed to restore safe travel conditions along existing access roads as they existed prior to the storm events. Therefore, the project is contemplated by the CEQA exemptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(c) (Emergency Projects).]

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Department/Division Representative: John Veggianelli, Engineering Environmental Planner

Date: 1/23/2026

Acceptance Date: 1/23/2026

Date Filed by County Clerk: _____

Attachment 1. Site Photos



Mudslide crossing roadway with slope failure into Baron Ranch (January 9, 2026).



Second access gate with debris impact causing gate deformation (January 9, 2026).



Eroded access road north of the second access gate (January 9, 2026).



Accumulated debris and silt covering the access road prior to the vehicle bridge at Baron Ranch (January 9, 2026).



Vehicle bridge covered with silt, with debris lodged upstream and beneath the bridge (January 9, 2026).



Access road past the vehicle bridge with erosion and water flowing down the roadway (January 9, 2026).