



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
 DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
 Northern Region  
 619 2nd Street  
 Eureka, CA 95501  
[www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov)

**GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor**  
**MEGHAN HERTEL, Director**



May 18, 2026

Jared Walker  
 City of Ukiah  
 300 Seminary Drive  
 Ukiah, California 95482  
[Jawalker@cityofukiah.com](mailto:Jawalker@cityofukiah.com)

Ukiah New Municipal Well Project  
 MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
 State Clearinghouse (SCH) # 2026041112

Dear Jared Walker:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a Notice of Availability of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) from the City of Ukiah for the City of Ukiah New Municipal Well Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

## **CDFW ROLE**

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the state. (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, § 1802.) Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by Fish and Game Code. For example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY**

The Project proponent, the City of Ukiah (City), proposes to construct a new well with a capacity of approximately 600 to 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm). The

<sup>1</sup> CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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primary Project activities include construction of a test well to determine the potential capacity of the well, development of the well and related infrastructure, construction of an 800 square foot building to house the well and its electric components, other site development, and the construction of a 12-inch water transmission line, approximately 25-feet in length that would connect to the City's existing 6-inch water transmission line in Waugh Lane. Construction of the proposed Project is proposed to begin in the spring or summer of 2026 and take approximately one year to complete.

### **Location**

The Project is located on a City-owned parcel situated at 410 Talmage Road (APN# 003-150-40). The proposed project is located within the City of Ukiah, in Mendocino County. The Russian River is located approximately 0.78 miles to the east of the proposed Project site.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the City in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

### **I. Project Description and Related Impact Shortcoming Section 2.1, Page 2-1 Proposed Project Description**

**Comment 1:** The Project Description does not provide an adequate discussion of the potential impact to groundwater levels and flows within the Russian River that may occur with the installation and use of a new production well. The IS/MND disclosed that the Project would be implemented in five phases, with drilling of a test well to occur in Phase 1. This exploratory activity would evaluate the intervals and depths of both permeable and non-permeable sediments below ground surface, and the potential flow capacities of that material.

**Recommendation 1:** As the proposed well site is approximately 0.78 mile from the Russian River, and the sediments are characterized as fine to coarse-grained material with moderate infiltration rates (Ukiah Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan chapter 2.2.1.2 [2021]). Phase 1 should include a study of the potential drawdown of groundwater to determine both the vertical and lateral extent of groundwater levels during pumping. The study should also provide accurate estimates of aquifer parameters (i.e. hydraulic conductivity, transmissivity, etc.), which are critical in determining the lateral extent of the pumping influences generated by the well.

### **II. Environmental Setting and Related Impact Shortcoming Section 3.4, Page 3-10, Biological Resources**

**Comment 2:** The proposed Project may have a substantial adverse effect through the reduction of instream flows within the Russian River on federally listed species including Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Steelhead Trout (*O. mykiss*), amphibian Species of Special Concern including red-bellied newt (*Taricha rivularis*) and Foothill Yellow-legged Frog (*Rana boylei*), and riparian plant communities.

**CDFW Recommendation 2:** CDFW requests the opportunity to review the information collected during drilling and monitoring of the test well (Phase 1) to assess the potential impacts to groundwater levels and flows within the Russian River prior to the City commencing Phase 2.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB field survey form can be filled out and submitted online at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

## CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the IN/MND to assist the City in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. Due to the issues presented in this letter, CDFW concludes that the IS/MND does not adequately identify or mitigate the Project's significant, or potentially significant, impacts on biological resources. Deficiencies in the IS/MND can affect later project approvals by CDFW in its role as a Responsible Agency. In addition, because of these issues, CDFW has concerns that City may not have the basis to approve the project or make "findings" as required by CEQA unless the environmental document is modified to eliminate and/or mitigate significant impacts, as reasonably feasible (CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15074, 15091 & 15092).

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Jennifer Garrison, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) at 707-477-7792 or [CEQAReferrals@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:CEQAReferrals@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
AA601B4C4B11422...

Michael R. Harris, Acting Regional Manager  
Northern Region

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Water Resources Director  
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ec: Angela Liebenberg, Monty Larson, Bryan Demucha, Jennifer Garrison,  
Rebecca Garwood

Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento  
[state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov](mailto:state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov)

## **REFERENCE**

Ukiah Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, Ukiah Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan, December 2021.