



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
MEGHAN HERTEL, Director

P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
wildlife.ca.gov

March 16, 2026

Zachary Wells
Executive Director
East Merced Resource Conservation District
2926 G St., Suite 102
Merced, CA 95340

Sent via email to Zach@eastmercedrcd.org

Subject: California Environmental Quality Act Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects – Sweetwater Restoration Project (Request No. 21080.56-2026-093-R4)

Dear Zachary Wells:

I am pleased to inform you as the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that I concur with the lead agency determination by the East Merced Resource Conservation District that the Sweetwater Restoration Project qualifies as a statutorily exempt restoration project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). (Pub. Resources Code, § 21080.56, subd. (e).) My concurrence as the CDFW Director is based on CDFW's independent review of the East Merced Resource Conservation District request for concurrence, which CDFW received on January 29, 2026. In my opinion, informed by the best available science and described in the separate CDFW concurrence, the Sweetwater Restoration Project meets all the qualifying criteria in Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive.

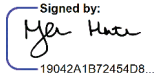
This concurrence signifies the continued commitment by CDFW and its partners in advancing the "Cutting the Green Tape" initiative, which is a collaborative effort to increase the pace and scale of restoration projects in California in a way that protects the environment and results in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery. CDFW stands ready to continue this effort in coordination with the East Merced Resource Conservation District.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

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CDFW's concurrence will be posted on our website as provided by Public Resources Code section 21080.56. If you have any related questions, please contact Brad Henderson, Cutting the Green Tape Program Manager, at (530) 351-5948, or by email at Brad.Henderson@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Meghan Hertel, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

ec: **California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Valerie Termini
Chief Deputy Director

Steven Ingram
Assistant Chief Counsel
Office of the General Counsel

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Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
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