

## Notice of Exemption

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

From: Central Coast Water Authority  
255 Industrial Way  
Buellton, CA 93427

County Clerk of the Board  
County of Santa Barbara  
105 E. Anapamu St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
Room 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

County Clerk-Recorder  
County of San Luis Obispo  
1055 Monterey Street, Room D120  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

**Project Title:** Cuesta Tunnel North Portal Vegetation Abatement Project

**Project Location:** U.S. Highway 101 in northern San Luis Obispo County, between San Luis Obispo and Atascadero.

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:** The Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) is a joint powers agency formed to construct, own, and operate certain facilities needed to treat, convey, and deliver State Water Project (SWP) water to its project participants—retail water providers and end users located within the County.

CCWA maintains the drainage system at the Cuesta Tunnel North Portal site. A recent survey has shown vegetative growth that may impact the existing drainage system if left unabated, making it more susceptible to erosion and potential of flooding during rainstorms. CCWA intends to retain a contractor to abate vegetation in accordance with CCWA's Habitat Conservation Plan procedures.

**Name of Public Agencies Approving Project:** CCWA

**Name of Persons or Agencies Carrying Out Project:** CCWA

**Exempt Status:** Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, Sections 15000 – 15387 (CEQA Guidelines), Section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption); Categorical Exemptions: CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Public Facilities); Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction); and Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land).

### Reasons Why Project is Exempt:

**Class 1 - Existing Public Facilities Categorical Exemption:** The Project consists of operation, repair, and maintenance of existing facilities that involves negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. Therefore the Existing Public Facilities Categorical Exemption applies. (CEQA Guidelines § 15301.)

**Class 2 – Replacement or Reconstruction Categorical Exemption:** The Project consists of vegetation abatement in accordance with CCWA's Habitat Conservation Plan procedures, where the Cuesta Tunnel North Portal site will be located on the same site and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity. Therefore, the Replacement or Reconstruction Categorical Exemption applies. (CEQA Guidelines § 15302.)

**Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land Categorical Exemption:** The Project consists of minor alterations in the condition of land and vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Therefore, the Minor Alteration to Land Categorical Exemption applies. (CEQA Guidelines § 15304.)

**Exceptions to the Categorical Exemptions:**

None of the exceptions to the Categorical Exemptions apply, as the Project will not: impact a designated, mapped, and officially adopted environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern; result in a significant cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place over time; have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; damage a scenic highway or scenic resources within a state scenic highway; be located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; nor cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. (CEQA Guidelines § 15300.2.)

**Common Sense Exemption:**

This Project is also determined to be exempt based upon the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have a potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. (CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3).) A public agency may determine an activity to be exempt where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

Here, there will be no expansion of existing uses, and the Cuesta Tunnel North Portal site will operate in the same manner and at the same capacity as the existing Cuesta Tunnel North Portal site. As such, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, and therefore, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

**Agency Contact:** Peter Thompson, CCWA

**Area Code/Telephone:** 805-688-2292

Signature:   
Title: CCWA, Executive Director

Date: 5/26/26

Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_