# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**TO:** ☒ Office of Planning and Research
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95815

☒ Clerk of the Board
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**FROM:** City of Watsonville
Community Development Dept
250 Main Street
Watsonville, CA 95076

**Project Title:** Atkinson Lane Integrated Flood Management and Watershed Restoration Project - Phase I - Native Habitat Restoration

**Project Location - Specific:** The project is located on portions of APNs 019-226-42, 048-211-25, 019-236-01, 048-221-09 as outlined in Attachment A. The project site can be accessed via 78 Atkinson Lane or 1515 Brewington Avenue in the City of Watsonville.

**Project Location - City:** City of Watsonville **Project Location- County:** County of Santa Cruz

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:** The proposed project includes implementation of approximately 4.0 acres of native habitat restoration around the wetland complex located at 78 Atkinson Lane. Work will involve removal of non-native invasive species, including removal and treatment of approximately 2.0 acres of Himalayan blackberry infestation, planting native plants, and installation of erosion control. Restoration treatment areas for Phase I are outlined in Attachment A. Work will be carried out principally with hand labor. Existing native trees and shrubs will be preserved and protected in place. Protective measures including worker training, surveys prior to work commencement, and daily monitoring will be implemented to ensure that the habitat restoration activities will not result in adverse impacts on any native wildlife species or their habitats.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** City of Watsonville

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Watsonville Wetlands Watch and City of Watsonville

**Exempt Status (check one):**

☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);

☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));

☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));

☒ Categorical Exemption: **15333. Class 33 Small Habitat Restoration Projects**

☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Public Resources Code sections 21080, 21084, 21065 and CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3)

**Reasons why the project is exempt:** The project is less than five acres in size and involves native habitat restoration and enhancement activities that will improve habitat for native plants and wildlife. The project will not result in adverse effects on any endangered, rare, or threatened species or their habitat. No hazardous materials will be used or released, and the project will not cause significant cumulative impacts. None of the conditions described in §15300.2 apply.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Matt Orbach **Telephone:** 831.768.3075

**Signature:** _____ **Date:** 05/27/2026 **Title:** CDD Director

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

**Attachment A.** Atkinson Lane Integrated Flood Management and Watershed Restoration Project - Phase I - Native Habitat Restoration

Restoration Treatment Area
Blackberry Removal Locations

**Attachment B. Atkinson Lane Integrated Flood Management and Watershed Restoration Project Overview**

**Project Overview:** The Atkinson Lane Integrated Flood Management and Watershed Restoration Project is a flood risk reduction and watershed habitat restoration project located on the eastern boundary of the City of Watsonville. The Atkinson Wetland Complex is located between two affordable housing developments, Pippin Phase I (54 Atkinson Lane) and Pippin Phase II (1515 Brewington Avenue ) on several parcels that cross both unincorporated Santa Cruz County and the City of Watsonville. As part of the County's requirements for approval of these housing developments, a Habitat Enhancement Plan was prepared in 2021 for the Atkinson Wetland Complex which outlined removal of non-native vegetation and revegetation with native riparian and upland species to benefit wetland functions and values.

Project activities for the Atkinson Lane Integrated Flood Management and Watershed Restoration Project include two primary components which will be implemented in two phases:

Phase 1. Implementation of approximately 4.0 acres of native habitat restoration activities as outlined in the 2021 Habitat Enhancement Plan. This work will involve removal of non-native invasive species, including removal and treatment of approximately 2.0 acres of Himalayan blackberry infestation, planting native plants, and installation of erosion control. Enhancing native habitat will benefit ecological functions and values and improve water quality within the Atkinson Wetland Complex.

Phase 2. Design and implementation of best management practices (BMPs) for urban stormwater run-off, such as a vegetated bioswale and/or wetland retention basins, to reduce sediment inputs and enhance water quality within the wetland complex while also providing flood-risk reduction by enhancing the ability of the wetland complex to attenuate floods. Phase II BMPs will perform in collaboration with the Phase I Habitat Enhancement to further improve ecological functions and water quality within the Atkinson Wetland Complex.

**Funding:** Funding for this project was awarded to the City of Watsonville and Watsonville Wetlands Watch in 2024 in the amount of $545,000, by the Regional Water Management Foundation as a part of a block grant from the CA Department of Water Resources.

**Timeline:** Habitat restoration (removal of invasive plants and planting native plants) is scheduled to begin in summer of 2026 in accordance with the approved habitat restoration plan. Design of the stormwater BMPs in in process. Target date for construction is summer 2027. All work under current funding needs to be completed by September 2027.