NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: ☒ Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

☒ County Clerk
County of Sonoma
585 Fiscal Drive, Room 103
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

FROM (Public Agency)**:**
Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Project Title: Mark West Wikiup Preserve Foot Bridge and Culvert Replacement Emergency Project

Project Location Specific: 5001 Carriage Lane

Project Location – City: Santa Rosa **Project Location – County:** Sonoma

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: The project is located on the Mark West Wikiup Preserve, which was formerly the Wikiup Golf Course. The 30-acre Preserve will be utilized in perpetuity as a park and open space.

An existing collapsed footbridge over a drainage, previously used by golf carts to access the former First Tee, requires immediate repair. The original culvert appears to have burned away during the Tubbs fire, a disaster that prompted an Emergency Proclamation from California Governor Jerry Brown. The fire left only unsupported asphalt over the drainage. Consequently, the vertical banks beneath the asphalt are eroding the hillside drainage that flows directly into Mark West Creek, which contains critical habitat for salmon species protected under the California and federal Endangered Species Acts. In addition to sedimentation from the active erosion of the drainage banks, the drainage carries flow from the steep hillsides upstream during storm events. The active erosion and sedimentation may be worsened by the Super El Niño this winter.

This pre-existing disaster damage is now directly threatened by a second disaster condition. On September 21, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Statewide Emergency Proclamation due to a historic potential for a Super El Niño to occur this winter. Given the forecasted high precipitation and resulting high flow conditions, there is an urgent need to mitigate further damage to essential public infrastructure and prevent severe downstream sedimentation in the Mark West Creek habitat.

The emergency project activities include removing the asphalt and debris, pulling back vertical slopes from adjacent drainage areas to stabilize the site and prevent further collapse, replacing the original culvert, and trimming selective vegetation in the area. Following installation, the drainage slopes will be hydroseeded with a native erosion control mix appropriate for riparian habitat.

Lead Agency Approving Project: Sonoma County Water Agency

Lead Agency Contact Name and Phone: Connie Barton (707) 547-1905

Applicant: Sonoma County Water Agency

Applicant Contact Name and Phone: Connie Barton (707) 547-1905

Exempt Status (check one):

☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
☒ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)); Projects to replace property or facilities damaged or destroyed in a disaster-stricken area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act, commencing with Section 8550 of the Government Code.
☒ Emergency Project (Sec.21080 (b)(4); 15269(b)(c)); Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency

☒ Exemption under Governor's September 21, 2026, emergency proclamation (Sec. 7): Government Code section 8558(b)
☐ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:
☐ Statutory Exemptions. State Code number:

Reasons why project is exempt: The project is statutorily exempt pursuant to the California Public Resource Code Section 21080(b)(3) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a)-(c) based on the following Findings:

1. Governor-declared emergency area (PRC § 21080(b)(3); 14 CCR § 15269(a)): The project area is within a disaster-stricken area impacted by the Tubbs Fire. On September 21, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Statewide Emergency Proclamation declaring a state of emergency due to a historic, potentially record-breaking 2026–2027 El Niño event (Gov. Code 8550 et seq.).

2. Facilities Destroyed by Disaster: The original culvert was destroyed by the historic Tubbs Fire, leaving an unsupported layer of asphalt over drainage, causing the sub-grade embankments to become vertical and structurally compromised resulting in active erosion of the drainage banks.

3. Imminent Threat of Secondary Disaster (PRC § 21080(b)(4); 14 CCR § 15269(b)-(c)): The project site is actively threatened by an impending secondary disaster condition. The drainage channel carries high-velocity stormwater runoff from the steep hillsides upstream during storm events. The Super El Niño this winter will bring severe weather, atmospheric rivers, catastrophic flooding, rapid land erosion, mudslides, and massive debris flows. Left unmitigated, these compounding conditions will accelerate the active erosion, worsen severe sedimentation threatening public infrastructure and draining into critical habitat for salmon species protected under the California and federal Endangered Species Acts.

4.Necessity of Specific Action to Prevent or Mitigate Emergency: The project activities of removing the asphalt and debris, pulling back vertical slopes from adjacent drainage areas to stabilize the site and prevent further collapse, replacing the original culvert, and trimming selective vegetation in the area, constitute specific, immediate actions necessary to prevent and mitigate sudden infrastructure failure. These actions directly fulfill Section 7 of the Governor's September 21, 2026, Proclamation, which mandates that local agencies immediately execute sediment management, erosion control, and channel-capacity improvements to prevent public safety and protect critical drainage infrastructure ahead of the catastrophic winter weather.

Signature	Interim General Manager *Title*	October 28, 2026 *Date*

☒ Signed by Lead Agency Approving the Project Date received for filing at OPR:_____