NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

2026-EIR-132
FILED
October 29, 2026
MATT H. MAY
COUNTY CLERK
By Ralph Wilson
Deputy Clerk

To: Office of Planning and Research
Post Office Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Merced County Clerk
2222 M. Street
Merced, CA 95340

From: Santa Nella County
12931 S. Hwy 33
Santa Nella, CA 953

Project Title: Contract between United States and Santa Nella County Water District Providing for Project Water Service and Facilities Repayment: San Luis Unit and Delta Division

Project Location – Specific: Santa Nella County Water District

Project Location – City: N/A **Project Location – County:** Merced

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This project is for the execution of a contract between the United States, by and through the United States Bureau of Reclamation ("Reclamation"), and the Santa Nella County Water District (the "District") to permanently assign 4,449 acre feet ("AF") of San Luis Water District's ("SLWD") Central Valley Project ("CVP") water allocation to the District (the "District CVP Contract"). The District has historically secured portions of SLWD's CVP allocation for use on the areas of the District's boundaries that overlapped with SLWD's boundaries. However, the District and SLWD amended their respective jurisdictional boundaries to avoid the overlap pursuant to Merced County LAFCo authorization in 2022. Accordingly, the District and Reclamation are entering into the District CVP Contract to provide the District with a direct CVP allocation from Reclamation, but the District will continue to accept water service in similar amounts it has historically been using dating back to 1988, and such is in the same scope and nature as ongoing CVP water operations.

The beneficiaries of this project are the District's customers. By acquiring a direct contract with Reclamation, the District will improve the reliability of its water supply to ensure continued water delivery to District landowners and residents. The District owns, operates, and maintains the facilities that supply CVP water and deliver it to customers in the District.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Santa Nella County Water District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Santa Nella County Water District

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. State type and section number:** Existing Facilities – Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301; and Common Sense Exemption – Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15061, subd. (b)(3)

☐ **Statutory Exemption. State code number:**

Reasons why project is exempt:

Existing Facilities – CEQA Guidelines, § 15301 – A Class 1 exemption "consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing or minor alternation of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination . . . . The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of existing use." (CEQA Guidelines, § 15301.) This categorical exemption applies because the CVP water the District receives pursuant to the District CVP Contract will be through existing San Luis Unit of the Delta Division facilities and involves no expansion of use beyond that already existing.

Moreover, this is a single contract which will not result in successive similar projects. Entering into the District CVP Contract will merely ensure continued reliable delivery of CVP water to the District in the same amounts and through the same facilities as the District has been using to receive a portion of SLWD's CVP allocation.

Common Sense Exemption – The "Common Sense Exemption" applies to this project. As described above, the District CVP Contract contemplates delivery in the same or similar nature and scope as deliveries under SLWD's CVP contract, which have been in place for over 30 years. The District's customers have relied on this water for the same amount of time and in similar amounts. While the CVP water actually delivered will, as always, depend on seasonal and annual availability, the District CVP Contract does not change the total contracted quantity historically available under the SLWD CVP contract, but partially and permanently assigns that quantity to the District. Further, the purpose of use, timing, and facilities used will not change. Therefore, there is no possibility the District CVP Contract may have a significant effect on the environment within the District's service area or in neighboring areas.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: **Amy Montgomery** **Area Code/Telephone/Ext:** **(209) 826-0920**

If filed by applicant:

1. **Attach certified document of exemption finding.**
2. **Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?** ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Signature: _____ **Date:** 10/16/26 **Title:** General Manager

■ **Signed by Lead Agency**
☐ **Signed by Applicant**