Print Form

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

County Clerk
County of: Lake
255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

From: (Public Agency): Community Development Department
255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95423
(Address)

2026-086

FILED
November 16, 2026
JENAVIVE HERRINGTON
COUNTY CLERK
LAKE COUNTY
By KG
Deputy clerk

Project Title: Wright Wetland Preserve, Wetland Restoration Project

Project Applicant: Lake County Land Trust

Project Location - Specific:
440, 446, 950, and 982 Soda Bay Road

Project Location - City: Lakeport Project Location - County: Lake

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:
See the attached for a detailed project description

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Lake, Community Development Department

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Trish Turner, Associate Planner

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: _____
- ■ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: California Public Resources Code Section 21080.56

Reasons why project is exempt:
The proposed project (Project) will increase the quantity and quality of wetland habitat by hydrologically reconnecting 32 acres of isolated wetlands to Clear Lake and removing sections of a levee that currently covers historic wetland habitat. This Project will benefit numerous native plant, fish, and wildlife species (i.e., Black Cottonwood, Willow, Tule, Clear Lake Hitch, Clear Lake Tule Perch, Bald Eagle, White Pelican, otter, and mink) as well as various species of sport fish (Large-mouth Bass, Black and White Crappie, Bluegill, and various species of catfish). Water quality will be improved by restoring natural overland flow, repairing erosion points, and improving sediment capture and retention from upland sources.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Trish Turner, Associate Planner Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 707-263-2221

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: 11/14/2026 Title: Associate Planner

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: _____

Revised 2011

☐

WRIGHT WETLAND PRESERVE
BIG VALLEY WETLANDS
WETLAND RESTORATION PLAN
January 4, 2021

The Wright Wetland Reserve (Wright) was purchased by the Lake County Land Trust (LCLT) in 2020 as part of the Big Valley Wetlands Project (BVWP). Funding for Wright came from LCLT donor raised funds and a grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board. The BVWP was developed between 2010 and 2014 to protect and restore approximately 710 acres of wetlands on the Big Valley shoreline between Clear Lake State Park and Lakeport and to protect and restore 43.5 miles of creeks in Big Valley that are, or potentially are, utilized by the Clear Lake hitch, a California threatened species, during spawning. Wright contains approximately 120 acres of functional wetland and 32 acres of hydraulically isolated historic wetland. This Plan is to reconnect the isolated wetland to Clear Lake and restore some of the natural hydrology to the property.

A levee was constructed on the property between 1957 and 1974 (we believe in the mid to late 1960's) for agricultural purposes which separated approximately 32 acres of wetland area from Clear Lake. Grazing and limited vegetable production occurred behind the berm. Approximately one half of the tules have grown back, however, they are not accessible to fish within Clear Lake nor do they provide water quality benefits (nutrient uptake) to Clear Lake. Approximately 120 acres of wetlands at the north end of the property are still connected to Clear Lake.

Circa 1952, Manning Creek, which currently flows along the southwest property corner, was channelized onto the property to the west of Wright. Historical aerial photographs and topographic maps indicate that a portion of the natural delta of Manning Creek was on Wright. A remnant channel and creek mouth exist at the northern end of Wright. Other channels have been removed by leveling the Wright property for flood irrigation purposes.

An old roadway across the southern edge of Wright has been elevated and currently blocks overland flow from passing through Wright. The old roadway provides access to the pole barn and corrals along the southern property line. To the southwest of the pole barn area, the road no longer serves a purpose. No culverts are evident in the roadway and flow is directed to the slough along the eastern edge of the property. Due to the low channel slope (<0.2% average), water backs up and overflows the roadway to the east of the pole barn and has created significant ruts which limits the usability of the roadway.

The proposed project is to restore hydraulic connectivity of the isolated wetland area to Clear Lake and to restore some of the natural overland flow from the south through the property. Approximately 72 percent of the wetlands near Clear Lake have been lost due to development. Wetland loss has adversely impacted fish and wildlife and the water quality in Clear Lake. While this project involves only 0.36% of 9,000 acres of the historic wetlands, any wetland increases are beneficial to the Clear Lake ecosystem.

The project will benefit:

- Native and introduced fish in Clear Lake: Wetlands provide shelter, spawning and rearing habitat for nearly all the fish in Clear Lake.
- Birds: Both migratory and resident birds utilize wetland areas for foraging and nesting purposes. Islands will also be created by the levee breaches which provided birds shelter from some terrestrial predators.
- Water quality: Wetlands are known to reduced phosphorus and nitrogen in water bodies.

Project components include:

- Breach levee to reconnect historic wetlands to Clear Lake: Three breaches are proposed in the eastern section of levee adjacent to the dredged channel. The ground elevation[i] at the proposed breach locations vary but are near 4 foot Rumsey or approximately half full on Clear Lake. This promotes hydraulic connectivity of the wetlands to Clear Lake for much of an average water year[ii] and connects the lowest portion of the isolated wetlands to Clear Lake. Another breach location was considered along the northern section of the levee, however, ground elevations were approximately 6 foot Rumsey and would only have water in it for short periods in all but the wetter years. Each breach is proposed to be 40 feet wide at the base with side slopes of 3:1. Each breach is estimated to remove 75 to 100 cubic yards (CY) of material from the levee. Material removed from the breaches is proposed to be disposed of by either:
    - Placement adjacent to the breach on the land side to increase the new "levee islands" to increase island size and potential nesting habitat. This would actually reduce the acreage of restored wetlands, although it would be balanced by the increased wetland area created by the breaches, or
    - Placement of the material in an upland location, such as near the pole barn.
- Consider pilot plantings of tules in the reconnected historic wetlands: A large patch of tules grow in the isolated wetlands, although it could be larger. Grazing cattle have probably limited the growth of wetland plants. Isolated tule plants away from the main patch show the potential as can be expected from the ground elevation. Consideration should be given to placing plantings of tules and other native wetland vegetation in the restored wetland.
- Relocate or remove fence lines within the Public Trust Easement (lakeward of 7.79 ft Rumsey, or 1329.0 ft NAVD88: Portions of three fence lines are within the Public Trust Easement and wetland restoration area. All fences do not function to keep cattle out of the wetland area as they do not connect to other fences and/or have sections that have failed and barb wire is lying on the ground. Fencing within the Public Trust Easement should be removed. If LCLT continues grazing on Wright, new fences need to be installed upland of the Public Trust Easement to exclude livestock from the wetland areas.
- Breach the old roadbed southwest of the pole barn to facilitate movement of surface water northward through the property: A ten foot bottom width breach is proposed in the roadbed immediately southwest of the pole barn area. This would intercept overland flow from the area to the south and southwest and route it north west of the pole barn area. It would also intercept overflows from Manning Creek and allow them to proceed northward. This would reduce the amount of water currently flowing east approximately 1,000 feet to the slough, where the average channel slope is approximately 0.2% and reduce overflows of the access road. Excavated material

(estimated at less than 20 CY) would be disposed of in the immediate area, including building a berm to prevent vehicles from accidentally entering the breach. Culvert(s) may also be necessary in the access road where the overflows currently occur.

- Remove two abandoned agricultural water pumps and (at least some of) the associated infrastructure: Two pumps exist in the southeast corner of the property.
    - One is located on a platform in the slough and was a supply pump for flood irrigating the property. The buried irrigation pipe extends westward early to the property line, including at least one standpipe. The pump, platform and the irrigation line should be removed.
    - The second pump is located on the landside of the levee on a collapsed wooden platform. It was used to dewater the area behind the levee in the spring. The pump, platform and discharge pipe should be removed.
- Sediment and erosion control: Because of the need for excavation adjacent to Clear Lake, extra care must be taken to prevent sediment from entering the lake, both during and after construction. A SWPPP will be prepared addressing these issues. Silt fences and exclusion fencing will be required during construction to contain soil and reduce chance of damage to native vegetation. Disturbed area will be reseeded with the appropriate plants after construction is complete.

Following are historical aerial photographs, historical topographic maps and the proposed wetland restoration plan.

---

[i] Ground elevations are obtained from LiDAR data collected for FEMA in 2015-2016

[iii] Clear Lake is managed between Zero and 7.56 foot Rumsey, with the lake reaching 7.56 foot Rumsey approximately 50% of the years. Higher and lower water levels are experienced during flood and drought years.