

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

**TO:** Santa Barbara County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Christopher Schmuckal

The project or activity identified below is determined to be exempt from further environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as defined in the State and County Guidelines for the implementation of CEQA.

**APN's:** 113-020-016, 113-020-018, 113-030-002, **Case No.:** 23EMP-00015  
113-030-008, 113-030-009, 113-030-010, 113-030-027

**Location:** Santa Maria River, West of Guadalupe and Highway 1

**Project Title:** Emergency Permit – Santa Maria River - Guadalupe

**Project Applicant:** Santa Barbara County Public Works Flood Control Division

**Project Description:** *The project proposes to remove vegetation and siltation debris near the center of the Santa Maria River footprint from State Route 1 towards the Pacific Ocean. The project is approximately 4 miles long, 3.2 miles of which is within the Coastal Zone boundary. Debris removal ranges from 200 to 330 feet in width and 4 to 9 feet in depth along the river. Suitable material that is removed from the river will be placed along the southern and northern margin of the river corridor outside of the ordinary high water mark to create an 8 to 10 foot berm to direct flows into the historic river pathway. The project includes the following components:*

- *The first 2.7 miles of the project from the Coastal Zone boundary towards the ocean is un-vegetated and debris removal will occur within an area 300 feet wide and up to 6 feet in depth.*
- *The western 0.5 miles of the project includes the removal of 7 acres of arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) riparian vegetation in order to restore the flow pathway. Willows will be cut off at the base to remove vegetation impeding waterflow, while also allowing future regrowth. The debris removal along this section will be 200 feet wide by up to 6 feet in depth and a berm will be created along the south side of the channel. All cut debris will be buried in the berm to allow it to regrow.*
- *The District is developing a habitat restoration plan in coordination with resource agencies, which will be implemented once the debris removal work is complete.*

*County Flood Control staff will implement all avoidance and minimization measures described in their October 16, 2023, letter (Attachment C). These measures include but are not limited to the following:*

- *District biologists will monitor the project area during equipment work and perform pre-project surveys of vegetation/habitat where special status species may have the potential to occur.*
- *Special-status plant species, if detected, will be clearly marked and excluded from the work area prior to equipment work.*
- *District biologists will survey for and relocate any special status wildlife during operations.*
- *District biologists will provide an environmental training session for contractors and staff working onsite.*
- *Work will be performed outside of the nesting bird season*
- *No work will occur during rain events or any forecasted river flow events*
- *No herbicide will be used during any stage of project operations.*

*Access to the project site will be taken off of Highway 1 and West Main Street. The project is located along the Santa Maria River, within Flood Control easement area, in the Fifth Supervisorial District on Assessor’s Parcel Numbers: 113-030-010, 113-030-009, 113-030-008, 113-030-027, 113-030-003, 113-030-002, 113-020-016, 113-020-019, 113-020-018.*

*The project is an emergency because, following the significant storms from winter of 2023, sediment build-up caused the Santa Maria River to re-align and erode beyond the southern bank, along a 5-mile stretch between State Route 1 and the Pacific Ocean. The deviated flowing water pathway resulted in flooding and damage to public facilities, including the City of Guadalupe’s wastewater treatment plant, West Main Street, and the road used by the public to access the coast at Guadalupe Dune County Park. In addition, private structures in the area, including homes, are under imminent threat of flooding and property damage with the forecasted El Nino winter season. The Governor of California declared a State of Emergency as a result of severe winter storms related to an atmospheric river event beginning on December 27, 2022. In addition, this project received emergency funding from the County Board of Supervisors in September 2023 to complete the work.*

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Santa Barbara County Planning & Development

**Name of Person or Entity Carrying Out Project:** Santa Barbara County Public Works Flood Control Division

**Exempt Status:**

- Ministerial
- Statutory Exemption
- Categorical Exemption
- Emergency Project
- Declared Emergency

**Cite specific CEQA and/or CEQA Guidelines Section:** Section 15269 Emergency Projects

**Reasons to support exemption findings:**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15269 exempts “specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.” Emergency action is warranted in this situation because sediment build-up in the Santa Maria River caused by the significant storms from the winter of 2023, caused the river to re-align and erode beyond its southern bank along a 5-mile stretch between State Route 1 and the Pacific Ocean. The deviated river pathway resulted in flooding and damage to public facilities, including the City of Guadalupe’s wastewater treatment facility, and private neighborhoods. The forecasted El Nino for the upcoming winter season puts these structures under imminent threat of flooding and property damage. An immediate response is necessary to reduce the flood risk for these communities.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Chris Schmuckal

**Phone #:** 805-568-3510

**Department/Division Representative:**



**Date:** 11/3/2023

**Acceptance Date:** 11/3/2023

**Distribution:** Hearing Support Staff

**Date Filed by County Clerk:** \_\_\_\_\_