

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: Santa Barbara County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

FROM: Matt Naftaly, Water Agency

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: NA

Case No.: NA

Location: Cuyama Valley, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Kern Counties

Project Title: Cuyama Groundwater Basin Study

Project Description: Due to concerns raised by constituents in the Cuyama Valley, the Santa Barbara County Water Agency (Water Agency) has been commissioned to produce a comprehensive report on current and future water availability in the Cuyama Groundwater basin. The Water Agency is conducting this study in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) as the USGS holds the most expertise and highest level of credibility in a water resources science investigation. This project is being conducted over a four year period. It began in the summer of 2008 and will end mid 2013.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Santa Barbara
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Santa Barbara County Water Agency

Exempt Status: (Check one)

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

Cite specific CEQA and/or CEQA Guideline Section: CEQA Categorical Exemption Section 15306 (Class 6) Basic data collection, research experimental management, and resource evaluation activities.

Reasons to support exemption findings: The Cuyama Valley Groundwater Study provides information, data, and analysis regarding groundwater within the basin. Such data may be used to protect natural resources and the environment. The study makes no recommendations regarding future actions or policies and the County has not approved, adopted, or funded any future actions. The study

will not result in a serious or major disturbance to any environmental resource. Therefore, the above listed exemption applies to this action.

There is no substantial evidence that there are unusual circumstances (including future activities) resulting in (or which might reasonably result in) significant impacts which threaten the environment. The exceptions to the categorical exemptions pursuant to Section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines are:

- (a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located -- a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.**

The study results in no physical disturbance to the environment with the exception of the installation of 3 groundwater monitoring wells installed by the United States Geologic Survey. The installation of groundwater monitoring wells by the USGS is categorically exempt from CEQA requirements as defined by Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 19, Section 15306 which addresses basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. All 3 monitoring wells are located within previously disturbed road right-of-way and will be used strictly for information gathering purposes as part of the study.

- (b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.**

There are no significant incremental or measurable cumulative impacts for the Cuyama Groundwater Study. The installation of additional groundwater monitoring wells in the study area would not result in a cumulatively significant impact. Therefore, this exception to the Categorical Exemption is not applicable to the proposed project.

- (c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.**

The Cuyama Study is for informational purposes only and will have no significant effect on the environment. All wells necessary for the study

have been installed in previously disturbed road right of way. Therefore, there is no reasonable possibility that the study will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

- (d) **Scenic Highways.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

The study does not result in any facilities that are viewable from any scenic highway area. Therefore, this exception to the Categorical Exemption is not applicable.

- (e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

The study is not located on a Hazardous Waste site. Therefore, this exception to the Categorical Exemption is not applicable to the proposed project.

- (f) **Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Completion of the study has no impact on any historical resources.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Matt Naftaly Phone #: 805 568-3542

Department/Division Representative:  Date: 8/27/12

Acceptance Date: _____

distribution: Hearing Support Staff

Project file (when P&D permit is required)

Date Filed by County Clerk: _____.

RECEIVED

AUG 27 2012

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