

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: Santa Barbara County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

FROM: Public Works Department, Resource Recovery and Waste Management

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: 081-150- 032 **Case No.:** Not Applicable

Location: Baron Ranch, 14550 Highway 101, Goleta, 25 miles west of the City of Santa Barbara

Project Title: Baron Ranch Management Contract

Project Description: Resource Recovery and Waste Management (RRWMD) is proposing to renew the agreement with Ag Land Services for the management of agricultural activities on the county-owned Baron Ranch. In addition, Ag Land Services will maintain areas of native vegetation that have been restored as part of a mitigation program for impacts associated with projects at the Tajiguas Landfill and required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as well as state and federal permits. The proposed contract is for two years from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Santa Barbara

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Santa Barbara County Public Works Department, Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division (RRWMD)

Exempt Status: (Check one)

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

Cite specific CEQA and/or CEQA Guideline Section: CEQA Guideline Section 15301 (Existing Facilities).

Reasons to support exemption findings:

CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 exempts from environmental review "operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing or minor alteration 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 proposed project involves a contract for the continued operation/management of the Baron Ranch, an existing county-owned ranch planted with approximately 90 acres of avocado and 7 acres of cherimoyas. The Baron Ranch is also being used as a mitigation site for impacts associated with Tajiguas Landfill operations and has been planted with approximately 35 acres of native vegetation with a total of 50 acres proposed. Native plant restoration activities at Baron were addressed in a Subsequent EIR prepared for the Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch Restoration Project (08EIR-00000-00007) The County purchased the Baron Ranch in 1991 primarily to serve as a buffer to the Tajiguas Landfill, which is located in the

canyon immediately west of the ranch. Consistent with the requirements of this exemption, the proposed project would involve continued management/operation of the ranch by Ag Land Services which has managed the ranch for the past 16 years. There would be no expansion of the use of the ranch. Therefore, the project can be found to be categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

There is no substantial evidence that the proposed project involves 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.**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 is a Class I exemptions and therefore this exception is not applicable.

- (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.**

No other similar projects are proposed to occur at the Baron Ranch that would contribute to cumulative impacts. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

- (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 contract is for the continued management of the historical agricultural activities at the ranch as well as maintenance of areas restored with native habitats. Arroyo Quemado which runs through the ranch is known breeding habitat for the federally threatened California red-legged frog. Orchards adjacent to the creek have largely been removed and replaced with native habitats as a part of the Baron Ranch restoration activities. Ag Land Services would be required to continue to manage the ranch in compliance with all applicable environmental regulations. Therefore, no unusual circumstances are anticipated that would result in the potential for a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

- (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 project would not change the visual characteristics of the existing ranch. Therefore, this exemption would not apply.

- (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 Baron Ranch is not listed as a hazardous waste site; therefore, this exception does not apply.

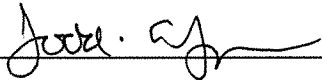
- (f) **Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

The proposed project is for a contract to continue the existing agricultural management activities on the ranch. No new impact on historical resources is expected; therefore, this exception does not apply.

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Date: May 29, 2014

Acceptance Date:

Date Filed at Planning and Development:

Date Filed by County Clerk: