

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

<p><b>To:</b> Office of Planning &amp; Research 1400 Tenth Street Sacramento, CA 95814</p> <p><b>To:</b> Kern County Clerk 1115 Truxtun Avenue Bakersfield, CA 93301</p> <p><b>To:</b> Fresno County Clerk 2221 Kern Street Fresno, CA 93721</p> <p><b>To:</b> Merced County Recorder 2222 M Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Merced, CA 95340</p>	<p><b>Lead Agency/Applicant</b></p> <p><b>From:</b> Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa WSD 12109 Highway 166 Bakersfield, CA 93313-9630 661-527-6069</p>
--	--

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAY 22 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

**Project Title:** 2019 Water Transfer from San Luis Water District within the Central Valley Project to Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District within the State Water Project.

**Location -- Specific:** San Luis Water District ("SLWD") is located in Fresno and Merced Counties and Wheeler Ridge - Maricopa Water Storage District ("Wheeler Ridge") is located in Kern County. Wheeler Ridge has lands in the Delta Export Service Area of the CVP.

**Location -- Counties:** Fresno County, Kern County and Merced County.

**Description of Activity:** SLWD is proposing to transfer up to 10,000 AF of its 2019 Central Valley Project ("CVP") water from SLWD to Wheeler Ridge. SLWD has a contract for an agricultural water supply with the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation ("Reclamation") for water to be provided from the Central Valley Project ("CVP"). SLWD forecasts that it will have up to 10,000 AF of such 2019 CVP water supply captured at O'Neill Forebay in San Luis Reservoir by February 28, 2020, that it is willing to transfer to Wheeler Ridge from O'Neill Forebay during the WY.

**Name of Public Agencies Approving or Carrying Out Activity:** San Luis Water District, Wheeler Ridge - Maricopa WSD (Lead Agency), California Department of Water Resources and Kern County Water Agency (Responsible Agencies), Fresno County, Kern County and Merced County.

**Exempt Status:**

- Ministerial
- Declared Emergency
- Emergency Project
- Categorical Exemption.** State type and section number: See CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.
- Statutory Exemption.** State code number: See CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)3.

**Reasons why activity is exempt:** CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)3 provides that a Lead Agency may determine an activity to be exempt from CEQA based upon the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have a potential for causing significant environmental impacts. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Wheeler Ridge finds that approval of the proposed water transfer has no possibility for significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

1. The proposed action consists of a one-time water transfer that will use existing facilities and would not require any construction or grading.
2. The project does not constitute a new permanent source of water supply and will not result in any growth inducing or cumulative environmental impacts.
3. There will be no land use changes or additional agricultural acreage being cultivated as a result of the proposed project.

Additionally, since the project will rely on the operation of existing facilities, there will be no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the Lead Agency's determination and will not have a significant effect on the physical environment; the project also qualifies for a categorical exemption from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301. None of the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines would apply to the proposed action.

Note that per FONSI signed June 29, 2017 entitled *Reclamation Approvals Associated with the Poso Creek Water Company's Multiyear Banking and Transfer Program*, Reclamation proposes to approve a series of transfers of up to 50,000 acre-feet per year of available CVP water supplies over a 9-year period from CVP Contractors to Poso Creek members either for direct agricultural use on member lands located within Westlands, San Luis, Wheeler Ridge, and Semitropic or for banking in Semitropic and/or Kern Water Bank for later use on member lands within those same districts. As analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) dated June 29, 2017 entitled *Reclamation Approvals Associated with the Poso Creek Water Company's Multiyear Banking and Transfer Program* this and similar projects would have a cumulative beneficial effect on water supply during dry years. It is likely that over the course of the Proposed Action, districts will request to exchange water supplies among themselves and, as such, would allow Westlands, San Luis, Wheeler Ridge and Semitropic to have greater long-term flexibility in their water management actions, use existing water supplies in a timely manner, and provide overall better management of their water supply. This would provide a cumulatively beneficial impact to water supplies within the districts.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Wendy A. Jones  
 Water Resources Manager  
 (661) 527-6069

Signature: Wendy A. Jones Title: WATER RESOURCES MANAGER Date: 15, MAY 2019

Signed by Lead Agency  
 Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing by County Clerk:

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAY 22 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE