

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT
Post Office Box 1058
Coachella, CA 92236

To: County Clerk
County of Riverside
Post Office Box 751
Riverside, CA 92502

File: 0710.1810.25

Project Title: Avenue 64 Sewer Improvement Project

Project Location: Along Monroe Street between Avenue 62 and Avenue 64 in the city of Thermal, within Riverside County

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) proposes to construct an approximately 4,500 linear foot 10-inch vitrified clay pipe (VCP) gravity sewer main and 12 manholes along Monroe Street between Avenue 62 and Avenue 64 in the unincorporated community of Thermal within Riverside County, located within portions of Sections 2 and 3, Township 7 South, Range 7 East, San Bernardino Base Meridian. The proposed sewer main would connect the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians (TMDCI) Avenue 64 subdivision to the CVWD sewer system. Currently there is insufficient space and inadequate soils for replacement of failed septic systems for homes in the Avenue 64 subdivision; as such, the subdivision requires construction of a sewer collection system and a connection to CVWD sewer facilities. The proposed project would have a beneficial impact on the residents of the Avenue 64 subdivision by reducing the health risks associated with deficient sanitary facilities. CVWD would own and operate the sewer main along Monroe Street. Funding for the proposed project may come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development program; as such, a NEPA categorical exclusion (assessment) was prepared in 2019 by Indian Health Services on behalf of the TMDCI.

Construction is anticipated for the duration of 6 months. The pipeline alignment would be placed within the right-of-way along the west side of Monroe Street and require trenching at a width of up to 10 feet and depth up to 20 feet. Staging would occur along the alignment.

Several cultural resource surveys and field studies have been prepared for the proposed project (various authors and years). The reports determined that the entire region is an area of intensive prehistoric use and includes sites within the project vicinity consisting of a National Register listed historic district, human remains and known graves and cremation sites. The TMDCI reviewed these findings and determined that there would be less risk of impacting cultural resources if the proposed alignment ran along the west side of Monroe Street, furthest away from Toro Cemetery, as proposed. It is recommended that a qualified archaeologist and Tribal monitor observe ground-disturbing activities during construction.

The *Biological Assessment* (L&L Environmental, 2013) prepared for the project concluded that the project would have no effect on endangered or threatened botanical and wildlife species or on designated critical habitat. The project would have no effect on sensitive botanical species and that although the project may impact individual wildlife resources, it is not likely to adversely affect and is not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability of a wildlife resource in the planning area.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (Continued)

Almost all of the project area is heavily disturbed existing dirt or paved roadway and bordered on either side by agriculture, housing and other development. The *Biological Assessment* recommends several mitigation measures to avoid or lessen impacts, which will be required of the project. The project site is located adjacent to the north of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area associated with the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). To avoid or minimize potential biological impacts to this conservation area, construction activities are required to adhere to the CVMSHCP's Land Use Adjacency Guidelines [Section 4.5] as relevant to the project. A significant slope up from the southern limit of the project area exists between the project area and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area. This slope should prevent runoff, minimize noise impacts and minimize access to the conservation area consistent with recommendations in the CVMSHCP.

The project is not subject to the Coachella Valley Association of Governments Local Development Mitigation Fee because the project location is an existing disturbed roadway/parcel.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: CVWD; Armando Rodriguez, Engineer Manager

Exempt Status:

- ☐ Ministerial (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(1); State CEQA Guideline §15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(3); State CEQA Guideline §15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (Pub. Res. Code §21080(b)(4); State CEQA Guideline §15269(b)(c))
- ☒ Statutory Exempt: State CEQA Guidelines §15282(k)
- ☒ Categorically Exempt: State CEQA Guidelines §15303
- ☐ General Rule (State CEQA Guideline §15061(b)(3))

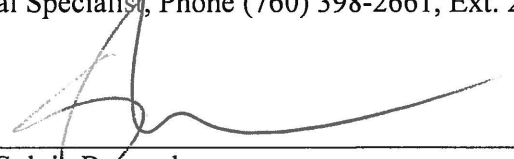
Reasons why project is exempt:

State CEQA Guidelines §15282(k) (Other Statutory Exemptions): This exemption allows for installation of new pipeline or maintenance, repair, restoration, removal, or demolition of an existing pipeline as set forth in Section 21080.21 of the Public Resources Code, as long as the project does not exceed one mile in length. The project consists of installation of 4,500 linear feet of pipeline is therefore statutory exempt from CEQA.

State CEQA Guidelines §15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures): This class 3 categorical exemption allows for the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures and installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures including utility extensions. The project would install and operate a sewer pipeline and accessory utility features to serve an existing community.

Contact Person: Elizabeth Meyerhoff, Environmental Specialist, Phone (760) 398-2661, Ext. 2775

Date: August 26, 2019



Sylvia Bermudez
Clerk of the Board

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE