



Valley of the Moon Water District Donald Street Water Tank Hillside Stabilization Project Environmental Evaluation for a Class 1 and Class 2 Categorical Exemptions

OVERVIEW

The Valley of the Moon Water District (VOMWD) is a public agency that provides high-quality drinking water to 23,750 people in a 12 square-mile area in the Sonoma Valley, near to the City of Sonoma.

As part of its water delivery system, VOMWD owns and operates a water storage tank located at the eastern terminus of Donald Street, just north of the City of Sonoma. The tank receives water from VOMWD sources, stores it, then provides water to homes and other land uses in the vicinity of the tank using associated pumps and pipelines.

NEED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The tank is located at the base of a steep hill, which has been failing, and depositing rocks and soil in the vicinity of the tank. A significant failure of the hill has the potential for damaging the tank, pumps, pipes, and other facilities supporting the delivery of water. Such a failure also has the potential to disrupt the supply of water to customers, to require the replacement of VOMWD facilities, and, potentially to risk injury or death to VOMWD employees.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

VOMWD has determined that the best course of action to remedy the risk to its facilities involves two elements, both shown in Attachment 1. The first action would be to install a steel rockfall net structure along the face of the slope, anchored in solid ground at the top of the slope. The second action would be to construct a 6-foot tall retaining wall between the tank facilities and the failing slope to protect the facilities (and any people that might be on the site at the time) in case of slope failure which the rockwall net structure is unable to completely contain.

The retaining wall will be constructed of freestanding XL blocks, and will extend along the entire base of the slope. The construction of the wall will require the re-location of a portion of an existing 6-inch supply pipe that ascends the slope at grade from the tank to supply water to homes at the top of the hill. This pipeline will be rerouted to extend over the top of the wall, and reconnected to original pipeline on both sides of the wall.

Obtaining Easements

The retaining wall will be constructed entirely on VOMWD lands, but the steel rockfall net will need to extend onto neighboring parcels in order to provide sufficient coverage of areas potentiall subject to rockfall, and to ensure that the uphill anchors for the net are placed in solid rock. VOMWD has obtained easements from the two landowners adjacent to the proposed project to accomplish this work.

Public Outreach

VOMWD reached out to the 100 residents closest to the project site on November 17, to inform them of the proposed project and the potential noise and traffic that would be created during construction. Outreach was done in person, but a written notice (Attachment 2) was also provided to neighbors.

Construction

The construction of the proposed improvements are expected to take approximately 6 weeks. The construction will require: an excavator; diesel trucks to haul workers, materials, and equipment to and from the site; and large-auger hand drills (for installation of anchors for the steel rockfall net). The installation of the rockfall net will require approximately 1 week.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

Environmental Setting

All project construction would take place within the VOMWD-owned parcel (APN 127-102-006) Donald Street Tank parcel owned by VOMWD, except for installation of the steel rockfall net, which will extend onto two neighboring parcels (APNs 127-102-025 and 127-120-021). The flat portion of the VOMWD-owned parcel is developed with a paved access road and parking area, water storage tank, pumps, pipelines, protective fencing, and other related facilities and equipment. The steeply sloped portion of the parcel consists largely of exposed rock and dirt, with little vegetation. The top of the slope is sparsely vegetated with oak trees and understory vegetation.

1. Would the proposed project result in the expansion of capacity or use of the project facilities (Class 1)?

The proposed project would not result in the expansion of the capacity of the Donald Street water tank or any of the ancillary facilities. Further, the proposed improvements fit within the following examples provided for Class 1:

- Interior or exterior alterations involving such things as...plumbing...;
- Existing facilities of both investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services;
- Addition of safety or health protection devices for use during construction of or in conjunction of existing structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment, or topographical features...

2. Does the project involve the replacement or reconstruction of an existing structure on the same site as the structure being replaced or reconstructed (Class 2)?

Yes. The proposed project involves the replacement of a segment of an existing pipeline from the tank to upslope customers.

3. Would the new structure have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the existing structure?

Yes. The new pipeline segment will have the same purpose and capacity as the existing pipeline segment.

4. Does the project require obtaining an environmental permit that could result in physical changes to the environment?

No. The project does not require that VOMWD obtain any environmental permits, as the project would not have substantial impacts on any protected species or habitats. VOMWD has designed the project to avoid the need to remove or trim any trees. Further, construction of the project will occur during the winter months, outside of the nesting period for any protected bird species.

5. Is the project visible from an official State Scenic Highway?

No. There are no scenic highways within the portion of Sonoma County near the proposed project (Caltrans 2020). The nearest scenic highway segment to the proposed project is in Santa Rosa, separated from the project site by a mountain range. Therefore, the project is not visible from any scenic highways and would not result in damage to scenic resources within view of a scenic highway.

6. Is the project located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 (Cortese List)?

No. The proposed project site is not listed as a hazardous waste site on the Cortese List (California Environmental Protection Agency 2020).

7. Would the project result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource?

No. The proposed project site is largely paved and developed with VOMWD facilities. No evidence is available to indicate the presence of a historic resource on the site, so the project would not result in a substantial adverse change to such a resource.

8. Is there evidence of the potential for the project to contribute to a significant cumulative impact?

No. The proposed project would involve minimal disturbance to the land, and thus, would not result in significant environmental impacts. There are no other known proposed projects that would result in similar impacts in the vicinity of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to a significant cumulative impact.

9. Is there evidence of a reasonable possibility of a significant environmental impact due to unusual circumstances?

No. There is no evidence of a reasonable possibility of a significant environmental impact due to unusual circumstances at the project site. None of the following indicators of potential unusual circumstances exist on or immediately adjacent to the project site: unique or high-quality habitat; wildlife migration routes; unique recreational facilities or resources; a stream or water body; a critically depleted groundwater basin or surface water resource. Nor is the project site located in an area with important mineral resources, or an officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard. While there is a portion of the site with slopes of 10 percent or more, and the presence of highly erodible soils, the proposed project is intended to address these potential hazards through the installation of a steel rockfall net and the construction of a retaining wall. These improvements will reduce the likelihood of landslides occurring and will protect VOMWD people and facilities, should such a slide occur.

Conclusion

Based on information contained in the administrative record, including the answers provided to Questions 1-9 above, VOMWD finds that the project is

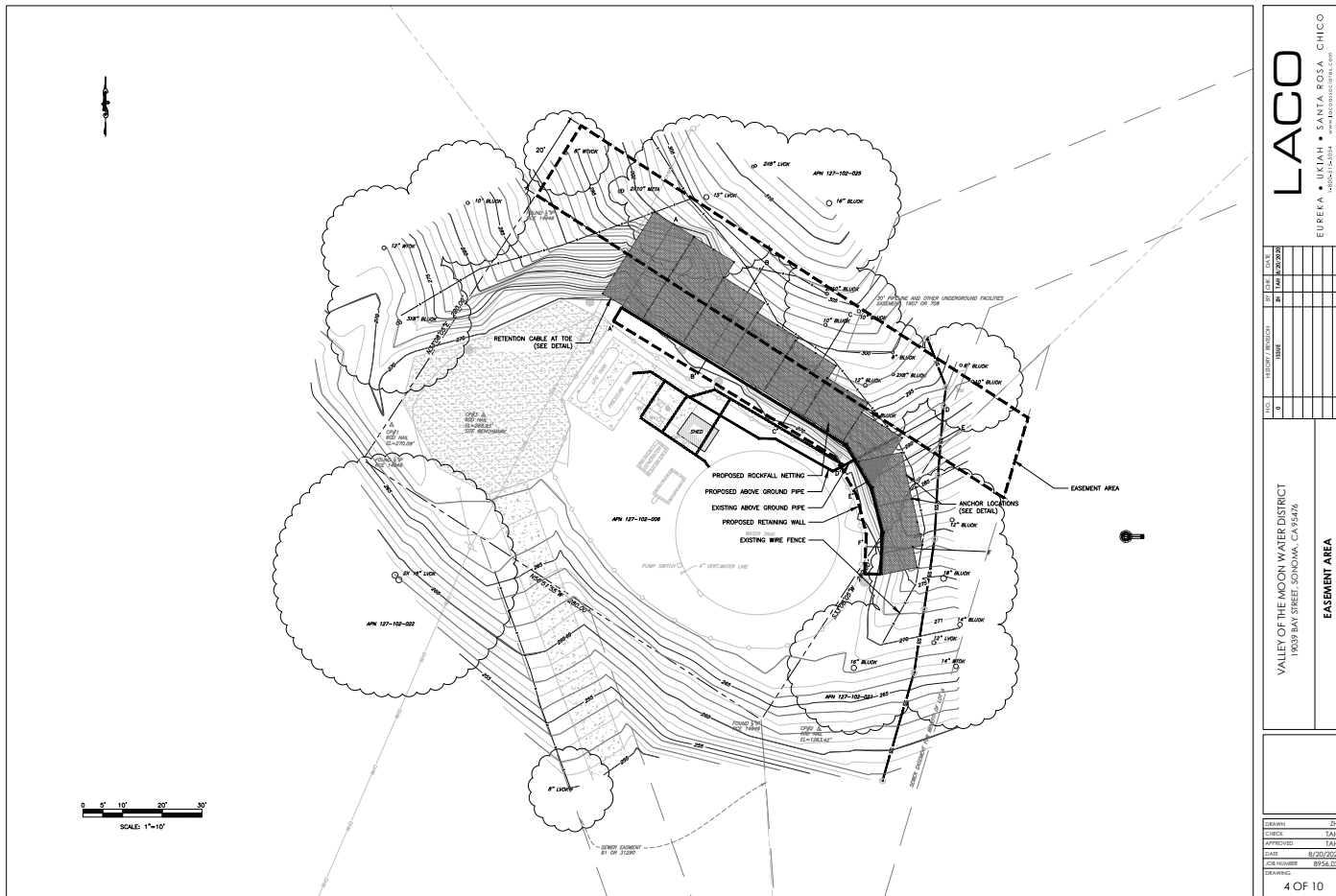
eligible for both a Class 1 Categorical Exemption covering minor alterations to existing facilities (Section 15301), and a Class 2 Categorical Exemption covering the replacement or reconstruction of existing facilities (Section 15302). VOMWD further finds that the project fits within the parameters established in CEQA Guidelines Section 15302, and none of the exceptions to this exemption defined in Section 15300.2 apply.

References

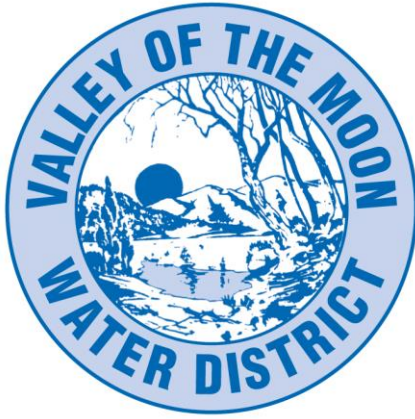
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2020. California Scenic Highway Mapping System website. Accessed on November 30, 2020 at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm.

California Environmental Protection Agency. 2020. EnviroStor Database website. Accessed on November 30, 2020 at: calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/.

Attachment 1



Attachment 2



VALLEY OF THE MOON WATER DISTRICT

A Public Agency Established in 1962
19039 Bay Street · P.O. Box 280
El Verano, CA 95433-0280
Phone: (707) 996-1037
Fax: (707) 996-7615

November 17, 2020

Re: Hillside Stabilization Work at the East End of Donald Street

Hello Neighbor,

Valley of the Moon Water District (District) is pleased to inform you that the District will be stabilizing the hillside near some of its facilities at the end of Donald Street. Construction is scheduled to begin in early January 2021. The project is expected to require approximately six weeks to complete. During that time, you will see trucks and equipment traveling to and from the jobsite along surface streets in the area.

As with any construction project, there may be some temporary inconveniences including delayed traffic, noise, and water shutdowns. We strive to minimize any inconvenience to you, so construction is limited to Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 7:00 pm and you will be notified in advance should we need to temporarily stop your water service to perform construction activities. It is expected that water interruptions will only affect customers in the upper elevations of Michael Drive.

One portion of the project will involve drilling into the rock with loud, pneumatic, hand-operated drills. These drills are similar in noise to a jackhammer. This part of the project is expected to last about one week (five days).

The system improvements resulting from this project will benefit your property for many years to come by improving the resiliency and reliability of the water system. We value our relationship with our customers and will make every attempt to complete this project on schedule, with a minimum inconvenience to you.

If you have questions or need further information, please call the District office at (707) 996-1037.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt Fullner", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Matt Fullner – Interim General Manager