

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO:

☒ **Office of Planning and Research**
PO Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

☒ **Shasta County Clerk**
1643 Market Street
Redding, CA 96001

FROM:

Fall River Valley CSD
Cecil Ray, General Manager
24850 Third Street
Fall River Mills, CA, 96028

Project Title: Fall River Valley Community Services District – Groundwater Test Well Project

Project Location:

The proposed project is located in the unincorporated community of Fall River Mills, Shasta County, in Sections 30 and 31, in Township 37 North, Range 5 East, of the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Fall River Mills 7.5-minute quadrangle (see **Figure 1**). As shown in **Figure 2**, the proposed well sites, labelled well site #3 and well site #1B, are located, respectively, on Fall River Joint Unified School District property (Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 018-540-010) and on private property (APN 032-160-039) northeast of the intersection of Burney St. and 3rd Street.

City: Fall River Mills (unincorporated)

County: Shasta

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The purpose of the proposed project is to determine a location for one or two additional permanent wells to ensure a safe and reliable potable water supply for customers in the Fall River Valley Community Services District (FRVCSD).

The FRVCSD provides water to the residents and businesses in the community of Fall River Mills and McArthur. Currently, FRVCSD maintains two wells, however, the district relies on a single well located in McArthur. Fall River Mills is located approximately five miles west of this well. The well is currently producing 370 gallons per minute (gpm). The secondary well, located in Fall River Mills, is unused due to low-quality water resulting from high levels of iron and manganese, and a low yield (120 gpm). In the case of mechanical failure or an emergency, the secondary well would be unable to provide adequate water to the district. FRVCSD has a current maximum water demand of 390 gpm, and often requires 24-hour pumping during summer months and fire events. While the estimated maximum daily demand is 94% of the existing storage volume, there is little room for error during the summer months.

The proposed project would include drilling up to two test wells to locate a secondary quality water source. As shown on **Figure 2**, two potential test well sites have been identified by FRVCSD. Well site #3 is the preferred test well site and a test well will be drilled here first. If this site provides adequate water supply of at least 400 gpm, and satisfactory water quality, the test well will later be converted to a permanent well to provide a second source of water supply to FRVCSD. Well site #1B would not be needed in this case. However, if well site #3 does not provide adequate water supply, FRVCSD will construct another test well at well site #1B.

Drilling operations at both sites would require slight site preparation and grading; no trees are expected to be removed. Construction of the test wells would not provide for future build-out or induce population growth in the area.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Fall River Valley Community Services District

Name of Agency Carrying out the Project: Fall River Valley Community Services District

Local Agency Contact Person: Cecil Ray, General Manager

Exempt Status: Categorical Exemption:

California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines):

Class 4, §15304 (Minor Alterations to Land)

Class 6, §15306 (Information Collection)

Reason Why Project Is Exempt:

The Class 4 exemption applies to the minor alternations to the condition of land (e.g., clearing, grading, trenching, and backfilling) that do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, and do not involve grading in wetlands or other waters, provided that the surface is restored following construction. The Class 6 exemption consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The project is consistent with the categorical exemptions noted above because work would consist of the construction of a new well for data collection.

As documented in **Attachment A**, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; would not result in damage to scenic resources within a Scenic Highway; is not located on a hazardous waste site pursuant to §65962.5 of the Government Code; would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource; and would not result in cumulative impacts.

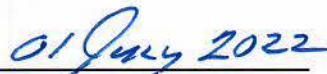
Signature: _____



Cecil Ray

Fall River Valley Community Services District General Manager

Date: _____



Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

Attachments:

Figure 1: Project Vicinity

Figure 2: Preferred Test Well Sites

Attachment A: Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption



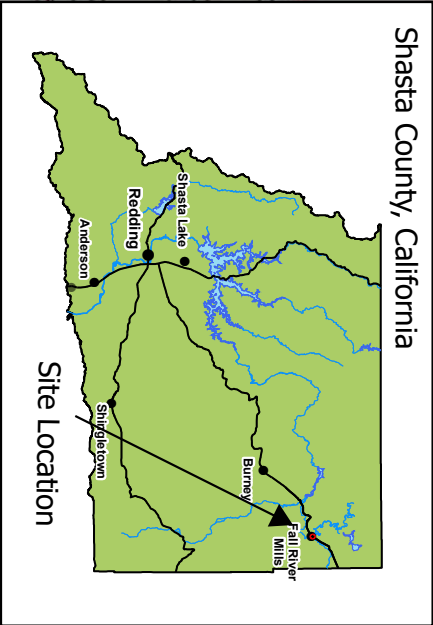
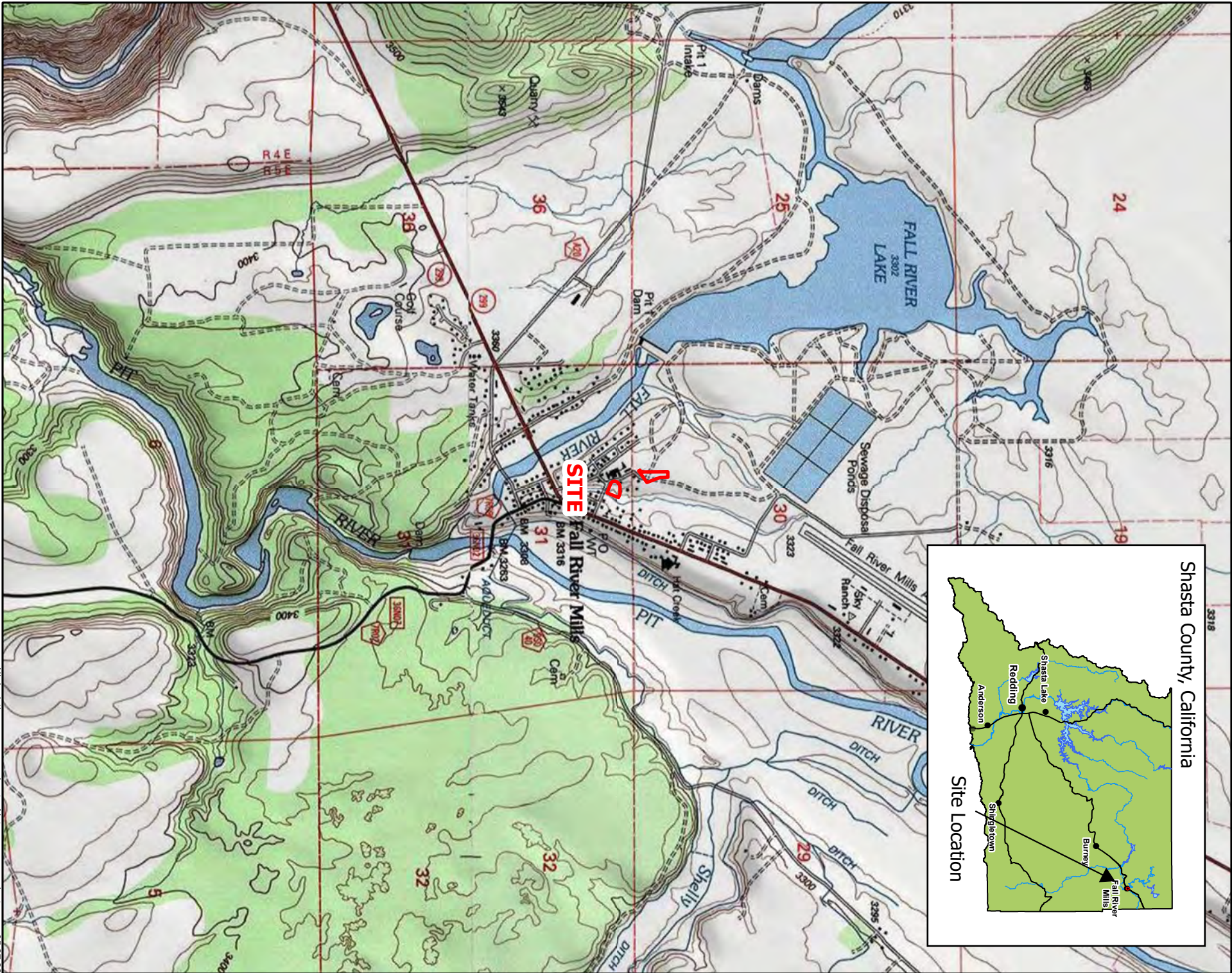
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Project Vicinity Map

Figure 1

All depictions are approximate. Not a survey product. 05.27.22

ENPLAN





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All depictions are approximate. Not a survey product. 05.27.22



Figure 2
Proposed Well Sites

ATTACHMENT A
Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption
Fall River Valley Community Services District
Groundwater Test Well Project

As described in the Notice of Exemption (NOE), the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to §15304 (Class 4-Minor Alterations to Land) and §15306 (Class 6-Information Collection) of the CEQA Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 identifies exceptions that override a lead agency's ability to use a categorical exemption. These exceptions are listed below, followed by documentation of why each exception does not apply to the proposed project.

1. 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 in 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 proposed project is supported in by Class 4 and Class 6 exemptions. As documented below, no evidence has been found to suggest that the project location is particularly sensitive. Likewise, the project is not expected to affect an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. Therefore, the Class 4 and Class 6 exemptions are applicable to the proposed project.

2. Cumulative Impact. *All exemptions are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time, is significant.*

The purpose of the proposed projects is to drill up to two test wells to determine the suitability of the project sites for the installation of a future water well that would eventually be connected to FRVCS D's water system. No successive projects of the same type are proposed in the vicinity. Potential effects of the proposed project are temporary and would cease at completion of construction. In addition, test wells are temporary in nature. However, in the event a permanent well is constructed, it must comply with the applicable sustainable groundwater management plan and local codes adopted for the protection of groundwater. There is a water supply well located approximately 1000 feet from test well site #3, however, compliance with agency requirements will ensure that the proposed project's cumulative impacts are less than significant. Therefore, the project's impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

3. 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.*

An "unusual circumstance" exists if the project's circumstances differ from the general circumstances of projects covered by the applicable exemption, and, if so, whether there is a reasonable possibility of a significant effect on the environment *due to* the unusual circumstances. As documented below, there are no unusual circumstances that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Aesthetics:

The proposed project consists of the drilling of up to two test wells. The project sites are surrounded by paved roads, residential properties, and vacant agricultural land; they are not visible to motorists on State Route 299. The nearest single-family residences are located ±100 feet east and south of well site #3, and ±100 feet east of well site #1B. The project does not include construction of any permanent structures, and no trees would be removed to accommodate the test wells. In addition, the project is not in an area of unique scenic vistas, and temporary visual impacts during construction due to drilling and staging activities would cease upon the completion of the project; no unusual circumstances apply and no significant impacts would occur.

Agriculture and Forest Resources:

According to the California Department of Conservation, the project area was not surveyed for inclusion in the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The project sites are zoned One-Family Residential (R-1). Surrounding properties are zoned R-1, Public Facilities (PF), and Exclusive Agricultural (EA). The purpose of the EA zoning district is to preserve lands with agricultural value that have a combination of size and quality. However, the project does not include any components that would conflict with surrounding agricultural uses. In addition, based on review of historical aerial imagery, it does not appear that the project site or surrounding areas have been used for agricultural purposes. Therefore, no unusual circumstances apply, and no significant impacts would occur.

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions:

The proposed project would result in the temporary generation of ROG, NO_x, PM₁₀, and other regulated pollutants during construction. ROG and NO_x emissions are associated with employee vehicle trips, delivery of materials, and construction equipment exhaust. PM₁₀ is generated during site preparation, excavation, and from exhaust associated with construction equipment. The project does not include any components that would result in a long-term increase in emissions. There are no unusual circumstances associated with air quality that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Biological Resources:***Special-Status Plant Species:***

Review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for the project area identified one federally listed plant species as potentially occurring in the project vicinity, slender Orcutt grass, and did not identify designated critical habitat in the study area for any federally listed plant species. Review of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) records revealed four additional special-status plant species within a five-mile radius of the project site. The four species identified are: marsh skullcap, tufted loosestrife, watershield, and water star-grass. All the species identified are associated with wetlands or other aquatic habitats. The absence of such habitats was documented via aerial photo review and a May 19, 2022, field review. Given the absence of habitat, none of the species identified would be present at the project sites.

Special-Status Wildlife Species

Review of the USFWS species list for the project area identified the following federally listed animal species or candidates for federal listing as potentially being affected by the proposed project: northern spotted owl, Delta smelt, monarch butterfly, conservancy fairy shrimp, and Shasta crayfish. The USFWS species list does not identify designated critical habitat in the study area for any federally listed animal species.

CNDDB records identified thirteen special-status wildlife species within a five-mile radius of the project site. The thirteen special-status wildlife species include the American badger, bald eagle, bank swallow, bigeye marbled sculpin, greater sandhill crane, hardhead, Oregon spotted frog, rough sculpin, Shasta crayfish, Townsend's big-eared bat, tricolored blackbird, western pond turtle, and wolverine. In 2011, a large colony of bank swallows was reported approximately 600 feet northeast from of well site #1B. However, well construction is unlikely to affect nesting swallows due to intervening topography. Furthermore, the birds were reported adjacent to roadways and would be accustomed to periodic loud noises and other human-induced disturbances.

Although some of the special-status animals noted above could forage in the general project area, there is negligible or no potential for these or other special-status wildlife to rely on the project site for breeding or other critical life cycle events.

Nesting Migratory Birds

The USFWS identified the Bird of Conservation Concern as potentially being affected by the proposed project: bald eagle, black swift, black tern, Cassin's finch, Clark's grebe, evening grosbeak, Franklin's gull, lesser yellowlegs, Lewis's woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, rufous hummingbird, and willet. If present on site, construction could result in nest removal or indirectly affect nesting birds by causing adults to abandon their nests in response to loud noise levels and other human-induced disturbances.

during construction. The potential for adversely affecting nesting birds will be minimized by conducting construction activities outside of the nesting season (between September 1 and January 31), or conducting pre-construction nesting surveys in accordance with existing standard construction measures if work is conducted during the nesting season.

There are no unusual circumstances associated with special-status species, nesting birds, or other biological resources that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Energy

The proposed project does not include any components that would result in environmental impacts due to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources in the long-term. There are no unique circumstances related to energy use during construction of the proposed project that would result in more significant impacts than other similar construction projects.

Geology and Soils:

According to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, the nearest Alquist-Priolo Special Study Zone to the project area is the McArthur Fault Zone, approximately 4 miles east of the project area. The California Geologic Survey also identified several potentially active faults belonging to the Hat Creek Fault Zone that run through the community of Fall River Mills. However, the project does not include the construction of structures for human occupancy and would not increase the likelihood that an earthquake would occur in the area.

Soils on the project site are mapped by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Dugden-Graven complex, 0 to 5 percent slopes, and Pittville sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes. These soil types are found throughout the Fall River Mills area and are not unique to the project site. There are no unusual circumstances associated with geology or soils that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality:

Construction activities would result in the temporary disturbance of soil and would expose disturbed areas to potential storm events, which could generate accelerated runoff, localized erosion, and sedimentation. However, this is a temporary impact during construction activities, and no long-term impacts would occur. Best Management Practices (BMPs) for erosion/sediment control would be implemented in accordance with state and local requirements. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (Panel 06089C0500G, effective March 17, 2011, Not Printed), the project area is not located in a flood hazard zone.

Land Use and Planning:

The project would not physically divide an established community or cause an environmental impact due to a conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation.

Mineral Resources:

The California Geological Survey has not designated any Mineral Resource Zones in the study area. In addition, there are no properties in the project area that are zoned for mining activities.

Noise:

Construction activities would generate noise and would temporarily increase noise levels in the area. However, there is nothing unique to the project that would result in more significant impacts than other construction projects. The project does not include any components that would result in a permanent increase in noise levels. There are no unusual circumstances associated with noise that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Population and Housing:

The purpose of the proposed project is to determine a location for an additional permanent well to ensure a safe and reliable potable water supply for customers in the Fall River Valley Community Services District (FRVCSD). The proposed project involves the drilling of up to two test well sites, one or both of which may be converted to a permanent well producing quality water for FRVCSD customers. Although existing and future residents and businesses would benefit from the addition of a new well, the project would not induce population growth in the area beyond that currently projected in the County's General Plan. There are no unusual circumstances associated with population and housing that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Public Services/Recreation:

Because the project would not induce population growth, the project would not generate a demand for additional fire protection, police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, or other public services.

Transportation/Traffic:

There would be short-term increases in traffic in the area associated with construction workers, delivery vehicles, and equipment; however, existing regulations require safety measures to be employed to safeguard travel by the general public during construction. Because the project would not induce population growth, the project would not directly or indirectly result in a permanent increase in traffic. The proposed activity would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

Utilities and Service Systems:

Because the project consists of test wells only, it would not induce population growth in the area. Further, the test wells would not generate additional demand for power, natural gas, telecommunications facilities, stormwater drainage, wastewater treatment or other utilities or services. There are no unusual circumstances associated with utilities or service systems that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Wildfire:

The proposed project does not include any development or improvements that would increase the long-term risk of wildland fires or expose people or structures to wildland fires. There are no unique circumstances associated with the proposed project that would result in more significant impacts than other similar projects in the area.

- 4. 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.*

According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System, there are no officially designated State Scenic Highways in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact.

5. 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 §65962.5 of the Government Code.*

The following databases were reviewed to locate "Cortese List" sites.

- List of Hazardous Waste and Substances sites from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database.
- SWRCB GeoTracker Database.
- List of solid waste disposal sites identified by SWRCB with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit.
- List of active Cease and Desist Orders and Clean-Up and Abatement Orders from the SWRCB.

The records search revealed that the project is not located on a hazardous waste site. There are no active clean-up sites or hazardous waste sites on or adjacent to the proposed project sites. The nearest open case is a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) clean up site located on the south side of Highway 299, approximately 1000 feet south of well site 1B. Due to the distance from the clean-up site, the proposed project would not affect or be affected by the clean-up site.

6. 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.*

According to NRCS, two soil types, Duden-Graven complex, 0 to 5 percent slopes; and Pittville sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes, are found at the project site. Duden-Graven complex and Pittville sandy loam date to the Pleistocene Age and are generally too old to harbor buried resources (Meyer, 2013). Based on the geomorphological characteristics of the project site, the age of the soil mapped in the area, and the level of contemporary disturbance, the project site is considered to have a low potential for both buried historic and prehistoric resources.

However, there is always some potential for previously unknown cultural resources to be encountered during excavation activities. Therefore, the following standard construction measures will be included in bid/contract documents to address the inadvertent discovery of cultural resources and human remains.

1. In the event of any inadvertent discovery of cultural resources (i.e., burnt animal bone, midden soils, projectile points or other humanly modified lithics, historic artifacts, etc.), all work within 50 feet of the find shall be halted until a professional archaeologist can evaluate the significance of the find in accordance with PRC §21083.2(g) and §21084.1, and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(a). If any find is determined to be significant by the archaeologist, the Fall River Valley CSD (FRVCSD) shall meet with the archaeologist to determine the appropriate course of action. If necessary, a Treatment Plan prepared by an archeologist outlining recovery of the resource, analysis, and reporting of the find shall be prepared. The Treatment Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the district prior to resuming construction.
2. In the event that human remains are encountered during construction activities, FRVCSD shall comply with §15064.5 (e) (1) of the CEQA Guidelines and PRC §7050.5. All project related ground disturbance within 100 feet of the find shall be halted until the County coroner has been notified. If the coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the coroner will notify the NAHC to identify the most likely descendants of the deceased Native Americans. Project-related ground disturbance in the vicinity of the find shall not resume until the process detailed in §15064.5(e) has been completed.
3. In the event that project plans change to include areas not surveyed, additional archaeological reconnaissance may be required. If cultural resources are encountered, the archaeologist shall recommend/implement additional measures as necessary, which may include subsequent monitoring by an archaeologist or Native American representative.

DOCUMENTATION:

California Air Resources Control Board. 2020. Area Designations Maps—State and National. <http://www.arb.ca.gov/deg/adm/adm.htm>. Accessed May 2022.

California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey. Mineral Land Classification Maps. <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=mlc>. Accessed May 2022.

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California Department of Transportation. 2022. California State Scenic Highway Mapping System. Shasta County. <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>. Accessed May 2022.

California Environmental Protection Agency. 2022. Cortese List Data Resources. <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>. Accessed May 2022.

California Natural Diversity Database. <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Maps-and-Data>. Accessed February 2022.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. National Flood Hazard Map (Panel 06089C0925G, effective March 17, 2011, Not Printed). <https://hazardsfema.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8b0adb51996444d4879338b5529aa9cd>. Accessed May 2022.

Meyer, Jack. 2013. A Geoarchaeological Overview and Assessment of Northeast California: Cultural Resources Inventory of Caltrans District 2 Rural Conventional Highways: Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties, Vols. 1-2. Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc. Report on file at Caltrans District 2 Office, Redding.

Shasta County. 2014. Shasta County General Plan. https://www.co.shasta.ca.us/index/drm_index/planning_index/plng_general_plan.aspx. Accessed February 2022.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service. 2021. Web Soil Survey. <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>. Accessed May 2022.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2022. List of Threatened and Endangered Species. <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>. Accessed May 2022.