

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

National Environmental Policy Act Categorical Exclusion Checklist

**COPY
ORIGINAL**

Categorical Exclusion No.: 14-SCAO-021-CX

DATE: JAN 19 2016

PROJECT: Stockdale Recovery Facilities Project

NATURE OF ACTION:

Cooperative Agreement No R14AP00114 provides Water and Energy Efficiency Grant funds for the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) to install three wells with piping, solar-powered flow meters, and related appurtenances within the 323-acre Stockdale West property in Kern County, California. The facilities will extract and recover stored groundwater to be conveyed via the California Aqueduct to the IRWD service area in Orange County.

EXCLUSION CATEGORY:

516 DM 14.5 C(3) – Minor construction activities associated with authorized projects which correct unsatisfactory environmental conditions or which merely argument or supplement, or are enclosed within existing facilities.

EVALUATION OF EXCEPTIONS TO ACTIONS WITHIN CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Would the action:	No	Uncertain	Yes
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?	X	_____	_____
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	X	_____	_____
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)]?	X	_____	_____
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	X	_____	_____
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	X	_____	_____
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?	X	_____	_____
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office?	X	_____	_____



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Southern California Area Office
Temecula, California

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?	X		
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	X		
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?	X		
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?	X		
12. Adversely affect Indian Trust Assets?	X		
13. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?	X		




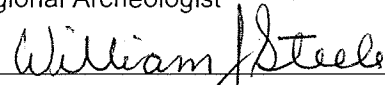
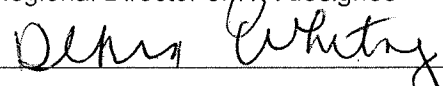
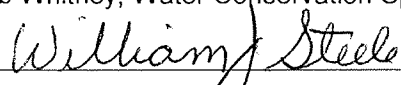
EXPLANATION/REMARKS

The minor construction will increase extraction capacity at an existing groundwater bank. A CEQA Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2013091076) identified no significant impacts. Recharge basins were installed on 265 acres in 2011. No listed species or critical habitats were affected.

Stockdale West is Prime Farmland (California FMMP, 2012). Land already in or committed to water storage is not "farmland" per 7 CFR 658.2(a). The action is not irreversible and does not convert Prime Farmland to nonagricultural use. Groundwater recharge facilities are compatible land uses under Kern County *Agricultural Preserve Standard Uniform Rules*. Agricultural uses will still be allowed within the basins when not operated for water recharge or water management purposes.

COMMITMENTS:

None.

Preparer's Signature:		Date: <u>1-14-16</u>
	Alejandro Bustamante, Environmental Intern	
Reviewed By:		Date: <u>1-14-16</u>
	Doug McPherson, Environmental Protection Specialist	
Concurrence with Item 7:	California SHPO concurrence attached	Date: <u>1/5/16</u> 
	Regional Archeologist	
Concurrence with Item 12:		Date: <u>1-19-16</u>
	Regional Director or ITA designee	
Recommended:		Date: <u>1-19-16</u>
	Deb Whitney, Water Conservation Specialist	
Approved:		Date: <u>1-19-16</u>
	William J. Steele, Area Manager	

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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January 5, 2016

William J. Steele
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Southern California Area Office
27708 Jefferson Avenue, Suite 202
Temecula, CA 92590-2628

Re: Stockdale Recovery Facilities Project, Kern County, California

Dear Mr. Steele:

Thank you for your December 9, 2015 letter initiating consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the above referenced undertaking. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is consulting with the SHPO to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470f), as amended, and it's implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. Your letter is notifying the SHPO on the Reclamation's finding of no historic properties affected (36 CFR §800.4(d)(1)).

Reclamation is providing funds for the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) to install three groundwater wells with pipelines, flow meters, and associated appurtenances in Kern County, California. Reclamation has defined the area of potential effect (APE) to encompass 323-acres, and is known as the Stockdale West property. The construction of the well pads will require a vertical APE of approximately 2 feet below the existing grade and the pipeline installation will include trenching activities with a vertical APE varying between 7 and 15 feet deep. The APE is depicted on Enclosure 1 included with your letter. I find Reclamation's determination and documentation of the APE to be sufficient (36 CFR §800.4(a)(1)). The *IRWD Stockdale West Ranch Joint Banking Project Draft Phase I Cultural Resources Study* report (Ehringer et al. 2013) was submitted with your letter.

Efforts to identify historic properties within the APE (36 CFR §800.4(b)(1)) were conducted by cultural resource staff with ESA. These efforts are detailed in Ehringer et al. 2013 and consisted of a record search and a reconnaissance-level survey of the APE. A review of historic maps identified one built cultural resource, the Pioneer Canal located in the southeast corner of the APE. No additional cultural resources were identified. Previous ground disturbing activities within the APE include agricultural activities, and the construction of eight holding/recharge basins and levees and two canals. The basins have been excavated 1-2 meters below ground surface and the excavated dirt was used to construct the levees within the APE. Given the previous disturbance, Reclamation has determined that encountering subsurface archaeological deposits within the APE is low.

Native American consultation included contacting the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for a search of the Sacred Lands File that failed to indicate the

Mr. Steele
January 5, 2016

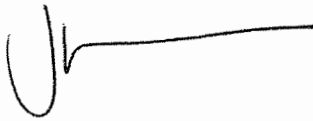
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presence of Native American cultural resources within the immediate vicinity. ESA sent letters to the Native American contacts provided by the NAHC and no responses were received. I find the Reclamation's level of effort in identifying historic properties within the APE to be sufficient (36 CFR §800.4(b)(1)).

Although the Pioneer Canal is located in the southeast corner of the APE, the Canal is protected within an easement and no component of the undertaking will occur within this easement. Based on the Reclamation's level of effort, they have determined a finding of no historic properties affected as a result of this undertaking (36 CFR §800.4(d)(1)). I do not object to your finding.

Thank you for seeking my comments and considering historic properties as part of your undertaking. Please be advised that under certain circumstances, such as post-review discoveries or a change in the undertaking description, you may have future responsibilities for this undertaking under 36 CFR Part 800. If you require further information, please contact Alicia Perez at 916-445-7020 or at Alicia.Perez@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer