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May 20, 2021

Subject: NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Project: FREEMAN DIVERSION FISH PASSAGE FACILITY GEOTECHNICAL EXPLORATION PROJECT

The United Water Conservation District (District) is proposing the Freeman Diversion Fish Passage Facility Geotechnical Exploration Project (project or proposed project) to investigate the geotechnical site characteristics which would inform final design and construction of the future fish passage facility alignment at the Freeman Diversion facility. The Freeman Diversion facility is located on the Santa Clara River approximately 4 miles southwest of the city center of Santa Paula, and approximately 10 river miles upstream of the Pacific Ocean in Ventura County, California. The proposed geotechnical explorations would occur along the alignment of the future fish passage facility.

The Freeman Diversion facility includes a Denil fish ladder that was designed to provide upstream passage for adult steelhead, however, as a result of litigation, the United States District Court for the Central District of California determined the current facility is inadequate and the District is required to analyze alternative fish passage facility designs for eventual replacement in consultation with the resource agencies and as part of the Freeman Diversion Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. The District is considering two alternatives for a new fish passage facility: a hardened ramp and a vertical slot. The proposed geotechnical explorations would inform the design and construction of either fish passage facility alternative. Previous geotechnical explorations nearby the Freeman Diversion facility were conducted in 1983, 1989, 2013 and 2016. The currently proposed geotechnical explorations would supplement the previously collected data with borings to greater depths and at more specific locations needed to better characterize the subsurface conditions along the proposed alignment, as well as test pits and a seismic refraction survey.

The District is the lead agency for the project, under CEQA, and has directed the preparation of an Initial Study (IS) on the proposed project in accordance with CEQA requirements and the State CEQA Guidelines. The IS describes the proposed project and assesses the proposed project's potentially significant adverse impacts on the physical environment. It concludes that the proposed project's potentially significant or significant adverse effects on the environment can be mitigated to less-than-significant levels; therefore, a proposed MND has been prepared. The project site is not present on any of the lists enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

Agencies and members of the public are invited to provide written comments on the IS/MND. **The comment period is from May 20, 2021 to June 18, 2021.** The IS/MND can be reviewed at the District office at 1701 N. Lombard Street, Suite 200, Oxnard, CA, 93030 or on the Districts web site at: <https://www.unitedwater.org/key-documents/#ceqa-documents>



Comments can be sent to Randall McInvale, at 1701 N. Lombard Street, Suite 200, Oxnard, CA, 93030, or email at RandallM@unitedwater.org. All comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on June 18, 2021. For e-mailed comments, please include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in MS Word format, and include the commenter's name and U.S. Postal Service mailing address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Purpus', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Linda Purpus
Environmental Services Manager

cc: Nicholas Tomera, GEI Consultants