

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Water Plant Project, Georgetown Divide, California October 2012

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 awarded a grant in the amount of \$1,433,600 to the Georgetown Divide Public Utility District (GDPUD) in accordance with the Consolidate Appropriations of 2006 (CFDA 66.202) and February 15, 2012 Technical Correction: "Georgetown Divide Public Utility District for water and wastewater infrastructure".

EPA Region 9's award of a grant for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370f. In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulation, 40 CFR §1508.4, a federal agency may categorically exclude an action from detailed environmental review, provided the proposed action meets certain criteria which EPA has previously determined indicate the undertaking will not have significant environmental impact and provided no extraordinary circumstances exist. EPA's categorical exclusions are set forth in 40 CFR Part 6.

Eligibility for Categorical Exclusion

The Georgetown Divide Public Utility District is planning to make required improvements to the existing Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Water Plant (ALT WTP), located near Cool, California. GDPUD's original plan was to build a new drinking water treatment plant at Greenwood Reservoir, including a new treated water transmission main to connect the new plant with the existing water distribution system. However, due to increasing construction costs and limited funding, GDPUD is now planning to retrofit the existing Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Plant.

This project will consist of: building a new filter building, installing new package contact clarification units, a new raw water pump building, constructing a new finished water storage tank at the clearwell site, adding telemetry and monitoring equipment, providing water recycling process equipment, adding on-site drying beds, and other miscellaneous improvements.

The Auburn Lake Trails WTP Project is necessary to ensure the provision of continuous and reliably treated safe drinking water. In February 2004, The California State Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a Compliance Order requiring the GDPUD to modify or replace the existing treatment process with one of the approved methods listed in the current Surface Water Treatment Regulations (SWTR) (Chapter 17, Title 22 of California Code of Regulations). CDPH has approved of the two alternatives proposed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by USDA in 2010. This improvement will address EPA's Strategic Plan goal of Clean and Safe Water, Sub Objective 2.1.1 Water Safe to Drink and bring the Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Plant into compliance with the SWTR.

40 CFR §6.204 (a) (1) (ii) allows a project to be categorically excluded when the project involves:

“Actions relating to existing infrastructure systems (such as sewer systems; drinking water supply systems; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) that involve minor upgrading, or minor expansion of system capacity or rehabilitation (including functional replacement) of the existing system and system components (such as the sewer collection network and treatment system; the system to collect, treat, store and distribute drinking water; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) or construction of new minor ancillary facilities adjacent to or on the same property as existing facilities. This category does not include actions that: involve new or relocated discharges to surface or ground water; will likely result in the substantial increase in the volume or the loading of pollutant to the receiving water; will provide capacity to serve a population 30% greater than the existing population; are not supported by the state, or other regional growth plan or strategy; or directly or indirectly involve or relate to upgrading or extending infrastructure systems primarily for the purposes of future development.”

EPA Region 9 has determined the proposed project is eligible for a categorical exclusion under 40 CFR §6.204 (a)(1)(ii), as the project involves an upgrade and rehabilitation of an existing system to collect, treat, store and distribute drinking water. GDPUD will retrofit the existing Auburn Lake Trails (ALT) Water Treatment Plant (WTP), which involves approximately 2.4 acres of the overall WTP. They are considering two treatment alternatives: Direct filtration process or a contact clarification process, including correction of operational deficiencies. Both alternatives will meet the CDPH treatment requirements and will not provide additional capacity for future development.

Extraordinary Circumstances

EPA Region 9 has reviewed the proposed action to ascertain whether the proposed project involves any of the extraordinary circumstances identified at 40 CFR § 6.204(b) (1)-(10) and has determined:

- (1) The proposed action is not known or expected to have potentially significant environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment either individually or cumulatively over time.
- (2) The proposed action is not known or expected to have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on any community, including minority communities, low-income communities, or federally recognized Indian tribal communities.
- (3) The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect federally listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat.
- (4) The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect national natural landmarks or any property with nationally significant historic, architectural, prehistoric, archeological, or cultural value, including but not limited to, property listed on or eligible for the

National Register of Historic Places.

(5) The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect environmentally important natural resource areas such as wetlands, floodplains, significant agricultural lands, aquifer recharge zones, coastal zones, barrier islands, wild and scenic rivers, and significant fish or wildlife habitat.

(6) The proposed action is not known or expected to cause significant adverse air quality effects.

(7) The proposed action is not known or expected to have a significant effect on the pattern and type of land use (industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational, residential) or growth and distribution of population, including altering the character of existing residential areas, and is consistent with land use plans approved by a state, local government or federally recognized Indian tribe and federal land management plans.

(8) The proposed action is not known or expected to cause significant public controversy about a potential environmental impact of the proposed action.

(9) The proposed action is not known or expected to be associated with providing financial assistance to a federal agency through an interagency agreement for a project that is known or expected to have potentially significant environmental impacts.

(10) The proposed action is not known or expected to conflict with federal, state, local government, or federally recognized Indian tribe environmental, resource protection, or land use laws or regulations.

There may be less than significant impacts, including some areas where mitigation measures will be incorporated during construction. Mitigation measures will be incorporated to ensure less than significant impacts during construction in the following areas: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, utilities and services systems.

The following mitigation measures established in the EA for the proposed project and are summarized in Appendix B, pages 1-15, of the EA. Measures include, but are not limited to: a variety of preconstruction surveys (by qualified biologists/botanist, archeologist, geotechnical experts, etc.) and evaluations; ceasing work if sensitive species or archaeological artifacts are found; development of stormwater protection plans and plans for use of heavy equipment to reduce reactive organic gases (ROG) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emission and dust; project design/location will preserve natural landscape, trees, and other natural features; filing appropriate notices of intent for NPDES Construction General Permit; and limiting construction hours.

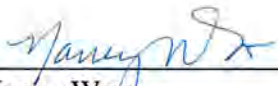
EPA also reviewed the Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Plant Project Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA) (April 2010) prepared for Georgetown Divide Public Utility District and the US Dept of Agriculture and the USFWS Informal Consultation (July 1, 2010 letter and September 10, 2012 email), in relation to USDS-Rural Development funding provided.

On July 15, 2010, USDA-Rural Development Office signed a Categorical Exclusion under 7 CFR 1794.22 (b) and (c).

On October 4, 2012, in response to EPA's request for consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act, the Office of Historic Preservation concurred with the EPA determination that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project. This determination is based on a review of Archaeological Inventory Survey – Auburn Lake Trails Water Treatment Project, dated January 4, 2010.

Finding

EPA Region 9 finds the proposed action conforms to the category of actions eligible for exclusion from detailed environmental review under 40 CFR §6.204 (a)(1)(ii) and will not involve any extraordinary circumstances. Accordingly, EPA Region 9 will not prepare either an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment for the proposed project. EPA Region 9 may revoke this categorical exclusion if changes in the proposed action render it ineligible for exclusion or if new evidence emerges which indicates that serious local or environmental issues exist or federal, state, or local laws would be violated.



Nancy Woo
Acting Director, Water Division

October 25, 2012

Date