

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Categorical Exclusion Checklist

Issuance of a Permit to the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board for Modification to Four Air Vacuum/Air Release Valves along the South Coast Conduit

CEC-13-048

Prepared by:


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Date: 05/19/2015

Concurred by:

See Attachment A
Architectural Historian
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Date: See Attachment A

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Date: 05/20/2015



Background

In 2012, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) performed an inspection of the South Coast Conduit, a component of the Cachuma Project. Four Air Vacuum/Air Release (AV/AR) valves along the South Coast Conduit (see Figure 1) were deemed non-compliant with the California Code of Regulations Title 22, Chapter 16, § 64576. The four AV/AR valves need to be modified in order to meet these regulations.

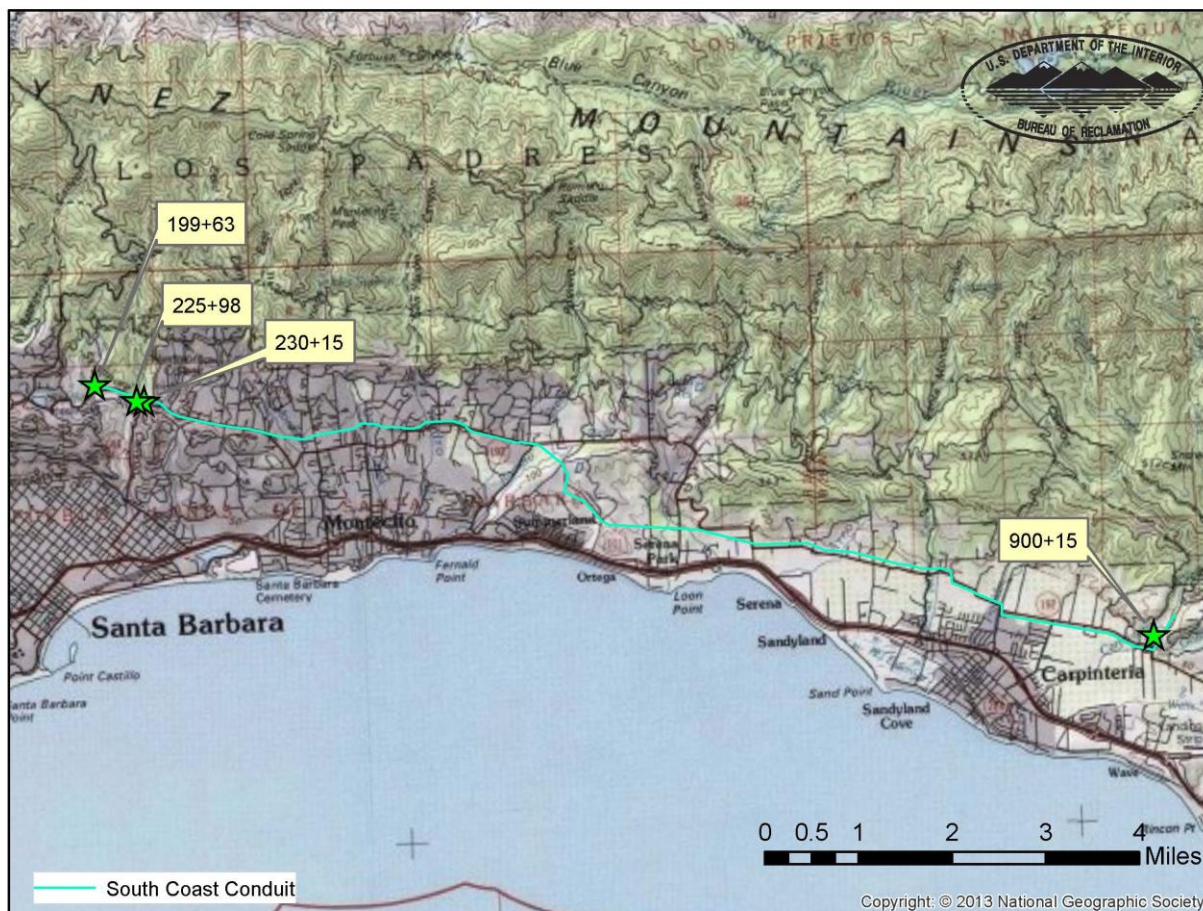


Figure 1 Location of AV/AR Valves Requiring Modifications

Nature of the Action

Reclamation will issue an MP620 permit (Mid-Pacific Region specific permit for addition or alterations to federal facilities) to the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board (COMB), its operating entity for the South Coast Conduit, to modify the four AV/AR valves to meet the requirements of California Code of Regulations Title 22, Chapter 16, § 64576.

Modifications would include installing drains at each of the four structures. The drains would be installed immediately downhill of each valve (to the south at Station 199+63, east at Station 225+98, south at Station 230+51, and southwest at Station 900+15), and would prevent the valves from being exposed to run-off and rainwater. A schematic of the proposed drain is shown

in Figure 2. Installation of the drains would require hand excavating a 1-foot wide, 5-feet long, and 2-feet deep trench at each site and installing a 4-inch drain and 18-inch square by 12-inch deep gravel infiltration field. A total of 1.7 cubic yards would be excavated from for all four sites and would be used for backfill at each respective site. Areas of excavation are within the previously disturbed areas created when the AV/AR valves were originally installed. No water would be discharged from the valves for this action. Rainwater and run-off from the new drains would percolate into the infiltration fields, and would not enter any nearby creeks.

Environmental Commitments

COMB shall implement the following measures to avoid potential environmental effects to biological resources:

- Immediately before any ground disturbing activities or vegetation removal for the project begin, the person in charge of work at the site shall slowly walk the area that will be subjected to potential disturbance, and adjacent land within 25 feet of such areas, visually canvassing it for frogs. If any litter, debris, vegetation, or rocks could obscure a frog, the area shall be inspected. If any frog is observed, its length from snout to vent shall be estimated, general coloration and any distinguishing characteristics (i.e. pattern and distribution of spotting, coloration, particularly at base of hind legs, stripes or mask through eye, etc.) shall be noted and recorded. If possible, photographs shall be taken. If photographs are taken, an identifiable object near the frog and wholly within the frame of the photograph shall be measured with a ruler. Documentation for an observation shall be transmitted to Reclamation environmental staff and no work shall commence until that information is reviewed and notification of permission to proceed is provided by a Reclamation biologist. If the identity of the frog cannot be determined to be a species other than California Red-legged frog, no action may commence and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be required.
- Before the initiation of any ground-disturbing activities for the project, the person in charge of work shall survey the site for any burrows that are located close enough to the Action areas that they may be destroyed during excavation. If such burrows are present, and cannot reasonably be avoided, ground-disturbing activities shall not begin until Reclamation biologists have been contacted for further guidance.
- All vegetation clearing required to complete the project shall be done by hand, or with the use of hand-tools.
- Work on the project shall begin no earlier than a half hour before sunrise and shall cease at least a half hour before sunset.
- No work shall take place during or within 3 days after which half an inch or more of precipitation has fallen.
- If any listed species are observed in the action area during construction, work shall stop and Reclamation shall be contacted immediately. Work on the project shall be suspended until Reclamation determines the appropriate course of action.

- To prevent inadvertent entrapment of listed species and other wildlife during construction, all excavated steep-walled holes or trenches more than 1 foot deep shall be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials. If the trenches cannot be closed, one or more escape ramps (with slopes less than or equal to 1:1) constructed of earthen-fill or wooden planks shall be installed. Before such trenches or holes are filled, they must be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals. If federally protected species are found in any of the holes or trenches, work shall stop and Reclamation shall be contacted immediately for further guidance.
- If work on the project occurs during the bird breeding season (February 1 to August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct nesting bird surveys in the tree(s) immediately adjacent to the Action area. If a nesting migratory bird is found, no construction on the project shall occur within 35 feet of the nest until the young have fledged or until a qualified biologist determines the nest is no longer active. If active nests are observed and the recommended nest avoidance buffer is not feasible, a qualified biologist may propose a non-disturbance buffer based on, but not limited to, species-specific information, site lines from the nest to the work-site, and observations of the nesting bird's reaction to project activities. If the biologist determines that a smaller avoidance buffer is warranted, the biologist shall provide Reclamation with a written explanation as to why. Based on the submitted explanation, Reclamation will determine whether to allow the smaller buffer. All survey documentation shall be submitted to Reclamation prior to the start of construction. No nesting bird surveys are required if work occurs outside of the bird breeding season.

Exclusion Category

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

Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion

- | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. This action would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1502.3). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. This action would have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA Section 102(2)(E) and 43 CFR 46.215(c)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. This action would have significant impacts on public health or safety (43 CFR 46.215(a)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | No | Uncertain | Yes |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 4. This action would have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographical characteristics as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (43 CFR 46.215 (b)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. This action would have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks (43 CFR 46.215(d)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. This action would establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (e)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. This action would have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (f)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. This action would have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. This action would 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 (43 CFR 46.215 (h)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. This action would violate a Federal, tribal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment (43 CFR 46.215 (i)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. This action would affect ITAs (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. This action would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898) (43 CFR 46.215 (j)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | No | Uncertain | Yes |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13. This action would 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 (EO 13007, 43 CFR 46.215 (k), and 512 DM 3)). | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. This action would 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, EO 13112, and 43 CFR 46.215 (l)). | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

NEPA Action: Categorical Exclusion

The Proposed Action is covered by the exclusion category and no extraordinary circumstances exist. The Action is excluded from further documentation in an EA or EIS.

Attachment A: Cultural Resources Determination

CULTURAL RESOURCE COMPLIANCE
Mid-Pacific Region
Division of Environmental Affairs
Cultural Resources Branch

MP-153 Tracking Number: 13-SCAO-278

Project Name: Issuance of a Permit, Cachuma O&M Board for Modification to Four Air Vacuum/Air Release Valves, South Coast Conduit

NEPA Contact:

NEPA Document: CEC-13-048

MP 153 Cultural Resources Reviewer: Scott Williams 

Date: April 22, 2015

The proposed undertaking by Reclamation is to issue to the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board, its operating entity for the South Coast Conduit, to modify the four AV/AR valves. This is the type of undertaking that does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the NHPA Section 106 regulations codified at 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1). Reclamation has no further obligations under NHPA Section 106, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1).

The proposed modifications would include installing drains at each of the four structures. Installation of the drains would require hand excavating a 1-foot wide, 5-feet long, and 2-feet deep trench at each site and installing a 4-inch drain. A total of 1.7 cubic yards would be excavated from for all four sites and used for back at each respective site. Areas of excavation are within the previously disturbed area when the AV/AR valves were originally installed. No water would be discharged from the drains for this action. After reviewing documentation provided within CEC-13-048, Reclamation has concluded this action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.

This document is intended to convey the completion of the NHPA Section 106 process for this undertaking. Please retain a copy in the administrative record for this action. Should changes be made to this project, additional NHPA Section 106 review, possibly including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, may be necessary. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.