

**DRAFT**  
**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

TO: COUNTY CLERK  
COUNTY OF VENTURA

FROM: WATERSHED PROTECTION  
DIRECTOR

Project Title: Coyote Creek Emergency Pilot Channel Project
Project Location: NW and SE of Santa Ana Road Bridge at Casitas Vista Road, Near Ojai (Casitas Springs community)
Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of the Project: With federal assistance and funding from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, the Ventura County Public Works Agency-Watershed Protection (VCPWA-WP) is proposing to remove sediment and obstructing vegetation along Coyote Creek to restore the channel capacity and reduce flooding issues to the surrounding community. The current and reoccurring problem (2005, 2017, 2023, and 2024) is the flooding of Camp Chaffee Road and residential properties along the creek. The early 2023 storms produced heavy rainfall causing widespread damage and flooding throughout the County of Ventura, including Coyote Creek. The goal is to remove obstructing vegetation and sediment within 3,300 linear feet of creek channel to restore the drainage capacity. Additionally, the VCPWA-WP and NRCS are working towards a property acquisition (1.5 acres) with removal of one home and associated improvements/structures that were damaged by flooding and sediment deposition in the floodway and floodplain. The channel clearing and property buyout will reduce future flooding and restore habitat for aquatic wildlife. Vegetation within the 45-foot-wide channel excavation work area will be removed. A new channel cross section will have 25 foot wide bottom width; with 2(H):1(H) banks on either side and will be excavated approximately five feet lower than the existing grade. On both sides of the new channel, in an additional adjacent work area up to 10 feet wide vegetation will be cut to ground level for access. The total work impact area is estimated to be about 6 acres and will remove approximately 22,000 cubic yards of sediment. Once the damaged property is acquired, structures will be demolished. The neighboring properties are in support of these efforts and partially funded the excavation work. Appropriate biological surveys will be performed, and a qualified biologist will be on site during work activities, per regulatory permits and VCPWA-WP standard best management practices. Annual fall season sediment and vegetation maintenance in the channel will occur on County (County funded) and private (landowner funded) parcels.
Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Ventura County Public Works Agency - Watershed Protection
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: David Fleisch, VCPWA Assistant Director

Exempt Status: (Check One)

☐ Categorical Exemption

☒ Statutory Exemption – Section 15269 (a) and (c), Emergency Projects

Reasons why project is exempt: Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency on January 4 and again June 16, 2023. President Biden declared a Major Disaster on January 15 and April 3, 2023, and State of Emergency on March 10, 2023. This project consists of specific emergency actions that would repair flood control structures “damaged or destroyed as a result of a disaster in a disaster stricken area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor” (Sec. 15269[a]), and would “mitigate an emergency” along the highly eroded areas damaged by flooding and erosion (Sec. 15269[c]). The proposed emergency actions are necessary to maintain public safety and protect developed properties and infrastructure. Additionally, the proposed project is funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service for a situation requiring immediate action under its Emergency Watershed Protection Program (7 CFR part 624).
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Contact Person: David Fleisch, VCPWA Assistant Director	Area Code (805)	Telephone 654-2373
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Date Received for Filing:

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Director

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Date

EXHIBIT 4 - CEQA NOE





Image 1. Flooding at Camp Chaffee Road crossing taken 5/9/2024. This has been flooded and impassible since January 2023.



Image 2. Buyout property showing ~3-4 feet of sediment and flow through the property – 5/9/2024



Figure 1. Coyote Creek, surrounding drainages, and Casitas Dam upstream of project site



Figure 2. Coyote Creek showing Santa Ana Rd bridge and Camp Chaffee Road crossing

**Project Location:** The project area is along Coyote Creek, a tributary to the Ventura River, parallel to Casitas Vista Road. The Casitas Dam is located about two miles upstream of Camp Chaffee Road. The site is located in the 100-year floodplain.

**Possible sensitive species:** least Bells vireo (potential habitat), California red-legged frog (unlikely habitat)

**Habitat:** Designated critical habitat for southern steelhead (however, habitat currently unsuitable)

**No hardscape features will be installed.** The project includes vegetation and sediment removal, excavation to restore channel capacity, and the property buyout and demolition activities.

**Facility Characteristics:** Coyote Creek is a Ventura County Public Works Agency–Watershed Protection (VCPWA–WP) jurisdictional (Ordinance WP-2) channel that traverses private property and County Parks land (Foster Park). VCPWA – WP has no flood control facility, easement, or right-of-way, and therefore activities have only been performed under emergency conditions with assistance and funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (2005 and 2017).

**Length of project:** 3,300 linear feet  
The project will begin approximately 1,060 feet downstream of Santa Ana Road bridge and continue upstream approximately 500 feet upstream of the Camp Chaffee Road.