

## **Attachment to PIF – Nipomo Community Services District - Eureka Well Project**

### **Response to C.1 – Project Description**

#### **Project Summary:**

Equip Eureka Well #2 with a new pump and motor, construct a prefabricated steel building, site piping, bladder tank, generator pad, electrical equipment, telemetry, and site improvements.

This project is titled Eureka Well #2 since there was an original well on the same site that had a failed casing. A new well was drilled, and new casing was installed at the same well site property as explained below.

#### **Project Purpose:**

The Eureka Well had historically been one of the District's largest producing wells and was extremely important for water supply reliability. The well was drilled in 1979 and had a nominal flow capacity of 1000 gallons per minute (gpm). In late 2016, the well casing failed, and it was determined that the well was no longer serviceable.

The well was properly destroyed, and a new well was drilled, hence the name Eureka #2, on the same site in 2020. The replacement well was drilled on the same site as the old well since the old well had excellent water quality and quantity characteristics. Additionally, utilizing the existing site for the replacement well maximized the District's investment in support infrastructure at the site.

The next phase of the project is to equip the new well so that it can be utilized to provide water to the District's water system. The work to be completed through this grant includes refreshing the bid documents, conducting construction bidding, and overseeing project construction. The work involves, but is not limited to, equipping the new well with a new pump and motor, constructing a prefabricated steel building, site piping, bladder tank, generator pad, electrical equipment, telemetry, and site improvements.

Regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the project involves the replacement of an existing facility with substantially the same purpose and capacity and is categorically exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15302. A CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed for the project in December 2019.

### **Response to D.1 – Provide a Narrative for Project Justification**

#### **Background history:**

The Eureka Well had historically been one of the Nipomo Community Services District's (NCSD) largest producing wells. The well was drilled in 1979, and the 2007 Master Plan Update identified a nominal flow capacity of 890 gallons per minute (gpm) for the well based on the long-term average of flow records. In late 2016, the well casing failed, and staff determined that the well was no longer serviceable. The well has been properly destroyed and now needs to be replaced with a new well. The replacement well was drilled on the same site as the destroyed well since the destroyed well had excellent water quality and quantity characteristics. Additionally, utilizing the existing site for the replacement well will maximize the District's investment in support infrastructure at the site.

The original well was properly destroyed, and a new well was drilled (hence the name Eureka #2) on the same site in 2020.

From 2021 to 2022, the NCSD completed the initial design, obtained a CEQA notice of exemption, and initiated the next construction phase, outfitting the well site with the appropriate pumps and appurtenances. In late 2022, the NCSD put the next phase of the construction project on hold due to the construction bids being over twice what the NCSD had estimated and budgeted. Since then, the project has been on hold due to budget issues. Currently, the NCSD has completed a water rate study and is anticipating that the current customers will approve the new rates, which will provide revenue to fund the project in early 2026.

#### **Urgency of need:**

The importance of this well site has become more evident in recent months due to the increased volume of imported water that the NCSD receives from the City of Santa Maria. The NCSD, along with our Nipomo Mesa Management Area (NMMA) partners, Golden State Water Company, and Woodlands Mutual Water Company, is contracted to "take or pay" 2,500 AFY of imported water as the physical solution of the groundwater adjudication. The intent of this imported water is to reduce groundwater pumping for the long-term health of the groundwater basin. The consequences of turning off or reducing the operation of groundwater wells in the Nipomo basin exacerbate water quality issues, as seen in the NCSD case, with higher Nitrate levels.

Though the nitrate levels have not exceeded water quality standards, the higher levels are cause for long-term concerns. The Eureka Well site is situated in a portion of the basin that does not have any nitrate water quality issues.

In addition to the water quality issue, the increased imported water also presents a water supply issue. Again, this seems counterintuitive. Our water system permit requires that our sources of supply can provide water to our customers even with the largest source is taken out of service. In our case, since imported water is our primary source of supply, our groundwater wells must be prepared to meet customer demand should this condition arise. For example, the NCSD would be able to provide water to its customers during times that the Intertie may be inoperative due to emergency operations in the City of Santa Maria, or due to maintenance or repair of the Intertie itself. In recent years, this was not an issue since our groundwater wells were running regularly. In our existing four (4) operational groundwater supply wells, when a groundwater well is taken out of service temporarily, the nitrate levels increase such that we need to flush the pump for several hours before we can put it back into service. Currently, one of our wells has been taken out of service due to prolonged nitrate issues. If the Eureka Well is not constructed, the NCSD may need to consider installing a nitrate removal system, which would incur additional capital and long-term operational costs, as well as brine disposal issues. If the Eureka Well is constructed, it will not only provide better water quality but also increase its capacity, thereby compensating for reduced service from the other existing wells.

The Eureka Well would also play a role in long-term regional water supply. There have been current discussions on the possibility of connecting the NMMA with our agency partners in the Northern Cities Management Area. At the very least, such a physical connection could provide emergency mutual aid, and the Eureka Well would provide the quality and quantity of water to provide such aid. At best, it would provide long-term collaboration for water supply resiliency across the entire NCMA and NMMA.

#### Conclusion

Based on the discussions above, the Eureka Well would improve water quality and water supply for the Nipomo basin. This project not only benefits the NCSD but also has long-term regional benefits for the NMMA and potential benefits for the NCMA. Major project milestones have already been completed, such as Environmental, Easements, and Design. This project is expected to meet the grant construction completion schedule of March 2027.