

EIR PURPOSE AND SCOPE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Facilities Plan portion of this document, which consists of Sections 1 through 7, was prepared by the Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District of Los Angeles County (SCVSD). The primary objective of the Facilities Plan is to meet the requirements of the Upper Santa Clara River Chloride Total Maximum Daily Load (Chloride TMDL) established by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board-Los Angeles Region (RWQCB-LA), a state regulatory agency. The Chloride TMDL, which seeks to attain a water quality objective of 100 milligrams per liter (mg/L) for chloride for the Santa Clara River (SCR) Reaches 4A, 4B, and 5 through 7, effectively limits chloride levels from point source discharges including discharges from the SCVSD's Valencia Water Reclamation Plant (VWRP) and Saugus Water Reclamation Plant (SWRP).

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Facilities Plan, which consists of Sections 8 through 20 of this document, has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code §§21000 et seq.) to evaluate the potential impacts of the four final alternatives identified in the Facilities Plan. The SCVSD is the lead agency under CEQA, and Environmental Science Associates (ESA) assisted in the preparation of the EIR.

8.2 EIR SCOPE

The EIR evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the four project alternatives described in Section 6.7.1.

8.3 CEQA PROCESS OVERVIEW

8.3.1 Purpose

CEQA's purpose is to (1) inform governmental decision-makers and the public about potentially significant environmental effects of proposed projects, (2) identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced, (3) prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures, and (4) disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project if significant environmental effects are involved.

The EIR was prepared pursuant to the CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3). The EIR is to be used by regulators and the public in reviewing of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, alternatives for accomplishing the project’s objectives, and any mitigation measures that may minimize, avoid, or eliminate environmental impacts. Note that in this EIR, the term “proposed project” is equivalent to the term “recommended project” in the Facilities Plan.

8.3.2 Scope and Content

The EIR focuses on the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project. Significance criteria (indicating what constitutes a significant impact) were developed for each environmental issue analyzed in the EIR and are described at the beginning of each impact analysis section. Impacts are categorized as follows:

- Significant and Unavoidable Impact
- Less Than Significant Impact After Mitigation
- Less Than Significant Impact
- No Impact

CEQA provides that a lead agency may not approve or carry out a project unless it finds that the environmental effects of the project have been reduced to a less than significant level after mitigation or the project benefits outweigh the unavoidable significant impacts. In the latter circumstance, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations (CEQA Guidelines, §15093).

The potential environmental effects from the proposed project are analyzed in accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Based on the Initial Study contained in Appendix 8-A, the proposed project may have a potentially significant effect on the following environmental issue areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic

These issues are discussed by resource area in Sections 9 through 19. Where feasible, mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level are proposed.

8.4 INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with applicable state environmental statutes, regulations, and policies to inform federal, state, and local decision makers regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and its alternatives. As an informational document, an EIR does not recommend approval or denial of a project. The Draft EIR was

provided to the public for review, comment, and participation in the planning process. After public review and comment, this Final EIR was prepared. This Final EIR includes responses to comments on the Draft EIR received from agencies, organizations, and individuals. It is being distributed to provide the basis for decision making by the lead agency and other responsible and trustee agencies.

8.4.1 SCVSD's Use

As the lead agency, the SCVSD has jurisdictional authority over the proposed project. This EIR will be used by the SCVSD to make decisions with regard to the construction and operation of the proposed project and to inform agencies considering permit applications and other actions required for the construction and operation of the project. Federal, state, regional, and local agencies that have jurisdiction over some part of the proposed project or a resource area affected by the project are expected to use this EIR as part of their approval or permit process.

Actions that the SCVSD may undertake after preparation of the Final EIR include, but are not limited to:

- Certifying the EIR
- Approving the proposed project or an alternative
- Completing final design
- Obtaining other agency permits and approvals
- Approving construction contracts
- Obtaining state and federal funding

8.5 KEY PRINCIPLES GUIDING PREPARATION OF THIS EIR

8.5.1 Forecasting

In this EIR, the SCVSD has made its best efforts to predict and evaluate the reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts of the proposed project and its alternatives. CEQA does not require the SCVSD to engage in speculation about impacts that are not reasonably foreseeable. Therefore, CEQA does not require a worst-case analysis (CEQA Guidelines, §§15144, 15145).

8.5.2 Environmental Thresholds, Substantial Evidence, and Disagreement Among Experts

The threshold of significance for a given environmental effect is the level at which SCVSD finds that an environmental impact of the proposed project and its alternatives is significant. A threshold of significance can be defined as a “quantitative or qualitative standard, or set of criteria, pursuant to which significance of a given environmental effect may be determined” (CEQA Guidelines, §15064.7 [a]). The thresholds of significance provided in the CEQA Guidelines have been used as the basis of the environmental impact analysis in this EIR. Some thresholds or criteria have been adapted to the specific circumstances of the proposed project and

its alternatives. The criteria for determining the significance of environmental impacts in this EIR analysis are described in each resource area.

The EIR identifies impacts as significant or less than significant. While impacts determined to be less than significant need only be acknowledged, an EIR must identify feasible mitigation measures for any significant impact. If there are no feasible mitigation measures for a given impact, that impact would remain significant and unavoidable. The SCVSD has based its conclusions about the significance of environmental impacts in this EIR on identifiable thresholds and have supported its conclusions with substantial evidence. Public comments on the draft EIR could have raised evidence that might have resulted in disagreement about levels of significance and mitigation. Any disagreements have been noted and will be considered by the SCVSD during the public hearing process. However, CEQA does not require this EIR to resolve such disagreements.

If expert opinions differ on an issue concerning the environmental impacts of a project and its alternatives, the main points of disagreement must be described in the EIR. This EIR summarizes conflicting opinions and includes sufficient information to allow the public and decision makers to consider the environmental consequences of the project.

A lead agency making a decision on a project in which the record contains a disagreement among experts need not select the most conservative, environmentally protective, or liberal opinion. The lead agency may give more weight to the views of one expert over another and need not resolve a dispute among experts. Although public comments must be considered and addressed by the lead agency, it need not incorporate the comments into the project as long as the lead agency identifies the basis for its decision and its decision is supported by substantial evidence.

8.5.3 CEQA Baseline

The CEQA Guidelines (§15125) require that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a proposed project at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. This environmental setting will normally serve as the baseline by which the lead agency determines whether an impact is significant. The lead agency may also consider a baseline condition that reflects fluctuations resulting from cyclical trends, such as drought and wet weather.

The CEQA baseline represents the environmental setting at a fixed point in time, which may differ from a no project alternative. A no project alternative allows for growth at the project site that would likely occur without any required additional approvals. The No Project Alternative for this project is described in Section 20.

8.5.4 Requirements to Evaluate Alternatives

The CEQA Guidelines require that the alternatives section of an EIR:

- Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives
- Include reasonable alternatives not within the lead agency's jurisdiction, if applicable
- Include a no project alternative
- Identify the lead agency's preferred alternative

- Present the alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study and briefly discuss the reasons for elimination

The CEQA Guidelines (§15126.6) require an EIR to describe a range of reasonable alternatives to a proposed project or to the location of the project that may feasibly meet most of the basic objectives of the proposed project but avoid or substantially lessen any significant environmental impacts. The EIR should compare merits of the alternatives and identify the environmentally superior alternative. This document contains an extensive alternatives analysis in Section 6 and the environmental impacts of the final alternatives are compared in Section 20.

An EIR need identify only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice between the alternatives and the recommended plan. §15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines provides that a feasibility analysis may consider site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise obtain access to the alternative site. The EIR is not required to evaluate an alternative that has an effect that cannot be reasonably identified, that has remote or speculative implementation, or that would not achieve the basic project objectives.

8.5.5 State Revolving Fund Requirements

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) will use this document to ensure that the proposed project complies with the state revolving fund (SRF) loan requirements. The SRF loan program is partially funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is subject to federal environmental regulations. The EPA has chosen to use CEQA as the compliance base for California's SRF Loan Program. In addition to CEQA, the EPA requires compliance with specific federal environmental regulations, including the federal Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the General Conformity Rule for the federal Clean Air Act (CAA).

8.6 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The SCVSD, as lead agency, published an NOP for the Draft EIR on January 6, 2012 and circulated the NOP for an extended 42-day public review period starting on January 9, 2012 and ending on February 17, 2012. The NOP included a project description and a preliminary list of potential environmental impacts. Copies of the NOP were also made available for public review at the SCVSD office at 1955 Workman Mill Road in the City of Whittier and on the SCVSD web site at <http://www.lacsd.org/>. The SCVSD received comments on the NOP from 34 parties. Appendix 8-B includes the NOP and comments received.

8.7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

CEQA recommends conducting early coordination with the general public, appropriate public agencies, and local jurisdictions to assist in developing the scope of the environmental document. Three EIR scoping meetings were held at the City of Santa Clarita Activities Center during the NOP review period. The first meeting, intended for public agencies, was held on the afternoon of February 1, 2012. The second and third meetings, intended for the general public, were held on the evenings of February 1 and February 9, 2012. Attendees were provided an opportunity to

voice comments and concerns regarding potential environmental effects of the proposed project and the issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR.

The comments received during the NOP review period and at the public scoping meetings were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. Issues not related to the scope or environmental effects of the proposed project (e.g., financing or economic factors) were not addressed in the Draft EIR but may be considered by the SCVSD before making a final decision on the project. In addition to the three public scoping meetings conducted in February 2012, numerous additional outreach meetings were held with various organizations from late 2011 through 2013.

CEQA requires issuance of a Notice of Availability (NOA) when a draft EIR is made available to the public for review to enable responsible agencies and interested parties to provide meaningful input. The NOA was released on April 24, 2013, when the Draft Facilities Plan and EIR was released, for an extended 60-day public review period ending June 24, 2013. The NOA described the project, the four final alternatives, and listed the potential significant environmental effects of these alternatives. Although not required by CEQA, the SCVSD also held four informational meetings and four public hearings in both Santa Clarita and City Terrace during the comment period. In response to public interest, the public review period was subsequently extended an additional 30 days to July 24, 2013. Both the NOA and the extension of the public review period were extensively advertised in local newspapers.

The SCVSD accepted a total of 114 written (letters and comment cards), electronic (e-mails), and oral (public hearing testimonies) communications containing a total of 492 individual comments on the Draft Facilities Plan and EIR throughout the public review period. Section 21 includes a list of all agencies, organizations, and persons who submitted comments, as well as copies of all comments and responses thereto. As required by CEQA, responses were provided to all public agencies that submitted comments at least 10 days prior to certification of the Final Facilities Plan and EIR.

More details on the Public Participation Program are included in Appendix 8-C.

8.8 KNOWN AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

The following list of concerns and areas of controversy is based on the comments received on the NOP.

- Basis for chloride limits established by the RWQCB-LA
- Potential impacts to downstream beneficial uses

An additional area of controversy, trucking brine into the City Terrace area for disposal, was identified based on comments received during the review period of the Draft Facilities Plan and EIR.

8.9 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

CEQA requires that an EIR identify irreversible environmental impacts that would be caused by the recommended project. Implementation of the Facility Plan may result in some irreversible environmental changes, including the potential disruption of archaeological resources. This EIR

assesses these impacts and provides mitigation measures where necessary to reduce the significance of these effects.

8.10 REQUIRED APPROVALS

Implementation of the Facilities Plan and EIR may require approval from the following agencies:

- California Department of Transportation – Encroachment Permit for trenching in a State Route
- Regional Water Quality Control Board – Waste Discharge Requirements and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
- State Water Resource Control Board – Water Diversion
- Environmental Protection Agency – Brine Injection Permit
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Streambed Alteration Agreements
- United States Army Corps of Engineers – Nationwide Permit
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service – Federal Endangered Species Act consultation regarding effects to federally listed species
- California State Office of Historical Preservation – SRF-required consultation
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Works – Encroachment Permit for trenching in county roads
- City of Santa Clarita – Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets
- City of Burbank – Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets
- City of Glendale – Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets
- City of San Fernando – Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets
- City of Los Angeles – Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets
- Ventura County Department of Public Works – Encroachment Permit for trenching in county roads

8.11 EIR ORGANIZATION

A summary of the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project are included in the Executive Summary (available under separate cover). Organization of this Final EIR is as follows:

- 8 EIR Purpose and Scope
- 9 Aesthetics
- 10 Air Quality
- 11 Biological Resources
- 12 Cultural Resources
- 13 Energy Resources

14	Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
15	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
16	Hydrology and Water Quality
17	Land Use and Planning
18	Noise
19	Transportation and Traffic
20	Cumulative Impacts and Project Alternatives
21	Responses to Comments
22	Changes and Errata