

1.9 RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY MEETING COMMENTS (NOVEMBER 20, 2003)

Oral comments were received at the community meeting for the Draft EIR, held on November 20, 2003, in Lancaster, California. The purpose of the meeting was to hear the concerns of the homeowners within the proposed eastern agricultural area Although District No. 14 did not tape-record this meeting and is not obligated to provide responses to comments received at this meeting under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the following responses are provided to the comments that were otherwise gathered. Each comment is numbered sequentially by "CM-", followed by a number. Where a response includes a change to the text of the Draft EIR, a reference is made to Chapter 10, which contains corrections and clarifications made to the Draft EIR text.

CM-1 MELANIE BOSTIC

The comment suggests that the area between Avenues E and D south of the Edwards Air Force Base (EAFB) from Division Street to 40th Street East should be considered for agricultural reuse operations. There are only four houses in that region. This area was evaluated by the LWRP 2020 Plan. Chapter 7 of the LWRP 2020 Plan and Chapter 5 of the Final EIR describe the process conducted by District No. 14 to identify feasible locations to conduct agricultural reuse. The area suggested was rejected due to poor soil quality. Agricultural activities in the vicinity have historically not been successful (see Figure 4.1-14 on page 4-16 of the Final EIR). The potential for crop failure was considered a fatal flaw for the area suggested. The two feasible areas (Eastern and Western Agricultural Areas) were evaluated at equal detail in the Final EIR. See Eastern Agricultural Area Master Response.

The comment also asks for other alternatives and expresses concern over the use of recycled water and its effects on the health of animals who feed on the crops. District No. 14 would apply recycled water for crops using methods approved by the California Department of Health Services (DHS). Recycled water is used routinely throughout the country for the irrigation of fodder crops. Use of recycled water would not affect livestock that consume the fodder crops. The practice poses no health impact to livestock or to humans who consume that livestock. See Public Health Master Response and Groundwater Protection Master Response.

CM-2 RAY MCCORMICK

The comment suggests researching other inland wastewater districts such as Las Vegas and Denver and reevaluate alternatives regarding wastewater. The Clark County Sanitation Districts servicing the City of Las Vegas, Nevada, discharges into Lake Mead and has recently implemented wastewater recycling projects for municipal irrigation. The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District servicing the greater Denver metropolitan area discharges to the South Platte River that eventually flows to the Missouri River. See Public Health Master Response for a matrix showing similar irrigation projects conducted by wastewater utilities operating in closed basins in California.

CM-3 JERRY GORMAN

The comment suggests that better treatment should be provided. The Final EIR evaluates four alternatives, two of which would provide tertiary treatment with disinfection for the full 26 million gallons per day (mgd) flow projected by the year 2020. The recommended project of the LWRP 2020 Plan involves the construction of a full tertiary treatment facility (Alternative 2). See Public Health Master Response.

CM-4 KATHLEEN BURR-BALLESTEROS

The comment states that evapotranspiration rates are high in the Draft EIR table and questions why District No. 14 did not discuss with the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau to identify available land for agricultural reuse operations. The comment inquires about a Farm Management Plan and about insect formation and mitigation on storage reservoirs. See responses to comments PH-8 and 64-2. See Farm Management Plan Master Response. Aside from public hearings, District No. 14 conducted meetings on June 27, 2001, February 25, 2003, and May 6, 2003, with local farmers and the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau prior to publication of the Draft EIR in September 2003 in an effort to identify farming entities interested in using recycled water.

CM-5 JOHN GOIT

The comment discusses tertiary treatment and mentions that farming and tertiary treated water would be acceptable. The comment asks for an explanation for tertiary treatment and supports tertiary treated water for agriculture reuse. The comment opposes the taking of land and demands a meeting with the Directors of District No. 14. The Final EIR evaluates two full-tertiary alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 4) and recommends implementation of Alternative 2. District No. 14 will attempt to acquire the necessary land from willing sellers. See Eastern Agricultural Area Master Response.

CM-6 DAVID GREEN

The comment asks why the Western Agricultural Area is not the preferred site. Chapter 7 of the LWRP 2020 Plan and Chapter 5 of the Final EIR provide a description of the alternatives analysis conducted to identify the recommended agricultural site. See Eastern Agricultural Area Master Response.

The comment asks if Lake Los Angeles was considered as an effluent management option. Lake Los Angeles was considered, but was rejected since its 31-acre dry lake bed would provide less than 0.2 mgd of effluent management capacity. This represents less than 1% of the total effluent flow of 26 mgd that District No. 14 is projecting for the year 2020.

The comment states that the Eastern Agricultural Area is being used as a dumping ground for sewage that will affect perception of the area. District No. 14 is not dumping sewage. The sewage undergoes an extensive treatment process that meets all local, county, state, and federal standards for wastewater treatment. The level of treatment provided under each alternative evaluated would comply with California DHS regulations for reuse of recycled water use. Chapter 1 of the Final EIR describes the project purpose and objectives. Chapter 5 describes the alternatives evaluated to meet the objectives. Chapter 4 of the Final EIR evaluates four alternatives of the project in detail. See Public Health Master Response.

The comment states that District No. 14 will pollute groundwater similar to the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant. Elevated levels of nitrates have been detected in groundwater below the land application areas used by the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant. Los Angeles County Sanitation District No. 20 of Los Angeles County (District No. 20), in coordination with the RWQCB-LR, is in the process of determining the cause for the contamination and designing means of remediating the groundwater. The Final EIR concludes that use of land application methods such as those used by District No. 20 in Palmdale would likely result in unacceptable degradation of groundwater. Therefore, the Final EIR concludes that implementation of Alternatives 3 and 4, that include these methods during winter months, would result in a significant and unavoidable impact to water quality. Neither of these two alternatives

are the recommended project. The Final EIR concludes that maintaining application rates within agronomic rates will avoid degrading groundwater quality.

The comment inquires over the cost for full tertiary treatment. Chapter 6 of the LWRP 2020 Plan provides estimated costs of two full tertiary alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 4). The Final EIR does not consider costs as an environmental impact.

CM-7 MARTA WILLIAMSON

The comment expresses anger over Palmdale groundwater contamination. See response to comment CM-6.

The comment suggests that the wastewater should receive a greater level of treatment. The comment states that recycled water is not safe. The Final EIR evaluates four alternatives, two of which would provide tertiary treatment with disinfection for the full 26 mgd flow projected by the year 2020. This level of treatment would be acceptable for municipal reuse on golf courses and roadway medians, among other uses. The irrigation of crops with recycled water would comply with California DHS regulations. The recommended project of the LWRP 2020 Plan involves construction of a full tertiary treatment facility (Alternative 2).

CM-8 GAYLEEN MCGARRY

The comment asks what additional treatment beyond tertiary treatment is available. High quality water treatment ("tertiary plus") can include microfiltration, ultrafiltration, reverse osmosis, and various means of disinfection including ultraviolet radiation. See Public Health Master Response.

The comment inquires about whom the farmers are and if they are willing to pay for farming. District No. 14 conducted a number of public meetings, which were advertised locally, in order to identify farming entities that might be interested in farming with recycled water from the LWRP. Other than a farming entity situated approximately 17 miles west of the LWRP, District No. 14 has not identified any other farming entities with a substantial number of acres to satisfy a significant portion of the agricultural operations required under the LWRP 2020 Plan. District No. 14 will own and oversee the farming operations. Farming operations will be contracted to individual farming entities. The economics of the contractual agreement have not been determined at this time.

The comment states that eminent domain was used to acquire land for the Palmdale Airport but the property remains unused. Chapter 1 of the Final EIR explains the need for the project. District No. 14 would need the property to manage the projected effluent rate of 26 mgd by the year 2020.

CM-9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER

The comment asserts that growth should be stopped. District No. 14 has no control over growth policies in the region. Individual cities and county agencies are responsible for managing growth in their general plans. The Final EIR discusses growth in the Antelope Valley and the secondary effects of growth on page 4-197.

CM-10 PHILIP GIBA

The comment states that the farming operations will degrade groundwater. District No. 14 would be responsible to ensure that no groundwater contamination resulted from the project. The Water Recycling Requirements issued by the RWQCB-LR would impose numerous conditions to ensure that groundwater was not adversely affected. Mitigation measure 4.3-6 would commit District No. 14 to install monitoring wells around the agricultural sites. Monitoring results are public information. If monitoring found contamination, District No. 14 would modify farming operations. See Groundwater Protection Master Response.

CM-11 JEFF SIEBORT

The comment asks if groundwater recharge should be diluted to a 4 to 1 ratio with potable water. Recharging groundwater via direct injection of recycled water would require treatment above tertiary, dilution with potable water, and obtaining permits from the RWQCB-LR. Further discussion of this alternative is provided in Chapter 6 of the LWRP 2020 Plan. The comment asks if the Air Quality Management District has been contacted. The Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District was sent a copy of the Draft EIR, but provided no comment. Section 4.8 of the Final EIR discusses air quality.

CM-12 ERLAN CALVERT

The comment expresses unwillingness to move and suggests discussions with the farmers and the Mayor of Palmdale. The comment recommends putting together a Farm Management plan first. District No. 14 will attempt to purchase as much land as possible without displacing residents. In the event that residents are displaced, the Final EIR provides mitigation measures 4.13-1 and 4.13-2 that commit District No. 14 to providing appropriate replacement housing for low or moderate income families. District No. 14 will provide fair market value for all properties acquired. See Farm Management Plan Master Response and Property Acquisition Master Response.

CM-13 DONALD MISCHKA

The comment expresses concern over the value of property, and questions the success of the proposed project in regards to potential farmers. The comment recommends putting together a Farm Management plan. District No. 14 will attempt to purchase as much land as possible without displacing residents. In the event that residents are displaced, the Final EIR provides mitigation measures 4.13-1 and 4.13-2 that commit District No. 14 to providing appropriate replacement housing for low or moderate income families. District No. 14 will provide fair market value for all properties acquired. See Farm Management Plan Master Response and Property Acquisition Master Response.

CM-14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER

The comment questions the notification process. See Public Notification Master Response.

The comment asserts that the water is unsafe for humans. District No. 14 would apply recycled water for crops using methods approved by the California Department of Health Services. Secondary-treated recycled water is used routinely throughout the country for irrigation of crops. The practice poses no health impact to livestock or to humans who consume that livestock. See Public Health Master Response.

CM-15 ANTONOVICH'S FIELD DEPUTIES NORMAN HICKLING AND PAUL NOVAK

The comment opposes the use of eminent domain. District No. 14 will attempt to purchase as much land as possible without displacing residents. See Property Acquisition Master Response.

The comment questions why the water is not treated to a tertiary level and also expresses health concerns. The Final EIR evaluates four alternatives, two of which (Alternatives 2 and 4) would provide tertiary treatment with disinfection for the full 26 mgd flow projected by the year 2020. This level of treatment would be acceptable for municipal reuse on golf courses and roadway medians, among other uses. The recommended project of the LWRP 2020 Plan involves the construction of a full tertiary treatment facility (Alternative 2). See Groundwater Protection Master Response and Public Health Master Response.

CM-16 KRISTIN

The comment asks whether secondary treated water can be pumped into groundwater and whether abandon wells could act as conduits to groundwater. Groundwater recharge with secondary treated recycled water is not allowed. Abandoned wells would be identified and properly capped prior to the implementation of the agricultural reuse operations. The Final EIR provides further discussion on abandoned wells on page 4-72. See Groundwater Protection Master Response.

CM-17 JOHN GOIT

The comment suggests that tertiary treatment is the solution to wastewater treatment. The Final EIR evaluates two alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 4) that would provide full tertiary treatment. However, regardless of the level of treatment provided, the problem remains one of effluent quantity. Additional effluent management facilities must be constructed to properly manage the treated water.

The comment suggests that District No. 14 establish a new water district to sell recycled water. District No. 14 does not have the authority to create water purveying agencies. District No. 14 can, however, enter into agreements with water purveyors to provide them with recycled water. For example, District No. 14 has committed to providing the City of Lancaster with up to 1.5 mgd of recycled water for its municipal reuse project.

CM-18 UNKNOWN SPEAKERS

The comment expresses concern over the value of property and inquires about the appraisal process. See Property Acquisition Master Response.

The comment asks if recycled water will reach the groundwater. See Groundwater Protection Master Response.

CM-19 JOSH EVANS

The comment states that if a personal appraiser is hired, will there be a reimbursement. District No. 14 has retained an appraisal firm to appraise parcels within the proposed project area, however, property owners may also retain an appraiser at their own cost.

CM-20 UNKNOWN SPEAKER

The comment questions the notification process and declares that the proposed project is affecting the citizens emotionally. See Public Notification Master Response