

CHAPTER 8

EIR PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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INTRODUCTION

District No. 20 has prepared Part I of this document, the PWRP 2025 Plan, to propose upgrades and expansions of wastewater treatment and effluent management facilities to meet the needs of District No. 20 through the year 2025 in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner. This PWRP 2025 Plan EIR, comprising Part II of this document, has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of CEQA to assess potential impacts of the proposed project.

SCOPE OF PWRP 2025 PLAN EIR

This PWRP 2025 Plan EIR evaluates potential environmental effects associated with construction and operation of the proposed project described in Chapter 7. Three storage reservoir location alternatives and two agricultural area location alternatives are evaluated at an equal level of detail. Figure 8-1 identifies the alternative site locations for the proposed storage reservoirs and agricultural areas.

The existing agricultural area located within the area currently leased by District No. 20 from LAWA has already undergone project-level analysis pursuant to CEQA requirements. These agricultural areas are already approved for on-going agricultural operations, independent of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

A description of the regional environmental setting, providing more detailed setting descriptions within an area referred to as the Initial Study Area, are provided herein. The Initial Study Area encompasses the outer boundaries of the facility site screening analysis performed for the proposed project as described in Chapter 7. The Initial Study Area is located generally north and east of the PWRP as shown in Figure 8-1. This PWRP 2025 Plan EIR describes the environmental setting within the Initial Study Area for each environmental resource.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PROCESS OVERVIEW

The basic purpose of CEQA 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.

An EIR should use a multidisciplinary approach by applying social and natural sciences to make a qualitative and quantitative analysis of all the foreseeable environmental impacts a proposed project would exert on the surrounding area. As stated in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information, which enables them to make a decision intelligently which takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible.

The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR was prepared to comply with CEQA regulations, and is to be used by local regulators and the public in their review of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, alternatives, and mitigation measures that will minimize, avoid, or eliminate the environmental impacts.

The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR focuses on the potentially significant environmental effects of the

project. Significance criteria (indicating what constitutes a significant impact) were developed for each environmental issue analyzed in this document and are defined at the beginning of each impact analysis section. Impacts are categorized as follows:

- 1) significant, unavoidable;
- 2) significant, but can be mitigated to a less than significant level; and
- 3) less than significant (mitigation is not required under CEQA, but may be recommended).

CEQA requires that a lead agency shall neither approve nor carry out a project as proposed unless it finds that the significant environmental effects have been reduced to an acceptable level of insignificance (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091 and 15092) or the project benefits outweigh the unavoidable significant impacts requiring the Lead Agency to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations (CEQA Section 15093).

Notice of Preparation

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was published by District No. 20 on September 20, 2004. The NOP was circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and other interested parties. The comment period was open for a period of 30 days. The NOP consisted of a project description, including project alternatives, and a preliminary list of potential environmental impacts. Appendix L includes a copy of the NOP. Appendix M provides copies of comments received on the NOP.

Public Participation Program

The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR was circulated to local, state and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals wishing to comment on it for a 45-day public review period from April 29 through June 17, 2005. A public hearing was held on June 2, 2005. Written and oral comments were submitted to District No. 20. This Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR

provides responses to each comment received, as documented in Chapters 25, 26, and 27.

The Board of Directors for District No. 20 will review the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR and will consider a resolution for its certification (i.e., a finding that the EIR complies with the requirements of CEQA at a noticed public hearing). Following certification, District No. 20 may consider project approval and adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

CEQA requires that projects identify irreversible environmental impacts that would be caused by the proposed project. Implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan would result in some irreversible environmental changes including the destruction of desert scrub habitat and potential disruption of archaeological resources. The EIR assesses each of these impacts and provides mitigation measures where necessary to reduce the significance of these effects.

Known Areas of Controversy

Few comments were received concerning the NOP for the project (see Appendix M). No major controversial issues were raised during the scoping process. Potentially controversial issues of the project could include acquisition of land required to obtain an adequate amount of farm land for the proposed effluent management system. District No. 20 is in the process of complying with the RWQCB-LR CAO to abate the nitrate concentrations above the MCL within the groundwater near the existing effluent management areas. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR assists in alleviating this controversial issue.

Proposed Project

Chapter 7 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identifies the proposed project. The proposed locations for agricultural operations and storage reservoirs have been changed since the circulation of the Draft

PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Figure 8-1 identifies the newly proposed locations for project facilities. The project locations have been changed because attempts to negotiate with LAWA were unsuccessful, and Agricultural Study Area No. 6 and Storage Reservoir Study Area Nos. 1 and 2 are not available to District No. 20. As a result, the proposed project includes acquisition of land within Agricultural Study Area No. 5 and Storage Reservoir Study Area No. 3. Potential impacts associated with the use of these alternate locations were identified and evaluated in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR and are included in this Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

Required Approvals

Implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR will require approval from numerous agencies including the following:

- RWQCB-LR, for WDRs, WRRs, and SWPPPs;
- DHS for recycled water reuse systems approvals;
- DFG for SAAs for trenching through Little Rock Wash;
- DFG for Cal-ESA consultation regarding effects to MGS and sensitive plants;
- USFWS for FESA consultation regarding effects to federally listed species;
- California State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) for SRF-required consultation;
- AVAQMD for air emissions permit necessary for treatment facilities;

- DPW for an Encroachment Permit due to work within County roads;
- DRP for a CUP if construction of storage reservoirs and development of agricultural reuse operations occur within an SEA; and
- City of Palmdale for an Encroachment Permit for trenching in city streets.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PWRP 2025 PLAN EIR

A summary of the environmental effects of the project are included in the Executive Summary. Part II of this document, comprising the EIR for the project, is organized into the following chapters:

- 8.0 EIR Purpose and Scope
- 9.0 Land Use / Agricultural Resources
- 10.0 Aesthetics
- 11.0 Cultural Resources
- 12.0 Biological Resources
- 13.0 Transportation
- 14.0 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 15.0 Geologic Hazards and Soils/Mineral Resources
- 16.0 Air Quality and Odor
- 17.0 Noise
- 18.0 Public Services and Utilities
- 19.0 Recreational Facilities
- 20.0 Population and Housing/Secondary Effects of Growth
- 21.0 Hazardous Materials
- 22.0 Public Health
- 23.0 Cumulative Impacts and Project Alternatives