CHAPTER 26

WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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INTRODUCTION

The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR was completed and released for public review on April 29, 2005, pursuant to CEQA requirements. In addition, NOA were mailed to over 2,100 property owners that were potentially affected by the proposed project. The public review period lasted over 45 days, officially closing on June 17, 2005. Twenty-one comment letters were received from public agencies, property owners, and other interested parties. Table No. 26-1 contains a listing of the comment letters received on the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, sorted in the order in which they were received. Copies of the comment letters and responses to each immediately follow.

Table No. 26-1
List of Comment Letters Received on the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR

LETTER NO.	SOURCE OF LETTER	DATE
1	Ty, Perla	April 30, 2005
2	Palapo, Erasmo	May 10, 2005
3	Harmon, Donald	May 23, 2005
4	DeCristofaro, Margaret	May 23, 2005
5	Southern California Association of Governments	May 31, 2005
6	California Department of Fish and Game	May 31, 2005
7	United States Air Force Plant No. 42	June 2, 2005
8	Southern California Edison	June 2, 2005
9	California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region	June 15, 2005
10	City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power	June 16, 2005
11	Los Angeles World Airports	June 16, 2005
12	County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation	June 17, 2005
13	Federal Aviation Administration – Western Division	June 17, 2005
14	Nebeker, Eugene	June 17, 2005
15	McKean, Kathy	June 20, 2005
16	Palmdale Water District	June 20, 2005
17	Ott, Craig and Donna	June 20, 2005
18	State Water Resources Control Board	June 20, 2005
19	Walker, Marcia	June 20, 2005
20	Webb, Dean	June 20, 2005
21	Harmon, Donald	June 28, 2005

-----Original Message-----
From: Perlaty1@cs.com [mailto:Perlaty1@cs.com]
Sent: Saturday, April 30, 2005 4:41 PM
To: davila@lacsd.org
Subject: Lot 227, Tract 30718 Book 3372 Pg 1 Parcel: 017

I received your two page mail regarding the proposed Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan.

I think it is affecting my property on the above location. I want to get paid for it. Please keep me posted. I am disabled and I cannot go to those meetings. Please don't construct anything on my property without my approval. Thanks

1-1

Perla B. Ty Ph: 714-557-0748
3640 South Main St. #B
Santa Ana, CA 92707

COMMENT LETTER 1: TY, PERLA

Comment No. 1-1

The comment states that the property owner wants to be paid for the value of the property. Displaced property owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for additional information on land valuation.

-----Original Message-----
From: Rusty Palapo [mailto:w6etp@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 10, 2005 10:39 AM
To: davila@lacsd.org
Subject: Location of PWRP and Alternative Effluent Facility Locations for Palmdale.

Dear Mr. Charles E. Boehmke,

I am in receipt of a letter from the County Sanitation Districts for Los Angeles county dated April 29,2005 which indicates a Public Notice Of Availability for the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan, Draft Environmental Impact Report. Included therein is a map of the said plan that covers a two mile radius.

My concern is the location of the Agricultural Study Area Nr. 5 and the Storage Reservoir Study Area Nr. 3 which are both designated as Alternate Sites, which would cover the proposed pipeline. The approximate location of my 2.25 acres is in the area of Avenue M and 100th Street East.

What is the impact of the proposed plan to the landowners such as I in our plans to improve the land for either future residential use and/or commercial purposes? Are the Landowners going to be bought out by the County? As a layperson, I personally do not understand all of these.

Your clarification (in Laypersons terms) would be appreciated. I am now a Resident of the State of Ohio effective this 2005 fiscal year. I still intend to pay my taxes for the land continuously.

Please either reply by e-mail and followed with a confirmation letter addressed at: 1444 North LasCerne Circle, Mansfield, Oh., 44906.

Respectfully,
Erasmo T. Palapo
419-610-4224
W6ETP@hotmail.com

2-1

COMMENT LETTER 2: PALAPO, ERASMO

Comment No. 2-1

The comment states that the property owner wants clarification on the land acquisition process and any impacts that the proposed project may have on plans to improve the property with residential or commercial uses. Displaced property and business owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Recycled water has been used in various locations in the state of California for many years without decreasing property values and is amenable to residential and commercial land use designations. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for additional information.

M. DeCristofaro
8 W. Packsaddle Rd.
Rolling Hills, Ca. 90274

May 19, 2005

Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, Ca. 90601

Re: Airport 9-42
Assessors Parcel No: 3378-029-018

Dear Mr. Highter:

We recently received the draft environmental impact report for the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan. Reviewing the enclosed map it appears our property is located in the agriculture study area no.6. I assume if you chose this area the property will be taken by a government grant at fair market value.If as a result of the meetings you determine it is more beneficial to use agriculture area no.5 what negative effect will this development have on our property? 3-1

Please provide us with the possible use for property in this area and a potential time line for the reclamation plant development.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

Margaret DeCristofaro
Partner Airport 9-42

MAY 23 2005 AM 11:16 DOC # 496065 HIGHTER S

COMMENT LETTER 3: DECRISTOFARO, MARGARET

Comment No. 3-1

The comment states that the property owner wants to know what uses are compatible with the proposed project, and what is the project implementation schedule. Recycled water has been used in various locations in the state of California for many years and is amenable to residential and commercial land use designations. It is District No. 20's intent to secure the use of up to 5,140 acres of land for agricultural reuse and up to 700 acres of land for storage reservoirs and solids handling facilities. Displaced property and business owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Figures 7-8 and 7-9 in Chapter 7 contain schedules for project implementation. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for further information.

cert 7005 0390 0002 4662 5669

May 17, 2005

Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road Whittier, CA 90601

Ref: Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan

Dear Mr. Highter:

In response to your impact report for the Reclamation Plant 2025 in Palmdale dated April 29, 2005, I am the owner of five (5) acres, three (3) other smaller parcels and three (3) water wells within your Impact Report 2025.

I have lived in the same house in the "2025 Impact area" since 1948 and operated a business for most of the time and am doing so at this time. 4-1

I realize that progress is necessary, but the "2025 Facilities Plan" would be devastating for me and my business.

Yours truly,

Don Harman

Donald Harman
Harman Family Trust
41614 102nd Street East
Palmdale, CA 93591

MAY 23 2005 AM09:13

DOC # 495865

Highter S

COMMENT LETTER 4: HARMON, DONALD

Comment No. 4-1

The comment states that the property owner's business will be negatively affected by the proposed project. Recycled water has been used in various locations in the state of California for many years without decreasing property values and is amenable to residential or commercial land use designations. Displaced property and business owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for additional information.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

Main Office
818 West Seventh Street
12th Floor
Los Angeles, California
90017-3435

t (213) 236-1800
f (213) 236-1825

www.scag.ca.gov

May 25, 2005

Mr. Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

RE: SCAG Clearinghouse No. I 20050285 Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan & DEIR

Dear Mr. Highter:

Thank you for submitting the **Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan & DEIR** for review and comment. As areawide clearinghouse for regionally significant projects, SCAG reviews the consistency of local plans, projects and programs with regional plans. This activity is based on SCAG's responsibilities as a regional planning organization pursuant to state and federal laws and regulations. Guidance provided by these reviews is intended to assist local agencies and project sponsors to take actions that contribute to the attainment of regional goals and policies.

We have reviewed the **Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan & DEIR**, and have determined that the proposed Project is not regionally significant per SCAG Intergovernmental Review (IGR) Criteria and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Section 15206). Therefore, the proposed Project does not warrant comments at this time. Should there be a change in the scope of the proposed Project, we would appreciate the opportunity to review and comment at that time.

A-1

A description of the proposed Project was published in SCAG's **May 1-15, 2005** Intergovernmental Review Clearinghouse Report for public review and comment.

The project title and SCAG Clearinghouse number should be used in all correspondence with SCAG concerning this Project. Correspondence should be sent to the attention of the Clearinghouse Coordinator. If you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 236-1945. Thank you.

Sincerely,

MARK BUTALA
Senior Regional Planner
Intergovernmental Review

MAY 31 2005 PM 12:48

DOC # 459424 HIGHTER 5

COMMENT LETTER 5: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Comment No. 5-1

The SCAG comment states that the proposed project is not regionally significant. Therefore, the project does not warrant SCAG comment at this time. The comment is noted and no response is necessary.

State of California – The Resources Agency ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, *Governor*

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
http://www.dfg.ca.gov
4949 Viewridge Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 467-4201

RECEIVED
JUN 13 2005
STATE CLEARING HOUSE

May 31, 2005

Mr. Steven W. Highter
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

Clear 6/16/05 C

Draft Environmental Impact Report for
Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan
SCH # 2004091123, Los Angeles County

Dear Mr. Highter:

The Department of Fish and Game (Department) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the above referenced proposed project relative to impacts to biological resources. The project proposal consists of the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant (PWRP) upgrade and expansion to provide wastewater treatment capacity that is projected by the year 2025. The PWRP 2025 Plan also proposes to implement an effluent management system consisting of agricultural and municipal reuse with storage reservoirs that reuse all of the recycled water. The Plan proposes to secure use of approximately 5,140 acres for agricultural reuse and approximately 700 acres for storage reservoirs. A pipeline would be constructed connecting the PWRP with the storage reservoirs and agricultural reuse sites. The project area consists of agricultural lands and sensitive natural vegetative communities including desert alkali scrub, Mojave wash scrub and Joshua tree woodland. The project area also provides potential habitat for several special status species including but not limited to: desert tortoise (DT); Mohave ground squirrel (MGS); Swainson's hawk (SW); burrowing owl (BUO); Le Conte's thrasher; loggerhead shrike and alkali mariposa lily. The project area also includes Department jurisdiction drainages including Little Rock Wash, Big Rock Wash and associated tributaries. The propose project is located at the PWRP at the intersection of 30th Street East and Avenue P-8 in unincorporated Los Angeles County. Storage reservoirs and agricultural reuse areas will be located generally north and south of the PWRP

The following statements and comments have been prepared pursuant to the Department's authority as Trustee Agency with jurisdiction over natural resources affected by the project (CEQA Section 15386) and pursuant to our authority as a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Section 15381 over those aspects of the proposed project that come under the purview of the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq) and Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.:

IMPACTS TO BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

1. Biological Resource Assessment – Figure 12-1 within the Biological Resources Section of the DEIR shows vegetative communities and habitat quality within and adjacent to the ISA (ISA).

   a. The DEIR should quantify in acres the areas of vegetative communities within the ISA area and the impact areas proposed by the project. This will assist in the analysis of direct and cumulative impacts to these communities. 6-1

   b. Table 12-2 does not mention the potential presence of Swainson's hawk or Mohave ground squirrel however these species are indicated in Figure 12-1 as being observed in the past within the ISA. The DEIR should be consistent when describing occurrences of special status species. 6-2

2. Department Jurisdictional Drainages – Impact 12-2 of the DEIR indicated that a preliminary reconnaissance of the ISA identified area of previously modified desert wash and acknowledged that other smaller washes not observed may occur on the site. Mitigation Measure 12-4 stated that that "a Streambed Alteration Agreement will be obtained from the DFG if necessary."

   a. Pursuant to Section 1600 et seq. of the Fish and Game Code, the Department concurs that a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) with the applicant may be required prior to any direct or indirect impact to a lake or stream bed, bank or channel or associated riparian resources. The Department's issuance of a SAA may be a project that is subject to CEQA. To facilitate our issuance of the Agreement when CEQA applies, the Department as a responsible agency under CEQA may consider the local jurisdiction's (lead agency) document for the project. To minimize additional requirements by the Department under CEQA the document should fully identify the potential impacts to stream and/or riparian resources and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, monitoring and reporting commitments for issuance of the Agreement. It is recommended that the project proponent apply for a Streambed Alteration Agreement so that the Department may evaluate the site and confirm jurisdictional conclusions made in the DEIR. Early consultation is recommended, since modification of the proposed project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. 6-3

MITIGATION MEASURES

1. Mojave Ground Squirrel - Mitigation Measure 12-8 of the DEIR states that mitigation for unavoidable impacts to occupied or presumed occupied MGS habitat within low to moderate quality saltbush scrub only, will be achieved by acquiring and protecting compensatory lands at a ½:1 to 3:1 ratio depending on the habitat quality of the impacted habitat.

   a. To achieve statewide consistency to fully mitigate for incidental take of MGS under 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code, the Department will be requiring a 1:1 mitigation ratio for marginal and 2:1 for moderate MGS habitat loss within areas assumed to be occupied by MGS lacking protocol trapping surveys to determine presence/absence. The documented presence MGS based on trapping protocol surveys and or direct observation increases the mitigation ratio to at least 3/1. 6-4

   b. The DEIR offers no justification for excluding mitigation for MGS within creosote scrub on the Initial Study site. The DER states that the creosote scrub community includes many of the same shrub species as those found in the saltbush scrub areas found on the proposed project site. MGS are known to be generalists when utilizing vegetative communities. The Department recommends that mitigation for loses of MGS occupied or presumed occupied habitat within creosote scrub habitat be 6-5

included in the FIER within the mitigation parameters recommended in Section 1a above. 6-5 (cont.)

c. The loss of unoccupied MGS habitat should be considered a significant cumulative impact under CEQA since this species does not always occupy suitable habitat during years of low reproduction. Suitable MGS habitat adjacent to core population areas are thought to facilitates the persistence of this species within its range over time. 6-6

d. Measures to avoid take of MGS coming onto the project site from adjacent MGS habitat should be discussed in the FEIR. The Department recommends that a biological monitor be on site during initial project construction including trenching and laying water pipe if these activities are conducted during the period when MGS are above ground and active. Agricultural activities including cutting alfalfa may take MGS feeding within these fields if conducted adjacent to MGS habitat near the project site. 6-7 The introduction of additional agricultural activities into or adjacent to MGS habitat will result in the introduction and/or increased population of California ground squirrels which are thought to compete with MGS for resources. These impacts should be evaluated in the FEIR along with proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures for competition with California ground squirrels should not include the use of rodenticides or other measures which will result in mortality of MGS or secondary poisoning/trapping of other non-target wildlife species. 6-8 The Department recommends acquisition of compensatory mitigation land for the assumed take of MGS within adjacent MGS habitat. because survey results are only valid for one year and continual agricultural practices may result in take of MGS in subsequent years.

2. Desert Tortoise – Mitigation measure 12-11 states that DT surveys will be conducted in all proposed disturbance areas within DT habitat and that occupied DT habitat will be mitigated accordingly pursuant to Section 7 and 10a of the FESA..

a. Measures to avoid take of DT coming onto the project site from adjacent DT habitat should be discussed in the FEIR. The Department recommends that a biological monitor be on site during initial project construction including trenching and laying water pipe if these activities are conducted during the period when DT are above ground and active. Agricultural activities including cutting alfalfa may take DT feeding within these fields if conducted adjacent to DT habitat near the project site. 6-9 Protocol surveys of DT within appropriate habitat are valid for one year and do not assure that yearly agricultural practices will not take DT during subsequent years unless yearly surveys are conducted to confirm absence of DT in adjacent areas or exclusionary fencing is erected around active agricultural fields.

b. Desert tortoise is considered a State threatened species. Anticipated unavoidable incidental take of DT would require a 2081 incidental take permit from the Department under the California Endangered Species Act or the Department's concurrence with any mitigation measure required within a Federal Incidental Take Permit for DT issued for the project by the USFW. This should be stated in Mitigation Measure 12-12 6-10

3. Swainson's hawk - Mitigation measure 12-5 states that active nests will be avoided by project activities including removing nesting trees.

a. The Swainson's hawks exhibits a high site fidelity to nesting locations year after year 6-11

and so any active SH nests found on site should be avoided as per Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5 which pertains to taking of birds of prey or their nests and eggs. The Department further recommends that large nesting trees within the project area be retained and additional trees planted adjacent/near to proposed alfalfa fields as an additional mitigation measure for loss of SW nesting habitat. 6-11 (cont.)

4. Burrowing Owls – Mitigation measure 12-5 describes mitigation measures for avoiding take of BUO.

a. The DEIR fails to discuss mitigation for loss of BUO nesting habitat as the result of the proposed project. It is the loss of habitat that is responsible for the statewide decline of BUO. The Department recommends compensatory habitat acquisition as specified in the burrowing owl consortium guidelines. Additional mitigation for loss of nesting habitat could be conducted on site by avoiding/creating areas where BUO may nest as these species benefit from the increased prey base associated with alfalfa forage production as long as the use of insecticides and rodenticides are avoided. 6-12

5. Joshua Tree Woodland (JTW) – Mitigation Measure 12-18 proposes compensatory mitigation at a 1:1 ratio for loss of JTW. Compensation may include the development of or donation to a conservation bank, land trust or conservation easement.

a. The Department is pleased that MM 12-16 proposes compensatory mitigation for loss of JTW communities but proposes a 2:1 mitigation ratio considering the cumulative loss of JTW within the vicinity of the project area and greater Antelope Valley. The Department has been tracking loss of JTW woodland within the Antelope Valley as the result of discretionary project approval under CEQA and estimates that approximately 1800 acres of JTW have been type converted within the City of Palmdale and vicinity alone since 1999 when records started to be kept by the Department. This is a conservative estimate since not all projects have been evaluated by the Department and agricultural clearing of JTW (exempt from West Mojave Plan consideration and compensation) accounts for hundreds of additional acres of cleared JTW and cumulative loss. 6-13

b. Any payment of compensatory mitigation to the City of Palmdale or any other entity for loss of JTW and other desert vegetation should be justified by providing information on what that entity has done or proposes to do to preserve/create/restore functional desert vegetation communities. Any mitigation banking agreements and location of said banks should be approved by the Department to assure that project approval is contingent on compliance with said agreement and said timeframes for implementation. Banking locations should be situated adjacent to large core areas of existing similar habitat preferably adjacent to protected public lands. The Department does not consider preservation of small isolated patches of Joshua trees or alkali scrub on site within developed areas or transplanting into banking areas for later use as landscaping trees as adequate mitigation for project related loss of JTW or other desert vegetative communities. 6-14

6. Los Angeles World Airport Lands - Figure 1 of DEIR shows that the recommended proposed project is located within the boundaries of the Los Angeles World Airport (LAWA).

a. The 1978 Final Environmental Impact Report for the Palmdale International Airport proposed expansion references 3,800 acres of land at the eastern end of the airport 6-15

site from 80th Street East and 1000 acres of land between 60th and 70th Street East in the south central area of the site as feasible and suitable mitigation for wildlife and states that the Department of Airports would develop a Resources Management Plan (RMP) to protect and enhance these areas for wildlife and botanical habitat value. The Department has been unsuccessful, despite several attempts, to inquire from LAWA further information on the exact location of the identified habitat conservation areas and the content of the RMP for these areas. This information would be useful for planning purposes and to assure that the proposed PWRP proposed project does not conflict with identified habitat protection areas identified by LAWA or their ability to mitigate for future airport expansions. This concern should be addressed in the FEIR. 6-15 (cont.)

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS

1. Page 23-10 of the DEIR recommends groundwater recharge and wetlands creation as alternatives which would eliminate and avoid significant impacts to biological resources respectively. The DEIR stated that the wetland alternative would likely not accommodate the projected flow without use of agricultural spreading in conjunction.

   a. The Department recommends consideration of an additional project alternative. This alternative involves wetland creation in conjunction with groundwater recharge for use of treated wastewater. Careful planning of wetland creation to avoid sensitive desert vegetative communities could enhance wildlife diversity while avoiding potential take issues of listed species from ongoing agricultural practices associated with the LACSD's preferred proposed alternative 1. 6-16

In conclusion, the Department most strongly recommends that the above concerns and comments are addresses in the FEIR prior to project approval

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Questions regarding this letter and further coordination on these issues should be directed to Mr. Scott Harris, Associate Wildlife Biologist, at (626) 797-3170.

Sincerely,

C. F. Raysbrook
Regional Manager

cc: «Ms. Morgan Wehtje, Camarillo
Mr. Scott Harris, Pasadena
Mr. Ronnie Glick, Santa Barbara
Ms. Mary Meyer, Ojai
CFR-Chiron; HCP-Chiron
Department of Fish and Game
«Mr. Scott Morgan»
state clearinghouse, Sacramento
SPH:sph

COMMENT LETTER 6: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Comment No. 6-1

This comment states that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should quantify the areas of vegetative communities within the proposed project area shown in Figure 12-1 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Using the survey data compiled for the GIS map shown in Figure 12-1, the following acreage approximations of habitats have been derived:

Agricultural Study Area No. 5

- Mojave Creosote Bush Scrub (low quality): 127 acres
- Mojave Creosote Bush Scrub (moderate or high quality): 1,851 acres
- Desert Salt Brush Scrub (low quality): 532 acres
- Desert Salt Brush Scrub (moderate or high quality): 2,116 acres
- Mojave Wash Scrub: 29 acres
- Joshua Trees (low density): 2,036 acres
- Joshua Tree Woodland (moderate density): 727 acres

Agricultural Study Area No. 6

- Mojave Creosote Bush Scrub (low quality): 39 acres
- Mojave Creosote Bush Scrub (moderate or high quality): 1,804 acres
- Desert Salt Brush Scrub (low quality): 320 acres
- Desert Salt Brush Scrub (moderate or high quality): 1,739 acres
- Mojave Wash Scrub: 0 acres
- Joshua Trees (low density): 2,762 acres
- Joshua Tree Woodland (moderate density): 712 acres

Comment No. 6-2

This comment states that Table 12-2 does not mention the potential presence of Swainson's hawk or MGS within the proposed project area. However, Table 12-2 (p. 12-9) does mention both Swainson's hawk and MGS as special status wildlife species potentially occurring within the proposed project area and states their status as federally threatened and federal species of concern/California threatened, respectively. Table 12-2 also includes the dates and general locations of the DFG California Natural Diversity Database records of these species within the Initial Study Area. Figure 12-1 provides detailed locations on these species' occurrences.

Comment No. 6-3

This comment states that the DFG concurs with the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR's conclusion that an SAA may be required prior to any direct or indirect impact to a jurisdictional water feature. Chapter 12 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describes the biological resources, including potential waters of the state under the jurisdiction of DFG, within the potential project impact areas. Impact 12-2 states that the construction of storage reservoirs and pipeline and the conversion of land to agricultural uses may encounter areas that could be considered waters of the state under the jurisdiction of DFG. Mitigation Measures 12-2 through 12-4 identify procedures to ensure that impacts to waters of the state would be mitigated to a less than significant level. These measures include conducting a survey of the project area for potential waters of the state. Should waters of the state be found, they will be delineated and described by a qualified biologist. If necessary, an SAA will be obtained from DFG for work in jurisdictional areas and District No. 20 will comply with all conditions of the SAA, including off site mitigation if appropriate.

Comment No. 6-4

This comment states that DFG will require a compensation ratio ranging from 1:1 to 3:1 for destruction of habitat assumed to be occupied by MGS depending on habitat quality. Mitigation Measure 12-8 commits District No. 20 to compensate for impacts to MGS at a ratio to be determined depending on the quality of habitat removed, and ranges from 1/2:1 to 3:1. This range encompasses DFG's recommended range. It is worth noting that the West Mojave Plan recommends a ratio of 1:1 to compensate for removal of habitat affecting MGS and other sensitive species in the project area. The actual ratio would require DFG approval.

Comment No. 6-5

This comment states that creosote scrub could be considered MGS habitat and recommends that creosote scrub areas be included in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR as potential MGS habitat. The text of Mitigation Measures 12-7 and 12-8 will be revised as follows to include MGS absence surveys in creosote bush scrub habitat and mitigation for creosote bush scrub areas assumed to be MGS habitat:

Mitigation Measure 12-7: District No. 20 will conduct absence surveys according to the modified protocol guidelines as approved by DFG for MGS in all proposed disturbance areas that could provide at least low quality habitat for the species (i.e., low and moderate quality saltbush scrub and low and moderate quality creosote bush scrub areas as shown in Figure 12-1). If no MGS are found during these surveys, no other action would be required to protect the species. However, if MGS are found to be present, Mitigation Measure 12-8 shall apply. At its discretion, District No. 20 may forgo these protocol surveys and proceed with Mitigation Measure 12-8, requiring compensatory lands.

Mitigation Measure 12-8: If no DFG-approved absence surveys are conducted, or if the presence of MGS on any of the undeveloped lands to be cleared by District No. 20 is indicated during the protocol surveys, compensatory lands at a 1/2:1 to 3:1 ratio shall be made available in perpetuity for the protection of the MGS, depending on the value of the habitat quality. Compensation would only be required for the conversion of the areas shown on Figure 12-1 that may be potentially suitable MGS habitat such as low and moderate quality saltbush scrub and low and moderate quality creosote bush scrub. The location and conservation management of the identified compensatory lands shall be approved by DFG pursuant to Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code.

Comment No. 6-6

This comment states that the loss of unoccupied MGS habitat should be considered a significant cumulative impact under CEQA. Impact 12-10 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identifies that the project would result in the loss of Joshua tree woodland habitat and reduction of a sensitive natural community and available habitat for common and special-status wildlife species in the project region, which includes MGS. Mitigation Measure 12-18 includes compensatory mitigation for loss of moderate density Joshua tree woodlands, as shown on Figure 12-1, at a 1:1 ratio in perpetuity for the protection of this sensitive community and associated special-status species habitat. In addition, this measure includes development and implementation of a Habitat Compensation and Management Plan (HCMP) for Joshua tree woodlands. These measures would also provide compensatory mitigation for the loss of unoccupied potential MGS habitat that supports Joshua tree woodland and reduce the project impact of the loss of unoccupied potential MGS habitat to a less than significant level. Compensatory mitigation for the loss of occupied or assumed occupied habitat would be provided through Mitigation Measure 12-8.

Comment No. 6-7

This comment states that measures should be taken to avoid the "take" of MGS coming onto the project site from adjacent MGS habitat and that this issue should be discussed in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The current status of the MGS is considered "potentially extirpated" within the project region of the County (Leitner, *Current Status of the MGS Map, 2005 Mohave Ground Squirrel Workshop*, 2005; and Aardahl, *MGS Conservation: Proposed Amendments to the California Desert Conservation Area for the Western Mojave Desert*, 2005). MGS have not been observed within Los Angeles County in over 25 years and recent protocol surveys in the project region have had negative results. Thus, the potential for occurrence of MGS within the project site is considered to be low. Mitigation Measures 12-7 and 12-8 provide measures to prevent significant impacts to MGS potentially occurring on the project site and/or moving onto the project site during construction.

According to one source, the species has an average home range of less than an acre and, more importantly, bounded at its outer extent by its burrow system (Recht, M.A., 1977). More recent research (Leitner and Leitner, 2004) documents larger home ranges and dispersal movements, but the potential for MGS to move onto the project site after these areas are under agricultural production and simultaneously exposure to hazards (such as harvest machinery) is considered to be speculative (CEQA 15145. Speculation).

The construction of the recycled water pipelines will be aligned (to the extent feasible) within developed street rights of way that do not provide habitat for MGS. Since the likely presence of MGS is low, no mitigation would be required for construction within the road right of way. In the event that pipeline construction occurs in undeveloped areas, District No. 20 will conduct absence surveys as described in Mitigation Measure 12-7. In accordance with Mitigation Measure 12-8, if no DFG-approved absence surveys are conducted, or if the presence of MGS on any of the undeveloped lands to be cleared by District No. 20 is indicated during the protocol surveys, District No. 20 will enter into a 2081 Incidental Take Permit with DFG and will perform the appropriate biological monitoring.

Comment No. 6-8

This DFG comment states that the introduction of additional agricultural activities into or adjacent to MGS habitat will result in the introduction and/or increased population of California ground squirrels, which are thought to compete with MGS for resources and that this impact should be evaluated in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. As discussed above, the potential for MGS to inhabit areas adjacent to the project site is considered to be low. California ground squirrels attracted to the project site by water and agricultural forage may utilize these adjacent non-agricultural areas with low potential to support MGS individuals. The extent to which California ground squirrels will utilize native desert habitat adjacent to agricultural areas and the distance from agricultural areas that California ground squirrels will travel is not known. However, MGS trapping survey results in native desert habitat adjacent to agricultural areas in the project region usually yield only an occasional California ground squirrel (personal observation by Christine O'Rourke), primarily within close proximity to agriculture. Observations of California ground squirrel burrows during MGS surveys are also very rare indicating that California ground squirrels in these areas are likely transient from agricultural areas.

Comment No. 6-9

This comment states that measures should be taken to avoid the "take" of desert tortoise (DT) coming onto the project site from adjacent DT habitat and that this issue should be discussed in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. To prevent construction impacts to DT moving from adjacent habitat into work areas, Mitigation Measure 12-12 would be implemented. Beyond the construction phase of the project, there are no practicable mitigations for avoiding impacts to DT exposed to agricultural operations. However, the low likelihood of tortoises in the area, combined with the unsuitability of hayfields as habitat and a limited period of exposure, make prediction of harm speculative.

Comment No. 6-10

The comment states that DT is a state threatened species and, therefore, the need for a 2081 incidental take permit may be required and should be stated in Mitigation Measure 12-12. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR assumes that a 2081 permit would be required as part of the project if site surveys indicate that MGS potentially could be impacted. In response to this comment, Mitigation Measure 12-12 has been modified in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR as follows:

Mitigation Measure 12-12: If USFWS-approved surveys identify desert tortoise on any of the undeveloped lands to be cleared by District No. 20, a Desert Tortoise Protection and Mitigation Plan will be developed and adopted in consultation with the USFWS and DFG. Elements of the plan would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Pre-construction desert tortoise surveys and tortoise relocation to an off site location approved by USFWS- and DFG-authorized biologist(s).
- Staking of approved disturbance areas in the field and installation of temporary tortoise exclusion fencing around active construction areas.
- A worker education program including the natural history, endangerment factors, and appropriate protocol for dealing with tortoise encountered in and around the construction areas.

- Enforcement of speed limits and checking under vehicles for tortoise.
- Biological monitoring of all ground disturbance.
- Measures to prevent increased use of the project site by common ravens through trash management, removal of unnatural sources of standing water, and other means.

In addition, compensatory mitigation for desert tortoise habitat loss at a 1/2:1 to 3:1 ratio, depending on the value of the habitat quality, shall be made available in perpetuity for the protection of the desert tortoise for the conversion of any of the potentially suitable habitat areas shown on Figure 12-1 (i.e., moderate quality with moderate constraints areas). The location and conservation management of the identified compensatory lands shall be approved by USFWS pursuant to Sections 7 and 10a of the FESA and by DFG pursuant to Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code.

Comment No. 6-11

This comment states that Swainson's hawk nests should be avoided per DFG Code Section 3503.5, large nesting trees within the project area should be maintained, and additional trees should be planted adjacent/near to the proposed alfalfa fields as an additional mitigation measure. If construction activities are scheduled to occur within the Swainson's hawk breeding season, Mitigation Measure 12-5 includes preconstruction surveys and creation of no-disturbance buffer zones around active nests to avoid impacts to nesting Swainson's hawks, their eggs, and nests. To provide mitigation for loss of nesting habitat, Mitigation Measure 12-5 will be modified in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR as follows**:**

Mitigation Measure 12-5: If project activities cannot be avoided during the breeding-bird season (generally March 1 through August 31), District No. 20 shall conduct focused pre-construction breeding-bird surveys to include Swainson's hawk, white-tailed kite, loggerhead shrike, Le Conte's thrasher, and California horned lark, as well as other species protected under the MBTA, in all areas that may provide suitable nesting habitat. For activities that occur outside the breeding-bird season (generally September 1 through February 28), such surveys would not be required.

No more than two weeks before construction, a survey for burrows and burrowing owls would be conducted by a qualified ornithologist. Surveys would be based on the protocol described by the California Burrowing Owl Consortium (1993), which includes up to four surveys on different dates if there are suitable burrows present. Surveys would include areas within 250 feet of the construction area that provide potential burrowing owl nesting habitat (access permitting). Simultaneous with the owl surveys, an assessment of the construction area would also be conducted to determine the nesting status of Swainson's hawk, white-tailed kite, loggerhead shrike, Le Contes' thrasher, and California horned lark, as well as other species protected under the MBTA. The survey protocol timing and methodology may include aspects of recent burrowing owl survey protocol research (i.e., Conway, 2003).

If any of the above species are identified, occupied nests or burrows would not be disturbed during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31 for owls and other raptors; March 1 through August 31 for other species), including a minimum 250-foot buffer zone around any occupied burrow or passerine nest, 150 feet for other non-special status passerine birds, and up to 500 feet for raptors. The size of individual buffers may be modified through coordination with DFG based on site-specific conditions and existing disturbance levels. During the

non-nesting season, District No. 20 would encourage owls to relocate from the construction disturbance area to off-site habitat areas and undisturbed areas of the project site through the use of one-way doors on burrows. Consistent with California Burrowing Owl Consortium Guidelines, if ground squirrel burrows, stand pipes, and other structures that have been documented during preconstruction surveys as supporting either a nesting burrowing owl pair or resident owl are removed to accommodate the proposed project, these structures will be relocated or replaced on or adjacent to the project site. Relocated and replacement structures and burrows will be sited within suitable foraging habitat within 1/2 mile of the project area. In addition, removed trees that have been documented during preconstruction surveys as supporting occupied Swainson's hawk nests will be replaced with suitable native nest tree species (i.e., cottonwoods, etc.) within 1/2 mile of the project area and adjacent to suitable foraging habitat. No relocation or habitat replacement measures are required for loggerhead shrike, Le Conte's thrasher, or California horned lark during the non-breeding season.

Comment No. 6-12

This comment recommends that compensatory habitat be provided for the loss of burrowing owl habitat. Consistent with California Burrowing Owl Consortium Guidelines, Mitigation Measure 12-5 will be modified in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR (see modifications in response to Comment No. 6-11) to provide replacement burrows and/or structures documented during preconstruction surveys as supporting a nesting burrowing owl pair or resident owl.

Comment No. 6-13

The comment suggests that the mitigation ratio for Joshua tree habitat should be 2:1 due to the cumulative decline of Joshua tree woodland in the region. Mitigation Measure 12-18 requires that District No. 20 mitigate for the direct impact of Joshua tree woodland removal at a 1:1 ratio. This compensation is appropriate to compensate for the direct impact. Although the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes that Joshua tree woodland is a unique habitat, Joshua trees themselves are not listed in the state or federal Endangered Species Acts. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that implementation of the proposed project would result in cumulative impacts to biological resources. However, CEQA recognizes that mitigation for a cumulative impact may not be feasible on a project-by-project basis (CEQA Guidelines Section 15130c). It is not within the mandate of District No. 20 to mitigate direct impacts of other developments. Regional resource managers such as DFG and the Bureau of Land Management have the responsibility for ensuring regional viability of natural resources. The West Mojave Plan does not identify any conservation areas specifically for the preservation of Joshua tree woodland.

The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides substantial mitigation for impacts to Joshua tree woodland that is consistent with local and regional resource management plans. Mitigation Measure 12-16 requires District No. 20 to comply with the City of Palmdale's Joshua tree protection ordinance. Elements of the HCMP required to mitigate the direct impact will include, but not be limited to, the identification of responsible parties and financial assurances for management of compensatory lands in perpetuity and all other project compensation and monitoring activities; identification of biological goals and management objectives; clearly defined success criteria; a comprehensive list of management tasks and implementation schedule; and contingency measures.

Comment No. 6-14

The comment states that any payment for compensatory mitigation for Joshua tree woodlands be justified by providing information on what is being proposed and that any mitigation banking agreement be approved by DFG. As discussed in Mitigation Measure 12-18, the location and conservation management of the compensatory lands shall be discussed with DFG and USFWS. District No. 20 will develop and implement an HCMP for the compensatory lands, including financial assurances for management of compensatory lands in perpetuity, and transmit the plan to DFG and USFWS.

Comment No. 6-15

This comment states that the 1978 EIS for the PIA references 3,800 acres at the eastern end of the proposed airport site, within Agricultural Reuse Study Area No. 6, that would be preserved to provide feasible and suitable mitigation for wildlife. The EIS further states that the LADOA (now known as LAWA) would develop a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) to protect and enhance these areas. In the 1970s, the City of Los Angeles purchased approximately 17,700 acres east of USAF Plant 42, including the land surrounding the PWRP and oxidation ponds, with the intention of constructing and operating the PIA. A 1978 EIS and a 1982 EIS were prepared for a proposed Airport Layout Plan for the PIA. However, the airport was never built; and, no development restrictions or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property.

In January 2005, LAWA released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD. The Master Plan has determined that the level of expansion required to accommodate the future demand levels (1.14 MMAP in 2030) can be met by existing USAF Plant 42 runways; any plans for development of an international airport as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the PIA are merely conceptual in nature and depend on theoretical future demand levels. Based upon these facts, the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identified Agricultural Study Area No. 6 as a potential location for agricultural reuse operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

Comment No. 6-16

This comment states that DFG recommends an additional project alternative that would create wetlands in conjunction with groundwater recharge using treated wastewater. A wetland alternative was evaluated in Chapter 6 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on page 6-21. The alternative was considered infeasible because (1) there could be a gradual build up of salts in the wetlands that would jeopardize the viability of the habitat and (2) the created wetlands would become dependent upon the effluent discharged to them. The recycled water would then be considered dedicated to the wetlands due to their dependency on this water stream and could not be diverted to emerging recycled water reuse opportunities. A planned groundwater recharge alternative was also analyzed in the alternatives analysis (pages 6-14 through 6-19), but this effluent management alternative was removed from further consideration because it could not provide management of the recycled water produced by the PWRP in the time frame necessary. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
DETACHMENT 1, AERONAUTICAL SYSTEMS CENTER (AFMC)
PRODUCTION FLIGHT TEST INSTALLATION, AF PLANT 42
2503 EAST AVE P, PALMDALE CA 93550-2196

MEMORANDUM FOR SANITATION DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ATTN: STEVEN W. HIGHTER
SUPERVISING ENGINEER, PLANNING SECTION
1955 WORKMAN MILL ROAD
WHITTIER CA 90601

FROM: ASC DET 1/CE (AFMC)
2503 EAST AVENUE P
PALMDALE CA 93550

SUBJECT: Comments to Draft EIR for Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan

1. We have reviewed the subject EIR and offer the following comments;

a. Page ES-9, Table ES-3. Under the column "Cost Effectiveness", shouldn't Alternative 2 be a plus (+) according to the paragraph titled "Cost Effectiveness"? 7-1

b. Figure 4-2. The map shows the property to be off Palmdale Boulevard, this should be Avenue P-8. 7-2

c. Page 9-10, Impact 9-3. There is insufficient discussion on the mitigation of potential bird strikes. There is also no mention of the impact on the airfield operations at Air Force Plant 42. 7-3

d. Page 14-10, Mitigation Measure 14.5. How can runoff be prevented and yet allow 100 year flood water to pass through? 7-4

e. Page 14-11, It appears Impact 14-5 and Mitigation Measure 14-6 conflict with one another. 7-5

f. Page 14-11, Mitigation Measure 14-8. How will this be done and yet prevent unauthorized runoff? 7-6

2. First and foremost, "Safety of Flight" is one of our most important priorities. As such bird air strike hazards pose a potential risk to both the pilot and the aircraft. By introducing the establishment of a new water treatment facility the potential for bird air strikes increases. We recommend during your deliberate planning activities you consider locations for evaporation ponds and/or agriculture farming areas that are situated south of our Runway 25 approach path because that air corridor handles about 85% of the aircraft coming into AFP 42 airspace. In other words, we believe your range of alternatives should focus on solutions that locate these facilities south of Ave N and the subsequent documents are a bit more robust in addressing bird air strike hazards and how to mitigate that risk for AFP 42, LAWA, and Edwards Air Force Base. Plan should address what design enhancement could be included to deter birds from settling in around any evaporation bonds and what physical deterrents could be introduced in and around agricultural area to mitigate bird populations from remaining in the area. 7-7

3. The document also discusses several Effluent Management Alternatives; however, it tends to focus on the establishment of a Chemically Activated Sludge (CAS) treatment facility with the assumption that some 5100 acres of agricultural land will be irrigated with reclaimed/recycled water. To put that in perspective you're taking about 8 square miles of agriculture land which is almost the size of AFP 42.

4. We recommend the District further examine how to potentially incorporate some form of recharge/discharge alternatives in combination with the treatment facility, evaporation ponds, and agricultural land use. By incorporating recharge/discharge alternatives you would help reduce the amount of agricultural land use required, reduce the size of evaporation ponds which in turn would help reduce the bird air strike risks. All of this; however, must be looked from the perspective that any recharge/discharge alternatives should not adversely impact downstream stakeholders. 7-8

5. In conclusion, we support the District's objectives of building capacity to handle future growth through the year 2025 and to find ways that accommodate recycled water re-use opportunities through the use of tertiary treatment. However we also feel more information must be provided that will ensure the safety of our flight operations from potential bird strikes. 7-9

6. Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions at (661)272-6720.

ROMEO S. ARENGO
Chief Engineer

COMMENT LETTER 7: UNITED STATES AIR FORCE PLANT NO. 42

Comment No. 7-1

The comment questions whether in Table ES-3 (on pg. ES-9), under the column "Cost-Effectiveness," Alternative 2 should be a "+," according to the paragraph titled "Cost-Effectiveness." The costs for Alternative 2 were noted as similar or only slightly less than Alternative 1, and therefore a "0" was the appropriate score. The control system for Alternative 2 is more complex and expensive than that required for Alternative 1, a fact that was not mentioned but has been added to the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on page 6-26.

Comment No. 7-2

The comment states that, in Figure 4-2, the map shows the property to be off Palmdale Boulevard, but this should be off Avenue P-8. Figure 4-2 has been modified to reflect this comment.

Comment No. 7-3

The comment states that there is insufficient discussion of the potential for bird air strike hazards and that there is no mention of the impact on airfield operations at USAF Plant 42. Page 9-5 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describes the current and proposed future PMD operations. Impact 9-3 on page 9-10 discusses the compatibility of the recommend project with those operations, and concludes that there is a less than significant impact. To provide further detail concerning how a conclusion of "less than significant" impact was reached, Chapter 25 of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a section entitled Airport Compatibility. That section includes a discussion on potential bird air strike hazards based on the FAA's most current Advisory Circular (AC No. 150/5200-33A), which provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports.

Regarding any impacts on airfield operations at USAF Plant 42, it should first be noted that not every existing land use practice, such as the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities, on or near an airport that potentially attracts hazardous wildlife, actually does. The FAA has outlined procedures by which an actual hazard can be identified. An investigation is first triggered by the occurrence of specific triggering events on or near an airport. If the triggering events meet the criteria as outlined in Part 139 of 14 CFR, a WHA is required. The FAA then determines whether a formal WHMP is needed. If the FAA determines that a WHMP is needed, the airport operator must formulate and implement a WHMP, using the WHA as a basis for the plan.

Land use practices having the potential to attract birds within five miles of the existing USAF Plant 42/PMD include agriculture, undeveloped open space, and the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events, as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing treatment and effluent management facilities, or that a WHA has been prepared by USAF Plant 42 or PMD. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project recommends upgrading and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project also has a less than significant impact on airfield operations at USAF Plant 42. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

Comment No. 7-4

The comment questions how it is possible to prevent runoff yet allow a 100-year flood event to pass through the project site (Mitigation Measure 14-5). Mitigation Measure 14-5 requires District No. 20 to construct berms to prevent unauthorized runoff from the agricultural sites. However, during flood periods, when no effluent is applied to the fields, the berms would be designed to avoid preventing flood waters from inundating the fields. In response to this comment, Mitigation Measure 14-5 has been modified as follows:

Mitigation Measure 14-5: District No. 20 shall construct a combination of earthen berms, modify existing site grades, and/or construct catch or pump basins at points around the proposed agricultural areas to prevent unauthorized runoff. The improvements would be designed to allow peak flood waters to inundate fields without modifying the floodplain by providing flood access culverts or other design features. The location and description of the improvements will be provided in the FMP.

Comment No. 7-5

The comment states that Impact 14-5 and Mitigation Measure 14-6 appear to conflict with each other. Impact 14-5 states that improperly abandoned wells could act as conduits for effluent to reach the groundwater. Mitigation Measure 14-6 ensures that wells in the proximity of the proposed project operations are identified and properly abandoned. The statements do not conflict with one another.

Comment No. 7-6

The comment questions how Mitigation Measure 14-8 could be accomplished while preventing unauthorized runoff. Mitigation Measure 14-8 applies to the design of reservoirs. Flood waters would be directed around the reservoirs and would not inundate the reservoirs themselves. The mitigation measure requires that the culverts directing flood waters around the reservoirs be designed to prevent scouring and road inundation downstream. As noted on page 14-11 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, District No. 20 would be required to prepare a Letter of Map Revision for submittal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to reflect the construction of storage reservoirs that modify the existing 100-year floodplain.

Comment No. 7-7

The comment states that the water treatment facility has the potential to increase bird air strike hazards. The comment recommends that the location of evaporation ponds and/or agricultural farming areas should be south of Runway 25 and that additional design enhancements be included to deter birds from "settling in" in areas near Runway 25. Not every existing or proposed land use practice, such as the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities, on or near an airport that potentially attracts hazardous wildlife, actually does. The FAA's Advisory Circular (AC No. 150/5200-33A) provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports and outlines procedures by which an actual hazard can be identified and mitigated. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events, as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing treatment and effluent management facilities, or that a WHA has been prepared by USAF Plant 42 or PMD. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. Nonetheless, the proposed project has been modified to site all effluent management facilities and agricultural operations outside the flight corridor between Avenues M and N, which has been identified by USAF Plant 42 as an area of concern. The proposed project recommends upgrading and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025

Plan and EIR concludes that the proposed project also has a less than significant impact on airfield operations at USAF Plant 42. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility.

Comment No. 7-8

The comment suggests that groundwater recharge/surface discharge projects should be considered. As discussed in Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, both of these alternatives were considered. The alternatives were deemed infeasible due to their inability to meet the project objective of providing reliable effluent management within the timeframe needed to comply with the RWQCB-LR discharge permit. However, as noted in Chapter 7 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, District No. 20 will implement the proposed project in stages, so that any alternative effluent management options that may become available, such as recharge/discharge, may be integrated into the project. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 7-9

The comment states that the Air Force supports District No. 20's objectives of building capacity to handle future growth and water use opportunities through tertiary treatment, but feels that more information concerning potential bird air strike hazards resulting from the proposed project is required in the subsequent Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The comment supporting the upgrade and expansion of the PWRP is noted. Chapter 25 of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a section entitled Airport Compatibility. This section includes a discussion on potential bird air strike hazards based on the FAA's most current Advisory Circular (AC No. 150/5200-33A), which provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON®
An EDISON INTERNATIONAL® Company

Alis Clausen
(661) 726-5608
FAX (661) 726-5615

June 2, 2005

Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan – public hearing June 2, 2005

Dear sir;

Southern California Edison will be seeking additional information about the PWRP 2025 Plan which could involve SCE substation, transmission and distribution facilities at Avenue O and 90th Street East. We will be providing written comments prior to June 17, 2005. **8-1**

Sincerely,

Alis Clausen
Southern California Edison

N 06 2005 PM01:32 DOC # 501494 HIGHTER S SWJ

42060 10th Street West
Lancaster, CA 93534

COMMENT LETTER 8: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY

Comment No. 8-1

The comment states that Southern California Edison owns and operates substation, transmission, and distribution facilities within the project site. District No. 20 will work with SCE to avoid impacts to this substation or to relocate its facilities if necessary.

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Lahontan Region

Alan C. Lloyd Ph.D.
Agency Secretary

Victorville Office
14440 Civic Drive, Suite 200, Victorville, California 92392-2306
(760) 241-6583 • Fax (760) 241-7308
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

JUN 15 2005

Clear 6/16/05 Lahue

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JUN 17 2005
STATE CLEARING HOUSE

WDID No. 6B190107069

James F. Stahl, General Manager
County of Los Angeles Sanitation Districts
P.O. Box 4998
Whittier, CA 90607-4998

DRAFT PALMDALE WATER RECLAMATION PLANT 2025 FACILITIES PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, PALMDALE, LOS ANGELES COUNTY (STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2004091123)

California Regional Water Quality Control Board staff (Board staff) reviewed the draft Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan (2025 Plan) and associated draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) received May 2, 2005. The State Clearinghouse review period for this report closes June 16, 2005. The EIR does not adequately evaluate the environmental impact on groundwater from wastewater disposed by agricultural re-use.

The 2025 Plan is the approach that the Los Angeles County Sanitation District intends to implement to eliminate land spreading of effluent above crop agronomic rates at the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant. Board staff's general comments on the 2025 Plan and EIR are provided below. Specific comments on both are contained in the Enclosure.

2025 Plan Summary

The treatment and disposal capacity of the current facility will be increased in two phases. By October 2009 (Stage V) the existing unlined secondary oxidation/percolation ponds will be decommissioned and converted to a conventional activated sludge facility with nitrification/denitrification and tertiary treatment capability. The agricultural re-use capacity will be expanded to 15 million gallons per day (mgd) by adding 840 acres of land for agricultural re-use and constructing 420 surface-area acres of new storage reservoirs constructed with a synthetic liner to retain winter flows. By October 2013 (Stage VI) the treatment and disposal capacity will be increased to 22.4 million gallons per day by adding conventional activated sludge components (as necessary) to accommodate increased flow, adding two storage reservoirs, and acquiring land for agricultural uses. The project would allow for future municipal re-use projects at a later date.

Environmental Impact Report Summary

The report identified three Significant and Unavoidable Impacts: a) air emissions during construction, b) loss and destruction of natural habitat and biological resources and c) secondary effects of population growth. The District determined that all other impacts were Less Than Significant after mitigation measures are employed.

Board Staff's General Comments

The following issues should be addressed before the 2025 Plan is finalized and the EIR is certified. Resolution of these issues is necessary to allow the Regional Board to determine that the California Environmental Quality Act is satisfied when considering waste discharge requirements for the new facility. In addition to the following main issues, enclosed are specific comments on the 2025 Plan and EIR that should also be addressed.

1. *Groundwater Salinity Increases from Agricultural Irrigation* – The EIR predicts that salinity will increase in groundwater beneath the proposed new agricultural use areas from the flushing of salts below the root zone to maintain the soil chemistry balance. However, it did not evaluate the extent and magnitude of this impact on the groundwater. The District has proposed a project that may cause total dissolved solids to increase in groundwater beneath the proposed agricultural re-use areas. The EIR (page 14-8) falsely states that use of effluent for irrigation would not be dissimilar to using groundwater for irrigation in terms of the amounts of salts applied. Consider that natural groundwater in the area generally contains total dissolved solids concentrations around 165 mg/L and the Districts effluent quality averages over three times this amount (520 mg/L in 2004). Unless a quantitative assessment demonstrates otherwise, groundwater salinity increases over time could rise to the level of a "significant effect on the environment"(§ 15065, CEQA Guidelines) and require analysis in the EIR because the "projects incremental effect [of increasing salinity] is cumulatively considerable" (§ 15130, CEQA Guidelines) when considered along with all other projects contributing to salinity increases in the Antelope Valley. If the District finds that the project will result in a significant impact to groundwater quality, it must propose satisfactory mitigation measures or conclude that groundwater salinity increases are a Significant Unavoidable Impact. If the District determines this is a Significant Unavoidable Impact then a finding of overriding consideration needs to be made with appropriate justifications. 9-1

   Mitigation measure No. 15-3 is inadequate because it requires periodic flushing of salts from the root zone into the vadose zone which will further increase groundwater salinity and is in conflict with mitigation measure No. 14-3, which requires crop irrigation at agronomic rates. Thus, the impact is not mitigated; it is simply delayed until enough salt flushing cycles eventually move the salt to groundwater. 9-2

2. *Proposed Effluent Quality* - The proposed new treatment plant design will provide for nitrification/denitrification to reduce total nitrogen concentrations in the effluent. By reducing effluent nitrogen levels and eliminating the practice of land spreading, the District intends to prevent the new facility from further exacerbating the existing groundwater pollution. 8-3

Mr. Stahl - 3 -

However, the 2025 Plan and EIR do not indicate the expected effluent quality for total nitrogen and other parameters. Staff questions how the District can make any determination of the impact to groundwater without knowledge of the effluent concentration that will ultimately be stored in ponds or applied to crops as irrigation. This information should be clearly stated in the 2025 Plan and the EIR must evaluate water quality effects associated with waste disposal and recycled water operations from the new facility. Appropriate mitigation measures must be identified if discharges from the treatment plant to either storage reservoirs or crop irrigation applications will have a significant impact on groundwater. 9-3 (cont.)

3. *Decommissioning of the Oxidation/Percolation Ponds* – The proposed project would remove from service the existing oxidation/percolation ponds after new lined storage reservoirs are constructed. The 2025 Plan does not describe how these ponds will be decommissioned, nor does the EIR evaluate the continued effect of residual drainage from these ponds on groundwater and the environment. Computer groundwater modeling conducted by the District indicates that residual drainage of nitrogen-rich water from the vadose zone to groundwater beneath the ponds will be a continuing nitrate source causing groundwater to persist at concentrations approaching the drinking water standard of 10 mg/L. The District must assess the environmental impact of leaving nitrogen-rich pore-water below the ponds to percolate to groundwater throughout the life of the project. The District must evaluate the mitigation measures necessary to prevent mobilization of nitrogen in the subsurface to groundwater from seasonal precipitation or gravity drainage. 9-4

If you should have any further questions, please contact Bob Dodds, Assistant Executive Officer in South Lake Tahoe at (530) 542-5410 or Mike Plaziak, Senior Engineering Geologist in Victorville at (760) 241-6583.

Sincerely,

for HAROLD J. SINGER
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Enclosure: Specific Comments on the 2025 Plan and Environmental Impact Report

cc: Palmdale Mailing List

JC/rc/lacasd#20 (Palmdale)/draft 2025 Plan EIR (V5)

California Environmental Protection Agency

Recycled Paper

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ENCLOSURE – REGIONAL BOARD STAFF SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Specific Comments on the 2025 Plan

1. Page 3-1 – The 2025 Plan indicates that although the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant does not discharge to waters of the United States, some alternatives may impact waters of the United States. Board staff understands that Lake Palmdale is the only water body in the Antelope Valley under federal jurisdiction and that no part of the proposed project will affect Lake Palmdale. Please clarify that the project, as proposed, would not impact a water of the United States. 9-5

2. Page 3-15 – The 2025 Plan references statewide general waste discharge requirements in Order No. 2000-10-DWQ for the land application of biosolids. Please note that the Order was rescinded and replaced by Order No. WQO 2004-0012-DWQ and the new order has the same requirements as the old one. It can be found at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resdec/wqorders/wqo04.html. 9-6

3. Page 4-4 – This comment expands on the issue raised in item No. 3 of the letter. The 2025 Plan indicates that percolation losses from the existing secondary oxidation ponds are considered negligible due to the low permeability of the pond bottoms. This is an inaccurate statement. The ponds are unlined and are reportedly constructed with a native soil bottom. The native soils are well, or excessively, drained loamy sands formed in alluvium. The District has no direct measurement of percolation losses from the existing ponds but has estimated these losses at less than 5%[1] of the effluent flow. In 2004, effluent flow averaged 8.3 million gallons per day. Therefore, there are potential percolation losses of 464 acre-feet per year, which represents a potentially significant impact to underlying groundwater. In addition, the District has provided to the Regional Board a separate computer groundwater model showing these ponds to be a continuing nitrogen source to groundwater after they are decommissioned. Please evaluate the impact of continued drainage from these ponds to groundwater following their decommissioning and what mitigation measures, if any, should be identified to reduce this source. 9-7

4. Pages 5-9 & 5-10 – The discussion of "Wastewater Characteristics" and "Wastewater Flow Projections" sections in the 2025 Plan must include an analysis of the lower than expected flow increases and associated increases in influent nitrogen concentrations on the effluent quality. When influent nitrogen concentrations increase, higher treatment costs are necessary to nitrify/denitrify and achieve the same effluent total nitrogen level. The District has provided separate information to the Regional Board postulating that water conservation devices are believed to be the primary cause of this effect. Please indicate how the District's observations have been considered in the 2025 Plan. 9-8

5. Page 5-14 – The 2025 Plan must state whether new sludge-drying beds will be lined and have a leachate collection and recovery system. The 2025 Plan must identify minimum design and 9-9

[1] Districts letter to the Regional Board dated September 23, 2004

Regional Board Staff Comments - 2 –
Palmdale WRP 2025 Plan & EIR

construction standards for the sludge drying bed liners. The EIR should include an analysis of the potential for leakage from sludge-drying beds to impact groundwater. 9-9 (cont.)

6. Page 6-19 - The 2025 Plan states that the US Army Corps of Engineers would require the Regional Board to adopt waste discharge requirements for recycled water projects to protect beneficial uses. Please clarify that it is not the US Army Corps of Engineers, but rather the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act that requires the Regional Board to regulate activities that could affect the beneficial uses of waters of the state. 9-10

7. Page 6-21 – The 2025 Plan references Regional Board comments made on a draft Environmental Impact Report prepared for sub regional wastewater treatment plants in the Mojave River Valley. The 2025 Plan takes these comments out of context. Increases in groundwater nitrate levels from background concentrations to the drinking water standard should be evaluated in the environmental document. That is the purpose of an Environmental Impact Report. The necessity for this evaluation should not be taken as an obstacle that precludes incidental recharge projects. It does indicate however, that incidental recharge projects may require a higher level of treatment to reduce total nitrogen in the effluent to prevent groundwater pollution and minimize degradation. 9-11

8. Page 6-27, 7-5 & 14-7 – The 2025 Plan indicates that new storage reservoirs will be lined with a synthetic liner with low permeability. There is wide variability in synthetic liner types and construction methods. An improper liner installation could allow for significant leakage. Board staff recommends a composite liner, consisting of an upper component, normally a flexible membrane liner of high-density polyethylene and a lower component either of compacted clay or geosynthetic clay. A properly functioning liner system will have a well-prepared, compacted sub-base and effective monitoring system. Estimated liner leakage rates should be identified. Please identify what minimum design and construction standards will be used for the liner system in new storage reservoirs and sludge drying beds. 9-12

Specific Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Report)

9. Page 8-3 – In the list of required agency approvals, please clarify that the Regional Board may also have to issue a permit for dredge/fill operations and/or require a storm water pollution prevention plan to control storm water during construction activities. 9-13

10. Page 12-12 & 12-18 – The Report indicates that a comprehensive wetlands delineation will be performed if clearing or land alteration is required. Please note that the simple act of obtaining a permit is not a mitigation. The Report indicates that Regional Board Water Quality Certification or Department of Fish and Games Streambed Alteration Agreements will be obtained if waters of the state will be affected. Please identify which waters may be impacted and what types of mitigation will be used. 9-14

11. Page 14-3 - The District has reported in separate documents to the Regional Board that the sodium hypochlorite disinfection system may increase the total dissolved solids in the effluent to about 575 mg/L. Therefore, effluent discharged from the treatment plant will exceed the Basin Plan's water quality objective by about 15%. The Report must identify 9-15

Regional Board Staff Comments - 3 –
Palmdale WRP 2025 Plan & EIR

background water quality in the agricultural reuse areas and the cumulative, long-term impacts to the receiving water under the agricultural reuse areas that will result from the proposed project. The Report must identify mitigation measures to reduce the level of impact or conclude there are significant unavoidable impacts. 9-15 (cont.)

12. Page 14-7 & 15-10 – This comment expands on the issue raised in item No. 1 of the letter. The Report identifies two impacts and a single mitigation measure for each impact that inadequately addresses groundwater salinity increases. The Report states that effluent water infiltrating from agricultural operations could degrade groundwater. The identified Mitigation Measure 14-3 is that effluent will be applied at agronomic rates in accordance with an, as yet to be prepared, Farm Management Plan to minimize infiltration. The Report also states that using effluent for irrigation could increase soil salinity over the long-term. The identified Mitigation Measure 15-3 is to conduct periodic soil flushing of salts into the vadose zone as necessary to maintain soil chemistry. The net result of implementing these two measures is long-term groundwater degradation that is not identified in the report. The Report must provide a complete quantitative evaluation of the groundwater quality impacts associated with using treated effluent for irrigation. The Report must include a cumulative impact assessment of flushing salts in the vadose zone to groundwater and identify appropriate mitigation measures. Otherwise the Regional Board will be unable to rely on this environmental document to base future permit actions. 9-16

13. Page 14-8 – The Report states that the total dissolved solids concentration in the effluent averaged 503 mg/L in 2003 and is below the secondary drinking water standard of 1,000 mg/L. This is incorrect. The secondary drinking water standard for total dissolved solids is a three-part standard; 500 mg/L – Recommended, 1,000 mg/L – Upper and 1,500 mg/L – Short-Term. Board staff considers the Recommended limit (500 mg/L) the applicable water quality objective necessary to comply with the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region because the natural groundwater quality is of better quality than the lowest numerical objective.. Please use the correct standard in the Report. 9-17

14. Page 14-8 - Background total dissolved solids in the vicinity of the current treatment plant are only about 165 mg/L and the 2004 average total dissolved solids concentration in the effluent was 520 mg/L. The Report should reflect the most recent current average total dissolved solids concentration in the effluent. 9-18

15. Page 14-8 - The Report states that using effluent for irrigation is not dissimilar to using groundwater in terms of the amount of salt applied. This is blatantly incorrect. As discussed above, the natural groundwater has total dissolved solids content of about 165 mg/L, over three times less than the 575 mg/L in the recycled effluent. There may be an environmental benefit of replacing an existing groundwater source of irrigation water with recycled water. However, the District instead is proposing new consumptive water uses for crop irrigation. The Report should quantify the groundwater degradation that will result from agricultural irrigation using treated recycled water at both Agricultural Study Area No. 6 (Recommended Site) and No. 5 (Alternative Site) 9-19

16. Page 15-8 – The Report indicates that a storm water pollution prevention plan will be prepared for coverage under the statewide general construction storm water National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. This permit regulates discharges to surface waters of the United States. The 2025 Plan previously identified that there were no waters of the United States in the project area. While implementing best management practices may be appropriate, regulatory coverage would not be under the permit stated. 9-20

17. Page 23-6 – The Report states there are four significant and unavoidable impacts. Only three are listed: a) air emissions during construction, b) loss and destruction of natural habitat and biological resources and c) secondary effects of inducted growth. Please clarify. 9-21

18. Verbally, the District stated it's intent to use effluent from the existing wastewater treatment plant for construction dust control and soil compaction purposes when Stage V and VI facilities are constructed. The 2025 Plan does not state this intent nor indicate that the effluent should meet CA Department of Health Services criteria for this use. Currently, the District is seeking Regional Board approval for this recycled water use in developing Sections 14 and 16. Board staff recommends that the 2025 Plan and Report identify this intended use and evaluate whether the recycled water from the existing treatment plant will meet Department of Health Services criteria. This will preclude the need to address this issue in a Supplemental or Subsequent environmental evaluation. 9-22

COMMENT LETTER 9: CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD, LAHONTAN REGION

Comment No. 9-1

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR predicts that salinity would increase in groundwater beneath the proposed agricultural fields due to the flushing of salts below the root zone, but does not quantitatively evaluate the extent, magnitude, and cumulative effect of this impact on groundwater. TDS concentration levels in the recycled water (approximately 600 mg/L), are not expected to increase as a result of the proposed project. This estimate includes the increase in TDS levels resulting from the recent addition of disinfection facilities. TDS levels in the groundwater found in local supply and monitoring wells in the vicinity of the existing EMS range from 113 mg/l to 717 mg/L (see Appendix F: PWRP Annual Monitoring Report for 2004). District No. 20 assumes similar TDS concentrations in the groundwater for the proposed agricultural reuse sites.

Although the WDRs for the PWRP do not contain a limit for TDS, they do contain a narrative requirement that the discharge shall not cause a violation of any applicable water quality standards for receiving water (groundwater). Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations contains drinking water limits for several constituents, including TDS. The projected effluent TDS is well below the recommended secondary upper level drinking water standard of 1000 mg/L, and is within the range of TDS levels found in the groundwater beneath the existing EMS (113 mg/L to the 717 mg/L). Groundwater modeling results for the proposed agricultural reuse areas indicate that TDS in the groundwater increases to less than 200 mg/L by 2025. It should be noted that the modeling results are based on a simplistic soil profile since soil boring data for the proposed agricultural reuse areas was not available. Due to the lack of water quality data, actual groundwater TDS values at the proposed sites are relatively unknown. The model assumed a TDS level of 175 mg/L in the existing groundwater at the proposed sites. The groundwater model otherwise is based on the same assumptions used in the groundwater model utilized preparing the CRP for the existing EMS.

Mitigation Measure 14-3 requires District No. 20 to implement a FMP outlining procedures for ensuring that recycled water is applied at agronomic rates to minimize the potential for infiltration. Mitigation Measure 15-3 requires the FMP to include BMPs for salinity management to reduce the potential for TDS accumulation in the crop root zone or transport to the groundwater. This will involve carefully controlled irrigation rates to carry TDS out of the root zone but not to the groundwater table (leaching). This method of irrigation will be effective in minimizing impacts to groundwater quality and reducing the impact of TDS to a less-than-significant level.

Comment No. 9-2

The comment states that Mitigation Measure 15-3 is inadequate because the recommended periodic flushing of salts from the root zone into the vadose zone would increase groundwater salinity and would conflict with Mitigation Measure 14-3, which requires crop irrigation at agronomic rates. District No. 20 does not concur with this statement because leaching salts from the root zone is a common practice and is necessary when irrigating crops in arid environments. It is an appropriate agronomic practice and plays a critical role in maintaining crop production on many irrigated lands where rainfall is inadequate to naturally leach salts below the root zone. The leaching fraction is accounted for in the agronomic rate calculation, therefore District No. 20 believes the comment that Mitigation Measure 15-3 is in conflict with Mitigation Measure 14-3 (requires crop irrigation at agronomic rates) is incorrect. Refer to the response to Comment No. 9-1 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-3

The comment questions how District No. 20 can make a determination of the impact to groundwater without knowing the effluent nitrogen concentrations that would be stored in ponds or applied to crops and requests that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluate water quality effects associated with wastewater disposal and recycled water operations from the new facility. Groundwater modeling results for the proposed agricultural reuse areas indicate that nitrogen concentrations increase slowly in the underlying groundwater because of natural uptake of nitrogen by plants and decay within the vadose zone. The initial nitrogen concentration of the underlying groundwater was assumed to be 1.5 mg/L and the effluent nitrogen was assumed to be 10mg/L. The simulation results indicate that nitrogen in underlying groundwater will not increase through 2025.

The proposed storage reservoirs would be lined to reduce the potential for infiltration as required in Mitigation Measure 14-2. The proposed project specifies that the floors and sidewalls of the storage reservoirs will be constructed by excavating and re-compacting native soils and that a synthetic liner with low permeability be installed to minimize infiltration. This design will need to be approved by the RWQCB-LR and supported by a water quality impact analysis. In addition, the proposed project would store water of a higher quality (i.e., tertiary effluent with enhanced nitrogen removal) than is currently produced by the PWRP. Prior to constructing the reservoirs, District No. 20 will submit an application for new WDRs from the RWQCB-LR for the new treatment and effluent management facilities. This revised WDR application will be required to demonstrate that the design for the proposed storage reservoirs will adequately protect groundwater quality, while considering beneficial uses of the local groundwater and the overall costs. As part of the proposed project, a groundwater monitoring system would be established around the agricultural areas to evaluate water quality effects of the project. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that nitrogen would be effectively managed to ensure protection of groundwater quality since nitrogen removal capabilities are included as part of the proposed treatment process and effluent management alternatives and District No. 20 would comply with water quality standard thresholds in their discharge permit. Refer to the response to Comment No. 11-15 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-4

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not describe how the ponds will be decommissioned or how the residual drainage from these ponds would affect groundwater and the environment. The comment requests that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR analyze the environmental impacts associated with leaving "nitrogen-rich pore-water" below the ponds that could potentially percolate to the groundwater and, if necessary, provide mitigation measures. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR was developed to minimize the potential for groundwater degradation. The secondary effluent in these ponds would be emptied through permitted use such as irrigation water for agriculture and through evaporation. As the operator of the oxidation ponds, District No. 20 is responsible for ensuring that residual contamination left in place after decommissioning is appropriately remediated in coordination with regulatory agencies, including the RWQCB-LR. In response to the CAO issued by the RWQCB-LR, a separate project is being implemented that includes remediation of elevated nitrate levels in the groundwater underlying the PWRP and surrounding area. Groundwater modeling indicates that effluent that percolated into the vadose zone beneath the ponds will continue to act as a source of nitrate to groundwater after the ponds are closed. However, the rate of percolation after decommissioning will decrease over time as the vadose zone beneath the ponds drains to field capacity. There is no effective remedial measure to remove percolated effluent from the vadose zone to any significant

depth. This "pore water" has been accounted for in the existing groundwater model for the site. Continued compliance with the CAO will ensure that potential percolation of nitrogen-rich water in the soils below the oxidation ponds after the ponds are taken out of service will be remediated. Refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 11-31 and 11-36 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-5

The comment asks that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR clarify that the project, as proposed, would not impact waters of the United States. As noted on page 3-1 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, most of the alternatives would not impact waters of the United States. However, effluent management alternatives were considered that included discharging to Lake Palmdale or to the Santa Clara River, both of which are considered waters of the United States. The proposed project, described in Chapters 6 and 7 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, will not impact any waters of the United States.

Comment No. 9-6

The comment states that referenced statewide general waste discharge requirements in Order No. 2000-10-DWQ for the land application of biosolids has been rescinded and replaced by Order No. WQO 2004-0012-DWQ, which has the same requirements as the previous order. The Regulations Governing Biosolids Management section of Chapter 3 in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has been revised to reflect this revision.

Comment No. 9-7

The comment refutes the notion that percolation losses from the existing unlined percolation ponds are considered negligible due to low permeability of the pond bottoms and asks that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluate the impact of continued drainage from these ponds into the groundwater. The existing oxidation ponds are permitted under the PWRP's existing WDRs, which are issued by the RWQCB-LR. The proposed project would permanently decommission the oxidation ponds once the CAS system is online in 2009. One project objective of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." District No. 20 is committed to complying with the CAO and future discharge permit requirements. Refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 9-4, 11-31 and 11-36 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-8

The comment states that the discussion of "Wastewater Characteristics" and "Wastewater Flow Projections" sections (pages 5-9 and 5-10) must include an analysis of lower than expected flow increases and the associated increases in influent nitrogen concentrations on effluent water quality. Since 1999, the influent nitrogen concentrations at the Palmdale WRP have risen from approximately 37 mg/l to approximately 44 mg/l, or an average of 1.2 mg/l per year. The reason for this rise has not been determined, but is likely attributed to increased growth along with more stringent local water conservation measures. Stage V of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a 15 mgd capacity CAS facility operated with a nitrification/denitrification (NDN) process. Stage VI expands this CAS with NDN facility to 22.4 mgd so that flows projected for the year 2025 may be accommodated. The recorded increases in influent nitrogen concentration are not significant with respect to the planning and design of CAS with NDN facilities. The proposed treatment facilities will be designed to accommodate influent nitrogen fluctuations, and annual differences of 1.2 mg/l are well within the range of

operational adjustments of the proposed treatment facilities. The design and sizing of NDN facilities will be based on the influent nitrogen loading.

Comment No. 9-9

The comment asks whether the new sludge-drying beds would be lined, and have a leachate collection and recovery system. The sludge drying beds proposed in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would be lined and include a leachate collection and recovery system. However, since release of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, District No. 20 has determined that centrifuges provide the best method for dewatering of digested solids; therefore, construction of new sludge drying beds is not included in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Chapter 7 of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has been revised to reflect this change (see Table 7-1 and Figures 7-2 and 7-3).

Comment No. 9-10

The comment notes that the Corps would not require the RWQCB-LR to adopt WDRs for recycled water to protect beneficial uses; rather, it is the state Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act that requires the RWQCB-LR to regulate activities that could affect beneficial uses. The Final PWRP Plan and EIR has been modified to reflect this change (see page 6-20).

Comment No. 9-11

The comment states that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should assess increases in groundwater nitrate levels over background concentrations and evaluate its significance. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR acknowledges on page 14-9 that potential infiltration of effluent to the groundwater could increase nitrogen concentrations over background levels; however, groundwater modeling results indicate no increase in nitrates in the underlying groundwater throughout the planning period (see the response to Comment No. 9-3). The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes that, as part of the project, a groundwater monitoring system would be established to evaluate water quality effects of the project. The proposed project will include a nitrification/denitrification treatment process to minimize the nitrogen concentration in the effluent. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that nitrogen would be effectively managed to ensure protection of groundwater quality since nitrogen removal capabilities are included as part of the project and District No. 20 would be subject to water quality standard thresholds in their discharge permit. Containment and remediation of the high nitrate levels in the groundwater, in the vicinity of the existing EMS, are being addressed through implementation of the Containment and Remediation Plan approved by the RWQCB-LR in April 2005. For additional information, refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 9-3, 11-4, 11-31 and 11-36.

Comment No. 9-12

The comment states that a composite liner consisting of an upper component (flexible membrane liner of high-density polyethylene) and a lower liner (compacted clay or geosynthetic clay) with a compacted sub-base and effective monitoring system should be used. Additionally, estimated liner leakage rates and minimum design and construction standards should be identified. The RWQCB-LR has not standardized permeability requirements for treated wastewater impoundments, but determines WDRs and liner impoundment requirements on a case-by-case basis. District No. 20 has not determined a final design for the liners. Prior to constructing the reservoirs, District No. 20 will submit an application for new WDRs to the RWQCB-LR for the use of new treatment and effluent management facilities. District No. 20 will be required to show in the revised WDR

application that the proposed design of the storage reservoirs will adequately protect groundwater quality, while considering beneficial uses of the local groundwater and the overall costs.

Comment No. 9-13

The comment states that the RWQCB-LR should be listed in the required approvals to issue a permit for dredge/fill operations and/or an SWPPP during construction activities. The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has been revised to add the RWQCB-LR for approval of dredge/fill operations. However, because the project will not be subject to NPDES storm water permits that would require an SWPPP, the SWPPP approval from the RWQCB-LR was not added to the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

Comment No. 9-14

The comment asks what waters of the state may be affected by the proposed project and what mitigation would be employed. A reconnaissance survey of the project study area was conducted to identify habitat types. The results of the survey are included in Figure 12-1. Waters of the state that were identified include Little Rock Wash and Big Rock Wash. Since the project study area was large, some areas that may be considered waters of the state may not have been identified. Mitigation Measure 12-2 commits District No. 20 to conducting surveys of project areas prior to their disturbance to identify if waters of the state are present. Mitigation Measure 12-3 commits District No. 20 to conducting a wetland delineation to identify habitat value of identified waters of the state. These studies would then provide valuable information to be included in the permit application required under Mitigation Measure 12-4. The various avoidance or compensation measures in the permit will depend on the resources identified in the subsequent studies.

Comment No. 9-15

The comment requests that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR include a discussion on background water quality in the agricultural reuse areas and the cumulative, long-term impacts to the receiving water. It is estimated that with the recent addition of disinfection facilities, TDS levels in the PWRP recycled water will be approximately 600 mg/L. TDS concentration levels in the recycled water are not expected to increase as a result of the proposed project. The WDRs for the PWRP do not contain a limit for TDS; however, they do contain a narrative requirement that the discharge shall not cause a violation of any applicable water quality standards for receiving water (groundwater). Title 22 of the CCRs contains limits for several constituents, including TDS, for drinking water. The recommended secondary TDS drinking water standard is 500 mg/L with 1,000 mg/L as the recommended upper level and 1,500 mg/L as the recommended maximum level. The projected effluent TDS of less than 200 mg/L in the year 2025 is not only well below the recommended secondary drinking water standard of 500 mg/L, it is also within the range of TDS levels found in the groundwater beneath the EMS (113mg/L to 717 mg/L). Due to a lack of water quality data for the proposed agricultural areas, existing TDS levels are assumed to be similar to that of the PWRP EMS. Refer to response to Comment No. 9-1 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-16

The comment states that the two impacts and one mitigation measure (pages 14-7 and 15-10) inadequately address groundwater salinity increases. The comment further states that Mitigation Measures 14-3 (applying effluent at agronomic rates) and 15-3 (periodic soil flushing of salts into the vadose zone) would result in

long-term groundwater degradation, which is not identified in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Mitigation Measure 14-3 requires District No. 20 to implement a FMP outlining procedures for ensuring that recycled water is applied at agronomic rates to minimize the potential for infiltration. Mitigation Measure 15-3 requires the FMP to include BMPs for salinity management to reduce the potential for TDS accumulation in the crop root zone or transport to the groundwater. This will involve carefully controlled irrigation rates to carry TDS out of the root zone but not to the groundwater table (leaching). This method of irrigation will be effective in minimizing impacts to groundwater quality and reducing the impact of TDS to a less-than-significant level. A network of monitoring wells installed both up- and down-gradient of the agricultural reuse site will verify that management practices are effective at maintaining groundwater quality. Refer to the response to Comment No. 9-1 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-17

The comment states that the drinking water standard of 1,000 mg/l used in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is incorrect and that a standard of 500 mg/l should be used instead to comply with the Water Quality Control Plan. As stated in the letter, the recommended secondary TDS drinking water standard is 500 mg/L with 1,000 mg/L as the recommended upper level and 1,500 mg/L as the recommended maximum level. The recommended upper limit of 1,000 mg/L was used in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, and is consistent with the range of TDS levels found in the groundwater beneath the existing EMS (113 mg/L to 717 mg/L). In addition, during the RWQCB-LR meeting in July, 2005, RWQCB-LR staff indicated that the 500 mg/L TDS standard may not be applicable and an appropriate standard for the site will be determined at a later date. Refer to the response to Comment No. 9-15 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-18

The comment states the 2004 average effluent TDS concentration was 520 mg/l, not 503 mg/l, and that the background level in groundwater is 165 mg/l. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR (page 14-8) indicated a groundwater TDS concentration range of 110 to 665 mg/L. Recent data show that TDS levels range from 113 mg/L to 717 mg/L[1]. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR used TDS effluent levels from 2003 monitoring data. The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has been updated to reflect the most current average TDS level of 520 mg/L[1]. Due to a lack of water quality data from the proposed agricultural reuse areas, District No. 20 does not believe it is possible to establish an accurate background level of TDS at this time, although an assumed background level was assumed for groundwater modeling purposes (see the response to Comment No. 9-1).

Regarding TDS levels from the proposed project, it is projected that TDS levels of the effluent will be approximately 600 mg/L. This estimate includes the increase in TDS levels resulting from the recentaddition of disinfection facilities.

Comment No. 9-19

The comment states that it is incorrect to assume that applying effluent is similar to using groundwater. The comment requests that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR quantify the groundwater degradation that will result from agricultural irrigation using wastewater effluent at both Agricultural Study Area Nos. 6 and 5.

[1] Appendix F: PWRP Annual Monitoring Report for 2004

District No. 20 acknowledges that, although TDS levels resulting from the proposed project will be within the recorded range in the area, it is not altogether accurate to state that the use of effluent for irrigation "would not be dissimilar to using groundwater." This statement has been corrected in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. TDS levels in the vicinity of the proposed project areas are assumed to be in the range from 113 mg/L to 717 mg/L, which is the range of TDS found near the existing EMS. It is projected that TDS levels of the effluent resulting from the proposed project will be approximately 600 mg/L. This estimate includes the increase in TDS levels resulting from the addition of disinfection facilities scheduled to be on-line prior to certification of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Refer to responses to Comment Nos. 9-1 and 9-15 for additional information.

Comment No. 9-20

The comment states that the project would not be subject to NPDES storm water permitting requirements including preparation of an SWPPP. The comment correctly notes that an SWPPP pursuant to NPDES requirements would not be necessary. Nonetheless, preparation of an SWPPP and implementation of best management practices have been identified as mitigation measures to minimize storm water quality impacts.

Comment No. 9-21

The comment notes that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR states that four significant and unavoidable impacts were identified though only three are listed. Only three significant unavoidable impacts were identified in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR as listed in the bullet points on page 23-6. The text in the bullet points has been changed to reflect this comment.

Comment No. 9-22

The comment states that if recycled water is to be used for dust control and soil compaction purposes during Stage V and VI construction, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should state this. District No. 20 is considering the use of recycled water for construction activities associated with the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. District No. 20 recognizes that water used for soil compaction and dust control must be wastewater treated to disinfected secondary water at a minimum to comply with Title 22. District No. 20 is committed to meeting the DHS's criteria for using the recycled water for beneficial uses such as construction activities and will secure the appropriate permits and approvals as required.

Department of Water and Power the City of Los Angeles

JAMES K. HAHN
Mayor

Commission
DOMINICK W. RUBALCAVA, *President*
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RONALD F. DEATON, *General Manager*

June 16, 2005

Mr. Steve Highter
Supervising Engineer
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Planning Section
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, California 90607

Dear Mr. Highter:

Subject: Comments on Draft Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan and Environmental Impact Report, Dated April 2005

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has reviewed the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County's (Sanitation District) Draft Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan (Facilities Plan) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Facilities Plan and the EIR.

The City of Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) holds title to approximately 27 square miles, or more than 17,000 acres, of land in the Antelope Valley near Palmdale and Lancaster. Part and parcel of LAWA's land is the right to pump and use groundwater from beneath that land. Five different legal actions are now pending in three different courts for the purpose of determining the rights to pump and use groundwater from the Antelope Valley. LAWA is organized under the laws of the State of California and the City of Los Angeles Charter (Charter). Under Section 672 of the Charter, all water rights of every nature and kind owned or controlled by the City of Los Angeles are under the possession, management and control of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of LADWP. 10-1

We are encouraged to see that the EIR recognizes the potential for groundwater contamination resulting from the direct or incidental infiltration of treated effluent. As an overlying landowner, the City of Los Angeles is greatly concerned over the potential for short- and long-term groundwater degradation that could potentially impair the City's ability to store and extract groundwater for potable use in the future.

LADWP's primary concern with the Facilities Plan and the EIR is to ensure that any proposed mitigation measures are sufficiently protective of the long-term quality and integrity of the groundwater supply. All measures to protect the safety and quality of the groundwater supply should be evaluated for consideration, including the potential use of double liners for the storage reservoirs and retention basins. Furthermore, LADWP recommends that a comprehensive groundwater monitoring and sampling plan be developed and implemented to ensure the 10-2

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proposed mitigation measures are protective of groundwater quality. The monitoring program should include monitoring wells surrounding the proposed storage reservoirs and agricultural fields to verify that nitrates and other contaminants from the effluent water are not leaching into the groundwater. The location of "down-gradient" areas may shift over time with changing basin conditions. Triggers for remedial action should be set well below the level of nitrate that could create a condition that threatens public health. Early detection of groundwater contamination will provide the Sanitation District ample opportunity to quickly implement mitigation measures to correct the condition. 10-2 (cont.)

As documented in Chapter 14 of the EIR, the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin is extensively developed and annual groundwater production is estimated to exceed natural recharge by nearly two-fold. The resulting groundwater storage capacity is estimated at more than 68,000,000 acre-feet, representing a significant opportunity for overlying landowners and other water rights holders, including the City of Los Angeles, to develop groundwater storage programs in the future to maximize the utility of this valuable water resource.

Conjunctive use management, also known as the integrated management of groundwater and surface water supplies, has improved the reliability of the water supply throughout the Western United States and has become a vital component as agencies attempt to optimize the use of their local groundwater resources to become less dependent on imported supplies. LADWP supports the development of conjunctive use programs and reiterates its concern that any expansion of the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant must be protective of groundwater quality to ensure the long-term use of the available storage space in the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin to help meet future water demands. 10-3

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Facilities Plan and the EIR. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mark Aldrian of my staff at (213) 367-0968.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Erb
Director of Water Resources

MA:mm

c: Mr. Mark J. Aldrian

COMMENT LETTER 10: CITY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER

Comment No. 10-1

This comment states that the water rights under the Los Angeles World Airports property are under the possession, management, and control of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. This comment does not address the adequacy of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. No response is necessary.

Comment No. 10-2

The comment expresses concern over the long-term quality of the groundwater supply. As noted on page ES-4, one objective of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates treatment and effluent management alternatives to avoid future degradation of groundwater.

The comment requests that storage reservoirs be provided with double liners and that a groundwater monitoring program be included as part of the proposed project. Mitigation Measure 14-4 requires that storage reservoirs be adequately lined to protect groundwater quality. The proposed project specifies that the floors and sidewalls of the storage reservoirs will be constructed by excavating and re-compacting native soils and that a synthetic liner with low permeability be installed to minimize infiltration. This design will need to be approved by the RWQCB-LR and supported by a Water Quality Impact Analysis. In addition, the proposed project would store water of a higher quality (i.e., tertiary effluent with enhanced nitrogen removal) than is currently produced by the PWRP.

Prior to constructing the reservoirs, District No. 20 will submit an application for new WDRs from the RWQCB-LR for the new treatment and effluent management facilities. This revised WDR application will be required to demonstrate that the design for the proposed storage reservoirs will adequately protect groundwater quality, while considering beneficial uses of the local groundwater and the overall costs.

In compliance with Title 22, part of the project includes the implementation of a groundwater monitoring program to ensure that wastewater treatment and effluent disposal operations are protective of groundwater quality and public health. Mitigation Measure 14-3 requires the FMP to include groundwater monitoring.

The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR also concludes that the new reservoirs would not significantly impact groundwater quality based on the commitment to line all storage reservoirs (bottoms and sides) with synthetic materials (Mitigation Measure 14.2), the increased level of treatment to be provided, and the expansion of the groundwater monitoring network.

Comment No. 10-3

The comment states that LADWP supports the development of conjunctive use programs and reiterates that the proposed project must protect groundwater quality for future use. As noted on page ES-4, one objective of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR recommends wastewater treatment and effluent management alternatives to avoid future degradation of groundwater. Refer to response to Comment No. 10-2 for additional information.

USPS EU720131316US

Los Angeles World Airports

June 15, 2005

VIA FACSIMILE (562-695-1874) AND OVERNIGHT MAIL
Mr. Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Planning Section
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90607

Re: Comments on Los Angeles County Sanitation District No. 20's (LACSD) Draft Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant (PWRP) 2025 Facilities and Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) Dated April 2005

Dear Mr. Highter:

INTRODUCTION

The City of Los Angeles Department of Airports (LAWA) owns more than 17,000 acres of land in the Antelope Valley which was acquired primarily in the 1970s to become the Palmdale Regional Airport. (PMD). The PMD property is located between 15th Street on the west, Avenue M on the north, 105th Street on the east, and Palmdale Boulevard on the south. LAWA's PMD property surrounds LACSD's PWRP and related ponds at 30th Street and 40th Street. Part of LAWA's property rights as an overlying landowner is the right to pump and use groundwater from beneath that land.

LACSD has issued a DEIR describing the 2025 Facilities Plan and EIR for the PWRP upgrade. LACSD proposes to upgrade the secondary treatment provided by the PWRP for sewage influent from Palmdale, to increase the capacity of the PWRP to meet an anticipated increase in influent from the current capacity of 15.0 mgd to 22.4 mgd, and to provide for effluent management through agricultural reuse by acquiring approximately 6,000 acres of land for fodder crops and storage reservoirs. LACSD's DEIR is required in part to comply with the Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) and the Cease and Desist Order (CDO) issued by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) in 2003 and 2004 to remediate groundwater underlying LAWA's and LACSD's land allegedly polluted with nitrate in excess of the MCL from the effluent disposed of by LACSD's PWRP. LAWA hereby presents its comments to LACSD's DEIR.

LAWA supports LACSD's proposed upgrade in treatment to the PWRP, and would support a more aggressive treatment protocol. 11-1

LAWA's principal concern with LACSD's Facilities Plan and the EIR is that there be adequate assessment and remediation of the groundwater impacted by nitrate from LACSD's effluent discharged to LACSD's ponds and to LAWA's property, and 11-2

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in the future that LACSD's effluent be treated adequately and managed safely so that the discharge of effluent and the continuing use of recycled water from LACSD's PWRP does not adversely impact the groundwater underlying LAWA's property or adversely impact LAWA's ability to operate its airport. LAWA is concerned that proposed treatment and mitigation measures be sufficiently protective to ensure the long-term quality and integrity of the groundwater supply, and that all appropriate measures to protect groundwater quality be utilized to ensure water quality. LAWA further recommends that a comprehensive groundwater monitoring and sampling plan be developed and implemented to ensure that the treatment, management and mitigation be protective of groundwater quality. The monitoring program should include monitoring wells underneath and downgradient of LACSD's oxidation ponds, and of any agricultural fields using recycled water and proposed storage reservoirs to verify that nitrates and any other contaminants from the effluent are not leaching into the groundwater. 11-2 (ont.)

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LAWA's further concern is that its property not be used in a manner that interferes with existing and future aviation uses of the Airport, or disturbs existing conservation areas. LAWA is committed to a regional approach to meet air travel capacity needs, and an important part of that plan is the expansion of the PMD. LAWA will not voluntarily allow its land to be used in a manner that creates safety risks, inhibits its ability to make PMD a major regional airport, or disturbs existing conservation areas. 11-3

LAWA has the following comments regarding specific subjects raised in the DEIR:

LACSD's Responsibility For Groundwater Cleanup

The Foreword to LACSD's EIR erroneously contends that from 1981 to 2001 management of PWRP's effluent was purportedly assumed by LAWA under agreements between the Parties in 1981 and 1989, and that at the end of that time LAWA was recycling less than 3% of the effluent and land spreading the rest. LACSD asserts that in 2000 the Lahontan RWQCB issued Revised WDRs and in 2003 issued a CAO, each of which named LACSD and LAWA as responsible parties for the nitrate contamination of the groundwater underlying LAWA's and LACSD's property. The nitrate contamination resulted from LACSD's discharge of effluent with high concentrations of nitrate from the PWRP. LACSD states that it will pursue all avenues of recourse to obtain equitable contribution from LAWA to fund remediation of the groundwater. (DEIR, Foreword, i-ii). 11-4

LAWA is not responsible for the nitrate contamination of the groundwater or for the cost of its cleanup. The nitrate contamination resulted from LACSD's inadequate treatment of its effluent, which contained an average of more than 33 mg/L of nitrate, and LACSD's discharge of that effluent to LACSD's unlined ponds and to LAWA's property. LACSD constructed the PWRP in 1953. Since that time LACSD has been discharging effluent to its unlined ponds and the property LAWA

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acquired in the 1970s, where it has percolated to the groundwater, in violation of the receiving water limits imposed by the Lahontan RWQCB's waste discharge requirements (WDRs) issued to the LACSD.

After the 1981 Agreement between LACSD and LAWA, LACSD's effluent stream grew substantially from about 3.1 mgd to about 9.5 mgd. During the 1980s LACSD discharged its effluent to ponds and to LAWA's property. LACSD designed and operated an overflow structure from its ponds and other facilities which released effluent to areas of Section 9 on a regular basis. LACSD requested LAWA to revise the maximum amount of effluent under the Agreement.

The Parties entered into the 1989 Agreement, which allowed LACSD to dispose of effluent up to 9.5 mgd from the PWRP to areas within Sections 9, 10 and 11 of LAWA's Property, and provided that LACSD would be responsible for all water quality matters. LACSD proposed to and did manage disposal of effluent from PWRP on LAWA's land under the 1989 Agreement. LACSD flood irrigated the west half of the southwest quarter of Section 9, the northeast quarter of Section 9, and the area to the east of the pistachio trees in Section 10, among other areas. LACSD constructed a test basin and flood irrigated Section 9 to the north of the basin, and leveled and bermed the disposal sites to control effluent on LAWA property. LACSD insisted on flood irrigating such areas of LAWA's land in order to dispose of all of its effluent from the PWRP. LACSD controlled the spreading of effluent on the non-cultivated areas of LAWA property and flood irrigated and land spread effluent on the non-cultivated areas. LACSD requested additional LAWA land for effluent spreading. LACSD also objected to numerous attempts by LAWA to lease property to agricultural operations because of LACSD's concern that it needed those areas to spread effluent from its PWRP.

The 1989 Agreement expired in 2001. In February 2002, LACSD entered into a Lease with LAWA for 2,680 acres that provided that LACSD is responsible for the management of the effluent on LAWA property and for all water quality matters, and shall comply with all RWQCB orders including the WDRs. In 2004, the RWQCB issued a Cease and Desist Order (CDO) to LACSD alone, requiring abatement of LACSD's continuing discharge of nitrate to the groundwater. The CDO required LACSD, *inter alia*, to cease the discharge of nitrogen to groundwater and to construct an upgraded treatment plant by October 2009 to increase capacity, provide for winter storage of excess flows above agronomic crop need, and to upgrade treatment to include nitrification/denitrification to remove the nitrate from the effluent.

The RWQCB's revised WDRs issued in 2000 and the CAO in 2003 provide that LACSD was the producer of the effluent and had primary responsibility for treatment and disposal of the effluent, and LAWA as landowner had only secondary responsibility. The WDRs provided that LAWA would be called on to meet or complete the WDRs or any enforcement order only if LACSD failed to meet the requirements of the WDRs or a future enforcement order. Thus, LACSD is primarily responsible for compliance with the WDRs and CAO. Further, under the Lease

11-4 (cont.)

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entered into in February 2002, LACSD was solely responsible for compliance with the WDRs and the CAO.

11-4 (cont.)

LACSD's Unsupported Contention Regarding Its 30th and 40th Street Ponds As A Source of Nitrate Contamination

The LACSD's DEIR erroneously asserts without support that the percolation rate of the ponds, which is a function of hydraulic head and hydraulic conductivity, is considered to be negligible due to the low permeability of the pond bottom soils. (DEIR, 4-4). LAWA—and the Lahontan RWQCB--contend that LACSD's unlined ponds at 30th and 40th Streets are major nitrate source areas. Indeed, even LACSD in its 1996-1997 Annual Status Report on Reclaimed Water Use acknowledged that "A significant amount of plant flow is lost due to evaporation and percolation from the oxidation ponds." (P. 73).

The RWQCB has required LACSD to determine whether the unlined ponds leak and if so the amount and quality of leakage and its effect on underlying groundwater, as part of the CAO's requirement to complete delineation of the nitrate plume by August 15, 2004. The RWQCB has noted that the ponds and the effluent management site (EMS) are major nitrate sources, and that the LACSD's nitrate delineation report did not adequately address the RWQCB's concerns for the source and extent of contamination in the vicinity of the ponds.

The RWQCB noted that LACSD's letter of September 23, 2004, concluded that while there may be some impact from the existing oxidation ponds, the upper bound of percolation estimates represent less than 5% of the final effluent that is discharged. The RWQCB noted that this (5% percolation) is a potential loss of 150 million gallons per year (MG/yr) escaping to groundwater considering there is an average of 3,000 MG of effluent annually discharged. The RWQCB further noted that shallow groundwater data indicate that nitrate concentrations range between 4-11 mg/L (as nitrogen) in the vicinity of the oxidation ponds, and that LACSD's Nitrate Containment and Remediation Plan submitted September 15, 2004, indicates by computer modeling that by year 2025 the highest concentrations remaining in groundwater will be from 7-9 mg/L in the vicinity of the unlined ponds. The RWQCB has concluded that the calculated percolation losses along with existing elevated groundwater nitrate concentrations are sufficient to conclude that the oxidation ponds leak and are a continuing pollutant source to groundwater. (RWQCB letters dated 11-10-2004 and 12-2-2004 to LACSD).

11-5

The RWQCB has directed that LACSD must evaluate the full magnitude and extent of leakage from both the 30th Street and 40th Street ponds and determine the pore-water quality including the concentration of total nitrogen and TDS percolating to the groundwater below the ponds. LACSD has argued that a separate work plan to address nitrate impacts from oxidation pond leakage is unnecessary because they will be addressed within the CAO and the 2025 Facilities Plan. The RWQCB has required that since the LACSD has indicated an intent to address pond leakage

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through the 2025 Facilities Plan, the Plan must discuss the leakage and its effect on degradation of the groundwater. The RWQCB will evaluate the degradation and decide if it would authorize such continuing degradation pursuant to SRWCB Resolution 68-16. (Id.)

LACSD's unsupported statement in its DEIR that the percolation rate of its ponds is considered to be negligible due to the purported low permeability of the pond bottom soils is contrary to the facts and to its obligation under the 2025 Facilities Plan to evaluate the magnitude and extent of leakage from the ponds and to determine the pore-water quality including nitrogen concentration percolating to the groundwater underlying the ponds. LACSD must properly assess and disclose the leakage from the ponds and its impacts to the underlying groundwater as part of the Plan.

11-5 (cont.)

LACSD's Proposed Treatment of PWRP Effluent Under The DEIR

LAWA believes that the upgraded treatment proposed by LACSD for the PWRP will improve the quality of the effluent. When implemented, the upgraded treatment will generate effluent that should not contaminate the underlying groundwater, as occurred previously as a result of LACSD's inadequate treatment of the effluent which has contained in excess of 33 mg/L of nitrate, as well as higher TDS of approximately 520 mg/L. LACSD proposes that treatment be primary, secondary with nitrification/denitrification (NDN), and tertiary, and with disinfection and solids removal. LACSD's DEIR states that this treatment will remove most of the nitrate from the effluent which previously has contaminated the groundwater underlying LAWA's property, and will allow uses including agricultural use, municipal reuse, and groundwater recharge via spreading. (DEIR, ES-2-9).

11-6

LACSD's DEIR states that advanced treatment (such as microfiltration/reverse osmosis—MF/RO) will not be adopted, even though it is feasible and is the environmentally superior alternative, since it supposedly does not increase the types of uses to which the recycled water can be put. (DEIR, ES-5, 8, 16). However, LAWA notes that utilizing advanced treatment and MF/RO would allow groundwater recharge by injection as well as by spreading. Such advanced treatment should be considered. Advanced treatment would enable LACSD to use all of the treated effluent from the PWRP for groundwater reuse and municipal reuse, and to avoid the costly agriculture reuse proposed on LAWA land for the area east of Little Rock Wash. It is important that the LACSD review and consider the LAWA environmental staff comments and analysis that support advanced treatment options, including MF/RO as the preferred alternative for the proposed 2025 Plan. See LAWA's further comments, infra.

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The Best Treatment Alternative Is Micro-Filtration/Reverse Osmosis

The Draft Plan & DEIR did not properly analyze all project treatment alternatives.

Micro filtration / Reverse Osmosis (MF/RO) was not adequately considered. As shown in the Table below, based on:

- Environmental Impacts,
- Cost Effectiveness,
- Effluent Quality, and
- Operational Considerations,

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MF/RO should be the preferred alternative.

Feasible Alternatives	Environ. Impacts	Cost Effectiveness	Effluent Quality	Operational Consideration	Overall Rating	Overall Rank
MF/RO	0	+	++	-	+2	1
Alt #1 (CAS)	-	0	0	+	0	2
Alt #2 (SBR)	-	0	-	-	-3	4
Alt #3(MBR)	-	-	+	0	-1	3

11-6 (cont.)

MF/RO has no additional Environmental Impacts (Bio, Cultural, Public Health) – no new land development would be needed.

MF/RO is cost effective (see attached cost comparisons)
(brine could be treated in solar evaporation ponds and disposed on Valley's dry lake bed).

MF/RO produces higher water quality: besides nitrates also removes 17,760 tons/yr. of TDS (Alt. #1, #2, #3 do not remove TDS).

MF/RO is off the shelf technology.

LACSD's Proposed Effluent Management Under the 2025 Plan and DEIR

The DEIR states that various effluent management strategies were evaluated, including groundwater recharge, municipal reuse and agricultural reuse. The DEIR states that agricultural reuse with winter storage and municipal reuse, as available, is the only effluent management option that provides an immediately effective effluent management program. LACSD's DEIR disregards municipal reuse (use of recycled

11-7

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water instead of potable water to irrigate municipal lands, parks, school grounds, golf courses and similar areas) as requiring time to be implemented, the involvement of local water purveyors and the construction of infrastructure. LACSD's DEIR disregards groundwater recharge as purportedly being an alternative whose feasible implementation is uncertain because of the needs for blending the effluent with fresh water, installing infrastructure to deliver the water, and partnering with water agencies. (DEIR, ES-5-11, 16).

In fact, groundwater recharge by spreading is feasible with the treatment proposed by the DEIR and is acknowledged to be the environmentally superior alternative because it would help restore the groundwater balance in the overdrafted AV Basin and avoid land conversion. (DEIR, ES-16, 17). Municipal reuse is a viable option which would utilize recycled water for municipal irrigation uses in lieu of pumping groundwater. Conversely, LACSD's proposal to increase agricultural use in the form of fodder crops would be unnecessarily consumptive in the overdrafted and arid AV Basin, and would require conversion of a large area of open space. The RWQCB noted in its April 13, 2005 Resolution regarding cleanup of the nitrate plume that uses of groundwater in the AV should not be consumptive and exacerbate the overdraft condition. Similarly, LACSD's tertiary treated recycled water should not be used for consumptive, artificially created agricultural uses, but rather for existing agricultural crops which currently use groundwater, for municipal reuse and for groundwater recharge. In this way the tertiary treated recycled water from the PWRP can be used in a manner which benefits rather than exacerbates the AV's overdrafted groundwater Basin, and the need for land for effluent management would be substantially reduced.

11-7

(cont.)

LACSD's Proposed Acquisition of Land To Site Agricultural Reuse and Storage Reservoirs Under The DEIR

LACSD states that it will need 5,140 acres of land for agricultural reuse and storage reservoirs to manage effluent from the expanded PWRP with its anticipated 22.4 mgd capacity, and 700 acres for solids handling. LACSD states that Agricultural Study Area No. 6, which is on LAWA land bounded by Avenue M and M-8 on the north, and Littlerock Wash to the West, and Storage Area No. 1, which is on LAWA land bounded by 90th Street on the West, Avenue M-8 on the north, 105th Street on the east and Avenue O on the south, both of which are on LAWA land east of Littlerock Wash, are the most suitable areas for the agricultural reuse operations and storage reservoirs. (DEIR, ES-11-13).

11-8

LACSD's intent to acquire and use this LAWA land for agricultural reuse and storage reservoirs is restricted by the existence of conservation areas and could interfere with flight patterns for LAWA and Air Force Plant 42 (AF Plant 42) across LAWA land. LAWA's 1978 FEIS for the Palmdale Regional Airport (PRA), which was prepared in response to a court order dated March 29, 1974, by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, in Sierra Club v Volpe, et al, Case No. 370-71, designated two Natural Resource Conservation Areas (NRCAs) for the PRA, and was

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approved by the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA). The larger NRCA covers approximately 4,940 acres and is located east of 80th Street to 105th Street. The smaller NRCA is located on the north side of Palmdale Blvd. between 60th and 75th Streets. The larger NRCA encompasses approximately 80% of the area which LACSD proposes to use for agricultural reuse and storage reservoirs.

The NRCAs provide for uses consistent with the preservation of the natural resources within them. The larger NCRA precludes LACSD's proposed use of that land for agricultural reuse, storage reservoirs and solids handling.

AF Plant 42 has expressed its concerns to LACSD about bird strikes in the main approach path to AF Plant 42's runways. The approach path is located north of Avenue N and south of Avenue M. The flight path is 2,000 feet wide and overlays approximately 719 acres (36%) of 1,973 acres of LAWA–owned land east of Littlerock Wash and north of Avenue N in Sections 1 and 2 (Township 6 North, Range 11 West) and in Sections 4, 5 and 6 (Township 6 North, Range 10 West).

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The cultivation of hay encompassed in LACSD's proposed agricultural reuse of LAWA land would attract rodents, which in turn attract high flying raptors and ravens. Because these birds rise up and often circle the area in which they feed, growing and bailing hay under the approach path would pose significant increased threats of bird strikes to approaching aircraft. Strikes to aircraft engines and cockpits increase the risk of crashes and are opposed by both USAF and LAWA. For this reason previous LACSD requests to use land north of Avenue N for effluent dispersal and hay cultivation have been opposed by USAF and were disapproved by LAWA.

11-8

(cont.

The location of storage reservoirs under and immediately south of the main runway approach path to AF Plant 42 as proposed by LACSD would pose another potential risk. Migrating waterfowl (ducks and geese) frequently are attracted to such ponds (even smaller ponds created by LACSD operations in the existing effluent management area attracted such birds). Siting large reservoirs under and immediately adjacent to the approach path would create a potential attraction for ducks and geese and increase the risk of bird strikes to aircraft. If such storage reservoirs are constructed, they should not be located close to any landing and take off corridors.

LAWA is developing a strategic plan for the development of the Palmdale Regional Airport (PMD) on LAWA property. The PMD Strategic Plan alternatives locate the airport runways and clear zones west of Littlerock Wash, and west of LACSD's Agricultural Study Area No. 6 and Storage Area No. 1. However, the PMD Strategic Plan runway approach corridors (which are 2,000 feet wide) will overlie approximately 1,480 acres (37%) of the approximately 4,000 acres that LAWA owns south of Avenue N and east of Littlerock Wash. The planned LAWA runway corridors would cross Sections 12 and 13 (Township 6 North, Range 11 West) and Sections 7,8,9,16, 17 and 18 (Township 6 North, Range 10 West), and LACSD's Agricultural Study Area No. 6 and Storage Area No. 1. These planned runway corridors correspond closely to the critical AF Plant 42 Air Installation

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Compatibility Use Zones (AICUZ) and would be greatly threatened by increased bird-attracting hay cultivation activity on both sides of the corridors as summarized above for AF Plant 42. Creating situations that promote such risks is unacceptable to LAWA and civil aviation regulatory authorities. Under the PMD Strategic Plan, land east of Little Rock Wash may also be necessary for aviation related uses connected with airport operations or to meet mitigation and conservation commitments for the new airport. 11-8

The DEIR Provides Erroneous Land Use, Biological Resources and Environmental Impacts Analysis

Chapter 9, Land Use/Agricultural Resources

Page 9-7 – The DEIR, in its discussion of "Storage Reservoirs" states that utility facilities are permitted in the M-3 zone, subject to Site Plan Review approval. The DEIR further states that the General Plan land use designation for the subject property is "Airfield and Related Use (AR)".

Section 21.05 of the Palmdale Zoning Code requires that the Approval Authority must find that "The design and layout of the proposed development or structures is consistent with the City's General Plan, any applicable specific plan, any applicable design guidelines, and the development standards set forth in this Zoning Ordinance." The Intent and Purpose of the Airport Industrial (M-3) Zone is "to provide an area for expansion of Palmdale Regional Airport and related facilities, and for activities associated with aircraft development, assembly, and testing." "Uses which would restrict or impede aircraft operations or the primary airport activities for which this zone was created are not allowed."

The DEIR gives the false impression that the Site Plan Review approval process is a ministerial action that does not involve any discretion. The paragraph discussing the Site Plan Review process is followed by a statement that "a Conditional Use Permit would not be necessary for constructing storage reservoirs in either Storage Reservoir Area No. 1 or No. 2." However, as specified in the Palmdale Zoning Code, in order for the project to be approved the Approval Authority must find consistency with the General Plan and Zoning, both of which call for an airport. Since the proposed project is not an airport or an airport related or ancillary facility, and since the storage reservoirs proposed in this particular area would be in conflict with airport uses, a finding on consistency with the General Plan and Zoning cannot be made. 11-9

On Page 9-10, the DEIR states that the proposed project "could conflict with future plans to convert the LAWA property into a regional airport." And in the subsequent discussions regarding this impact, the DEIR mentions that District No. 20 may not be able to renew its current lease and that it may need to move operations east to replace the lease area.

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The DEIR mentions on Page 9-5 that "LAWA is developing a new PMD Master Plan to meet expected future demand within Antelope Valley for additional flight capacity at PMD…", and mentions that "The sites for all three alternative development scenarios are located west of 40th Street East and north of Avenue P." However, the DEIR fails to disclose the potential impacts of the proposed project on current and proposed airport operations.

While the major components of development for the future PMD airport are currently being considered for the west side of LAWA property, an airport (whether in its current or future configuration) is not limited to the use of land, but also, more importantly, to its use of the airspace (both vertical and horizontal) for several miles around its runways. For physical development around runways, structures are limited in size and occupancy by standards established by the FAA. Uses are also limited by the FAA in order to safeguard against potential conflicts. Birdstrikes are one of the most critical concerns of airport operators. 11-10

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Land uses that have the potential to attract birds are not compatible with airport operations. The DEIR must disclose the potential for agricultural uses to attract birds and its impact on flight safety and the potential for the loss of life.

This is not a "less than significant" impact as indicated in the DEIR and mitigation measures are generally not feasible to avoid birdstrikes and the damage they may cause. This should also be further disclosed within a section of the DEIR that discusses "Hazards". The DEIR in Chapter 21 discusses "Hazardous Materials", yet Appendix G in the CEQA Guidelines recommends analysis of "Hazards and Hazardous Materials". Per Section VII (e) of Appendix G, the DEIR should provide analysis for the following question: "For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?"

Further, while the major improvements of the airport are located on the west side of LAWA property, critical aviation safety equipment and facilities and runway corridors are necessary along the approach route to a runway. It is misleading for the DEIR to imply that the LAWA property on the east side is not necessary to the development of PMD.

The DEIR erroneously asserts that there would be less than significant effects of the project on land use/agricultural resources including compatibility of the project with the planned Significant Ecological Area and with the plans for a regional airport. (DEIR, ES-17, 20). LACSD's proposal to use the NCRA dedicated to conservation use is directly inconsistent with the planned conservation use and is a significant adverse effect. LACSD's proposal to use LAWA property east of Little Rock Wash which would underlie AF Plant 42's and LAWA's runway corridors is inconsistent with airport usage and would constitute a significant adverse affect. 11-11

1 World Way P.O. Box 92216 Los Angeles California 90009-2216 Telephone 310 646 5252 Facsimile 310 646 0523 Internet www.lawa.org

Chapter 12, Biological Resources

On Page 12-17, the DEIR recommends a mitigation measure to reduce the potential impacts to special status plant species to a less than significant level. If special status species are found and if the project cannot be designed to avoid these populations, the mitigation measure "could include providing compensatory conservation lands or transplanting individual specimens." Yet, the DEIR does not identify the likelihood of achieving this measure. Does the District have land available for transplanting? The DEIR also fails to disclose the magnitude of such a project and instead leaves such efforts to a future date. The decision-maker on this project should have an idea of whether this potentially is a large or small impact and the DEIR should at a minimum provide an approximation of the amount of land impacted. The decision-maker should have an understanding of the total cost of the project, including mitigation costs, so that he/she can make an informed decision. 11-12

On Page 12-20, the DEIR recommends requiring compensatory lands should Mohave ground squirrels or desert tortoise be found, or in the case of the Mohave ground squirrel, should the District elect to forgo the protocol surveys. As discussed above, the DEIR should provide an indication of the magnitude of providing this mitigation. 11-13

The DEIR proposes 18 mitigation measures to address a variety of potential Biological Resources impacts. The majority of the measures require redesign of the project to avoid impacting these biological resources or relocation of the affected species or providing compensation. Given the quantity of biological resources potentially impacted, the decision-maker should be given the understanding of the magnitude of such mitigation required. Will the amount of mitigation required cause the project to be infeasible, either because of the lack of land available for development or an unforeseen amount of money required to comply with the mitigation measure? 11-14

Chapter 14, Hydrology and Water Quality

On Page 14-7, the DEIR recommends Mitigation Measure 14-2 that all proposed storage reservoirs (bottoms and sides) be lined with synthetic materials. The DEIR also "indicates that the native soil materials are likely too coarse (e.g. sandy) for use as liner material. Without a sufficient quantity of fine clay materials available locally, District No. 20 will need to utilize a synthetic liner to restrict permeability at the surface."

The District has not demonstrated that this method will prevent effluent water from infiltrating into the groundwater, degrading water quality. Synthetic liners are not a long-term solution to this problem as they deteriorate over time. Leakages are expected and common and given the coarse soil conditions will infiltrate into the groundwater and cause an environmental impact. Given the magnitude of the proposed project (approximately 385 million gallons (MG) over approximately 700 11-15

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Executive Director

acres), leakages are foreseeable. This mitigation measure only delays infiltration to a later date. A more permanent liner should be incorporated into the design given that it is highly unlikely that such liners will be replaced in the future when they fail. 11-15 (cont.)

On Page 14-10, the DEIR recommends Mitigation Measure 14-3 that the District implement a FMP outlining procedures for ensuring that effluent is applied at agronomic rates to minimize the potential for infiltration. The DEIR does not specify whether there are already industry standards available or whether these methods and procedures have to be developed and tested to ensure compliance with regulatory limits. Therefore, there is no indication if implementation of this measure will be effective or whether the maximum limits will not be exceeded. 11-16

As indicated in the DEIR, one component of the proposed project consists of agricultural application. However, the District has not demonstrated the feasibility of this method for this area. It is unlikely that the District will take upon itself this endeavor. Thus, it must rely on another party to accomplish this task. How involved will the District be in the management and oversight of these operations to ensure compliance with the FMP? What is the availability of these entities given the limited number of crops they can grow and the limited market for these crops after harvest? Is it economically feasible for this entity to produce a usable crop on over 840 acres or will the farming production be for waste? In order that agricultural reuse operations work as intended, a crop must be grown. If it is not going for use, then the crop is going to waste, in which case the DEIR has not disclosed the potential impact to Solid Waste Disposal. 11-17

On Page 14-8, the DEIR identifies Impact 14-8 that "Eliminating land application of treated effluent will reduce the amount of water recharged into the ground. This could adversely affect groundwater levels and local water supplies." Yet, in the Project Description, the components proposed do not include the elimination of land application of treated effluent. This statement is also misleading in that water recharge can occur by injection as well as by spreading with advanced treatment. 11-18

Chapter 23, Cumulative Impacts and Project Alternatives

On Page 23-11, the DEIR states that "Of the six treatment alternatives, advanced treatment would be considered the environmentally superior alternative since it would produce the highest quality water. However, the excessive energy requirements and costs associated with advanced treatment process pose substantial constraints to the alternative." However, the DEIR does not disclose the projected cost in comparison to the projected cost of the proposed project. Thus, the decision-maker does not have the ability to make its own conclusion of whether the costs and energy usage are "excessive". Further, all costs associated with the implementation of the proposed project should be identified, including costs to comply with the mitigation measures. 11-19

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LACSD's Proposal To Site Its Effluent Disposal Area On LAWA Land East of Little Rock Wash Fails To Address Existing and Proposed Land Uses.

In addition to the conservation areas and airport runway corridors, the DEIR fails to address several existing and proposed land uses within the proposed 6,000-acre effluent disposal area that LACSD proposes on LAWA land east of Little Rock Wash. These include:

1. Existing State of California (CalTrans) highway right-of-way located along approximately nine miles of the southern boundary of PMD. Within the proposed LACSD project area, 63.91 acres of right of way is shown on Tentative Parcel Map 24419 (LAWA Drawing 96012) along the airport's southern boundary primarily between Avenues P-7 and P-8.

2. Soil stabilization and restoration sites now operated by Dustbusters and the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation, are currently using 213.33 acres on west side of 70th Street between Avenues M and N. Of that acreage, approximately 40 acres are a joint use area under Dustbusters supervision. The remaining 173.33 acres is for additional Bureau of Sanitation soil stabilization and restoration use.

3. Active research sites operated by Dustbusters. A 38-acre area is located on the east side of 70th Street south of Avenue N-4 extending south to the top of the bank of Little Rock Wash. A smaller research site about 10 acres in size is located east of 90th Street at Avenue O-8.

4. The 10-acre site at approximately 93rd Street and Avenue P leased for more than 10 years to Randy Benjamin doing business as Picture Vehicle Rentals.

5. The 8 plus acre existing Southern California Edison substation site located at the southeast corner of Avenue O and 90th Street.

6. A future restoration projects site requested by the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation covering approximately 160 acres at 90th Street and Avenue P. That location is part of the Natural Resources Conservation Area set aside by the BOAC in the 1978 FEIS and approved by the Federal Court in the Stipulation of Dismissal in 1983. If needed, the Bureau of Sanitation soil stabilization and restoration project area can be expanded to include all land between 90th and 105th Streets between Avenues O and P covering a gross area of 960 acres.

7. A proposed Joshua Tree bank to be operated through the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District on up to 40 acres in the NRCA at a location to be determined within the Natural Resources Conservation area.

11-20

1 World Way P.O. Box 92216 Los Angeles California 90009-2216 Telephone 310 646 5252 Facsimile 310 646 0523 Internet www.lawa.org

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FURTHER SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

Comment #1: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-6, Table ES-2) Table ES-2 determinations for Groundwater Recharge & Municipal use are wrong. These two reuse methods can accommodate the "recycled water flows" from the PWRP and are "feasible". The table should be corrected accordingly.

11-21

Comment #2: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-6&7, Municipal Reuse) The DEIR's estimate of 7.8 mgd of municipal reuse demand is not documented. This estimated water volume demand seems low when considering the amount of water PWD and LA County Waterworks District 40 can use.

11-22

Comment #3: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-7, Discharge to Water Body in Antelope Valley) The alleged difficulties of obtaining a discharge permit are not documented. Claims and accounts about decisions by the Lahontan Water Quality District staff regarding the permit process and difficulties should be documented. Otherwise this section should be changed accordingly.

11-23

Comment #4: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-7 to ES-13, Identification of Feasible Wastewater Treatment and Effluent Management Alternatives) The selection is flawed. As noted in the general comments & cost analysis spread sheet, microfiltration followed by reverse osmosis should be the preferred treatment alternative based on:

1) Environmental Impacts – no need for new land development & the associated biological, cultural, public health and safety impacts.

2) Cost Effectiveness – better (MF/RO is lower in capital costs and higher in O&M costs). However, cost is comparable when amortized. May become profitable if adjudication occurs in the Valley, as noted in the cost analysis.

3) Effluent Quality - MF/RO also removes 17,760 tons of salts per year. Allows more reuse possibilities.

4) Operational Consideration - New operation is needed. The technology is available off the shelf with numerous turnkey plants in existence.

Further, groundwater recharge and municipal reuse are feasible, environmentally superior to the consumptive agricultural use proposed by the DEIR, and should be the preferred effluent management alternatives for the project.

11-24

Comment #5: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-13 to ES-15, Project Cost)

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Walter Zifkin

Kim Day
Executive Director

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(See attached cost spreadsheet.) The estimated preferred alternative project's capital cost and O&M cost are too low. The amount of $3 million designated for biological and cultural mitigation and land acquisition cost are also estimated too low. Also, the annual O&M cost is too low. For example, weed control and mosquito abatement for West Nile Virus, were not considered in the O&M cost. 11-25

Comment #6: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-18, Transportation) The creation of 700 acres of reservoir and 5,100 acres of agricultural land near Plant 42 & PMD and their runway corridors would attract birds and jeopardize public safety increasing birdstrike potential. This impact needs to be discussed. 11-26

Comment #7: (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY section; Page ES-19, Public Heath) The preferred project would create 700 acres of reservoir. This open water would be a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Public health impacts due to West Nile Virus need to be discussed. 11-27

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Kim Day
Executive Director

Comment #8: (Table ES-6; Page ES-20, Impact 9-3) Impact 9-3 is "significant" regarding the future development of PMD. The direct loss of land, pipelines spanning across the length of the airport, set aside buffer zones for birdstrike safety, and others, will significantly impact PMD future development. 11-28

Comment #9: (Table ES-6; Page ES-34, Impact 15-3) Impact 15-3 is "significant". The preferred alternative will not remove Total Dissolved Solids from the effluent. Approximately 17,760 tons of salts will be deposited on the soil per year (Based on effluent TDS = 520 mg/l.) 11-29

Comment #10: (Table ES-6; Page ES-37, Impact 22-2) Impact 22-2 is "significant". The preferred alternative will promote the breeding of mosquitoes and the potential for the West Nile Virus disease. 11-30

Comment # 11: (Chapter 4, Page 4-4, section on Evaporation, 3rd paragraph) This section states that "The percolation rate of the ponds, which is a function of hydraulic head and hydraulic conductivity, is considered to be negligible due to the low permeability of the pond bottom soils."

This statement is factually incorrect and should be revised. There may be plugging of pore space over time reducing permeability of the soils; however, the ponds are unlined and their permeability should not be characterized as low without adequate study. Even if clay is found beneath the ponds, water will find its path of least resistance and eventually work its way into the groundwater. 11-31

Comment # 12: (Chapter 6, Project Alternative Analysis) This section is completely flawed. See general comments & cost spreadsheet. 11-32

Comment # 13: (Chapter 7, Recommended Project Summary) This section needs to be changed to include the preferred MF/RO project and associated analysis. 11-33

1 World Way P.O. Box 92216 Los Angeles California 90009-2216 Telephone 310 646 5252 Facsimile 310 646 0523 Internet www.lawa.org

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Comment #14: (Chapter 9, Land Use/Agricultural Resources, page 9-10, last paragraph) According to FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33, since the large scale agricultural operations would attract birds that could increase the potential for bird air strike hazards, this proposed project is considered an incompatible land use. This paragraph should be revised. 11-34

Comment #15: (Chapter 22, Public Health, Page 22-3, Impact 22-2) The EIR needs to address mosquitoes and the West Nile Virus. 11-35

CONCLUSION

LAWA appreciates LACSD's proposed upgrade in treatment of the effluent for the PWRP and its consideration of LAWA's comments.

It is the position of LAWA that:

1. LACSD must clean up the nitrate contamination to the groundwater and provide sufficient treatment to its effluent from the PWRP so that no further contamination is caused by LACSD's effluent; 11-36
2. LAWA remains committed to a regional approach to meet the aviation passenger capacity needs of southern California. An important part of that plan is the growth of passenger service and the future expansion of Palmdale Airport;
3. LAWA will not allow its land to be used in a manner that creates safety risks to pilots and passengers using existing or future Palmdale Airport facilities, or that inhibits LAWA's ability to make Palmdale a major regional airport including disturbing lands intended as onsite mitigation as resource conservation areas; 11-37
4. LAWA will not allow its land to be used in a manner that creates safety risks to the pilots and passengers using Air Force Plant 42 and any future expansion of PMD; and 11-38
5. LAWA will not allow its land to be used in a manner that destroys the Natural Resource Conservation Areas. 11-39

Patricia V. Tubert
Deputy Executive Director
Los Angeles World Airports

1 World Way P.O. Box 92216 Los Angeles California 90009-2216 Telephone 310 646 5252 Facsimile 310 646 0523 Internet www.lawa.org

COMMENT LETTER 11: LOS ANGELES WORLD AIRPORTS (LAWA)

Comment No. 11-1

The comment states that LAWA supports the proposed upgrade in treatment and would support a more aggressive treatment protocol. The comment is noted. Chapter 6 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a treatment alternatives analysis and describes the screening process conducted by District No. 20 that resulted in tertiary treatment being a component of the proposed project. Refer to General Response: Alternatives Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-2

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should adequately assess and remediate groundwater impacted under LAWA's property by nitrates from PWRP effluent and that future PWRP facilities treat wastewater sufficiently to protect groundwater quality. The comment also recommends the development of a comprehensive groundwater monitoring plan to verify that contaminants do not leach into the groundwater. As noted on page ES-4, one objective of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates treatment and effluent management alternatives to avoid future degradation of groundwater and includes implementing a groundwater monitoring program in compliance with Title 22 of the CCR and RWQCB permit requirements.

Regarding LAWA's principal concern that there be adequate assessment and remediation of the groundwater impacted by nitrates in the oxidation ponds and under the existing EMS, groundwater quality concerns related to current PWRP operations are thoroughly addressed through responses to the CAO and CDO issued to District No. 20 in November 2003 and October 2004, respectively. The existing oxidation ponds will be decommissioned, and the site may be used to site storage reservoirs. The CAO requires District No. 20 and LAWA to clean up and abate the elevated nitrate levels identified in the groundwater beneath the EMS (including the oxidation ponds). The CDO supercedes the abatement portion of the CAO and imposes a timeline for implementing various abatement measures, of which the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is one component (see Chapter 1, page 1-5). The CAO and CDO can be found in Appendices C and D, respectively. District No. 20 is currently working with LAWA and the RWQCB-LR to implement a Containment and Remediation Plan approved in April 2005, which is a separate project from what is described in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

Comment No. 11-3

The comment states that the LAWA's property should not be used in a manner that interferes with its existing and future aviation uses, creates safety risks, or disturbs existing conservation areas. District No. 20 agrees that the PWRP 2025 Facilities Plan and EIR must be compatible with existing and future neighboring land uses including airport operations. However, District No. 20 disagrees with LAWA's contention that the Draft 2025 Plan and EIR's proposal to utilize Storage Reservoir Study Area No. 1 and Agricultural Study Area No. 6 for storage reservoirs and agricultural reuse operations, would interfere with LAWA's existing and future aviation uses. Based on LAWA's January 2005 NOP of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD, the existing USAF Plant 42 airfield has adequate capacity to accommodate forecast aircraft operations and will continue to be utilized for all aircraft operations through 2030. Construction

of new runways, as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the originally proposed PIA, is not included as part of any of the proposed alternatives developed in the Master Plan for PMD. Furthermore, District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. The proposed project is compatible with recommendations made by AC No. 150/5200-33A; therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed project will have less than significant impact on existing and future aviation uses.

Finally, the proposed project does not disturb any existing conservation areas; no development restrictions, NRMP, or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property. Nevertheless, coordinating long-term planning efforts with LAWA is an essential part of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes in several places (e.g., page 9-7) that the use of LAWA property is contingent on LAWA's approval. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

Comment No. 11-4

The comment contends that the Foreword in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR inaccurately represents LAWA's responsibility regarding elevated nitrates in the groundwater. Sanitation District No. 20 maintains the information depicting LAWA's responsibility regarding elevated nitrates in the groundwater as presented in the Foreword to the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is accurate.

Comment No. 11-5

The comment contends that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR inaccurately characterizes the permeability of the soils lining the existing oxidation ponds. The existing oxidation ponds are permitted under the PWRP's existing WDRs, which are issued by the RWQCB-LR. The proposed project would remove the existing oxidation ponds from service once the recommended CAS treatment system is on-line in 2009. One project objective of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." District No. 20 is committed to complying with the CAO, CDO, and future discharge permit requirements. Refer to responses to Comment Nos. 11-31 and 11-36 for additional information.

Comment No. 11-6

The comment states that implementation of tertiary treatment will avoid future groundwater contamination, but that advanced treatment including MF/RO would increase effluent management options. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates MF/RO as a treatment alternative, which was estimated to cost twice as much as tertiary treatment. The effluent management alternatives of agricultural and municipal reuse were considered to be more cost effective with tertiary treated effluent than MF/RO and attainable within the required timeframe of the RWQCB-LR orders. Refer to response to Comment No. P-1 in Chapter 27 and General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-7

The comment states that groundwater recharge or municipal reuse should be the preferred alternative. The comment also argues that increased agriculture is a new consumptive use. As noted on pages 7-5 and 7-6 of the

PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, municipal reuse is a component of the preferred project. District No. 20 is committed to partnering with local agencies and municipalities including the City of Palmdale, Palmdale Water District, Los Angeles County Waterworks District No. 40, and other members of the Antelope Valley Water Reuse Group to supply tertiary-treated effluent for future municipal reuse programs. Furthermore, the proposed agricultural operations are a component of the effluent management system that can be scaled back when reuse programs such as municipal reuse and indirect potable reuse alternatives become a reality. Groundwater recharge was considered by District No. 20 as an effluent management alternative, but was rejected since it does not meet the objectives of the project. Nonetheless, District No. 20 remains supportive of working with regional partners to develop a groundwater recharge project when feasible. Refer to response to Comment No. N-3 in Chapter 27 and General Response: Alternatives Analysis for additional information.

Agricultural operations employing recycled water do not constitute a new consumptive use in the Antelope Valley because no potable water use is involved. The new agriculture will instead benefit the local community and regional economy by boosting the agricultural output of the area. Because the agricultural operations included in the proposed project can be scaled back, recycled water can be made available for municipal use, to other farmers to use in place of groundwater, and for any other emerging beneficial uses with little lead time. Agricultural reuse was identified in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR as the best feasible alternative that can be implemented within the time frame required by the board orders from the RWQCB-LR. Agriculture has been pursued in the Antelope Valley for over a hundred years, and it is improbable that new agricultural endeavors will be, or should be, prohibited because they do or do not use recycled water.

Comment No. 11-8

The comment states that the acquisition of Agricultural Study Area No. 6 for agricultural use and storage reservoirs would be incompatible with a designated conservation area and could interfere with airport operations. The comment references a 1974 legal action that set aside a certain area as a conservation area to mitigate the impacts of the proposed development of the PIA. Since the proposed PIA was not constructed, those impacts have not materialized and may not if the PIA is not constructed or is modified from its original design. Discussions with LAWA, as well as the January 2005 NOP for the Master Plan for PMD, indicate that the scale of the proposed airport development will likely be confined to areas within or directly adjacent to USAF Plant 42. As a result, the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR assumed that LAWA would be interested in selling, transferring, or leasing the land east of Little Rock Wash since the impacts anticipated in the 1970s may be substantially lessened or ultimately may not occur. Furthermore, no development restrictions or recorded conservation easements could be identified for the property. If LAWA is committed to utilizing this area for habitat impact compensation, then the property would not be available to District No. 20. District No. 20 could not buy or enter into a lease agreement with LAWA for land that is officially designated as a conservation area to mitigate impacts to neighboring habitat.

The comment further states that agriculture would promote unsafe conditions for the airport due to bird air strike hazards. District No. 20 would not implement an effluent management program that created unsafe conditions for existing or future airport operations; the proposed project is consistent with the FAA's Advisory Circular (AC) No. 150/5200-33A, which provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

Comment No. 11-9

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR gives the false impression that construction of proposed storage reservoir facilities in the Airport Industrial (M-3) zone would be a ministerial action that does not involve any discretionary approval by the City of Palmdale. As discussed on pages 9-7 and 9-9 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, public utilities to be sited in the M-3 zone require a Site Plan Review. If these facilities are deemed compatible with airport uses, then a conditional use permit would not be necessary. For compatible land uses, the City of Palmdale Site Plan Review approval process will not require a public hearing nor approval by the Planning Commission, whereas a conditional use permit would require this discretionary approval. Site plans are subject to administrative review by the Planning Director (Palmdale Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 2, Sections 20.01 and 21.02). The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes on page 9-7 that LAWA would have to agree that storage reservoirs are compatible with the future Palmdale Regional Airport in order to utilize the land. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that agriculture and storage reservoirs would not result in significant impacts to airport safety if the runways remain at the existing site on USAF Plant 42, three miles to the west. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-10

The comment asserts that the proposed project would not be compatible with airport operations due to the potential for bird air strike hazards. The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should consider impacts of hazards within an airport use planning area as required by CEQA. Page 9-5 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describes the current and proposed future PMD operations. Impact 9-3 on page 9-10 discusses the compatibility of the recommend project with those operations, and concludes that there is a less than significant impact. To provide further detail concerning how a conclusion of "less than significant" impact was reached, Chapter 25 of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a section entitled Airport Compatibility. That section includes a discussion on potential bird air strike hazards based on the FAA's most current Advisory Circular (AC No. 150/5200-33A), which provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports.

The FAA has also outlined procedures by which an actual hazard can be identified. An investigation is first triggered by the occurrence of specific triggering events on or near an airport. If the triggering events meet the criteria as outlined in Part 139 of 14 CFR, a WHA is required. The FAA then determines whether a formal WHMP is needed. If the FAA determines that a WHMP is needed, the airport operator must formulate and implement a WHMP, using the WHA as a basis for the plan.

Land use practices having the potential to attract birds within five miles of the existing USAF Plant 42/PMD include agriculture, undeveloped open space, and the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events, as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing treatment and effluent management facilities, or that a WHA has been prepared by USAF Plant 42 or PMD. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project proposes upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project also has a less than significant impact on airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-11

The comment states that it is misleading for the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR to imply that LAWA property on the eastside is not necessary for the future development of the airport. District No. 20 agrees that construction of some facilities needed for airport operations may be necessary in the flight corridor that could include portions of Agricultural Study Area No. 6. However, in considering land use practices on or near airports, the FAA's Advisory Circular No. 150/5200-33A uses an airport's AOA as the reference point from which appropriate separation should be maintained. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that agricultural uses consistent with the Advisory Circular provide a buffer of low sensitivity around the airport and does not preclude the construction of ancillary airport facilities if necessary. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes in several places (e.g., page 9-7) that LAWA would have to agree that storage reservoirs and agriculture are compatible with the future PMD in order to utilize LAWA property.

The comment also notes that LAWA property on the east side of Little Rock Wash has been designated as a conservation area. However, no development restrictions, NRMP, or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property. Refer to response to Comment No. 11-8 and the General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-12

This comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should indicate the size of the potential compensation lands for sensitive plants to give decision makers an idea of the magnitude of the mitigation. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on page 12-17 notes that the areas not recently cleared could support sensitive plants and may need to be compensated. As shown in Figure 12-1, this constitutes a maximum area of approximately 4,656 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 5 and 4,593 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 6. Up to 5,840 acres would be cleared. The likelihood of finding sensitive plants covering the entire impact area is low. More likely, a few populations could be identified in small portions of the study area. When identifying compensation lands, District No. 20 will locate lands that satisfy the compensation requirements for any affected habitat for sensitive species. Therefore, any compensation lands for Joshua tree habitat would also provide habitat for sensitive plants.

Comment No. 11-13

This comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should indicate the size of the potential compensation lands for MGS and DT to give decision makers an idea of the magnitude of the mitigation. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes that the areas not recently cleared could support DT and MGS and may need to be compensated. As shown in Figure 12-1, this constitutes a maximum area of approximately 4,656 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 5 and 4,593 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 6. Up to 5,840 acres would be cleared.

District No. 20 would contract with a qualified biologist to perform presence/absence surveys for MGS and DT prior to any land disturbance. If either DT or MGS is found during the presence/absence surveys, DFG may require land compensation at a 3:1 ratio, or 13,968 acres in compensatory lands for the conversion of land in Agricultural Area No. 5 or 13,779 acres for Agricultural Area No. 6. However, DFG may reduce this ratio to a minimum of 1/2:1, depending on existing habitat quality to be removed as determined by the qualified biologist and DFG concurrence. It is worth noting that the West Mojave Plan establishes a recommended compensation

ratio of 1:1 for disturbance of habitat in the project location to mitigate potential impacts to all sensitive resources, including MGS and DT. Mitigation Measures 12-6 through 12-12 describe procedures necessary to adequately mitigate the loss of this amount of habitat.

Comment No. 11-14

The comment notes that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should discuss the magnitude of the mitigation for all biological resources to determine if the amount of mitigation would render the project infeasible. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates impacts to several species separately and identifies specific mitigation measures to compensate for loss of each sensitive resource. Compensation lands are or may be required for impacts to MGS, DT, Joshua tree habitat, and rare plants or plant communities. For each of these resources, impacts could occur generally in areas that have not been recently cleared. This constitutes approximately 4,656 acres within Agricultural Study Area No. 5 and 4,593 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 6. Since the presence of Joshua tree woodlands has been documented, destruction of these areas shown in Figure 12-1 (up to 727 acres within Agricultural Study Area No. 5 and 712 acres in Agricultural Study Area No. 6) will require compensation at a 1:1 ratio. If MGS or DT are identified in the impact area, compensation lands would be required at a ratio of between 1/2:1 and 3:1. It is worth noting that the West Mojave Plan establishes a recommended compensation ratio of 1:1 for disturbance of habitat in the project location to mitigate potential impacts to all sensitive resources, including MGS and DT.

When identifying compensation lands, District No. 20 will locate lands that satisfy the compensation requirements for all the affected sensitive species. Therefore, the compensation lands for Joshua tree habitat could also provide habitat for MGS and DT.

Comment No. 11-15

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed storage reservoir liner. District No. 20 commissioned a geotechnical investigation to determine liner requirements for the proposed storage reservoirs. It was concluded that nearly all the soils within the proposed reservoir site consist of varying degrees of sand, which will require a synthetic liner as part of construction to prevent excessive leakage. The proposed project specifies that the floors and sidewalls of the storage reservoirs will be constructed by excavating and re-compacting native soils, and that a synthetic liner be installed to minimize infiltration. This construction will need to be approved by the RWQCB-LR and supported by a Water Quality Impact Analysis. In addition, the proposed project would store water of a higher quality (i.e., tertiary effluent with enhanced nitrogen removal) than is currently produced by the PWRP.

Impact 14-2 identifies that storage reservoirs could promote infiltration of effluent into the ground. Although the installation of a liner that entirely eliminates infiltration for the life of the project would not be possible, the mitigation measure ensures that a synthetic liner will be utilized to minimize infiltration and prevent groundwater degradation. Mitigation Measure 14-2 commits District No. 20 to incorporate liners that will effectively minimize the rate of infiltration. Depending on the type, liners may be theoretically impermeable or have very low permeabilities, typically between 10^{-9} to 10^{-12} cm/sec. In addition, a defect with an area of 1 cm^2/acre may also be considered in liner designs[1]. The loading of nitrogen, or other constituents, to the

[1] Giroud, J.P., Badu-Tweneboah, K., Bonaparte, R. 1992 Rate of Leakage through Composite Liner due to Geomembrane Defects. Geotextiles and Geomembranes, 11:1-28.

groundwater as a result of percolation of water through liners with such low permeabilities and small defect areas is expected to be minimal, and groundwater concentrations are expected to remain close to background levels. As indicated above, District No. 20 will perform an analysis, which will determine potential effects to groundwater as a result of possible percolation of recycled water through the bottom of the lined reservoirs and submit it to the RWQCB-LR in order to obtain a permit for the use of the reservoirs as impoundments of recycled water.

Comment No. 11-16

The comment states that the effectiveness of the FMP has not been adequately described, and therefore, the effectiveness of the mitigation is in question. The contents of the FMP are listed in Mitigation Measure 14-3. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR commits District No. 20 to the application of treated effluent at agronomic rates. The FMP provides an adaptive management tool to ensure that the project objectives are met. The FMP establishes a mechanism to manage irrigation scheduling and groundwater monitoring to ensure compliance with the WDRs. District No. 20 has prepared a FMP for existing agricultural reuse operations in the EMS, which was approved by the RWQCB-LR on March 30, 2001, as a working document. In addition, District No. 20 has retained a certified agronomist and soil scientist to develop and manage a crop irrigation schedule for ensuring that effluent is applied at agronomic rates to the existing water reuse sites. A qualified agronomist would assist in developing an irrigation schedule for future sites. Implementation of the RWQCB-approved FMP will assist in mitigating the potential for degrading groundwater in the future.

Comment No. 11-17

The comment questions who will conduct the farming and whether the product will be disposed of as waste. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR proposes that farming will be conducted by experienced farmers under contract or lease agreement with District No. 20, as is the case at the existing EMS. As required in Mitigation Measure 14-3, a FMP that includes crop selection, irrigation scheduling, effluent water quality monitoring, crop production evaluation, and other measures will be implemented to ensure that agricultural practices are properly conducted and monitored. The ultimate responsibility to ensure effective farming is District No. 20's. District No. 20 anticipates that high quality crops will be produced equivalent to the quality of crops grown with potable water. It is not the intent of District No. 20 that the resulting crop be disposed of as waste.

Comment No. 11-18

The comment states that the Project Description does not indicate that land application will be eliminated and that water recharge can occur by injection. The components of the proposed project, described in Chapters 6 and 7 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, include those facilities that must be developed to implement the proposed project. Land application is not included as an effluent management method because it is one of several measures identified by the RWQCB-LR that collectively would demonstrate District No. 20's compliance with the CDO to cease the discharge of nitrogen to groundwater that creates a condition of pollution. The CDO requires compliance with this section by October 15, 2008. This point has been clarified in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on pages 6-2 and 6-14.

It is true that groundwater recharge can occur by injection as well as by surface spreading; however, neither of these methods of effluent management is included in the proposed project. District No. 20 did not include groundwater recharge as a means to manage effluent because it could not be implemented by the PWRP in the timeframe necessary. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-19

The comment notes that although the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR states that the environmentally superior alternative is infeasible due to costs, those costs are not identified; it continues to note that all costs associated with project implementation should be identified. CEQA (Section 15126.6(f)(1)) acknowledges that economic viability may make an alternative infeasible. All costs associated with implementation of the proposed project, including environmental mitigation costs, are identified and enumerated in Table 7-5 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Based on cost estimates prepared by District No. 20, MF/RO costs at least 70 percent more than tertiary treatment with agricultural reuse to construct and operate. To ensure that the costs associated with MF/RO were representative, District No. 20 contacted other agencies that use this technology. For example, the low bid (opened on March 16, 2004) for construction of MF/RO as part of Orange County Water District's Groundwater Replenishment System was used in determining accurate, current cost values for MF/RO unit construction. Refer to response to Comment No. P-1 in Chapter 27 and General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-20

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR fails to address several existing and proposed land uses within Agricultural Study Area No. 6 including the following:

Existing Caltrans highway right-of-way along Avenues P-7 and P-8.

The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identifies agricultural study areas within which property would be purchased for conversion to agriculture. The study areas are larger than the 5,140 acres needed for effluent management purposes. The Caltrans right-of-way noted in the comment would be located on the southern edge of Agricultural Area No. 6. Providing appropriate setbacks for a future roadway in this location would not substantially reduce land available for agriculture within Agricultural Study Area No. 6.

Soil stabilization and restoration sites operated by Dustbusters and the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation west of 70th Street between Avenues M and N.

Reconnaissance land use surveys conducted in the area did not identify any permanent structures in this area, although Figure 12-1 identifies this area to be cleared of natural vegetation. Property acquisition for conversion to agriculture would remove existing land uses. Since the agricultural study area is larger than the 5,140 acres needed for conversion to agriculture, some existing uses on the edges of operating fields may be avoided. This would be determined during the property acquisition process.

Active research sites operated by Dustbusters east of 70th Street south of N-4 and east of 90th Street at Avenue O-8.

Reconnaissance land use surveys conducted in the area did not identify any permanent structures in this area. Property acquisition for conversion to agriculture would remove existing land uses including these research sites.

The 10-acre site leased to Picture Vehicle Rentals at 93rd Street and Avenue P.

Figure 9-1 identifies a structure at this location. Property acquisition for conversion to agriculture would remove existing land uses including this structure and business.

The 8-acre Southern California Edison substation site at Avenue O and 90th Street.

Although reconnaissance land use surveys conducted in the area did not identify any permanent structures in this area, Southern California Edison maintains a substation facility in this location. Property acquisition for conversion to agriculture would remove existing land uses. However, since the agricultural study area is larger than the 5,140 acres needed for conversion to agriculture, some existing uses on the edges of operating fields may be avoided. District No. 20 may be able to avoid facilities that provide critical public services for the area. District No. 20 will work with SCE to avoid impacts to this substation or to relocate its facilities if necessary.

A future restoration project site requested by the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation at 90th Street and Avenue P covering 960 acres.

Figure 12-1 identifies a large area (approximately 320 acres) that is essentially cleared of natural vegetation. Property acquisition for conversion to agriculture would displace future soil restoration projects in this location by the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation.

A proposed Joshua tree bank to be operated through the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District.

The proposed Joshua tree bank would be established presumably to mitigate impacts to Joshua trees resulting from expansion of the airport. As noted in General Response: Airport Compatibility, LAWA proposed preparing a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) to protect and enhance this area. District No. 20 is not aware of any NRMP that has been prepared by LAWA. However, discussions with LAWA indicated that the scale of the proposed airport development may be reduced in future airport plans, and as a result, the conservation area may not be needed to the extent originally conceived. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR assumes that LAWA may be interested in selling, transferring, or leasing the land east of Little Rock Wash for purposes other than habitat conservation if the impacts associated with development of the PMD are less than originally envisioned. Furthermore, since no development restrictions, NRMP, or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property, any necessary habitat compensation land could be located off site. Figure 12-1 identifies the location of low-density and moderate-density Joshua tree woodland within the agricultural study areas. Purchasing of property for conversion to agriculture would displace Joshua tree woodland within the agricultural study areas. Impact 12-10 commits District No. 20 to providing off site compensation lands at a 1:1 ratio for affected Joshua tree woodland.

Comment No. 11-21

The comment states that Table ES-2 should show that groundwater recharge and municipal use can accommodate the recycled water flows for the PWRP and are therefore feasible. Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025

Plan and EIR describes District No. 20's alternatives screening process. The analysis concludes on page 6-19 that municipal reuse could be included as a project component, but could not accommodate full effluent disposal capacity requirements of the project. A study conducted in 1997 determined that reuse sites, such as parks, school grounds, golf courses, etc., in District No. 20 could use up to 7.8 mgd. No groundwater recharge projects have been proposed in the Antelope Valley that could utilize effluent from the PWRP at this time. Because of the time constraints involved in developing such a project (discussed in Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR), groundwater recharge could not accommodate the recycled water flows from the PWRP within the project's time schedule. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-22

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR's estimate of 7.8 mgd of municipal reuse demand (pp. ES-7) is not documented and seems low. This estimate was obtained from a Reclamation and Feasibility Study Draft Report prepared by Metcalf and Eddy for the City of Palmdale in 1997. The report documents projected recycled water demand for irrigation of existing and proposed schools, parks, greenbelt areas, golf courses, and one cemetery. The report is referenced in the text of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on page ES-7.

Comment No. 11-23

The comment states that the alleged difficulties of obtaining a permit for direct or indirect recharge are not documented. Appendix E of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes an analysis of the potential difficulties in obtaining a permit for groundwater recharge. As shown in the appendix, only four recharge projects are currently permitted in the State of California. The County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County provides recycled water for two of them. Each of these projects was constructed prior to 1980. In fact, no projects have been permitted in the state of California since 1976. Only three new groundwater recharge projects are planned for implementation in the next few years. Based on the various obstacles facing a groundwater recharge project, including the difficulty of obtaining permits, the analysis predicts that implementing a similar project in the Antelope Valley would likely take a minimum of ten years. District No. 20 will continue to explore and support this reuse option as opportunities emerge. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-24

The comment states that advanced treatment with MF/RO should be the preferred treatment alternative and groundwater recharge and municipal reuse should be the preferred effluent management alternatives. The effluent management alternatives of agricultural and municipal reuse were considered to be more cost effective with tertiary treatment than MF/RO and attainable within the time frame required by the RWQCB-LR's orders. Refer to the response to Comment No. P-1 in Chapter 27 and General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Groundwater recharge was considered by District No. 20 as an effluent management alternative. The alternative was rejected since it could not be implemented within the timeframe set forth by project objectives. However, District No. 20 remains interested in working with regional partners to develop a groundwater recharge project. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-25

The comment states that the estimated preferred alternative project's capital and O&M costs are too low. District No. 20 acknowledges that the proposed project capital and O&M costs are higher than originally estimated. These estimates were originally based on previous LACSD treatment plant projects and current industry-wide costs. Cost information has recently been refined during detailed design of similar upgrades and expansion of the LWRP, which has shown construction costs to be higher. Table 7-5 and 7-7 of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR have been revised accordingly. However, costs estimated for biological and cultural mitigation and land acquisition were based on recent experiences in developing similar land north of the proposed project site as a part of the LWRP Effluent Management Site. In regards to the biological and cultural mitigation estimate, District No. 20 maintains that this cost estimate is realistic and based on preliminary assessments of the project site by qualified experts. Finally, weed control and mosquito abatement are two of many operation and maintenance activities that are factored into the annual O&M costs.

Comment No. 11-26

The comment states that creation of 700 acres of storage reservoirs and 5,100 acres of agricultural land near USAF Plant 42 and the PMD would increase the potential for bird air strike hazards. The FAA's Advisory Circular (AC) No. 150/5200-33A provides guidance on land use practices that have potential to attract hazardous wildlife on or near airports. Land use practices having the potential to attract birds within five miles of the existing USAF Plant 42/PMD include agriculture, undeveloped open space, and the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events, as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing treatment and effluent management facilities, or that a WHA has been prepared by USAF Plant 42 or PMD. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project proposes upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project also has a less than significant impact on airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-27

The comment states that proposed storage reservoirs would be a breeding ground for mosquitoes and increase the risk of West Nile virus. Impact 22-2 states that, without proper management, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR could increase insect populations. Mitigation Measure 22-1 commits District No. 20 to implementing an insect control program. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that an effective insect control program would minimize the effects of the project on insect population. Currently, District No. 20 operates 149 acres of oxidation ponds and 1,220 acres of fodder crop agriculture. In addition, substantial agriculture currently exists throughout the region. Implementing insect control measures, the increase in agricultural acreage and storage reservoirs proposed in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not introduce new land uses that could significantly increase mosquito growth potential. Consequently implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not increase the risk of West Nile virus.

Comment No. 11-28

The comment states that the project would significantly impact future airport operations. However, District No. 20 disagrees with LAWA's contention that the Draft 2025 Plan and EIR's proposed project would interfere

with future development of PMD. Based on LAWA's January 2005 NOP of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD, the existing USAF Plant 42 airfield has adequate capacity to accommodate forecast aircraft operations and will continue to be utilized for all aircraft operations through 2030. Construction of new runways, as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the originally proposed PIA, is not included as part of any of the proposed alternatives developed in the Master Plan for PMD. Furthermore, District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. The proposed project is compatible with recommendations made by AC No. 150/5200-33A; therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed project will have less than significant impact on existing and future aviation uses. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-29

The comment states that the preferred alternative will not remove TDS from the effluent, that approximately 17,760 tons of salts per year would be deposited to the soil and, therefore constitute a significant impact of the project. It is projected that TDS levels resulting from the proposed project will be approximately 600 mg/L. This estimate includes the increase in TDS levels resulting from the addition of disinfection facilities scheduled to be on-line prior to the certification of the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Total TDS produced by the proposed project is estimated to be approximately 10,500 tons/year in 2009, increasing incrementally as the volume of influent increases.

Mitigation Measure 14-3 requires District No. 20 to implement a FMP outlining procedures for ensuring that recycled water is applied at agronomic rates to minimize the potential for infiltration. Mitigation Measure 15-3 requires the FMP to include BMPs for salinity management to reduce the potential for TDS accumulation in the crop root zone or transport to the groundwater. This will involve carefully controlled irrigation rates to carry TDS out of the root zone but not to the groundwater table (leaching). This method of irrigation will be effective in minimizing impacts to groundwater quality and reducing the impact of TDS to a less-than-significant level. A network of monitoring wells installed both up and down gradient of the agricultural reuse site will verify that management practices are effective at maintaining groundwater quality. Refer to the response to Comment No. 9-1 for additional information.

Comment No. 11-30

The comment states that Impact 22-2 is "significant" because the preferred alternative would promote the breeding of mosquitoes and the potential for West Nile virus disease. Impact 22-2 states that, without proper management, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR could increase insect populations. Mitigation Measure 22-1 commits District No. 20 to implementing an insect control program. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that an effective insect control program would minimize the effects of the project on mosquito production. Currently, District No. 20 operates 149 acres of oxidation ponds and 1,220 acres of fodder crop agriculture. In addition, substantial agriculture currently exists throughout the region. By implementing insect control measures, the increase in agricultural acreage and storage reservoirs proposed in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not introduce new land uses that could significantly increase mosquito growth potential. Consequently implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not increase the risk of West Nile virus.

Comment No. 11-31

The comment states that it is factually incorrect to state that the oxidation ponds do not promote significant infiltration since they are unlined. Groundwater quality concerns related to current PWRP operations are thoroughly addressed through the CAO and CDO issued to District No. 20 in November 2003 and October 2004, respectively. The CAO requires District No. 20 and LAWA to clean up and abate the elevated nitrate levels identified in the groundwater beneath the EMS (including the oxidation ponds). The CDO supercedes the abatement portion of the CAO and imposes a timeline for implementing various abatement measures, of which the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is one component (see Chapter 1, page 1-5). The CAO and CDO can be found in Appendices C and D, respectively. District No. 20 is currently working with LAWA and the RWQCB-LR to implement a Containment and Remediation Plan approved in April 2005, which is a separate project from what is described in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 9-4 and 11-2 for additional information.

Comment No. 11-32

The comment states that the Project Alternative Analysis section (Chapter 6) is completely flawed. Chapter 6 summarizes the alternative screening process conducted by District No. 20 to identify a proposed project. Since no specific comment as to the chapter's adequacy is provided, no specific response is possible. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-33

The comment states that the proposed project should include MF/RO treatment. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates MF/RO as a treatment alternative. The effluent management alternatives of agricultural and municipal reuse were considered to be more cost effective with tertiary treatment than MF/RO and attainable within the timeframe of the project objectives. Refer to the response to Comment No. P-1 in Chapter 27 and General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 11-34

The comment, using FAA Advisory Circular (AC) No. 150/5200-33 as reference, states that page 9-10 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR should be revised to reflect that the proposed project is considered an incompatible land use due to increased potential for bird air strike hazards. The comment references an FAA AC that is no longer in effect. On July 27, 2004, AC No. 150/5200-33A superceded AC No. 150/5200-33. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the referenced AC does not indicate that the proposed agricultural reuse is "an incompatible land use." It states that agricultural reuse "may be compatible with safe airport operation."

AC No. 150/5200-33A notes that wastewater treatment facilities and associated retention ponds (storage reservoirs) as well as agriculture are land use practices that have the potential to attract hazardous wildlife and threaten aviation safety. However, because not every existing land use practice, such as the PWRP and current EMS, on or near an airport that potentially attracts hazardous wildlife, actually does, the FAA has outlined procedures by which an actual hazard can be identified. An investigation is first triggered by the occurrence of specific triggering events on or near an airport. If the triggering events meet the criteria as outlined in Part 139 of 14 CFR, a WHA is required. The FAA will then "consider the results of the WHA, along with the

aeronautical activity at the airport and the views of the airport operator and airport users, in determining whether a formal WHMP is needed. If the FAA determines that a WHMP is needed, the airport operator must formulate and implement a WHMP, using the WHA as a basis for the plan."

Land use practices having the potential to attract birds within five miles of the existing USAF Plant 42/PMD include agriculture, undeveloped open space, and the PWRP treatment and effluent management facilities. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events, as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing treatment and effluent management facilities, or that a WHA has been prepared by USAF Plant 42 or PMD. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project proposes upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project has a less than significant impact on airport operations and is not incompatible with safe airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

Comment No. 11-35

The comment states that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR needs to address mosquitoes and the West Nile virus. Impact 22-2 states that, without proper management, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR could increase insect populations. Mitigation Measure 22-1 commits District No. 20 to implementing an insect control program. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that an effective insect control program would minimize the effects of the project on insect populations. Currently, District No. 20 operates 149 acres of oxidation ponds and 1,220 acres of fodder crop agriculture. In addition, substantial agriculture currently exists throughout the region. By implementing insect control measures, the increase in agricultural acreage and storage reservoirs proposed in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not introduce new land uses that could significantly increase mosquito growth potential. Consequently, implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would not increase the risk of West Nile virus.

Comment No. 11-36

The comment states that District No. 20 must clean up the nitrate contamination in the groundwater and provide sufficient treatment to its effluent so that there is no further contamination. Groundwater quality concerns related to current PWRP operations are thoroughly addressed through the CAO and CDO issued to District No. 20 in November 2003 and October 2004, respectively. The CAO requires District No. 20 and LAWA to clean up and abate the elevated nitrate levels identified in the groundwater beneath the EMS (including the oxidation ponds). The CDO supercedes the abatement portion of the CAO and imposes a timeline for implementing various abatement measures, of which the draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is one component (see Chapter 1, page 1-5). The CAO and CDO can be found in Appendices C and D, respectively. District No. 20 is currently working with LAWA and the RWQCB-LR to implement a CRP approved in April 2005, which is a separate project from what is described in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. As noted on page ES-4, one objective of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is to "provide a long-term solution for meeting water quality requirements set forth by regulatory agencies." The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates treatment and effluent management alternatives to avoid future degradation of groundwater and includes implementing a groundwater monitoring program in compliance with Title 22 of the CCR and RWQCB permit requirements. Refer to the response to Comment No. 11-2 for additional information.

Comment No. 11-37

The comment states that LAWA will not allow its property to be used in a manner that increases the safety risks to pilots and passengers and that inhibits LAWA's ability to develop the property as a major regional airport in the future, including disturbing lands intended as on site mitigation as resource conservation areas. Based on LAWA's January 2005 NOP of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD, the existing USAF Plant 42 airfield has adequate capacity to accommodate forecast aircraft operations and will continue to be utilized for all aircraft operations through 2030. Construction of new runways, as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the originally proposed PIA, is not included as part of any of the proposed alternatives developed in the Master Plan for PMD. Furthermore, District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. The proposed project is compatible with recommendations made by AC No. 150/5200-33A; therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed project will have less than significant impact on existing and future aviation uses.

Regarding lands intended as resource conservation areas, no development restrictions, NRMP, or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-38

The comment states that LAWA will not allow its property to be used in a manner that creates safety risks to the pilots and passengers at USAF Plant 42 and any future expansion of the Palmdale International Airport. Based on LAWA's January 2005 NOP of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD, the existing USAF Plant 42 airfield has adequate capacity to accommodate forecast aircraft operations and will continue to be utilized for all aircraft operations through 2030. Construction of new runways, as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the originally proposed PIA, is not included as part of any of the proposed alternatives developed in the Master Plan for PMD. Furthermore, District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project recommends upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project has a less than significant impact on present and future airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 11-39

The comment states that LAWA will not allow its lands to be used in a manner that destroys the Natural Resource Conservation Areas. During the 1970s, LAWA proposed preparing a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) to protect and enhance conservation areas. District No. 20 is not aware of any NRMP that has been prepared by LAWA. Since no development restrictions, NRMP, or recorded conservation easements were identified for the property, any necessary habitat compensation land could be located off site. Refer to response to Comment No. 11-8 and General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
"Creating Community Through People, Parks and Programs"

June 16, 2005

Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Mr. Highter:

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY-DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (DEIR) FOR THE PALMDALE WATER RECLAMATION PLANT 2025 FACILITIES PLAN

The DEIR for the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan has been reviewed for potential impact on the facilities of this Department. The project will not impact facilities under the jurisdiction of this Department. 12-1

Thank you for including this department in the review of this project. If we may be of further assistance, please contact Bryan Moscardini, Park Project Coordinator, at (213) 351-5133.

Sincerely,

Bryan Moscardini
Park Project Coordinator

JUN 17 2005 AM07:53 DOC # 506140 HIGHTER S-AN

Executive Offices - 433 South Vermont Avenue - Los Angeles, CA 90020-1975 - (213) 738-2961

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COMMENT LETTER 12: COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Comment No. 12-1

The comment states that the proposed project would not affect facilities under jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. The comment is noted and no response is necessary.

LETTER 3

U.S Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Western-Pacific Region
Airports Division

Federal Aviation Administration
P.O. Box 92007
Los Angeles, CA 90009-2007

VIA FACSIMILE

June 17, 2005

Mr. Steven W. Highter SWH
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, California 90601

Dear Mr. Highter:

**Draft Environmental Impact Report for the
Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is providing the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan.

The County's proposal to construct water storage reservoirs in the immediate vicinity of the Palmdale Production Flight/Test Installation Air Force Plant 42 (Air Force Plant 42) where the existing Palmdale Regional Airport (PMD) is located has the potential to create an unacceptable bird strike hazard near an airport. The potential for bird strikes and other wildlife hazard attractants has not been adequately evaluated in the Draft EIR. Further, as shown on Figure 7-6 of the Executive Summary of the Draft EIR, several water storage reservoirs are proposed to be located on and immediately east of property designated for the future Palmdale International Airport. 13-1

The location of these storage reservoirs is inconsistent with siting guidance provided in Paragraph 1-3 of FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33 "*Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or near Airports.*" A copy of this Advisory Circular is available on-line at: www.faa.gov/arp/pdf/5300-33.pdf. This guidance recommends a distance of not less than five (5) miles from a wildlife attractant and an aircraft movement area of an airport for approach and departure airspace. This criterion also applies to the proposed Palmdale International Airport.

Based on the information disclosed in the Draft EIR and the standards described in Advisory Circular 150/5200-13, the FAA objects to the proposal to construct storage reservoirs that would be located east of PMD and immediately east of the ends of the future runways at Palmdale International Airport. FAA objects to the proposal to construct storage reservoirs on airport property. This proposal is inconsistent with the Airport Layout Plan on file with the FAA for the future airport, as submitted by the city of Los Angeles. Construction of storage reservoirs would create an unacceptable attractant to wildlife. Large bodies of water such as these can also attract birds becoming a collision hazard to aircraft. 13-2

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The FAA's statutory mission, as directed by the U.S. Congress, is to ensure the safe and efficient use of navigable airspace in the United States. Pursuant to Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations Part 77, *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, Los Angeles County must submit a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alternation (FAA Form 7460-1) to the FAA for this proposal. This action is necessary so FAA can evaluate the potential hazard to air navigation that may be created by these proposed storage reservoirs. FAA recommends that this analysis be conducted before the EIR is certified pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970. 13-3

Further, we recommend Los Angeles County contact Los Angeles World Airports to obtain a copy of the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for Palmdale International Airport to show the location of the proposed new runways. We recommend that a copy of the ALP be included in the Final EIR to inform the decision makers and the public of the location of the future airport and the existing facilities at Air Force Plant 42 in relation to the proposal. FAA recommends that Los Angeles County work with LAWA and the FAA to broaden its search area for locations for storage reservoir sites that are not closer than five miles from the nearest runway end at an airport. 13-4

Please call me at 310/725-3615 if you have any questions about this matter.

Sincerely,

David B. Kessler, AICP
Regional Environmental Protection Specialist

cc: LAWA

COMMENT LETTER 13: FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION – WESTERN DIVISION

Comment No. 13-1

The comment states that storage reservoirs have the potential to create an unacceptable bird air strike hazard near the existing Palmdale Regional Airport. District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project recommends upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities (including storage reservoirs) in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project has a less than significant impact on present and future airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 13-2

The comment states that the project facilities would be inconsistent with the siting guidance provided in "Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports" (FAA AC 150/5200-33) for both the existing PMD and the proposed PIA. It should be noted that on July 2, 2004, the FAA issued an AC No. 150/5200-33A, which supercedes AC 150/5200-33. According to FAA AC 150/5200-33A, water treatment facilities are not considered inconsistent with siting guidance provided in "General Separation Criteria for Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports." Rather, the AC considers them to be land use practices that potentially attract hazardous wildlife and recommends that airport operators immediately correct any wildlife hazards arising from existing wastewater treatment facilities located on or near an airport.

Based on LAWA's January 2005 NOP of a Draft EA/EIR for future development recommended by the proposed Master Plan for PMD, the existing USAF Plant 42 airfield has adequate capacity to accommodate forecast aircraft operations and will continue to be utilized for all aircraft operations through 2030. Construction of new runways, as described in the 1978 and 1982 environmental documents for the originally proposed PIA, is not included as part of any of the proposed alternatives developed in the Master Plan for PMD. Furthermore, District No. 20 is not aware of any specific triggering events (evidence of a potential hazard), as defined by Part 139 of 14 CFR, resulting from the operation of the existing District No. 20 treatment and effluent management facilities that would confirm the existence of associated safety risks. Therefore, it can be concluded that no hazard from current PWRP operations exists. The proposed project recommends upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Therefore, the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the project has a less than significant impact on present and future airport operations. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 13-3

The comment states that District No. 20 must submit a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration (FAA Form 7460-1) to the FAA for this proposed project in order for the FAA to evaluate the potential air strike hazard. Section 4-3 of Advisory Circular 150/5200-33A does not require, but rather encourages the submittal of FAA Form 7460-1 to notify the FAA of proposed land use practice changes in the vicinity of public use airports. The proposed project recommends upgrades and expansion of the existing facilities in a manner that is

consistent with AC No. 150/5200-33A. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for further information.

Comment No. 13-4

The comment recommends that District No. 20 obtain a copy of the Airport Layout Plan for the PIA and include it in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR with a map that shows the relation between the proposed project, PIA, and USAF Plant 42. District No. 20 is aware of the Airport Layout Plan associated with the proposed PIA plan evaluated in a 1978 Environmental Impact Statement. After meeting with LAWA, it is District No. 20's understanding that the existing runway facilities at USAF Plant 42 will accommodate LAWA's air traffic needs for the PMD through the year 2030. This was confirmed by the NOP that LAWA released in January 2005 for the Master Plan for the PMD. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

NEB

June 16, 2005

Mr. Steve Highter
Supervising Engineer
Planning Department
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
P. O. Box 4998
Whittier, CA 90607-4998

Subject: Comments Regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and Draft Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan (PWRP 2020 Facilities Plan)

Dear Steve:

I hope this input will assist the Districts in designing a project that will be more acceptable to the community in Antelope Valley, assist the groundwater adjudication and further the long term interests of the Districts.

I am deeply concerned about the content, and therefore the validity of both the subject documents. Both are riddled with factual errors, miscalculations, misstatements and misleading information that I believe the Districts should correct. In its present form, the DEIR cannot be certified without making extensive substantive changes. As it stands, I believe it is significantly flawed in many important areas.

14-1

My discussions of the more significant shortcomings are as follows. My intention is not to nit-pick, dwell on small details, or repeat comments of others. I, University of California Extension Farm Advisors, and many of the Districts' staff have made many of these recommendations to the Districts in the past, to no avail.

On Page iii of the Forward, the following is stated "The Sanitation Districts will publish responses to all comments received in a final version of this document …" The Districts refused to respond in writing or otherwise to most comments received in the Lancaster DEIR and Facilities Plan and I encourage the Districts to respond to comments about the subject document.

Lack of Trust of the Districts by the Community

14-2

I have never met anyone, familiar with the Districts, who trust them. This conclusion, I believe, is based on the Districts track record in Antelope Valley, their planning now and in the future, their relationships with public and the subject documents.

14-2 (cont.)

As a result, the Districts should be prohibited from undertaking projects such as this one that have great probability of causing negative environmental effects on the community.

Other Alternatives

14-3

Perhaps the most prominent omission in these documents is the failure to consider, or even mention the option of "Incidental Recharge" of treated wastewater to creeks such as Big Rock or Little Rock. The Districts operate a project similar to this alternative in Valencia and the public has been given the impression that the Districts are intentionally deceiving the ratepayers by not acknowledging this alterative exists and analyzing this alternative in detail. The statements that over a decade will be required to implement an "Intentional Groundwater Recharge" project such as spreading basins or deep well injection appear to have no basis in fact. You are aware that I have recently met with the staff of the California Department of Health Services and Regional Water Quality Control Board. Also, the Districts overstate the need for blending water. Note that the "Incidental Recharge" project the Districts are conducting in Valencia requires no blending water.

Relation Between the Proposed Project and the Existing Groundwater Contamination and Degradation in Palmdale

14-4

The second significant omission in these documents concerns the lack of environmental analysis of the effect of the proposed project on the existing contaminated and degraded groundwater plumes. Secondary treated effluent has been allowed to percolate into the soil for decades and has created a contaminated plume with nitrogen over the drinking water standards of 10 ppm. This contaminated plume covers a 4 square mile area encompassing 21,000 acre-feet of groundwater. Also, a degraded groundwater plume with nitrogen concentrations above the background covers a 10 square mile area and affects 290,000 acre-feet of groundwater. In addition to these existing plumes, the Districts are planning to discharge about another 600 tons of nitrogen into the soil. Considering this input as well as the fact that some of the nitrogen discharged earlier is probably held in the soil column in the form of ammonia and organic nitrogen, the plumes will most likely grow considerably. In addition, these plumes have ruined groundwater storage space and compromised one of the best natural and imported water recharge areas in the Valley, namely Little Rock Creek. The effect of the proposed project on these problems should be analyzed in detail in the subject documents.

Cultural or Farming Concepts

14-5

A great majority of the agricultural discussion in the subject documents is too elementary and superficial to be of much assistance. For instance, these documents indicate that the Districts do not understand the principles of farming with effluent, irrigation with effluent, agricultural site selection to use effluent, public health concerns in using effluent, management and farmer capabilities required to use effluent, and the ability to financially analyze an effluent reuse operation. Under these circumstances, I

14-5 (cont.)

believe the proposed operation is doomed to failure. A discussion of more specific comments follows.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Maintaining Adequate Production of Alfalfa

14-6

In reading the subject documents, I have concluded that the Districts do not understand perhaps the most important concept in using plants such as alfalfa to dispose of wastewater. To be sure to protect the groundwater, the production of alfalfa every year needs to be maintained at a sufficiently high level to use all of the nitrogen in the effluent. Given crop rotation, weather vagaries, varying soils, irrigation system deficiencies, etc., this goal is not easy to attain. As discussed later, not all farmers can accomplish this. Definite performance standards dealing with production must be applied to any farmer using effluent.

Method of Irrigation

14-7

Center pivot irrigation is often not a wise choice when using nitrogen laden water for irrigation for the reasons I presented at the Regional Board meetings and discussions with Districts' staff. Also, center pivots, require more land than flood irrigation because the corners of a field are usually not irrigated. As I and many farm advisors have discussed with the Districts already, sprinkler irrigation presents many practical problems not encountered in flood irrigation.

Quantity of Land Required

14-8

Please review your water balance and show the calculations determining the agricultural acreage and storage and treatment pond acreages. I suspect these are overstated by a factor of two.

Storage and Oxidation Pond Design

14-9

Several sections in this document discuss percolation through the bottom of these ponds to the groundwater. Perhaps small areas have a minimal impact, but in these documents, you are considering very large areas. Clay liners do not stop the transport of nitrogen to the groundwater, they merely slow down the transport. Using hydraulic conductivities of clay published in the literature, a nitrogen content in the effluent of 25 mg/l, the area of your projected reservoirs and ponds, and an assumed background level of nitrogen in the aquifer (e.g. about 1 mg/l), you can calculate the volume of groundwater that the reservoirs and ponds can possibly contaminate above the drinking water standards. I recommend that you do these calculations, present them in the subject documents, and discuss.

Financial Analysis

14-10

The cost estimates in the subject documents are significantly flawed because mptions are made that are not realistic. For example, the assumption that agricultural has no value in the future is obviously not correct. In reality, this land may be very able, an order of magnitude greater than present day value. Also, no income or tive cash flow is projected from agricultural operations. Agricultural operations, in rast to treatment plants, should earn money for the Districts or the community. I ld assume that the yearly costs of agricultural land to this project are only the ying costs, e.g. interest on money invested, etc. Please discuss more fully.

nagement

14-11

The subject documents assume that any farmer can successfully use effluent. I ve that the public will demand that whoever uses this water are respected individuals have accepted their responsibilities to the community to be environmental stewards are not primarily motivated by financial gain or other inappropriate intents.

I hope these comments will be constructive and helpful to the Districts. I will forward to your written comments. Please telephone me at (310) 440-8862 if you any questions.

Yours truly,

Eugene B. Nebeker, Ph.D., P.E.
President

COMMENT LETTER 14: NEBEKER, EUGENE

Comment No. 14-1

The comment expresses concern that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR is "riddled with factual errors, miscalculations, misstatements, and misleading information." The comment does not specifically address a concern about the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, therefore no response is necessary.

Comment No. 14-2

The comment states that District No. 20 is not trustworthy. District No. 20 has prepared the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR in good faith to plan for the future wastewater management needs of the City of Palmdale and surrounding areas of unincorporated Los Angeles County. The comment does not specifically address a concern about the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, therefore no response is necessary.

Comment No. 14-3

The comment suggests that discharge to Big Rock or Little Rock Washes be considered as an effluent management alternative. Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates effluent management alternatives including groundwater recharge and discharge to the local washes mentioned in the comment. As noted in Chapter 6, these alternatives were deemed infeasible since they did not meet the project objectives. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 14-4

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR fails to disclose how the existing groundwater contamination will be remediated. The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR would dispose of 600 tons of nitrogen into the soil. Figures 14-4 and 14-5 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identify the extent of the elevated levels of nitrogen in upper level of the groundwater below the EMS. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on page 14-3 discusses the process being undertaken by District No. 20 in coordination with the RWQCB-LR to remediate the elevated nitrogen levels. As noted on page 14-4, the remediation process may include extraction of contaminated groundwater. The remediation efforts address the existing groundwater contamination as well as future contamination that could occur as nitrogen from past surface application practices reaches groundwater. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has been prepared to ensure that nitrogen loading to groundwater decreases in the future. This is an objective of the project as noted on page ES-4 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR acknowledges on page 14-8 that future effluent will contain nitrogen. However, since the levels of nitrate would be less than the nitrate requirement of crops, they are expected to be readily absorbed. As part of the project, a groundwater monitoring system would be established around the storage reservoirs and the agricultural reuse areas to evaluate water quality effects of the project. The proposed project will include a nitrification/denitrification treatment process to reduce the nitrogen concentration in the effluent. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that nitrogen would be effectively managed to ensure protection of groundwater quality since nitrogen removal capabilities are included as part of the project and District No. 20 would be subject to water quality standard thresholds in their discharge permit.

Comment No. 14-5

The comment states that District No. 20 does not understand the principles of farming with effluent. District No. 20 is currently managing agricultural operations utilizing effluent in compliance with WDRs issued by the RWQCB-LR. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR commits District No. 20 to developing an FMP per Mitigation Measure 14-3 to ensure that agricultural practices are properly conducted and managed to protect the underlying groundwater and public health.

Comment No. 14-6

The comment states that to be protective of groundwater quality, alfalfa production must be maintained at sufficiently high levels to use all of the nitrogen in the effluent throughout the year. As required in Mitigation Measure 14-3, a FMP that includes crop selection, irrigation scheduling, effluent water quality monitoring, crop production evaluation, and other measures will be implemented to ensure that agricultural practices are properly conducted and monitored.

Comment No. 14-7

The comment states that the proposed method of irrigation (i.e., center pivot) is not the best choice when using nitrogen laden water because it requires more land than flood irrigation and presents many practical problems not encountered with flood irrigation. District No. 20 is currently managing agricultural reuse operations near the PWRP using center pivot irrigation systems in compliance with WDRs issued by the RWQCB-LR and anticipates utilizing similar irrigation systems for this project. Center pivots have a number of advantages over other irrigation methods, including better control and distribution of effluent to prevent ponding water that could promote excessive infiltration and vector nuisances. In addition, the nitrogen level in the effluent produced from tertiary treatment will be much lower. When followed by disinfection, as planned in the proposed project, the recycled water from the PWRP will not present a health concern.

Comment No. 14-8

The comment requests to review the water balance equations used to calculate the required agricultural and storage reservoir acreages. District No. 20 has developed a detailed water balance for the PWRP that includes all existing sources (e.g., influent and rainfall) and sinks (e.g., evaporation and reuse operations) for influent and effluent, respectively, and what additional treatment and effluent management facilities would be required to manage projected increases in wastewater flow. Two equations are used in the water balance to determine rainfall and evaporation affecting the project. The equations are listed below:

a) $Q_{evap} = E_p C_p A$ Evaporation

b) $Q_{rain} = PA$ Rainfall

Where Q represents flow, E_p represents pan evaporation data, C_p represents the pan coefficient, A represents the area, and P represents precipitation.

In the case of the proposed project, the water balance was developed for the purpose of determining the number of acres of agricultural reuse operations and storage reservoirs required to effectively manage PWRP

effluent. For example, Table 26-2 contains the PWRP water balance for the year 2025, which includes the wastewater inflow that the PWRP is projected to experience in 2025 (22.4 million gallons per day), the expected rainfall onto the open-surface facilities at the PWRP (e.g., storage reservoirs), an estimate of the evaporation losses from these facilities, and the irrigational requirements of the agricultural reuse operations (see Table below). Two unknown parameters were solved to determine the number of acres of new agricultural reuse operations and acres of new effluent storage reservoirs are required in order to satisfy a set of constraints. For example, a primary constraint is that the storage reservoirs must be empty by the start of each fall. The result of

Table 26-2
PWRP Water Balance at 22.4 mgd

CALENDAR													
Months	**OCT**	**NOV**	**DEC**	**JAN**	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**TOTAL**
Days	31	30	31	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	365
PALMDALE AREA RAINFALL, EVAPORATION AND PERCOLATION DATA													
Gains													
Rain (in)	0.3	0.7	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.4	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	8.0
Rain (mg/acre)	0.008	0.019	0.038	0.043	0.043	0.038	0.014	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.005	0.217
Total Gains (mg/acre)	**0.008**	**0.019**	**0.038**	**0.043**	**0.043**	**0.038**	**0.014**	**0.003**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.005**	**0.005**	**0.217**
Losses													
Evaporation Rate (in)	6.47	3.24	2.30	2.07	2.47	3.67	6.31	8.40	11.15	12.36	11.98	7.68	78.10
Evaporation (mg/acre)	0.148	0.074	0.053	0.047	0.056	0.084	0.144	0.192	0.255	0.282	0.274	0.175	1.7838
Total Losses (mg/acre)	**0.206**	**0.130**	**0.111**	**0.105**	**0.109**	**0.142**	**0.200**	**0.250**	**0.311**	**0.340**	**0.332**	**0.232**	**2.469**
AGRICULTURAL IRRIGATION INFORMATION FOR CENTER PIVOTS (ASSUMING 90% EFFICIENCY)													
Irrigation (in)	6.82	2.38	1.12	1.40	2.21	3.58	5.13	8.68	8.68	9.51	8.97	8.31	66.8
Irrigation (mg/acre)	0.185	0.065	0.030	0.038	0.060	0.097	0.139	0.236	0.236	0.258	0.243	0.226	1.813
PWRP													
Q_{IN}													
Total Influent (mg)	694.4	672.0	694.4	694.4	627.2	694.4	672.0	694.4	672.0	694.4	694.4	672.0	8176.0
Rainfall (mg)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total In (mg)	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**694.4**	**627.2**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**8176.0**
Q_{OUT}													
Evaporation (mg)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Out (mg)	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Q_{IN} - Q_{OUT} (mg)	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**694.4**	**627.2**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**694.4**	**694.4**	**672.0**	**8176.0**
AGRICULTURAL REUSE OPERATIONS													
Q_{IN}													
Flow Available (mg)	694.4	672.0	694.4	694.4	627.2	694.4	672.0	694.4	672.0	694.4	694.4	672.0	8176.0
Q_{OUT}													
Irrigation (mg)	760.8	265.3	124.7	156.6	246.2	399.6	572.2	968.6	968.6	1061.3	1000.6	927.1	7451.6
Q_{IN} - Q_{OUT} (mg)	**-66.4**	**406.7**	**569.7**	**537.8**	**381.0**	**294.8**	**99.8**	**-274.2**	**-296.6**	**-366.9**	**-306.2**	**-255.1**	**724.4**
STORAGE RESERVOIRS													
Q_{IN}													
Inflow (mg)	-66.4	406.7	569.7	537.8	381.0	294.8	99.8	-274.2	-296.6	-366.9	-306.2	-255.1	724.4
Rainfall (mg)	2.9	6.8	13.5	15.5	15.5	13.5	4.8	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.9	77.3
Total In (mg)	**-63.5**	**413.4**	**583.3**	**553.2**	**396.5**	**308.3**	**104.6**	**-273.3**	**-296.6**	**-366.9**	**-304.3**	**-253.1**	**801.7**
Q_{OUT}													
Evaporation (mg)	73.3	46.4	39.4	37.5	38.8	50.6	71.4	89.0	110.7	121.2	118.1	82.5	879.0
Total Out (mg)	**73.3**	**46.4**	**39.4**	**37.5**	**38.8**	**50.6**	**71.4**	**89.0**	**110.7**	**121.2**	**118.1**	**82.5**	**879.0**
Q_{IN} - Q_{OUT} (mg)	**-139.8**	**360.3**	**530.3**	**500.2**	**342.3**	**244.2**	**28.4**	**-363.2**	**-407.3**	**-488.1**	**-424.3**	**-337.6**	**-154.6**
$Vol_{reservoirs}$ (mg)	0.0	360.3	890.6	1390.8	1733.0	1977.3	2005.7	1642.5	1235.2	747.0	322.7	-14.8	
$Vol_{capacity}$ (mg)	2088	1728	1197	697	355	111	82	445	853	1341	1765	2103	

Storage Reservoirs	
Wetted Surface Area (acres)	
Total Area (ac)	473
Water Depth (ft)	18
Storage Reservoir Size (acres)	70
No. of Reservoirs	5.9

Agricultural Reuse Site	
Farmed Area (acres)	4110
Total Area (acres)	5138
No. of Center Pivots	32.9

Oxidation Ponds	
Wetted Surface Area (acres)	0.0

the two unknowns indicated by the water balance, which is determined in terms of farmed acres of land and wetted surface area of reservoirs, was adjusted to reflect the need for land for buffer, roads, reservoir berms, ancillary agricultural facilities, etc. Also included in the water balance calculations is the fact that District No. 20 must apply all treated effluent at agronomic rates.

Comment No. 14-9

The comment requests that the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR include calculations showing percolation estimates of storage and oxidation pond design.

Regarding the existing oxidation ponds, groundwater quality concerns related to current PWRP operations are thoroughly addressed through the responses to the CAO and CDO issued to District No. 20 in November 2003 and October 2004, respectively. The existing oxidation ponds, which are permitted under the PWRP's existing WDRs issued by the RWQCB-LR, will be permanently decommissioned and are not part of the proposed project. The CAO requires District No. 20 and LAWA to clean up and abate the elevated nitrate levels identified in the groundwater beneath the effluent management site (including the oxidation ponds). The CDO supercedes the abatement portion of the CAO and imposes a timeline for implementing various abatement measures, of which the proposed project is one component (see Chapter 1, page 1-5). The CAO and CDO can be found in Appendices C and D, respectively.

Regarding the proposed storage reservoirs, they will not be constructed with clay liners but with synthetic liners, which will have significantly lower permeabilities than clays. District No. 20 commissioned a geotechnical investigation to determine liner requirements for the proposed storage reservoirs. It was concluded that nearly all the soils within the proposed reservoir site consist of varying degrees of sand, which will require a synthetic liner as part of construction to prevent excessive leakage. The proposed project specifies that the floors and sidewalls of the storage reservoirs will be constructed by excavating and re-compacting native soils, and that a synthetic liner be installed to minimize infiltration. This construction will need to be approved by the RWQCB LR and supported by a Water Quality Impact Analysis. In addition, the proposed project would store water of a higher quality (i.e., tertiary effluent with enhanced nitrogen removal) than is currently produced by the PWRP.

Impact 14-2 identifies that storage reservoirs could promote infiltration of effluent into the ground. Although the installation of a liner that entirely eliminates infiltration for the life of the project would not be possible, the mitigation measure ensures that a synthetic liner will be utilized to minimize infiltration and prevent groundwater degradation. Mitigation Measure 14-2 commits District No. 20 to incorporate liners that will effectively minimize the rate of infiltration. Depending on the type, liners may be theoretically impermeable or have very low permeabilities, typically between 10^{-9} to 10^{-12} cm/sec. In addition, a defect with an area of 1 cm^2/acre may also be considered in liner designs[1]. The loading of nitrogen, or other constituents, to the groundwater as a result of percolation of water through liners with such low permeabilities and small defect areas is expected to be minimal, and groundwater concentrations are expected to remain close to background levels. As indicated above, District No. 20 will perform an analysis to determine potential effects to groundwater as a result of percolation of recycled water through the bottom of the lined reservoirs and submit it to the RWQCB LR in order to obtain a permit for the use of the reservoirs as impoundments of recycled water.

[1] Giroud, J.P., Badu-Tweneboah, K., Bonaparte, R. 1992 Rate of Leakage through Composite Liner due to Geomembrane Defects. Geotextiles and Geomembranes, 11:1-28.

Comment No. 14-10

The comment contends that the cost estimates in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR are flawed and should be discussed more fully because the assumptions are not realistic, such as the assumption that land has no value in the future and that no income or positive cash flow is projected from agricultural operations. The costs of a project generally are not addressed for purposes of CEQA review unless they affect the feasibility of the project. Furthermore, the future value of land, which not only is difficult to estimate, is not necessarily relevant when considering what a project alternative will cost the District No. 20 ratepayers in present dollars. Although the land acquired will have a value in the future, District No. 20 will not necessarily sell the land and relocate its effluent management operations after 20 years of operation in order to realize the appreciated value of the land it owns. In terms of the value of crops, District No. 20 is approaching the agricultural reuse operations strictly from an effluent management standpoint. It is entirely possible that the farming entities hired to manage the agricultural reuse operations will be entitled to any crops harvested. Therefore, the value of crops to District No. 20 cannot be estimated with any certainty.

Comment No. 14-11

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR incorrectly assumes that any farmer can successfully use effluent. District No. 20 is currently managing agricultural operations utilizing effluent in compliance with WDRs issued by the RWQCB-LR. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR commits District No. 20 to developing a FMP per Mitigation Measure 14-3 to ensure that agricultural practices are properly conducted and managed to protect the underlying groundwater and public health.

Steven Highter, P.E.
Supervising Engineer
Planning Section
County Sanitation District
of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Rd.
Whittier, Ca. 90601-1400

Re: Comments on the Draft EIR for the Palmdale Reclamation Plant 2025 Plan

Dear Steve:

Herein are my comments on the EIR.

Although the District adhered to the mandated notification procedures, I feel the homeowners in Study Area 5 should have been notified directly when the project began, regardless of what is mandated. 15-1

Impact 11-1:

Archeological and Paleontology studies have not been adequately done. These studies need to be done by qualified 'local' experts, especially in Study Zone 5, where many artifacts have already been recovered. 15-2

Impact 12-5:

In Study Area 5, there are a significant number of owls which nest and breed in the vacant irrigation pipes and outbuildings, as well as the trees. They have been breeding in this area for at least 12 years. I personally have two ravens which live and breed in my Joshua tree and have again been there for at least 12 years. Relocating these birds will impact 'natures chain' of wildlife. There are also families of Kit Foxes, again that have been established for many years, as well as Badgers. Also, the EIR does not identify all of the significant wildlife within Study Area 5. There are also Mojave Green Rattlesnakes, which are protected. Currently I have an Antelope seeking shelter on my property. I provide a pond for the wildlife in this area, to ensure they have adequate, available water. The wildlife need to be protected, not be made to relocate further away. At some point, they will have no where to go. 15-3

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Impact 14-2:

Standard Permeability Requirements need to be established prior to this projects approval due to the impact of groundwater degradation. The mitigation measure 14-2 does not ensure minimal infiltration. 15-4

Who will regulate the FMP? What measures will be implemented to protect groundwater quality? This impact cannot be mitigated to a 'less than significant' level. What are the mitigation measures to reduce the elevated salinity produced by use of reclaimed water? 15-5

Impact 14-5:

The EIR claims there are unknown wells, but that they will be identified. The wells for the entire area were mapped several years ago. The EIR does not reflect their accurate locations. 15-6

Impact 14-6:

My residence is located in the Flood Plain, which not only contains many types of soil, but also has a 'natural' flow direction. Construction of storage reservoirs and berms would alter the natural flow. Mitigation by 'Engineering considerations' is ambiguous and needs to be defined in the EIR. This is definitely a 'significant' impact. 15-7

Impact 16-1:

Air quality will be greatly impacted by increased farming due to the fugitive dust. Although Senate Bill 700 was implemented, the already existing fugitive dust is creating respiratory problems for Eastsiders, as well as creating traffic hazards due to decreased visibility and 'brown out' conditions. Your proposed mitigation measures 16-5 and 16-6 do not sufficiently address this impact. The EIR states that the wind blows for 'brief periods of time'. This is ludicrous. The winds often reach speeds in excess of 45 mph and can be sustained for days at a time. Simply requiring the tractors to reduce speeds to 15 mph is not going to mitigate this issue. 15-8

The humidity levels on the Eastside are already significantly higher, due to the irrigation from the current farming. How can this issue be mitigated? 15-9

Haz-Mat:

There is no mention in the EIR regarding compliance with OSHA PSM standards. There is also no mention of Public Receptors and their proposed locations.
What is the Aqueous Ammonia concentration percentage for the plant?
The chemical threshold quantities are not identified in the EIR. What are they?
What standards and procedures will be used for safe handling, storage and disposal of pesticides and all other chemicals. This is not defined thoroughly in the EIR. These are toxic chemicals and pose a threat to public health, if not dealt with properly. **15-10**

Alternative Technologies:

The EIR does not address other technologies such as Micro Filtration/Reverse Osmosis. There is documentation which supports the use of this method, resulting in less environmental impact as well as significant costs savings. **15-11**

Alternative Sites:

Alternative sites, such as south of Ave. N have been mentioned by Plant 42. This site was not addressed in the EIR. **15-12**

Throughout the EIR, impacts are noted as 'less than significant'. That is an ambiguous, blanket statement that explains nothing. It needs to be defined. **15-13**

In conclusion, I support the use of reclaimed water. It is a proven, viable use for wastewater in many communities. Antelope Valley, being a closed basin, presents different concerns as compared to areas that have access to the ocean. More thorough studies and analysis need to be done, such as consideration of the area south of Ave. N and the alternative technologies on this project before approval is granted. The desert is a very delicate and unique Eco System, which needs to be dealt with accordingly. Although I believe reclaimed water is a viable alternative **I do not, at this time, feel the County Sanitation District of Los Angeles County EIR contains sufficient supportive documentation to draw the conclusions as presented.** I hope the public's concerns are seriously considered and a more acceptable project can come forth, thus benefitting the valley, without impacting those in the identified areas. **15-14**

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy McKean
42561 100th St. East
Palmdale, Ca. 93591
661-946-8400

COMMENT LETTER 15: MCKEAN, KATHY

Comment No. 15-1

The comment states that, although District No. 20 adhered to the mandated notification procedures, homeowners within Agricultural Study Area No. 5 should have been notified directly. The purpose of the public outreach program was to engage Palmdale residents early on in the planning process to help formulate project alternatives. A proposed project site was not determined until much later in the process. Residents that were potentially affected by the proposed project were promptly notified through Notices of Availability that coincided with the release of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on April 29, 2005. Over 2,100 NOAs were mailed to property owners within 5,000 feet of either Study Area No. 6 (proposed site) or Study Area No. 5 (alternative site). Refer to Chapter 24: Public Outreach Overview for further information.

Comment No. 15-2

The comment states that archaeological and paleontological studies have not been performed adequately. Chapter 11 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates the project's potential effects on cultural resources including archaeological and paleontological resources in the project area. A cultural records search of the project area was conducted at the South Central Coastal Information Center. The records search noted that portions of the LAWA property west of Little Rock Wash had been previously surveyed. Findings of this survey are summarized on page 11-4 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes on page 11-6 that land disturbance in areas that have not been previously surveyed could encounter cultural resources. Therefore, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR commits District No. 20 to Mitigation Measures 11-1 through 11-5 to ensure that impacts would remain less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 11-1 requires that District No. 20 conduct a cultural resources inventory prior to any groundbreaking activities in areas outside previously surveyed LAWA property. The surveys would identify potential significant prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, human remains, and historic buildings and structures. Mitigation Measure 11-2 requires that District No. 20 avoid these resources if possible. If avoidance is infeasible, additional research including, but not limited to, archaeological excavation shall be conducted (Mitigation Measure 11-4). If the qualified archaeologist determines that there is a potential for cultural resources within an area to be disturbed, they shall be retained to monitor those activities (Mitigation Measure 11-3). Also, in the event that during groundbreaking activities cultural resources are unearthed, all work within 50 feet of the resource shall be halted and a qualified archaeologist shall assess the significance of the find, meet with the project proponent and/or lead agency to determine the appropriate avoidance measure or other appropriate mitigation, which may include scientific analysis, curation, and reporting to current professional standards (Mitigation Measure 11-5). The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes on page 11-8 that due to the recent age of the overlying soil (Quaternary alluvium, which has an age that is less than 18,000 years before present) at the proposed project site, the potential to find significant paleontological resources is low and, therefore, the impact is less than significant.

Comment No. 15-3

The comment states that there are significant biological resources within Agricultural Study Area No. 5, including owls, ravens, Joshua trees, kit foxes, badgers, Mohave green rattlesnakes, and antelope that the proposed project would impact. Chapter 12 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR summarizes the results of a survey

of biological resources in a large area that includes Agricultural Study Area No. 5. Each of the species listed in the comment are identified as being present in the area with the exception of the Mohave green rattlesnake, which is not known to live in the west Mojave area (Bureau of Land Management, 2005). The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides mitigation measures, including purchase of compensation lands to be used for conservation in perpetuity of special-status species, potential habitat for special-status species, and threatened habitat communities. These compensation lands would also provide habitat for species that have not been identified as special status. Refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 6-11, 6-12, and 17-3 for additional information.

Comment No. 15-4

The comment states that Mitigation Measure 14-2 does not ensure minimal infiltration and that standard permeability requirements need to be established prior to the project's approval. Mitigation Measure 14-2 requires the use of synthetic materials to line the proposed storage reservoirs to minimize infiltration. The RWQCB has not established standard permeability requirements for wastewater impoundments, but determines WDRs and liner impoundments on a case-by-case basis. Refer to the response to Comment No. 10-2 for additional information.

Comment No. 15-5

The comment asks (1) who will regulate the FMP, (2) what mitigation would be implemented to protect groundwater, and (3) what mitigation would be implemented to reduce elevated salinity produced by the waste effluent.

Chapter 3 outlines the laws and regulations that the proposed project would be subject to. The collection and treatment of wastewater and the management of treated wastewater effluent is subject to federal, state, and local regulations under the authority of a number of different federal, state, and local agencies including, but not limited to, the EPA, the Corps, the SWRCB, and the RWQCB-LR.

The PWRP would operate in conformance with regulations in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations, WRRs issued by the RWQCB-LR, and a FMP (approved by the RWQCB-LR). These controls ensure that groundwater impacts from the PWRP and effluent management are not significant. The FMP establishes a system of standard operating procedures to monitor and modify recycled water application rates, nutrient levels, and soil amendment requirements using best management practices (BMPs). BMPs identified in the FMP include utilizing recycled water and site-specific crop and soil data to evaluate appropriate agronomic application rates. Any expansion of agricultural reuse will be developed in a similar manner. Nitrogen levels will continue to be carefully monitored to ensure that the concentrations do not exceed crop requirements, which could result in excess nitrogen infiltrating to the groundwater. Water quality monitoring data will continue to be routinely collected to evaluate nitrogen concentrations. Using this data, recycled water application rates will continue to be modified based on total nitrogen loading and crop nitrogen uptake requirements following procedures outlined in the BMPs developed for the FMP. Nitrogen demand may vary during the life cycle of the crop. Once the conventional activated sludge (CAS) facilities are constructed, nitrogen levels and the potential for groundwater degradation will be substantially reduced. Furthermore, the CAS system would be operated in NDN mode to increase nitrogen removal from the effluent.

Although accumulation of TDS in the soil is a normal agricultural process in arid climates, TDS accumulation in the crop root zone and groundwater is a concern. The PWRP FMP includes irrigation scheduling BMPs to

reduce the potential for TDS accumulation in the crop root zone or transport to the groundwater. This involves carefully controlled irrigation rates to carry TDS out of the root zone but not to the groundwater table. Flushing the TDS beyond the root zone (leaching) is an irrigation method practiced in the Antelope Valley and other arid regions and is proven to be effective. The proposed project will minimize percolation of irrigation water beyond the root zone by utilizing appropriate irrigation (sprinkler system). However, there would still be the need for annual periods of leaching of salts, which could potentially lead to percolation to groundwater.

It is projected that TDS levels resulting from the proposed project will be approximately 600 mg/L. This estimate includes an increase in TDS levels resulting from the recent addition of disinfection facilities. Although the WDRs for the PWRP do not contain a limit for TDS, they do contain a narrative requirement that the discharge shall not cause a violation of any applicable water quality standards for receiving water (groundwater). The Basin Plan defines the water quality standards for groundwater at the PWRP based on designated beneficial uses such as municipal water supply. Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations contains drinking water limits for several constituents, including TDS. Irrespective of dilution effects or evapoconcentration, the projected effluent TDS is still well below the recommended secondary upper level drinking water standard of 1000 mg/L, and the recommended maximum drinking water standard of 1,500 mg/L contained in Title 22. In April 2004 Geomatrix Consultants, Inc, (Geomatrix), prepared an analysis of the impact of TDS to the local groundwater using a groundwater model previously submitted and approved by the RWQCB-LR (June 2003 Antidegradation Analysis). The model results indicate a localized increase of TDS levels in the groundwater under the effluent management areas. However, the predicted levels remain below the recommended secondary upper level drinking water standard.

A network of monitoring wells installed both up and down gradient of the agricultural reuse will verify that management practices are effective at maintaining groundwater quality. The Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes that the agricultural operations would not significantly impact groundwater quality based on the commitment to apply treated effluent at agronomic rates, the implementation of a FMP outlining best management practices to be followed to ensure that agronomic application rates are maintained, the increased level of treatment to be provided, the history of agricultural reuse in the region, the requirement to obtain WRRs from RWQCB-LR to ensure protection of beneficial uses of groundwater, and the installation of a groundwater monitoring network.

Mitigation Measures 14-2, 14-3, 14-4, 14-6, and 14-7 (pages 14-7 through 14-11) are proposed to protect groundwater quality. Refer to the responses to Comment Nos. 9-1 and 9-15 for additional information.

Comment No. 15-6

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not reflect the accurate location of wells within the proposed project site, even though the wells were mapped a few years ago. Due to the large study area and multiple alternative sites, a comprehensive well survey was not conducted. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR assumes that numerous wells in various states of use and disrepair exist throughout the project area. Mitigation Measure 14-6 commits District No. 20 to conducting a comprehensive search for operating and abandoned wells within the project impact areas. Mitigation Measure 14-6 ensures that wells will be appropriately abandoned to prevent transporting effluent to the groundwater table.

Comment No. 15-7

The comment states that Ms. McKean's property is within a designated flood plain and that construction of facilities would alter the natural flow direction; additionally, mitigation by 'engineering considerations' is ambiguous and should be defined in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Storage Reservoir Study Area No. 3 includes areas currently used as oxidation ponds on 40th Street East and Avenue O-8 and a second site on the near the corner of 110th Street East and Avenue M. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes on page 14-11 that the proposed project could alter the natural flow direction in these areas. Mitigation Measure 14-8 commits District No. 20 to providing engineering considerations including flood diversion features capable of directing flood waters back into the floodway with velocity dissipation features to minimize scouring (page 14-11). On the site with existing oxidation ponds, the majority of flood waters can be diverted north using 50th Street East. The only remaining water to be directed through the site is the small portion west of 50th Street East and north of Avenue P, which should be channeled westerly along Avenue O to 40th Street East. The second location is between 110th Street east and 120th Street east generally between Avenue L and M. This location is outside the designated 100-year flood zone except for small areas paralleling 100th and 110th Streets. Reservoirs will be positioned to avoid the flood zones as best possible. District No. 20 will work with the appropriate flood management agencies to assure any impacts are addressed.

Comment No. 15-8

The comment states air quality would be affected due to increased amounts of fugitive dust as a result of agricultural activities and that Mitigation Measures 16-5 and 16-6 do not sufficiently address this impact. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes in Table 16-8 that fugitive dust would be emitted during agricultural operations. These emissions would be greatest during planting and tilling operations. Since the alfalfa would be regularly mowed rather than removed by the roots, planting and tilling activities would be minimized. Bare soil would only be subject to windy conditions for temporary periods of time since alfalfa cover would be established for most of the year. Furthermore, regular application of irrigation water would minimize dust emissions even during high wind periods.

Comment No. 15-9

The comment asks how elevated humidity levels, due to the proposed agricultural activities, would be mitigated. Although humidity levels in the immediate vicinity of proposed agricultural areas may alter the microclimate in that location, the impact of this elevation is not substantial enough to cause a change in the climate of the region that could alter vegetation, wind, wildlife, or storm patterns. Agricultural operations similar to those proposed in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR are common in the region.

Comment No. 15-10

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not mention compliance with OSHA Process Safety Management standards, does not identify sensitive receptors within the proposed project area, and does not identify chemical threshold quantities. Additionally, the comment asks what the aqueous ammonia concentration percentage would be for the proposed facilities and what standards and procedures would be used for the safe handling, storage, and disposal of pesticides and other chemicals.

Although there is no history of accidental release of chemicals at the existing PWRP, District No. 20 has developed an Integrated Emergency Response Plan and an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (page 21-2), in accordance with OSHA regulations, including Process Safety Management standards, designed to prevent and mediate the accidental release of hazardous materials stored and used at the site and, in the event of accidental spill, would immediately report such a release to local fire emergency personnel and appropriate county and state agencies (page 21-4). The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR identifies sensitive receptors near the PWRP and throughout the Agricultural Study Areas on page 16-4. Table 21-1 lists existing and proposed chemical use including ammonia. Currently ammonia is not used at the PWRP. Implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR will include use of an estimated 45,000 gallons per year of aqueous ammonia. With respect to chemical threshold quantities, the permitted thresholds are listed in the WDRs included in Appendix B and the existing and proposed chemical use quantities are listed in Table 21-1 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

Comment No. 15-11

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not consider other technologies for treating wastewater, such as MF/RO. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does evaluate MF/RO as a treatment alternative. The effluent management alternatives of agricultural and municipal reuse were considered to be more cost-effective with tertiary-treated effluent than MF/RO and attainable with the timeframe of the project objectives. The cost associated with blending water and its availability year-round, management of the brine effluent from the MF/RO process, and the need for adjudication of water rights in the Antelope Valley were other factors that made MF/RO less desirable than the alternative selected. As noted in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, District No. 20 will remain actively involved with other stakeholders in the region interested in developing other emerging effluent management alternatives. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 15-12

The comment states that alternative sites, such as south of Avenue N, are not addressed in the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Chapter 7 includes a discussion of the alternative site screening analysis conducted by District No. 20 to determine a preferred project location. Approximately half of Agricultural Study Area No. 6 is south of Avenue N and was therefore addressed.

Comment No. 15-13

The comment states that the phrase “less than significant” is ambiguous and needs to be defined in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The evaluation of significance of an identified impact is described on page 8-2 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. “Less than significant” is defined as an impact that does not adversely affect the environment to an extent that mitigation would be required. Each environmental resource area discussed in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR includes a listing of specific thresholds of significance to reduce the ambiguity of the determination as to whether an impact is significant or not.

Comment No. 15-14

The comment states the writer’s belief that reclaimed water use is a viable option, but the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not contain sufficient supportive documentation to draw the conclusions presented, particularly with

respect to use of the area south of Avenue N and alternative technologies. The comment supporting reclaimed water use is noted.

The response to Comment No. 15-12 notes that Chapter 7 includes a discussion of the alternative site screening analyses conducted by District No. 20 to determine a preferred project location. Approximately half of Agricultural Study Area No. 6 is south of Avenue N and was therefore addressed.

A number of different alternatives were presented and discussed in Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Based on the screening process, the proposed project satisfied the objectives and best accommodated the evaluation criteria. Refer to General Response: Alternatives Analysis for more information.

PALMDALE WATER DISTRICT
2029 East Avenue Q • Palmdale, California 93550 • Telephone (661) 947-4111
Fax (661) 947-8604
www.palmdalewater.org

oard of Directors
JEFFERY A. STORM, SR.
Division 1
RONALD D. CUNNINGHAM
Division 2
SHERYL A. SARNA
Division 3
RAUL FIGUEROA
Division 4
NOLAN NEGAARD
Division 5

LAGERLOF, SENECAL, BRADLEY, GOSNEY & KRUSE LLP
Attorneys

ACWA

June 17, 2005

Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Planning Section
ATTN: Mr. Steven W. Highter, Supervising Engineer
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

RE: COMMENTS ON DRAFT EIR FOR THE PALMDALE WRP 2025 FACILITIES PLAN

Dear Mr. Highter:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan. The Palmdale Water District (District) comments will focus on two areas: (1) upgrade of treatment from secondary treatment to tertiary treatment; and (2) implementing an effluent management system consisting of municipal reuse and groundwater recharge instead of agricultural reuse.

The District agrees with the Stage V wastewater treatment upgrades to tertiary treatment and the scheduled completion date of October, 2009. The District also agrees with the Stage VI wastewater treatment facilities expansion from 15.0 MGD to 22.4 MGD and the scheduled completion by the year 2013. The options for municipal reuse and groundwater recharge cannot realistically exist without a minimum of tertiary treatment. 16-1

We look forward to working cooperatively with the Sanitation Districts to help you comply with the requirements of Water Code Sections 13575 and 13576. These sections discuss the responsibility of recycled water producers and suppliers to work cooperatively with retail water suppliers to maximize the appropriate cost-effective use of recycled water in California. The opportunities that exist for 16-2

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Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Planning Section
ATTN: Mr. Steven W. Highter,
Supervising Engineer -2- June 17, 2005

municipal reuse and groundwater recharge in the Antelope Valley could reduce or even eliminate the need for agricultural reuse projects recommended in the draft EIR. 16-2 (cont.)

Please feel free to contact me at (661) 947-4111, x146 or Dennis LaMoreaux at (661) 947-4111, x117 if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

CURTIS D. PAXTON,
Assistant General Manager

CDP/dd

cc: Dennis D. LaMoreaux, PWD General Manager
Matthew R. Knudson, PWD Engineering Supervisor

COMMENT LETTER 16: PALMDALE WATER DISTRICT

Comment No. 16-1

The comment states that the PWD agrees with the Stage V wastewater treatment upgrades to tertiary treatment with a scheduled completion date of October 2009 and agrees with the Stage VI expansion from 15.0 mgd to 22.4 mgd with a scheduled completion of 2013. The comment is noted and no response is necessary.

Comment No. 16-2

The comment states that the PWD looks forward to working with District No. 20 to comply with Water Code Sections 13575 and 13576. The comment is noted and no response is necessary.

Steven Highter, P.E. SJH
Supervising Engineer
Planning Section
County Sanitation District
of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Rd.
Whittier, Ca. 90601-1400

Re: Comments on the Draft EIR for the Palmdale Reclamation Plant 2025 Plan

Dear Steve:

We have been relocated once already due to Los Angeles County deeming we were unable to reside on our property due to it being located in a designated Flood Zone. We purchased our property on 107th St. East and M-8, with the confidence that we were safe.

Now the Sanitation District wants to take our property for a Reclamation Plant. We have several concerns regarding this proposed project.

We don't understand how you can come in and take our property, of which we have invested so much time, effort and money into, when there are alternatives which seem to not have been adequately considered. Imagine how you would feel, given the same situation. 17-1

In today's real estate market, fair market value may provide us with a down payment, but the monthly mortgage payment would be nearly impossible to manage. 17-2

We are deeply concerned about the impact to the existing wildlife in our area. We go to great lengths to protect them. How can you mitigate this concern? 17-3

Our air quality will be greatly impacted by this project. With the smog which comes in from L.A. and the dust from the farming, it will be unbearable in the valley for many people. 17-4

How will the chemicals be safely stored? What are the emergency contingencies regarding the chemicals you use. 17-5

We think this project needs more study before being implemented in our valley. Although there are only a handful of homeowners directly impacted, we feel we should be taken into consideration, not thrown away like someone's garbage.

Thank you.

Craig and Donna Ott
41615 107th St. East
Palmdale, Ca. 93591
661-944-5801

JUN 20 2005 AM 11:55 DOC # 507055 LeBRUN T JGH

COMMENT LETTER 17: OTT, CRAIG AND DONNA

Comment No. 17-1

The comment questions how District No. 20 can acquire their property when it appears that other alternatives have not been adequately considered. District No. 20 conducted an extensive and comprehensive alternatives screening process, discussed in Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, to identify a preferred project that best meets the objectives stated in the plan. Refer to General Responses: Property Value and Acquisition and Alternative Analysis for further information.

Comment No. 17-2

The comment states that, in today's real estate market, fair market value for their property would provide them with a down payment, but not enough for the monthly mortgage payment. Displaced property owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Displaced individuals and families will be eligible for relocation assistance in accordance with well-established guidelines. This relocation assistance will consist of providing displaced individuals with moving expenses and rents, or mortgage differential to ensure that they have adequate replacement housing. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for further information.

Comment No. 17-3

The comment expresses general concern for the existing wildlife in the area and how one can mitigate for the potential impacts to biological resources as a result of the implementation of the proposed project. Chapter 12 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides a description of the biological setting in the project area. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides mitigation measures, including purchase of compensation lands to be used for conservation in perpetuity of special-status species, potential habitat for special-status species, and threatened habitat communities. These compensation lands would also provide habitat for species that have not been identified as special status.

Comment No. 17-4

The comment expresses general concern about air quality impacts as a result of the proposed project. The project's effects on air quality are addressed in Chapter 16 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. During construction of the facilities, emissions of nitrogen oxides and PM_{10} may exceed the regulatory thresholds of significance temporarily if multiple facilities are constructed simultaneously. This is identified as a significant and unavoidable impact of the project. Operational emissions would not result in emissions that would exceed thresholds of significance established by the AVAQMD. Note that, in general, agriculture, particularly with long-term crops such as alfalfa, tends to reduce wind-blown soils and dust.

Comment No. 17-5

The comment asks how chemicals will be used in the operation of the PWRP and what are the emergency contingencies regarding the chemicals used. Process chemicals (aluminum sulfate, ammonia, ferrous chloride, and sodium hypochlorite) used in the wastewater treatment process would be stored in above-ground storage tanks with secondary containment at the PWRP. Propane, diesel, and gasoline would be stored in existing

above-ground storage tanks. Pesticides would be stored in above-ground storage containers on agricultural lands. Although there is no history of accidental releases of chemicals at the existing PWRP, District No. 20 has developed an Integrated Emergency Response Plan and an Injury and Illness Prevention Program, in accordance with OSHA regulations, designed to prevent and mediate the accidental release of hazardous materials stored and used at the site and, in the event of accidental spill, would immediately report such a release to local fire emergency personnel and appropriate county and state agencies.

Alan C. Lloyd, Ph.D.
Agency Secretary

State Water Resources Control Board

Division of Financial Assistance
1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814 • (916) 341-5700
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 944212 • Sacramento, California 94244-2120
FAX (916) 341-5707 • http://www.waterboards.ca.gov

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

31-370.40.40

JUN 16 2005

Steve W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Mr. Highter:

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT NO. 20 (DISTRICT) – PALMDALE WATER RECLAMATION PLANT 2025 FACILITIES PLAN – STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN NO. C-06-4746-110 – STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2004091123

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above document. The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) has reviewed the EIR and has several specific comments. I understand that the District is pursuing a State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan. This letter contains specific information regarding environmental review requirements for the SRF program. The District will be the lead agency for the proposed project and the State Water Board will be a responsible agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As a funding agency, the State Water Board must consider the information in the environmental document when approving funding for the proposed project.

Since funding is being requested we would appreciate notice of any scheduled hearings or meetings regarding the environmental document and project approval. Also, please provide us with a copy of: (1) the resolution approving the project, adopting the EIR and making CEQA findings, (2) all comments received during the review period and your responses to those comments, (3) the adopted Mitigation Monitoring Plan, and (4) the Notice of Determination filed with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. 18-1

SRF loans are partially funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and require additional "CEQA-Plus" environmental documentation and review. The Division is required to consult directly with agencies responsible for implementing federal environmental laws and regulations. We have received copies of the EIR and will distribute the documents to pertinent federal agencies for review. Federal agencies are provided 45 calendar days to review and comment on the document plus six days mailing time. We will send you any comments we receive during the review period and request your responses. 18-2

SRF loan applicants must comply with federal laws pertaining to cultural resources, specifically Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A copy of your document has been 18-3

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provided to the Division's Cultural Resources Officer, Ms. Cookie Hirn. She will consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on your behalf at several points in the process. She will work with the District and the SHPO to establish the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE). After the APE is established, please provide documentation of the following: (1) background research for cultural resources—including a records search with the California Historical Resources Information System for an area one-half mile around the APE, and (2) consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission, interested Native Americans, local historical societies, and any other interested parties. Additional submittals, including a field survey by a qualified archeologist and, if appropriate, a historical specialist, may be required to document resource significance and/or project effects. When adequate information has been submitted, she will review it for Section 106 compliance and will forward approved documents to the SHPO. Early contact with Ms. Hirn at (916) 341-5690 regarding Section 106 process questions is critical. 18-3 (cont.)

SRF projects are also subject to provisions of the federal Endangered Species Act and must obtain Section 7 clearance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Accordingly, a copy of your EIR will be forwarded to the FWS for their review. Any issues raised by FWS will need to be resolved before any SRF loan can be approved. 18-4

As of January 31, 1994, SRF loan projects located in non-attainment areas are required to meet the federal General Conformity Rule for the federal Clean Air Act. Where a federal agency has delegated specific responsibilities to a state or local agency, the action is considered federal, and the state or local agency must make a conformity determination on the federal agency's behalf. According to the EIR, the Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District (AVAQMD) currently exceeds federal standards for Ozone and PM_{10}. Additionally, the estimated project construction emissions are expected to exceed AVAQMD significance thresholds for NO_x and PM_{10}. Several additional pieces of information as described below are needed before the State Water Board is able to establish whether a conformity determination is necessary. 18-5

Additional specific comments are as follows:

- As mentioned earlier, additional information is needed to ascertain if a conformity determination is necessary. Are the AVAQMD significance thresholds specified in Table 16-5 equivalent to the de minimis standards for the criteria pollutants? If not, please provide the applicable de minimis levels. Additionally, provide the emissions inventory for NO_x and PM_{10}. Also specify whether the project is sized to meet the needs of the population projections specified in the State Implementation Plan.

- A more detailed discussion of the expected secondary effects of growth would be appropriate in Chapter 20 of the EIR. Specifically, expand the discussion of impacts to biological resources and water resources to include impacts to beneficial uses specified in the Basin Plan for the Lahontan Region. These beneficial uses apply to Little and Big Rock Creeks and 18-6

Mr. Highter - 3 - JUN 16 2005

minor surface waters, and include contact and non-contact recreational opportunities, commercial and sportsfishing, warm and cold freshwater habitat, and wildlife habitat. 18-6 (cont.)

If you have questions regarding the environmental review of this project, please contact me at (916) 327-9117.

Sincerely,

Kim Wittorff
Environmental Scientist

cc: Governor's Office of Planning & Research
State Clearinghouse
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

California Environmental Protection Agency

Recycled Paper

COMMENT LETTER 18: STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

Comment No. 18-1

The comment states that the SWRCB should be notified of all scheduled hearings or meetings regarding the environmental document and project approval. In addition, the SWRCB would like a copy of: (1) the resolution approving the budget, adopting the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, and making CEQA findings; (2) all comments received during the review period and responses to those comments; (3) the adopted Mitigation Monitoring Plan; and (4) the Notice of Determination filed with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. The SWRCB will be notified of project-related hearings or meetings and will be provided the above documentation as requested.

Comment No. 18-2

The comment states that the SWRCB will forward all comments received during the NEPA-equivalent review period for the proposed project and request responses to these comments. District No. 20 provided copies of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR directly to responsible federal agencies at the beginning of the public review period. In addition, the SWRCB forwarded copies of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR to agencies responsible for implementing federal environmental laws and regulations as part of the SRF requirements. Any comments received from these agencies associated with the SRF requirements will be responded to by District No. 20 when they are received.

Comment No. 18-3

The comment states that the proposed project must comply with federal laws pertaining to cultural resources, specifically Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Mitigation Measures 11-1 through 11-5 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describe the necessary steps to fully comply with Section 106.

Comment No. 18-4

The comment states that a copy of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR will be forwarded to the USFWS to obtain Section 7 clearance. District No. 20 will respond to these comments when they are received.

Comment No. 18-5

The comment states that the project must meet federal General Conformity Rule requirements. The Antelope Valley Air Basin currently exceeds federal standards for ozone and PM_{10}. As shown in **Table 1**, estimated project construction emissions are expected to exceed AVAQMD regional pounds per day significance thresholds for NO_X and PM_{10}. Conformity analysis would be required if the project exceeds federal de minimis thresholds listed in Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, Chapter 1, Part 93, Section 93.153, Revised July 1, 2004. As noted in Table No. 26-2, construction emissions would not exceed the de minimis levels for NO_X or PM_{10}. Therefore, the project is de minimis and does not have to demonstrate CAA conformity.

Table No. 26-3
Project Construction Emissions and
General Conformity Thresholds

Air Pollutant	Construction Emissions (lbs/day)	AVAQMD Thresholds (lbs/day)	Construction Emissions (tn/yr)[1]	De Minimis Levels[2] (tn/yr)
NO_X	251	137	11	25
PM_{10}	125	82	6	70

Source*:* AVAQMD*, 2002, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Federal Conformity Guidelines,* May 2002.

1. Construction activity was assumed to occur five days per week for eight hours per day.

2. The MDAB has been identified as a "Severe-17" non-attainment area for O_3 and a "Serious" non-attainment area for PM_{10}.

The population projections used to size the planned expansion of the PWRP are based on the most recently approved SCAG forecasts. SCAG is the regional planning authority for most of Southern California (excluding San Diego County) and SCAG population projections are the most widely accepted regional projections prepared in Southern California. The population projections were incorporated into SCAG's most recent Regional Transportation Plan. The Regional Transportation Plan projections are used by the AVAQMD to develop Air Quality Management Plans, which, in turn, are used to develop the SIP. As such, the projected wastewater flow rates displayed in Table 5-15 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR and the increased PWRP capacity are based on appropriate population forecasts; and the project is sized to meet the population projections specified in the SIP.

Comment No. 18-6

The comment requests an expanded analysis of the secondary effects of growth, specifically to beneficial uses identified in the Basin Plan. The beneficial uses associated with Little Rock Wash, Big Rock Wash, and local groundwater are listed in Table 14-1 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. Since these washes are considered *waters of the state*, Impact 12-2 acknowledges that the project could affect *waters of the state* during construction. Mitigation Measures 12-2 through 12-4 provide measures to ensure that resources associated with the washes are not significantly affected by the project. District No. 20 may be required to obtain a Streambed Alteration Agreement from DFG and submit a report of waste discharge to the RWQCB-LR prior to construction within *waters of the state*. These measures would mitigate direct impacts of the project, protecting the beneficial uses established for the resources in the Basin Plan. However, the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR acknowledges that its implementation would contribute in a cumulative way to the significant reduction in biological resources in the region. As noted in the comment, growth in the region may also affect beneficial uses of the local *waters of the state*. In response to the comment, the following discussion has been added to Chapter 20, page 20-9:

The RWQCB-LR is responsible for the protection of water resources in the Antelope Valley. Growth may adversely affect water quality and beneficial uses of water resources, including the dry washes and groundwater. Encroachment of urban development increases urban runoff that can transport contamination to local *waters of the state*. Furthermore, as growth increases, wastewater treatment demands increase. The RWQCB-LR is responsible for evaluating measures such as the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR to ensure long-term protection of beneficial uses of local receiving waters, including groundwater. The Water Quality Control Plan (i.e., Basin Plan) provides a regional assessment of biological resources in the Antelope Valley and establishes beneficial uses and water quality objectives for each resource. The beneficial uses of Little Rock Wash, Big Rock Wash, and local groundwater are listed in Table 14-1. Through permitting of wastewater treatment discharges and

other discharges to *waters of the state*, and through the establishment of the Basin Plan, the RWQCB-LR provides a regional management mechanism to ensure the long-term protection of water resources. Furthermore, implementation of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR with approval from the RWQCB-LR is a major step toward ensuring that growth in the Palmdale area does not adversely affect water resources or cause health impacts.

WAL

Steven Highter, P.E. SWH
Supervising Engineer
Planning Section
County Sanitation District
of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Rd.
Whittier, Ca. 90601-1400

Re: Comments on the Draft EIR for the Palmdale Reclamation Plant 2025 Plan

Dear Steve:

As a homeowner in Study Area 5, I feel we are at a disadvantage regarding this project, due to the fact that we were given such short notice of it. One homeowner has an EIR, because she requested it. The first time I saw the EIR was June 10, 2005. The Sanitation District, on the other hand, has been working on this project for a long time. 19-1

I don't feel I will be able to relocate in todays real estate market with only compensation of fair market value. Even if I am able to stay, the proximity of the project will de-value my property, as well as possible health and environmental impacts. My mother resides with me and she has been displaced once already. She needs to know she has a permanent residence. 19-2

How will you mitigate the wastewater/chemical seepage into the aquafir, thereby impacting our well water? How can you possibly claim that staying no closer than 100 feet from a well will keep my water safe? 19-3

A more thorough Archeological study needs to be done in this area. Many things have been discovered in this area, as evidenced by the Indian Museum nearby. 19-4

How can you mitigate the impact on the plants and wildlife in the area? They should be protected, and this project certainly does not do that. 19-5

I don't want to have to relocate and I don't want this project in my area. I hope we will be kept better notified of further developments.

Thank you.

Marcia Walker
41711 106th St. East
Palmdale, Ca. 93591
661-944-0383

JUN 20 2005 AM 11:55 DOC # 502046 LE BRUN T

COMMENT LETTER 19: WALKER, MARCIA

Comment No. 19-1

The comment states that Ms. Walker was not given sufficient notice about the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA, impacted property owners were promptly notified through a Notice of Availability that coincided with the release of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR on April 29, 2005. In addition to CEQA requirements, District No. 20 implemented a public outreach and education program to include input from local residents early on in the facilities planning process. Refer to Chapter 24: Public Outreach Overview for additional information.

Comment No. 19-2

The comment states that the property owner is concerned that the proposed project will have a negative effect on current property values. Recycled water has been used in various locations in the state of California for many years without decreasing property values. Displaced property owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for additional information.

Comment No. 19-3

The comment asks how District No. 20 would mitigate for contaminated seepage as result of the proposed project and refutes the claim that maintaining a 100-foot buffer around existing wells would ensure well water safety. If not properly handled, infiltration of recycled water from agricultural reuse operation may potentially impact underlying groundwater resources. To mitigate this potential, the proposed project will be conducted in conformance with regulations in Title 22 of the CCRs, WRRs issued by the RWQCB-LR, and an FMP. These controls will ensure that groundwater resources are protected. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR will also require the installation of a monitoring well network to continually assess groundwater quality. Monitoring data will be reported to the RWQCB-LR and will be available for review by the public.

The 100-foot buffer requirement is a mandatory requirement established by the Department of Health Services in Title 22 of California Code of Regulations. A summary of the Title 22 regulations is included in Appendix Q of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR.

Comment No. 19-4

The comment states that archaeological and paleontological studies have not been performed adequately. Chapter 11 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR evaluates the project's potential effects on cultural resources including archaeological and paleontological resources in the project area. A cultural records search of the project area was conducted at the South Central Coastal Information Center. The records search noted that portions of the LAWA property west of Little Rock Wash had been previously surveyed. Findings of this survey are summarized on page 11-4 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes on page 11-6 that land disturbance in areas that have not been previously surveyed could encounter cultural resources. Therefore, the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR commits District No. 20 to Mitigation Measures 11-1 through 11-5 to ensure that impacts would remain less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 11-1 requires that District No. 20 conduct a cultural resources inventory prior to any groundbreaking activities in areas outside previously surveyed LAWA property. The surveys would identify potential significant prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, human remains, and historic buildings and structures. Mitigation Measure 11-2 requires that District No. 20 avoid these resources if possible. If avoidance is infeasible, additional research including, but not limited to, archaeological excavation shall be conducted (Mitigation Measure 11-4). If a qualified archaeologist determines that there is a potential for cultural resources within an area to be disturbed, they shall be retained to monitor those activities (Mitigation Measure 11-3). Also, in the event that during ground breaking activities cultural resources are unearthed, all work within 50 feet of the resource shall be halted and a qualified archaeologist shall assess the significance of the find, meet with the project proponent and/or lead agency to determine the appropriate avoidance measure or other appropriate mitigation, which may include scientific analysis, curation, and reporting to current professional standards (Mitigation Measure 11-5). The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR concludes on page 11-8 that due to the recent age of the overlying soil (Quaternary alluvium, which has an age that is less than 18,000 years before present) at the proposed project site, the potential to find significant paleontological resources is low and, therefore, the impact is less than significant.

Comment No. 19-5

The comment asks how District No. 20 will mitigate for potential biological resource impacts as a result of the proposed project. Chapter 12 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides a description of the biological setting in the project area. The Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR provides mitigation measures that include purchasing compensation lands to be used for conservation in perpetuity for affected resources. Refer to response to Comment No. 17-3 for additional information.

June 15, 2005

TO: Charles E. Boehmke,
Section Head, Planning Section,
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County.

Subject: Comments on EIR for the proposed Clean – up of Palmdale wastewater.

FROM: Dean Webb. Member of the AV Group of the Sierra Club

The use of treated wastewater on about 5, 000 acres of fodder crop (Alfalfa) to reduce the excessive build up, does not alleviate the main problem. 20-1 The dropping of the water table aquifer in the Antelope Valley (AV). Your solution produces problems for the Air Force, residents of the east side, and the environment. 20-2 The project needs to work for the full titeriary treatment of the water to drinking water standards, and then the percolation back into the water table. 20-3

Over 30 years ago the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), the Air Force, FFA, and the Sierra Club agreed this land should to be set up as a desert preserve. The destruction of many thousands of acres if Joshua tree woodlands along with the birds and animals associated with the vegetation is ill conceived and poorly planned. 20-4

Sincerely,
Dean Webb

Dean Webb,
1000 E. Caperton.
Lancaster, CA., 93535
Email < ldwebbo@aol.com >

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COMMENT LETTER 20: WEBB, DEAN

Comment No. 20-1

The comment states that the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR does not alleviate the "dropping of the water table aquifer." The groundwater level in an aquifer will "drop," or decrease, when withdrawals of groundwater exceed the recharge rate (overdraft conditions). District No. 20 does not contribute to overdrafting the groundwater basin. Reducing overdraft, a water supply issue, is not a project objective or a mandate of District No. 20. Chapter 6 of the Draft PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describes constraints associated with conducting a groundwater recharge alternative. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 20-2

The comment states that the project creates problems for the Air Force, the east side and the environment. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR has analyzed potential impacts to the Antelope Valley population and physical environment. The proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts with respect to air emissions, biological resources, and secondary growth effects. Refer to the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR for a discussion of these impacts.

Comment No. 20-3

The comment recommends tertiary treatment with the effluent recharged into the groundwater table. Chapter 6 of the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR describes constraints associated with conducting a groundwater recharge alternative. The alternative was rejected since it could not meet the schedule objectives of the project. Nonetheless, District No. 20 remains interested in working with regional partners to develop a groundwater recharge project. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.

Comment No. 20-4

The comment states that the project is ill-conceived and poorly planned because of impacts to biological resources. The comment also states that the land proposed for agricultural reuse was established as a desert preserve over 30 years ago. The proposed project is designed to minimize impacts to the environment and mitigation is provided to reduce significant and unavoidable impacts. Please see Table ES-8 in the Final PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR for a description of all proposed mitigation measures, including those for biological resources. Refer to General Response: Airport Compatibility for additional information.

June 24,2005

Steven W. Highter
Supervising Engineer, Planning Section
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road Whittier, CA 90601

Ref: Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant 2025 Facilities Plan

Dear Mr. Highter:

In regards to the proposed plan for storing sewage water adjacent to my properties would be very degrading to the value of such land. 21-1

Futhermore, farming of annual crops (vegetables) would create dust every year to this area, making it undesirable, or impossible to live at part of the time. 21-2

I hope that the Sanitation District can find another solution to resolve this problem. 21-3

Yours truly,
Donald Harman

Donald Harman
Harman Family Trust
41614 102nd Street East
Palmdale, CA 93591

JUN 28 2005 AM 10:35 DOC # 509421 HIGHTER S

COMMENT LETTER 21: HARMON, DONALD

Comment No. 21-1

The comment states that the property owner is concerned that the proposed project will have a negative effect on current property values. Recycled water has been used in various locations in the state of California for many years without decreasing property values. Displaced property owners will be compensated at fair market value and be given appropriate relocation costs, if applicable. Refer to General Response: Property Value and Acquisition for additional information.

Comment No. 21-2

The comment states air quality would be affected due to increased amounts of fugitive dust as a result of agricultural activities making it difficult to live in the area. The PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR notes in Table 16-8 that fugitive dust would be emitted during agricultural operations. These emissions would be greatest during planting and tilling operations. Since the alfalfa would be regularly mowed rather than removed by the roots, planting and tilling activities would be minimized. Bare soil would only be subject to windy conditions for temporary periods of time since alfalfa cover would be established for most of the year. Furthermore, regular application of irrigation water would minimize dust emissions even during high wind periods.

Comment No. 21-3

This comment states that a solution, other than the proposed project, should be found. District No. 20 conducted an extensive and comprehensive alternatives screening process, discussed in Chapter 6, to identify a preferred project that best meets the objectives stated in the plan. Besides meeting the objectives, tertiary treatment followed by effluent management via agricultural and municipal reuse was found to be more cost-effective and also attainable within the time frame required. As noted in the PWRP 2025 Plan and EIR, District No. 20 will remain actively involved with other stakeholders in the region interested in developing other emerging effluent management alternatives. Refer to General Response: Alternative Analysis for additional information.