



NOTICE OF PREPARATION & NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT WHITEWATER RIVER GROUNDWATER REPLENISHMENT PROJECT

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is publishing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Whitewater River Groundwater Replenishment Project (Project) in accordance with Public Resource Code §§21000 – 21189.57 and the 2020 CEQA Guidelines §§15000 – 15387.

The purpose of this NOP is to notify local, State, and Federal agencies, Native American tribes, and other interested organizations and individuals that CVWD plans to prepare an EIR for the proposed Project. CVWD is circulating this NOP to obtain input regarding the scope, content, and environmental issues relevant to the EIR. This NOP provides a summary of the Project description, Project location, and the expected scope of environmental analysis in the EIR.

To ensure that all potential environmental issues are considered and addressed within the Draft EIR, all comments regarding this NOP must be received, in writing, within the **30-day NOP public comment period, beginning February 3, 2020 and ending March 4, 2020**. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive notices regarding the proposed Project, have any questions, or need additional information, please use the Contact Person information identified below.

Project Description

CVWD is requesting a right-of-way (ROW) grant from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the continued operation and maintenance of CVWD's existing Whitewater River Groundwater Replenishment Facility (Facility). Since the early 1900's, CVWD has been replenishing the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin) in Whitewater with natural flow, snow melt, and beginning in 1973 with imported water as part of cooperative program with the Desert Water Agency. The Facility is a critical component for management of the Basin. The Facility is located on CVWD-owned lands as well as public land managed by the BLM. CVWD's existing ROW grants with the BLM have expired, and CVWD has applied to renew and amend the ROW grants. The proposed ROW grant would allow CVWD to continue groundwater replenishment activities at the Facility by delivering Colorado River water into the Basin at a maximum rate of up to 511,000 acre-feet in any given year. The proposed Project does not involve any new construction or ground disturbing activities.

Project Location

The existing Facility is located in the northwest portion of the CVWD service area, in the City of Palm Springs within Riverside County. The Facility is generally bound by the Interstate 10 (I-10) to the north, Indian Canyon Drive to the east, and State Route 111 (SR-111) to the west and south. CVWD has requested a ROW grant from the BLM for two locations totaling approximately 690.73 acres:

- The renewal area (approximately 511.9 acres) consists of two individual areas originally included in ROW grant LA 052742, which was previously issued by the BLM in 1984 and expired in 2014, and ROW grant CA 19150, which was previously issued by the BLM in 1987 expired in 2012. The renewal area covers a portion the existing Facility, including portions of Ponds 6 through 19, the concrete-lined and earthen conveyance channels, and Intake Structure 2. This area is located within portions of Section 24 of Township 3 South, Range 3 East and Sections 20, 28, and 30 of Township 3 South, Range 4 East (approximately 509.7 acres). The renewal area also includes the existing low-flow dike and channel crossing on a portion of Section 14, Township 3 South, Range 3 East (approximately 2.2 acres).
- The amendment area consists of approximately 178.83 acres that was not included in either of the previous ROW grants issued by BLM, but is currently used by CVWD for maintenance of existing flood control berms. The amendment area includes two existing flood control berms within portions of Sections 23 and 24 of Township 3 South, Range 3 East (approximately 178.83 acres).

Environmental Effects to be Analyzed

The EIR will evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed ROW grant. The following environmental issue areas will be analyzed in the EIR: air quality; biological resources; cultural resources; energy; geology and soils; greenhouse gas emissions; hydrology and water quality; land use and planning; and tribal cultural resources. The EIR will also evaluate potential growth inducing effects, cumulative effects, irreversible environmental impacts, energy impacts, and may include other topics identified during scoping.

Public Scoping Meeting

CVWD will conduct a public scoping meeting to share information about the proposed Project, describe the environmental review process, and solicit written comments on the proposed Project. The **public scoping meeting will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020** at CVWD's Steve Robbins Administration Building, located at 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, California 92211.

How to Submit a Comment & Contact Person

You are invited to submit written comments regarding this NOP by standard mail to: William Patterson, Environmental Supervisor, CVWD, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, CA 92211; or by email to wpatterson@cvwd.org

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, comments regarding this NOP must be received not later than 5:00 p.m. on March 4, 2020. All comments provided will become public record.

