

## 2. INTRODUCTION

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### 2.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is the lead agency for implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Chromium-6 Water Treatment Facilities Project (project). CVWD has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) to provide information about the potentially significant adverse environmental effects of the proposed project; to identify reasonable and feasible measures intended to minimize adverse effects, where necessary; and to describe and analyze alternatives to the proposed project.

The EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA (Public Resources Code §§21000-21189.3) and the 2016 State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, §§15000-15387).

Under State CEQA Guidelines §15121 (Informational Document):

- A. *An EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information which may be presented to the agency;*
- B. *While the information in the EIR does not control the agency's ultimate discretion on the project, the agency must respond to each significant effect identified in the EIR by making findings under Section 15091 and if necessary by making a statement of overriding consideration under Section 15093.*
- C. *The information in an EIR may constitute substantial evidence in the record to support the agency's action on the project if its decision is later challenged in court.*

### 2.2 CEQA PROCESS

#### 2.2.1 NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETING

The process of determining the appropriate scope, focus, and content of an EIR is known as “scoping.” The first step in the scoping process is the issuance of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report. The scoping period for the project began on July 10, 2015 with the issuance of the NOP for a 30-day public review period. The scoping period concluded on August 8, 2015. The NOP summarized the goals and objectives of the project and presented an overview of the project description. The NOP also described the EIR scoping process and provided information on a public scoping meeting.

A public scoping meeting was held on July 27, 2015 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the CVWD Administration Building Board Room, located at 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, California. The purpose of the meeting was to present information about the project to the public and agencies, and to solicit input as

to the scope and content of the DEIR. Notices of the public scoping meeting were placed in local newspapers informing the general public of the meeting. CVWD also sent the NOP, including the scoping meeting notice, to approximately 150 interested parties, including homeowners associations, property owners, non-governmental organizations, interest groups, and Indian tribes. The NOP was submitted to the County of Riverside County Clerk for 30-day posting. The NOP was also submitted to the State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH), which is responsible for circulating the NOP to state agencies. The SCH submitted the NOP to the following state agencies: Resources Agency; Department of Parks and Recreation; Department of Water Resources; Department of Fish and Wildlife Region 6; Native American Heritage Commission; California Highway Patrol; Caltrans District 9; Air Resources Board; State Water Resources Control Board Division of Financial Assistance; State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water; Department of Toxic Substances Control; and Regional Water Quality Control Board Region 7.

Five written comment letters were received by CVWD during the NOP comment period. Letters were received from state, regional agencies and local agencies, tribes, and interest groups, and ranged from design requests to DEIR discussion requirements. Appendix A includes a copy of the NOP, NOP distribution mailing list, a summary of the public scoping meeting, and copies of written comments received in response to the NOP.

### **2.2.2 DRAFT EIR**

The Draft EIR will be circulated along with the Notice of Availability and Notice of Completion for public review for a 45-day review period, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines §15085.

### **2.2.3 FINAL EIR**

Following the public review and comment period, CVWD will prepare written responses to the written and verbal comments received on the Draft EIR. Where necessary, the Draft EIR may be revised, as appropriate and, together with the Response to Comments chapter, will constitute the Final EIR.

In accordance with State CEQA Guideline §§ 15090-15097, CVWD will then consider certifying the Final EIR during a noticed public hearing.

Following Final EIR certification, CVWD may proceed with consideration of project approval actions, such as issuance of construction bid documents, acquisition of easements and encroachment permits, and other project actions. CEQA also requires the adoption of findings prior to approval of a project where a certified Final EIR identifies significant environmental effects that would be caused by implementation of a project. If the project that is approved would result in the occurrence of significant effects that are identified in the Final EIR but are not avoided or substantially lessened, CVWD shall state in writing by a "statement of overriding considerations" the specific reasons to support its action based on the Final EIR and/or other information in the record. If the project is approved, CVWD would file a Notice of Determination (NOD) within five working days following project approval.

### **2.2.4 MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING**

CEQA requires lead agencies to adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) at the same time the Final EIR is certified. The MMRP is a verification tool for use by the Lead Agency that lists

the mitigation program task, entity responsible for implementation, timing of compliance, and record of date of compliance. Once the Final EIR and MMRP are certified, the mitigation measures are conditions of the project.

### 2.2.5 CEQA-PLUS

The project may be financed, in whole or in part, by a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF or SRF) loan, administered by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), Division of Financial Assistance. The DWSRF program is partially funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and is therefore subject to federal environmental review requirements. All applicants seeking DWSRF financing must comply with CEQA and provide sufficient information so that the SWRCB can document compliance with federal environmental laws. The SWRCB calls this federal compliance “CEQA-Plus.” This Draft EIR has been prepared to address the CEQA-Plus requirements in order to be eligible for DWSRF loan funds. These requirements include documentation of compliance with applicable federal cross-cutting regulations, including the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the federal Clean Air Act, Environmental Justice, Farmland Protection Policy Act, Flood Plain Management, National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Protection of Wetlands/Clean Water Act (Sec 404), and Safe Drinking Water Action, Sole Source Aquifer Protection.

## 2.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

The organization of the Draft EIR is as follows:

**Chapter 1 – Executive Summary.** The Executive Summary includes a description of the project and summarizes construction and operational impacts that the project would have on environmental resources, along with mitigation measures to reduce those impacts, where feasible. Significant unavoidable impacts of the project are also identified, where applicable. Alternatives that would reduce or avoid the significant impacts of the project are summarized. Areas of controversy are also identified.

**Chapter 2 – Introduction.** This chapter describe the CEQA process and the organization of this document.

**Chapter 3 – Project Description.** This chapter provides an overview of project components, describes the project objectives, and provides a list of permits and approvals that are anticipated for the project from various resource agencies, local cities, County of Riverside, and others.

**Chapter 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.** This chapter presents the physical and regulatory setting by environmental resource area, identifies impact significance criteria, and analyzes potential impacts of the project. Mitigation measures are identified, where applicable. Chapter 4 analyzes the following resource areas:

- Overview (Section 4.1)
- Aesthetics (Section 4.2)
- Agriculture and Forest Resources (Section 4.3)
- Air Quality (Section 4.4)
- Biological Resources (Section 4.5)
- Cultural Resources (Section 4.6)

- Geology and Soils (Section 4.7)
- Greenhouse Gas (Section 4.8)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 4.9)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 4.10)
- Land Use and Planning (Section 4.11)
- Mineral and Energy Resources (Section 4.12)
- Noise and Vibration (Section 4.13)
- Population and Housing (Section 4.14)
- Public Services (Section 4.15)
- Recreation (Section 4.16)
- Traffic and Transportation (Section 4.17)
- Utilities and Service Systems (Section 4.18)

**Chapter 5 – Other Topics Required by CEQA.** This chapter discusses growth inducement, significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented, and significant irreversible environmental changes associated with the project. This chapter also provides a summary of cumulative impacts that are discussed in the resource sections.

**Chapter 6 – Alternatives.** This chapter describes alternatives to the project and compares their impacts to those of the project. This chapter also summarizes alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis.

**Chapter 7 – EIR Authors and Consultants.** This chapter provides a list of CVWD staff and its consultants responsible for preparation of this document.

**Appendices** provide information in support of the above chapters and are identified in the Table of Contents.