

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 - Overview of the CEQA Process

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Beaumont Avenue Recharge Facility and Pipeline project (project). This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq., and the rules, regulations and procedures for implementing CEQA as adopted by the San Geronio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA). This document is a Project EIR, in conformance with Section 15161 of CEQA Guidelines and examines the environmental impacts associated with a specific project. As the lead agency for this project, the SGPWA must complete the environmental review to determine if the proposed project would create significant adverse environmental impacts.

#### 1.1.1 - Overview

The SGPWA was formed with the purpose of importing water from the State Water Project (SWP) into the San Geronio Pass area in 1961. The SGPWA's mission is to import and sell supplemental water to protect and enhance local water supplies for use by present and future water users within SGPWA's service area. This service area encompasses approximately 228 square miles and includes the Cities of Beaumont, Calimesa, and Banning, as well as the unincorporated areas of Cherry Valley, Cabazon, Poppet Flat, Banning Bench, and San Timoteo and Live Oak Canyons.

The most heavily developed portion of the SGPWA's service area is the Beaumont Basin. Currently, the Beaumont Basin is experiencing an overdraft condition, which means that the amount of water withdrawn by pumping exceeds the average amount of water that naturally recharges the groundwater basin on an annual basis. The estimated hydrologic safe yield, which is the amount of groundwater that can be continuously withdrawn from the Beaumont Basin without adverse impact, is estimated at 6,100 acre-feet per year (AFY) (Boyle 2002). In 2007 and 2009, the annual precipitation was among the driest on record in Beaumont while 2010 was one of the wettest (SGPWA 2012). In 2011, the annual precipitation was below normal (SGPWA 2012). In 2010, the total production within the Beaumont Basin was 13,469 acre-feet (af) while in 2011, the total production was 13,908 af (SGPWA 2012), which means that the estimated exceedance of the hydrologic safe yield for 2010 was approximately 7,369 af and for 2011 was approximately 7,808 af. The cumulative overdraft of the Beaumont Basin since development of the region began in the 1920s is over 100,000 af (Albert A. Webb Associates 2008).

In 2003, Phase I of SWP's East Branch Extension (EBX) was completed, bringing raw SWP water into SGPWA's service area. However, the capacity of Phase I allows for a maximum of approximately 12,000 AFY of the SGPWA's Table A amount (i.e., amount of SWP water that

SGPWA has contracted for) which is 17,300 AFY (SGPWA 2012). Based on fluctuating precipitation and supply conditions, SWP yearly distribution can differ from Table A amounts. For example, in 2011, the SGPWA was distributed approximately 10,000 af of SWP water (SGPWA 2012), although the SGPWA has capacity for 12,000 AFY, and it's full Table A amount is 17,300 AFY. Following completion of both Phase II of the EBX (estimated 2015), which would increase overall capacity to the region, and the project as proposed in this Draft EIR, the SGPWA would be able to obtain its full Table A amount of 17,300 AFY of SWP water. The proposed recharge facility could also provide capacity to receive water from the SWP under the Article 21 Water Program or other supplemental water such as exchange water. The Article 21 Program was established to allow the California Department of Water Resources to provide water to State Water Project contractors (i.e., SGPWA) when water levels within the San Luis Reservoir in Northern California exceed certain water elevations. Furthermore, the proposed recharge facility could also provide recharge capacity for retail water agencies. The proposed recharge facility will allow SGPWA to receive the full Table A amount of SWP water as well as take advantage of wet years to receive more water to replenish the groundwater basin.

In 2008, the SGPWA evaluated six potential recharge sites within the Beaumont Basin. A recharge site would allow the SGPWA to recharge the groundwater basin with SWP water. Initially, SGPWA provided a detailed review of the Brookside South Recharge project that included an in-stream recharge facility within Noble Creek. The SGPWA decided not to proceed with the Brookside South Recharge project and is currently proposing a recharge facility southeast of Noble Creek.

### **1.1.2 - Purpose and Authority**

This Draft EIR provides project-level analysis of the environmental effects related to implementation of the project. The level of impact analysis in this Draft EIR corresponds to the degree of specificity deemed appropriate in accordance with CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code Regulations, Section 15146). This document addresses the potentially significant adverse environmental effects that may be associated with the planning, construction, and operation of the project. The document also identifies appropriate and feasible mitigation measures and includes alternatives that may be adopted to reduce or avoid potential significant impacts.

This Draft EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for the public agency decision-makers and the public, allowing informed decisions to be formed regarding the objectives and components of the proposed project. This Draft EIR is the primary reference document for the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for the project, in compliance with Public Resource Code (PRC) Section 21081.6. Environmental impacts cannot always be mitigated to a level that is considered less than significant. In accordance with Section 15093(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, if a lead agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the final CEQA documents and any other

information in the public record for the project. This is defined in Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines as “a statement of overriding considerations.” Based on the findings and conclusions in Section 3, Environmental Impact Analysis of this Draft EIR, there are no environmental issues that would result in significant and unavoidable adverse impacts, and therefore, a statement of overriding considerations will not be required.

### **1.1.3 - Lead Agency Determination and Project Applicant**

Section 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines defines the Lead Agency as, “The public agency, which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.” Criteria considered in identifying the Lead Agency include whether the agency: (1) has the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving the project as a whole; (2) is an agency with the general governmental powers; and (3) will act first on the project in question (Section 15051 of the CEQA Guidelines). The Lead Agency for this project is the SGPWA. In this capacity, the SGPWA is responsible for review of the environmental documentation process through certification of a Final EIR and subsequent implementation of the project.

The project applicant is the SGPWA who will be constructing and operating the components of the proposed project.

#### **Lead Agency and Project Applicant**

San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency  
1210 Beaumont Avenue  
Beaumont, CA 92223  
951.845.2577  
Contact: Jeff Davis, P.E., General Manager

### **1.1.4 - Applicability of City and County Land Use Plans, Policies, and Regulations**

According to California Government Code Section 53091(d) and 53091 (e), as a municipal water storage/recharge facility, the project would be exempt from the land use policies and zoning ordinances of a county or city, including the provisions contained in the City of Beaumont General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, as well as the County of Riverside General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Per California Government Code Section 53091(d):

Building ordinances of a county or city shall not apply to the location or construction of facilities for the production, generation, storage, treatment, or transmission of water, wastewater, or electrical energy by a local agency.

Additionally, California Government Code Section 53091(e) establishes that:

Zoning ordinances of a county or city shall not apply to the location or construction of facilities for the production, generation, storage, treatment, or transmission of water, or for

the production or generation of electrical energy, facilities that are subject to Section 12808.5 of the Public Utilities Code, or electrical substations in an electrical transmission system that receives electricity at less than 100,000 volts. Zoning ordinances of a county or city shall apply to the location or construction of facilities for the storage or transmission of electrical energy by a local agency, if the zoning ordinances make provision for those facilities.

In accordance with Sections 53091(d) and 53091(e) of the California Government Code, the proposed recharge facility, pipeline, service connection facility, and offsite triangular parcel are exempt from the provisions of the City of Beaumont and County of Riverside's Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Although the proposed project is exempt from City and County plans and ordinances, the SGPWA has chosen to provide an analysis of the project's consistency with those plans and zoning ordinance, and in some instances, to use them as thresholds for determining the project's potential environmental impacts.

In addition to the SGPWA approval, the SGPWA will be required to obtain encroachment permits for the proposed project. The encroachment permits require approvals from other agencies including Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (approval of an encroachment permit for pipeline construction under the Mountain View Channel and Noble Creek), Riverside County Transportation Department (approval of an encroachment permit for the pipeline in Beaumont Avenue and Orchard Street), and the City of Beaumont (approval of an encroachment permit for pipeline construction in Brookside Avenue).

---

## **1.2 - Scope of the EIR**

---

The purpose of this Draft EIR is to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the project. The SGPWA concluded that implementation of the project could potentially have a direct or indirect impact on the environment. Accordingly, the SGPWA determined the need for the preparation and evaluation of an EIR for the project. The scope of this Draft EIR includes the potential environmental effects identified in the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP) that was circulated for public review from November 13, 2012 to December 13, 2012; comments obtained during a public scoping meeting held on December 3, 2012 at the SGPWA office; and agency and public comment letters received in response to the IS/NOP. These comment letters, as well as commentors providing comments at the scoping meeting, are listed in Table 1-1. The comment letters and the IS/NOP are included as Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

**Table 1-1: Summary of IS/NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments**

<b>Commentor</b>	<b>Summary of Environmental Issues Raised in Comment Letter</b>	<b>Section Where Addressed</b>
Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse	The letter acknowledged receipt of the IS/NOP by the State Clearinghouse, provided guidance to responsible agencies regarding commenting on the IS/NOP, and included a list of reviewing agencies that were provided with a copy of the IS/NOP by the State Clearinghouse.	No substantive comment on the environmental issues; therefore no response required.
Native American Heritage Commission	The letter summarized the roles that the State, Native American Heritage Commission, and the Lead Agency play during the development process in regards to cultural, and in particular, Native American resources.	Section 3.3, Cultural Resources
California Department of Fish and Game	The Letter summarized the concerns that the Department of Fish and Game has regarding the project, including consistency with the Western Riverside MSHCP, impacts to sensitive species and habitats, impacts to Noble Creek, and impacts to Waters of the State.	Section 3.2, Biological Resources
Riverside County Transportation Commission	The letter stated that the Riverside County Transportation Commission reviewed the IS/NOP and had no comment.	No substantive comment on the environmental issues; therefore no response required.
Orange County Water District	The letter stated that the Orange County Water District would like to be added to the distribution list for all future CEQA documents related to the proposed project.	No substantive comment on the environmental issues; therefore no response required.
City of Calimesa	The letter stated that the City of Calimesa reviewed the IS/NOP and had no comment.	No substantive comment on the environmental issues; therefore no response required.
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	The letter stated that local water and groundwater data and analysis should be included as part of the hydrology and water quality evaluation in the EIR.	Section 3.7, Hydrology and Water Quality
<b>Commentor</b>	<b>Summary of Environmental Issues Raised at Scoping Meeting</b>	<b>Section Where Addressed</b>
Mr. Blair Ball, Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District	Commented at the public scoping meeting that the following environmental topics should be evaluated in the Draft EIR: Subsurface Hydrology	Section 3.7, Hydrology and Water Quality; Section 6.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, and IS/NOP (Appendix A)
	Setbacks along Beaumont Avenue, concerning trees	Section 3.2, Biological Resources and Section 3.3, Cultural Resources
	Jurisdictional waters.	Section 3.2, Biological Resources

**Table 1-1 (cont.): Summary of IS/NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments**

Commentor	Summary of Environmental Issues Raised at Scoping Meeting	Section Where Addressed
Duane Burk, City of Banning	Commented at the public scoping meeting that aesthetics and views from Beaumont Avenue and Brookside Avenue should be evaluated in the Draft EIR	Section 6.1, Aesthetics and IS/NOP (Appendix A)

**1.2.1 - Effects Found Not To Be Significant**

Based on the analysis and findings in the IS/NOP in Appendix A of this Draft EIR as well as additional information in Section 6 of this Draft EIR that supports the findings in the IS/NOP, the following environmental issues were determined not to be significantly affected by implementation of the project.

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Population/Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Utilities/Service Systems

The evaluation of the environmental effects that were found not to be significant provide adequate environmental documentation.

**1.2.2 - Effects Determined To Be Potentially Significant**

Based on the analysis and findings in the IS/NOP, a determination was made that an EIR would be prepared to address the potentially significant adverse environmental effects related to the implementation of the project. The scope of this Draft EIR includes environmental issues identified by the SGPWA during the preparation of the IS/NOP, as well as issues raised by agencies, organizations, and individuals in response to the IS/NOP. The following environmental issues were determined to be potentially significant and are addressed in this EIR:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic

Land Use/Planning was also an additional issue identified as having a potentially significant impact in the IS/NOP. The IS/NOP concluded that the proposed project could conflict with the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and that further analysis of this issue would be incorporated into the EIR. This issue is addressed in Section 3.2, Biological Resources, and therefore, there is no Land Use/Planning section in this EIR.

---

### 1.3 - Organization of the EIR

---

This Draft EIR is organized into the following sections, which contain the contents of an EIR as required by Sections 15120 through 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines. The main document is printed, while the appendices are included as a CD attached to the back cover of this printed copy.

- **Section ES: Executive Summary.** This section provides a summary of the project and the project alternatives that will be addressed in this Draft EIR, including a summary table of project and cumulative impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and the level of significance after mitigation for each environmental issue.
- **Section 1: Introduction.** This section includes an introduction and overview describing the purpose of this Draft EIR, along with its scope and components.
- **Section 2: Project Description.** This section provides a detailed description of the project, including the location and project characteristics. A discussion of the intended uses of this Draft EIR, project background, project objectives, and project approvals needed for the project are also included.
- **Section 3: Environmental Impact Analysis.** This section analyzes the environmental impacts of the project. Impacts are organized into major topical areas. Each topical area includes a description of the environmental setting, regulatory setting, significance criteria, impacts, mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation, as applicable. The specific environmental topics that are addressed in Section 3 are:
  - Section 3.1 Air Quality
  - Section 3.2 Biological Resources
  - Section 3.3 Cultural Resources
  - Section 3.4 Geology and Soils
  - Section 3.5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - Section 3.6 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
  - Section 3.7 Hydrology and Water Quality

- Section 3.8 Noise
- Section 3.9 Transportation and Traffic
- **Section 4: Cumulative Impact Analysis.** This section evaluates the combined effect of project impacts with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the project area.
- **Section 5: Other CEQA Considerations.** This section provides a summary of significant environmental impacts, including unavoidable, irreversible, and growth-inducing impacts.
- **Section 6: Effects Found Not To Be Significant.** This section includes a summary of environmental impacts determined through preparation of the IS to be less than significant or no impact. This summary includes information from the IS as well as additional information.
- **Section 7: Alternatives to the Proposed Project.** This section compares the project impacts with three project alternatives: the No Project Alternative, Reduced Footprint/Alternative Site Location Alternative, and the Secondary Alternative Site Location Alternative.
- **Section 8: Persons and Organizations Consulted.** This section provides a list of the organizations, persons consulted, and the various individuals who contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR. This section also provides a list of documents cited in the body of this Draft EIR.
- **Section 9: List of Preparers.** This section includes a listing of the lead agency personnel and technical consultants used to prepare this Draft EIR.
- **Section 10: References.** This section provides a listing of the technical studies and other documents used to prepare this Draft EIR.
- **Appendices.** The appendices contain the IS/NOP (including comments) and technical studies prepared to support the analyses and conclusions in this Draft EIR.

The Final EIR will be prepared after the public review period for this Draft EIR has been completed. The Final EIR will include comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR during the public review period; a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR; written responses to significant environmental issues identified in the comments received; and any other information added by the SGPWA.

---

## 1.4 - Documents Incorporated by Reference

---

In accordance with Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR has referenced several technical studies, analyses, and previously certified environmental documents. Information from these documents, which has been incorporated by reference, has been briefly summarized in the



appropriate Draft EIR sections. The documents that have been used to prepare this Draft EIR include, but are not limited to:

- City of Beaumont General Plan (2007)
- City of Beaumont Municipal Code (2012 [Updated])
- County of Riverside General Plan (2003)
- County of Riverside Code of Ordinances (2012 [Updated])
- County of Riverside Pass Area Plan (2000)

These reference documents, per Section 15150(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, are available for review at the following locations:

***City of Beaumont General Plan and City of Beaumont Municipal Code***

*General Plan*

<http://www.ci.beaumont.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=121>

*Municipal Code*

<http://www.ci.beaumont.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=246>

***County of Riverside General Plan, Riverside County Code of Ordinances, and County of Riverside Pass Area Plan***

*General Plan*

<http://www.rctlma.org/genplan/>

***Code of Ordinances***

<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=16320&stateID=5&statename=California>

***Pass Area Plan***

[http://www.rctlma.org/genplan/general\\_plan\\_2008/area\\_plan\\_vol\\_2/the\\_pass\\_area\\_plan\\_2008.pdf](http://www.rctlma.org/genplan/general_plan_2008/area_plan_vol_2/the_pass_area_plan_2008.pdf)

---

## **1.5 - Documents Prepared for the Project**

---

The following technical studies and analyses were prepared for the project:

- Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP), Appendix A
- South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) CalEEMod Emissions Estimator Model, Appendix B
- Habitat Assessment and Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Consistency Analysis, Appendix C.1.
- Focused Los Angeles Pocket Mouse Survey Report, Appendix C.2

**Introduction**

---

- Delineation of Jurisdictional Waters and Wetlands, Appendix C.3
- Cultural Resource Addendum Survey, Appendix D
- Geotechnical Review - Proposed Recharge Facility, Appendix E.1
- Geotechnical Investigation Report - Proposed Pipeline and Service Connection Site, Appendix E.2
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) - Proposed Recharge Facility, Appendix F.1
- Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR) Radius Search Report - Proposed Pipeline and Service Connection Site, Appendix F.2
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Roadway Noise Construction Model (RCNM), Appendix G
- Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA), Appendix H

---

**1.6 - Review of the Draft EIR**

---

Upon completion of this Draft EIR, the SGPWA prepared and filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the California Office of Planning and Research/State Clearinghouse to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161). Concurrent with the NOC, the SGPWA distributed a Notice of Availability (NOA) in accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines. The NOA was mailed to the organizations and individuals who previously requested such a notice in writing. This Draft EIR was distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding cities and municipalities, and all interested parties requesting a copy of this Draft EIR in accordance with Public Resources Code, Section 21092(b)(3). During the public review period, this Draft EIR, including the appendices, is available for review at the following locations:

San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency  
1210 Beaumont Avenue  
Beaumont, CA 92223  
Monday through Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Beaumont Library District  
125 E Eighth Street  
Beaumont, CA 92223  
Monday, Friday and Saturday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Tuesday and Thursday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Sunday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Wednesday: Closed

In addition, the Draft EIR, including the appendices, is available for review at the following SGPWA website.

<http://www.sgpwa.com/reports.asp>

Agencies, organizations, individuals, and all other interested parties not previously contacted, or who did not respond to the NOP, currently have the opportunity to comment on this Draft EIR during the 45-day public review period. Written comments on this Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Jeff Davis, P.E., General Manager  
San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency  
1210 Beaumont Avenue  
Beaumont, CA 92223

Comments may also be sent by email to Jeff Davis at:

Email: [JDavis@sgpwa.com](mailto:JDavis@sgpwa.com)

Upon completion of the public review period, written responses to all substantive environmental issues raised will be prepared and made available for review at least 10 days prior to the public hearing on the project before the SGPWA, at which the certification of the Final EIR will be considered. Comments received and the responses to comments will be included as part of the record for consideration by decision-makers for the project.

