Notice of Preparation

Date October 16, 2015

To: California Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Project: Sterling Natural Resource Center

Lead Agency: San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

Review Period: October 16, 2015, through November 16, 2015

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify agencies and interested parties that the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) as the Lead Agency will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for construction of the Sterling Natural Resource Center (SNRC). The proposed project would construct a new wastewater treatment facility in the City of Highland to treat wastewater generated within the East Valley Water District (EVWD) service area, which is entirely within the Valley District service area. Currently, EVWD conveys that wastewater to the City of San Bernardino for secondary treatment at the San Bernardino Water Reclamation Plant and tertiary treatment at the Rapid Infiltration and Extraction (RIX) facility which discharges to the Santa Ana River. The new treatment facility would produce disinfected tertiary recycled water (Title 22 water quality for unrestricted use). The treated water would be discharged to basins at the new treatment plant site, to existing basins currently operated by the City of Redlands, to City Creek, or to alternative locations.

Project Location: The SNRC would be constructed on a 20-acre parcel of land, located at North Del Rosa Drive between East 5th Street and East 6th Street in the City of Highland (see Figure 1). The conveyance pipeline to the City of Redlands' discharge basins would be installed within Alabama Street from East 6th Street for 1.3 miles south to the City of Redlands' basins. An additional conveyance would be installed within East 6th Street (or within a similar parallel route) heading east from the SNRC property for approximately 3 miles to City Creek and turning north within San Bernardino County Flood Control District (SBCFCD) right-of-way along City Creek. Additional or alternative conveyances may be identified and analyzed as part of the environmental review process.

About the Lead Agency: Valley District is a special district with wholesale water supply, wastewater treatment and water replenishment authority over an area of about 353 square miles in the eastern portion of the San Bernardino Valley, including the entire EVWD service area. EVWD provides potable water and wastewater collection services and has water replenishment authority for residents in the cities of Highland, San Bernardino, and unincorporated portions of San Bernardino County within a 30-square mile service area at the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains. Valley District as the lead agency and EVWD have entered into a Framework Agreement to achieve regional water replenishment objectives. Valley District, EVWD and other water agency partners are working together to develop a collaborative regional plan to increase the region's use of recycled water to meet water demands. Valley District and EVWD intend for the SNRC to be an integral part of that regional plan.

Public Comments: Valley District is soliciting the views of interested persons and agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be evaluated in the EIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description in this NOP and provide their comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency. The EIR will be used by the Valley District Board of Directors when considering approval of the proposed project as well as for any related discretionary approvals.

All comments to the NOP are due no later than November 16, 2015. Please send your comments to the mailing address or email address shown below. Include a return address or email address and a contact name in your agency or group with your comments.

Valley District
c/o Tom Barnes, Environmental Science Associates
626 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90017
tbarnes@esassoc.com

Scoping Meeting: Two scoping meetings will be held to receive comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meetings will include a brief presentation providing an overview of the proposed program and the CEQA process. After the presentation, oral comments will be accepted. Written comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit comments in writing at the scoping meetings. Written comments also may be submitted anytime during the NOP review period. The scoping meetings will be held as follows:

Thursday, October 29, 2015
2:00 p.m.
San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
380 E. Vanderbilt Way
San Bernardino, CA 92408

Thursday, November 5, 2015
5:00 pm
East Valley Water District
31111 Greenspot Road
Highland, CA 92346

Introduction

The San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) is proposing to construct the new SNRC facility in the City of Highland to treat wastewater generated in the EVWD service area for beneficial reuse higher in the Santa Ana River watershed. The proposed project would be owned and operated in accordance with the terms of the Framework Agreement between Valley District and East Valley Water District (EVWD). Valley District is initiating the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluating the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

EVWD currently conveys its wastewater to the City of San Bernardino, where it is treated and then discharged to the Santa Ana River lower in the watershed. The proposed project would instead treat, recycle and reuse the wastewater for multiple beneficial uses within the upper Santa Ana River watershed. The project provides the community with greater control over the cost of wastewater treatment and produces a new supply of recycled water to meet local recycled water demands. In addition, the proposed project may provide an opportunity to create and/or enhance riparian and aquatic habitats in City Creek that would benefit the regional conservation goals under development through the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Framework Agreement

Valley District and EVWD entered into a Framework Agreement in 2015 to enable collaboration between these two agencies within the San Bernardino Valley region to advance their integrated recycled water management objectives. Recognizing their mutual goals, the Framework Agreement provides for the construction and operation of the SNRC by Valley District. The agreement also contemplates a regional plan in partnership with other water agencies to increase the use of recycled water to solve regional water supply challenges.

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

Valley District was formed in 1954 as a regional water supply agency with a service area of covers about 353 square miles in southwestern San Bernardino County and a population of about 660,000. Its enabling act includes a broad range of powers to provide water, groundwater replenishment, wastewater and storm water treatment and disposal, recreation, and fire protection services. Valley District is a water wholesaler, delivering imported and local water supplies to local water retailers. Valley District contracts with the SWP to provide imported water to the region and also manages groundwater storage within its boundaries, which includes the cities and communities of San Bernardino, Colton, Loma Linda, Redlands, Rialto, Bloomington, Highland, East Highland, Mentone, Grand Terrace, and Yucaipa.

East Valley Water District

EVWD was formed in 1954 to provide domestic water service to the unincorporated and agricultural-based communities of Highland and East Highlands. As the population of the area has increased, these agricultural demands have been replaced by municipal demands. EVWD has built a water system to meet the growing municipal demands and currently serves a population of approximately 65,000. EVWD delivers 18 million gallons per day (MGD) of potable water from three sources: Bunker Hill

Groundwater Basin provides 90 percent, Santa Ana River (SAR) water provides 9 percent, and State Water Project (SWP) water provides 1 percent.

Groundwater is pumped from the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin through a series of 18 EVWD-owned wells. Surface water supplies are treated at the 8.0 million gallon per day (MGD) Philip A. Disch Surface Water Treatment Plant (Plant 134), which is owned and operated by EVWD. In addition, EVWD also operates and maintains the sanitary sewer collection system within its service area. Currently, the collection system conveys approximately 6 MGD of untreated wastewater to the City of San Bernardino via the East Trunk Sewer, where it is treated at San Bernardino Water Reclamation Plant and RIX facility.

Proposed Project Components

The proposed project involves construction of the SNRC facility, upgrades to the collection system, a treated effluent conveyance system, and discharge facilities. **Figure 1** provides an overview of the proposed project components.

Sterling Natural Resource Center

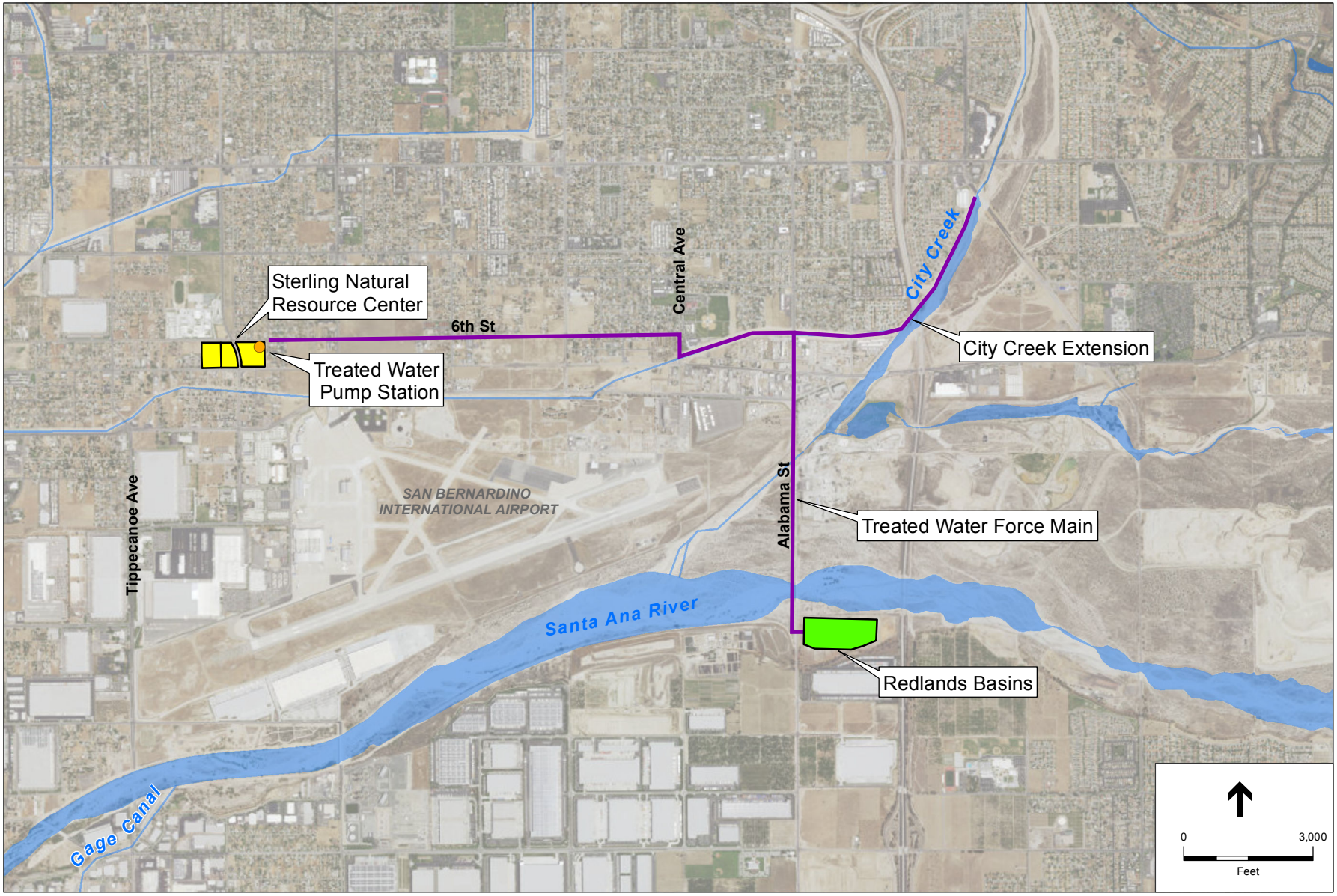
The SNRC would be constructed on a 20-acre parcel of land, located at North Del Rosa Drive between East 5th Street and East 6th Street (see Figure 1). The SNRC site is an undeveloped, flat parcel. The site has residential neighbors across the street to the north, east and west and several small businesses across the street to the south and west. There are two undeveloped neighboring parcels to the north and one to the south. The Indian Springs High School is adjacent to the north of the site across 6th Street and the San Bernardino Airport is located approximately one half mile southeast.

The SNRC would include treatment facilities that may consist of pretreatment bar screens, sand or grit chambers, equalization basins, primary clarifiers (sedimentation tanks), membrane bioreactors (MBR) with aeration tanks, and disinfection. On-site solids handling would require an aerobic or anaerobic digestion process followed by a belt thickener dewatering system. The SNRC would be sized for an initial flow expectation of 6 MGD with an ultimate capacity of 10 MGD.

The SNRC would be designed to integrate into the community with architectural features that would enhance the neighborhood. A portion of the property would be available to accommodate community facilities that may include a publically accessible park and a community center with meeting rooms, classrooms and an interpretive center. **Figure 2** shows the proposed location of the SNRC.

Effluent Conveyance and Discharge Basins

The proposed project includes the construction of a pump station at the SNRC property to convey the tertiary effluent from the SNRC to discharge locations. A 24-inch diameter conveyance pipeline would be installed within the existing right-of-way (ROW) of East 6th Street (or a parallel street) from the SNRC property for approximately three miles to Alabama Street. The pipeline would run south on Alabama Street from East 6th Street for approximately 1.3 miles to the existing discharge basins and would cross the Santa Ana River within an existing conduit attached to the Alabama Street Bridge.



SOURCE: ESRI

Figure 1
Project Location

SOURCE: ESRI

Figure 2
Sterling Natural Resource Center Location

Additional conveyance pipelines would also be installed to convey water for discharge into City Creek. From 6th Street, the pipeline would continue within the City Creek levee or through other public rights-of-way north for approximately 2,500 feet where a discharge structure would be constructed. The tertiary-treated water would be discharged to City Creek. City Creek is currently an ephemeral creek at this location, with no perennial flows. Other discharge locations and pipeline alignments may be identified in the EIR as well.

Sewer Pump Station and Collection Pipelines

Various collection system improvements are required within the service area in order to convey flows to the SNRC. The new facilities would include at least two sewer lift stations and associated force mains as well as several sewer trunk improvements within city streets.

Potential Environmental Impacts

The EIR will assess the physical changes to the environment that would likely result from the construction and operation of the proposed project, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Potential impacts are summarized below. The EIR will identify mitigation measures, if necessary, to avoid, minimize, and offset potentially significant impacts of the project.

Aesthetics

Potential direct and indirect impacts could occur both during construction and after the recycled water facilities and related infrastructure are built and operating. The EIR will identify the visible changes to the natural and man-made environment, including development of the SNRC, pump station, and conveyance pipelines within the viewshed.

Air Quality

Construction and operation of the proposed project could cause air emissions. Air emissions could result from construction equipment exhaust, ground disturbance during construction, material hauling, construction employee-commute travel, vehicle operational maintenance trips, and vehicle trips associated with any increases in employment. Operation of the water treatment plant and pump station may potentially generate emissions associated with energy use and from mobile sources that may include deliveries and solids disposal haul trucks. The EIR will estimate pollutant emissions from construction and operational activities and will develop mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potential impacts.

Biological Resources

The project could result in changes to wildlife habitat and disturbance of sensitive species during construction or operation. In particular, reduction of flows below the RIX facility could affect Santa Ana sucker and its habitat. In addition, discharges to City Creek could alter biological conditions in the drainage. The EIR will evaluate the potential for construction and operation of the proposed project to affect biological resources, and will also discuss local ordinances and state and federal regulations governing biological resources. The EIR will develop mitigation measures as necessary to avoid, minimize, and offset potential impacts.

Cultural Resources

The proposed project would require construction of facilities and pipelines that could disturb known or unknown archeological sites, paleontological resources, and/or human remains where groundbreaking activities occur. The EIR will assess the potential effects of the proposed project on cultural resources, including archaeological, historic, paleontological, and Native American resources. Mitigation measures will be identified if necessary to reduce potential impacts.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

The project area is located within a region of California that is seismically active. The proposed project would require construction of recycled water facilities that could be subject to potential seismic and geologic hazards, including ground shaking, liquefaction, soil instability, soil erosion, expansive soils, and landslides. The EIR will describe local and state-wide building codes and policies that would apply to the project that could mitigate or avoid potentially significant effects. The EIR will identify mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potential impacts.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project could result in the generation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with construction and operations. The EIR will estimate construction-related emissions and long-term operational emissions, including total CO_2-equivalent emissions for evaluating the effects of GHGs. The EIR will examine the project's effects on global climate change and evaluate consistency of the project with the State's GHG emissions reduction goals.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Excavation during construction could uncover contaminated soils or hazardous substances that pose a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. Construction activities could result in the release of hazardous materials. The EIR will evaluate whether the proposed project would be located on sites identified by the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Envirostor databases as hazardous release sites. The EIR also will evaluate the potential for the project to result in the release of hazardous materials during construction and operation. Mitigation measures will be proposed if necessary to reduce potential impacts.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Implementation of the proposed project may change local drainage patterns at construction sites, which could affect the volume, quality, and rates of surface runoff that in turn could affect local surface water resources. The EIR will describe relevant federal, state, and local regulations and agencies, including provisions of the federal Clean Water Act, the state Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and the permitting and regulatory authority of the RWQCB and SWRCB. The EIR will identify stormwater quality protection measures required during construction and operation of proposed facilities. The EIR will also evaluate potential impacts to flood control capacity and develop mitigation strategies if necessary to avoid significant impacts.

The EIR will evaluate impacts to surface water hydrology from reducing discharge into the Santa Ana River and introducing water into City Creek or alternative locations identified during the review process. The EIR will evaluate the potential to adversely affect groundwater quality through the infiltration of

treated water or through the entrainment of naturally occurring substances. The EIR will identify mitigation measures if necessary to ensure that potentially significant impacts are mitigated or avoided.

Land Use

The proposed project would construct facilities within an urban residential area adjacent to the Indian Springs High School. The EIR will evaluate the compatibility of the proposed project components with adjacent land uses.

Noise

Implementation of the proposed project would require construction and operation of project elements that would potentially generate noise and vibration. Construction activities that could be a significant source of noise and vibrations include trucking operations, use of heavy construction equipment (e.g., graders, cranes, and frontend loaders), and pile driving activities. During project operations, fixed sources of noise could be established. The EIR will describe the local noise policies and ordinances. The EIR will identify potential noise impacts associated with construction and operation and develop mitigation strategies if necessary to reduce potential impacts.

Population and Housing/Growth Inducement

The proposed project would provide wastewater treatment for existing and planned population within the service area. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the project to induce or accommodate growth. The EIR will identify current population and employment projections and identify local planning jurisdictions with the authority to approve growth and mitigate secondary effects of growth.

Public Services

The proposed project would construct a new wastewater treatment facility. Implementation of the proposed project is unlikely to affect demand for other public services or to require new or expanded facilities. The EIR will assess the potential for the proposed project to affect police and fire protection services, schools, parks, and recreational facilities.

Traffic and Transportation

Construction of the proposed project could affect traffic on local roadways as a result of vehicle trips associated with hauling of material and equipment, road closures and detours, increased demand for parking to serve construction workers, and increase in traffic hazards caused by construction activities. The EIR will evaluate the potential for additional construction vehicles, lane closures, or road closures to impact traffic and circulation. The EIR will identify mitigation strategies to reduce any potential effects.

Utilities and Energy

The proposed project could result in the temporary disruption of services to adjacent land uses. The EIR will describe the existing water, electricity, telecommunications, and gas utilities serving the local communities. The EIR will estimate the project's energy usage and assess potential impacts to local and regional energy supplies. Existing and projected regional supplies, demands, and facilities will be described along with any existing constraints or service deficiencies in the region. The EIR will evaluate the project's potential to affect utilities and will identify mitigation measures to minimize the effects, if any.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will evaluate potential cumulative impacts associated with the project for all environmental topics when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the area. The EIR will identify planned projects in the area including planned development, water supply, and wastewater treatment projects.