



NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Date: February 5, 2019

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

Lead Agency: Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
1955 Workman Mill Road, Whittier, CA, 90601

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge in Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse

Notice of Preparation

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties that the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Sanitation Districts) as the Lead Agency has independently chosen to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge in Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse (proposed project). The Sanitation Districts has prepared this NOP in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15082). The Sanitation Districts had previously published an Initial Study and a Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the same project in July 2018, which concluded that the proposed project would result in no significant impacts to the environment. Following public review of the MND and accompanying Initial Study, the Sanitation Districts decided to prepare an EIR.

The Sanitation Districts are soliciting input from interested persons and responsible and trustee agencies to assist in the development of the scope and content of the environmental information to be studied in the EIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description and provide comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency. The EIR will be used by the Sanitation Districts when considering approval of the proposed project.

NOP Comment Period: In accordance with CEQA, comments to the NOP must be received by Sanitation Districts no later than 30 days after publication of this notice. The review period for this NOP is from February 6, 2019 to March 9, 2019. We request that comments to this NOP be received no later than March 9, 2019 at 5:00 PM. Please include a return address and contact name with your comments and send them to the address shown below or email to jlanza@lacsdsd.org.

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Document Availability: The project description, location, and potential environmental effects are described herein. Copies of the NOP have been transmitted to the California State Clearinghouse and to responsible and trustee agencies. Copies of this NOP, the Initial Study, and future environmental documents prepared in conjunction with the proposed project will be available for public review on the Sanitation Districts' website at: http://www.lacsd.org/residents/documents_for_public_review.asp, and at the following location.

- Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, 1955 Workman Mill Road, Whittier, CA 90601

A Notice of Availability will be issued when the Draft EIR is published for public review.

Notice of Scoping Meeting

A Public Scoping Meeting will be held to receive public comments and suggestions on the environmental issues associated with implementation of the proposed project that will be addressed in the EIR. At the Public Scoping Meeting, a brief presentation and overview of the proposed project will be provided. After the presentation, oral and written comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR will be accepted. The Public Scoping Meeting will be open to the public and held at the following location:

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2019
Time: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Location: Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
District's Board Room
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

Proposed Project

In anticipation of increased future recycled water demands, the Sanitation Districts are proposing to incrementally reduce discharges of recycled water from five water reclamation plants (WRPs), including the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP, each of which currently discharges into the San Gabriel River, San Jose Creek, or Coyote Creek. The diverted water would supply recycled water programs implemented by other agencies. The proposed reduction in water discharges would occur over time, and would not involve any construction activities or other physical changes to the environment other than the decreased volume of discharge. Future construction of infrastructure projects to deliver recycled water will be covered under separate CEQA compliance documents prepared by the implementing agencies.

Project Location: The locations of the five WRPs are shown in **Figure 1**. The Pomona WRP currently discharges recycled water to San Jose Creek. The San Jose Creek WRP, Whittier Narrows WRP¹, and Los Coyotes WRP each discharge to the San Gabriel River. The Long Beach WRP discharges to Coyote Creek at the confluence with the San Gabriel River. The project study area includes the San Gabriel River and San Jose Creek.

Project Background: The Sanitation Districts are a public agency created under state law to manage wastewater and solid waste on a regional scale and consist of 24 independent special districts serving approximately 5.6 million people in Los Angeles County (County). The Sanitation Districts' service area covers approximately 850 square miles and encompasses 78 cities and unincorporated territory within the County. The Sanitation Districts operate 10 WRPs and the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant. Seventeen sanitation districts provide sewerage services in the metropolitan Los Angeles area are signatory to a Joint Outfall Agreement that provides for the regional, interconnected systems of facilities known as the Joint Outfall System (JOS). The service area of the JOS encompasses 73 cities and unincorporated territory, providing sewage treatment, reuse, and ocean disposal for residential, commercial, and industrial wastewater. Under the Joint Outfall Agreement, Sanitation District No. 2 of Los Angeles County (District) has been appointed managing authority over the JOS.

Project Objectives: (1) Support increased water recycling in the San Gabriel River watershed through maximizing availability of treated effluent otherwise discharged to flood control channels; (2) Create a more efficient utilization of treated effluent to support both recycled water reuse and sensitive riparian habitat; (3) Sustain sensitive habitat supported by historical treated effluent discharges to the San Gabriel River watershed.

Project Description: The Sanitation Districts are proposing to incrementally reduce discharges of recycled water from the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP. The Sanitation Districts are not proposing to construct any new facilities. The proposed use of the recycled water would be implemented by water agencies and other users over time. The Sanitation Districts will continue to maintain the ability to discharge treated water at the same points but anticipates discharging lesser quantities. A brief description of the proposed project's discharge operation modifications is provided below:

- The San Jose Creek WRP discharge is currently rotated between five discharge locations within the San Gabriel River watershed as show on in Figure 1. The use of the discharge locations is irregular throughout the year and varies year-to-year, depending on the availability of groundwater recharge facilities and channel maintenance activities. Under the proposed project, discharges from the San Jose Creek WRP at discharge point SJC002 would be reduced from an annual average of approximately 9.48 million of gallons per day (MGD) to a minimum monthly average of approximately 5 MGD. Although the total annual volume would be reduced, the new monthly average discharge would provide a more consistent discharge rate compared to existing conditions. Discharges would be timed to more

¹ The Whittier Narrows WRP has 3 discharge locations; of which only one is to the San Gabriel River.

efficiently meet the water demand needs of sensitive habitat. The diverted water would be conveyed for beneficial reuse to groundwater recharge basins or other reuse facilities.

- The Pomona WRP discharges into a concrete-lined portion of San Jose Creek which contains no sensitive habitat. As San Jose Creek nears the San Gabriel River, the concrete lining gives way to a soft-bottom reach. Current and historic groundwater upwelling occurs within the lined portion of San Jose Creek upstream of the transition location. The proposed project would result in zero discharge from the Pomona WRP. Habitat in the soft-bottomed portion of San Jose Creek would continue to be sustained by rising groundwater.
- The Whittier Narrows WRP has three discharge locations but only one tributary to the San Gabriel River. A recently approved modification to discharge from the Whittier Narrows WRP will reduce discharges to the San Gabriel River by approximately 1 percent (0.01 MGD).
- The Los Coyotes WRP discharges into a concrete-lined portion of the San Gabriel River. Discharge flow is contained within the low-flow channel of the river under typical dry-weather conditions. This project proposes to maintain a minimum discharge flow of 2 MGD to prevent the low-flow channel from going completely dry downstream of the plant.
- The Long Beach WRP discharges into the concrete-lined Coyote Creek approximately 3,000 feet before the start of the San Gabriel River estuary. Urban runoff and natural flows in Coyote Creek upstream of the Long Beach WRP maintain a consistent flow in the creek at the discharge location. This project proposes a minimum discharge flow of zero from the Long Beach WRP.²

Environmental Evaluation

The Sanitation Districts prepared and published an Initial Study in July 2018 that evaluated potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project. The Sanitation Districts initially issued a Notice of Intent to adopt an MND and received public comments. After considering the public comments submitted, the Sanitation Districts has elected to prepare an EIR. Based on the Initial Study, the EIR will focus on potential impacts to biological resources, hydrological resources, and recreation. All other effects were determined to be less than significant in the Initial Study. The Initial Study is available for review on the Sanitations Districts' website as provided above. The following environmental topic areas will be addressed in the EIR.

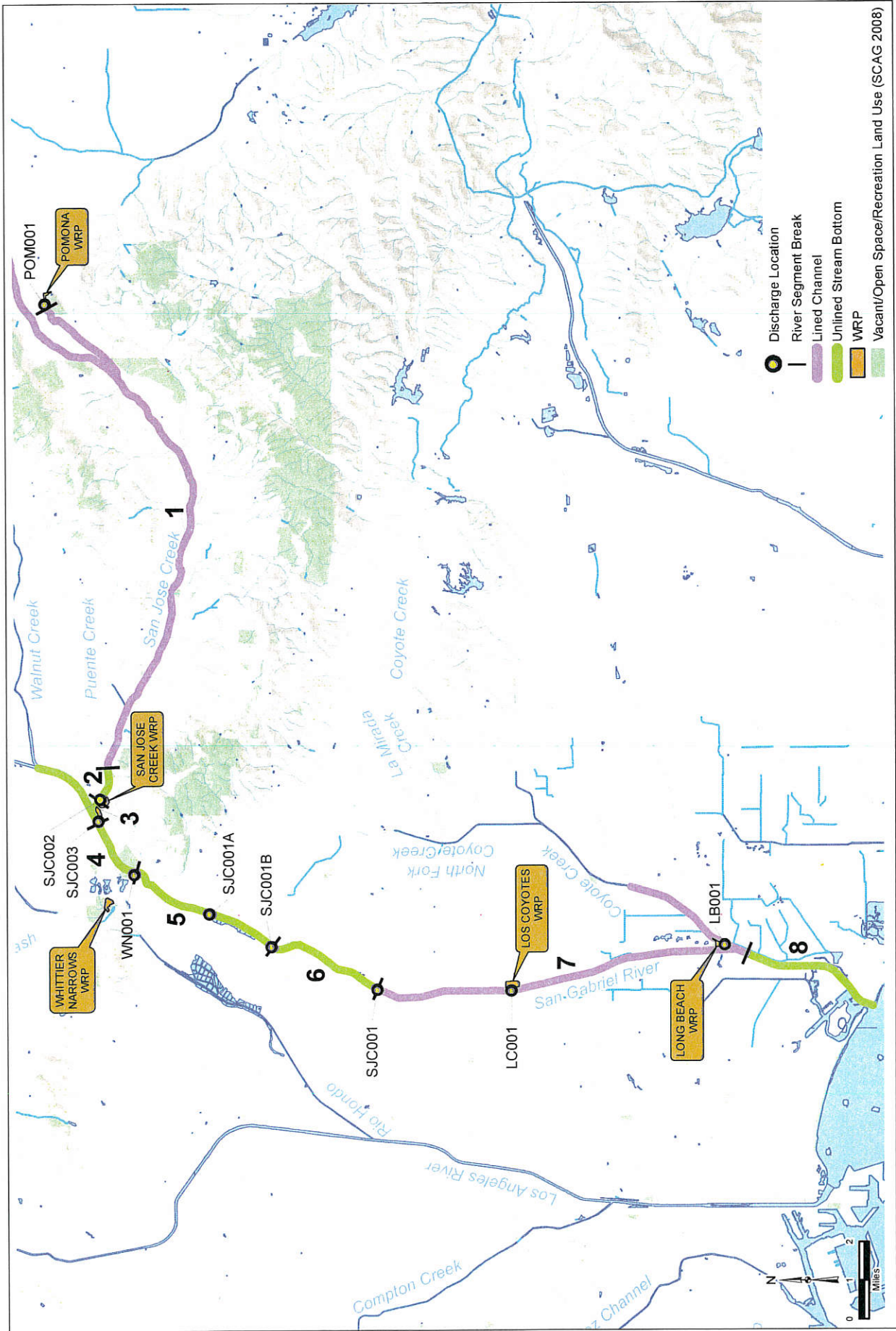
Biological Resources: The proposed project would reduce discharges from five WRPs. Potential sensitive biological resources within and along the San Gabriel River and other tributaries could be impacted by changes in operations under the proposed project. All potential impacts to biological resources will be further evaluated in the EIR. If the EIR identifies significant adverse

² In addition, the Long Beach WRP would increase contributions to the Alamitos Seawater Intrusion Barrier injection well system and may increase recycled water available for other reuse projects. Los Coyotes, Pomona, and Whittier Narrows WRPs would also increase contributions to recycled water use projects.

impacts to biological resources, it will also include mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts, where feasible.

Hydrology and Water Quality: The Sanitation Districts are proposing to reduce discharges of recycled water from five WRPs including the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP, each of which currently discharges into the San Gabriel River or San Jose Creek. The EIR will evaluate potential hydrology and water quality impacts of the proposed changes in operation on the tributaries and groundwater resources within the San Gabriel River Watershed. If it is determined that the project could have significant hydrology and water quality impacts related to surface water hydrology or groundwater or water quality, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts, where feasible.

Recreation: The proposed project does not propose development that could result in an increased demand for the use of park or other recreational facilities in the area. However, the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area is a popular recreation area, and the proposed project could affect the open space resources or infringe on public access. As such, impacts are considered potentially significant and further analysis of this issue in an EIR is required.



SOURCE: Clearwater EIR Segment Map

San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge
in Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse

Figure 1
Sanitation Districts Receiving Water Stations and Discharges to San Gabriel System

