



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
700 NORTH ALAMEDA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

for the Colorado River Aqueduct Master Reclamation Plan for San Bernardino and Riverside Counties

DATE: November 17, 2022

TO: Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties

LEAD AGENCY: The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

PROJECT TITLE: Colorado River Aqueduct Master Reclamation Plan for San Bernardino and Riverside Counties

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) has prepared a Draft Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS-MND) for the Project listed above pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. Anyone desiring to comment on the Draft IS-MND may do so in writing within the 30-day public review period from Thursday, November 17, 2022 through 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19, 2022. In addition to making the Draft IS-MND available for public review, the document is being sent to responsible, trustee, and interested agencies as part of the review process required under CEQA (Section 21092 of the Public Resources Code) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15072 of the California Code of Regulations).

PROJECT LOCATION:

The Project Area is comprised of 20 borrow sites (14 active sites and 6 inactive sites) along an approximately 125-mile stretch of the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) right-of-way with ten borrow sites located in unincorporated San Bernardino County and ten borrow sites located in unincorporated Riverside County.¹ The Project Area is located within the southern Mojave Desert, extending from the Copper Basin Reservoir to the east to the Cottonwood Mountains near the Julian Hinds Pumping Plant to the southwest, and encompasses a total area of approximately 149.3 acres (79.8 acres in San Bernardino County and 69.5 acres in Riverside County). The entirety of the Project Area is owned by Metropolitan. The Project Area is not included on any of the lists enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (hazardous waste facilities). Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide maps of the locations of the 20 borrow sites.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In 1933, Metropolitan began construction of the CRA and its related infrastructure. During infrastructure development and aqueduct construction, Metropolitan initiated material extraction at various on-site sources of sand, gravel, stone, and undifferentiated earthen materials for use in construction, operation, and maintenance of CRA infrastructure. These extraction areas are referred to as "borrow sites." When Metropolitan completed construction of the CRA and began operations in 1941, it retained fee title to the land beneath and adjacent to the CRA. The fee title land, including the borrow sites, was also utilized throughout the 1950s during planned expansions of the CRA facilities. Metropolitan continues to use earth, stone, sand, gravel, and other materials sourced from these lands to restore, repair, protect, and maintain essential berms, access roads, and pipeline cover after storm events and for other critical operations and maintenance activities along the CRA. Today, Metropolitan maintains seven active borrow sites in San Bernardino County and seven active borrow sites in Riverside County.

The proposed Project consists of the reclamation of 14 active borrow sites located in San Bernardino and Riverside counties pursuant to the requirements of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). Per SMARA, a reclamation

¹ Metropolitan initially identified 20 borrow site reclamation locations where surface mining activities either actively occur or had occurred in the past (ten in San Bernardino County and ten in Riverside County). An analysis of potential environmental impacts from reclamation activities was conducted for all 20 borrow site locations; however, six of the 20 borrow sites are inactive and have already been passively reclaimed and therefore are not subject to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and its reclamation requirements (Surface Mining and Reclamation Act; Public Resources Code Sections 2710-2796). In an effort to provide a comprehensive environmental review, all 20 borrow site locations are analyzed within the IS-MND even though only 14 sites are active and would be subject to reclamation.

plan that identifies the specific reclamation activities, final end use of the reclaimed site, and success criteria and monitoring/reporting must be prepared and approved by the SMARA Lead Agency (in this case, the California Mining and Geology Board). Metropolitan has prepared a Master Reclamation Plan (MRP) to address reclamation of the 14 active borrow sites in San Bernardino and Riverside counties pursuant to SMARA. As outlined in the MRP, once material extraction at each borrow site is complete, each borrow site would be reclaimed in accordance with SMARA requirements. Proposed reclamation activities would generally consist of removing deleterious materials and debris, recontouring borrow site slopes and floors, installing stormwater best management practices, and revegetating reclaimed areas with a native plant hydroseed mix. These reclamation activities would take approximately 30 days to complete at each site. The final end use of each borrow site would be revegetated open space consistent with the surrounding environment. Following reclamation/revegetation activities, a monitoring program as required by SMARA would commence. Monitoring would be conducted on a semi-regular basis (likely quarterly) for a period of up to three years by a monitoring biologist or other qualified staff to ensure best management practices, revegetation, and all other reclamation activities meet the SMARA performance standards.

It is anticipated operation and maintenance of the CRA would require the extraction of materials from these borrow sites for up to the next approximately 100 years, with material depletion at the majority of the borrow site locations conservatively assumed to occur by 2122, at which point reclamation activities would commence. The timing of this would be different for each site.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA, an Initial Study was prepared for the Project. The Initial Study describes the environmental impacts of the proposed Project and concludes that, with the implementation of mitigation measures for biological resources, the proposed Project will not have a significant effect on the environment. Based on this assessment, a Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/REVIEW:

In accordance with Section 15073 of the State CEQA Guidelines, hard copies of the Draft IS-MND are available for public review for 32 days from Thursday, November 17, 2022 through 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19, 2022 at:

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
700 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

A copy of the Draft IS-MND will also be posted on Metropolitan's website at: www.mwdh2o.com/CEQA

Please contact Michelle Morrison via telephone or email at EP@mwdh2o.com to make arrangements for viewing the document at Metropolitan's office or to request a hard copy of the Draft IS-MND if you are not able to access the document online or at the location listed above.

When submitting written comments to Metropolitan, please provide the name and email address of a contact person. All Comments and questions regarding the Project should be directed to:

Ms. Michelle Morrison
Environmental Planning Section
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, California 90054
(213) 217-7906

Comments may also be submitted via e-mail to: EP@mwdh2o.com

Reference: "SMARA Master Reclamation Plan Draft IS-MND" in the subject line.

Metropolitan will notify commenters of the date, time and place of the public meeting at which Metropolitan's Board of Directors will consider the proposed Project and IS-MND, including comments received during the public review period. This information will also be posted on the website referenced above. Information on how to access the meeting will be found in the meeting agenda published at the following website 72 hours in advance of the meeting - <https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

Figure 1. Project Area – San Bernardino County

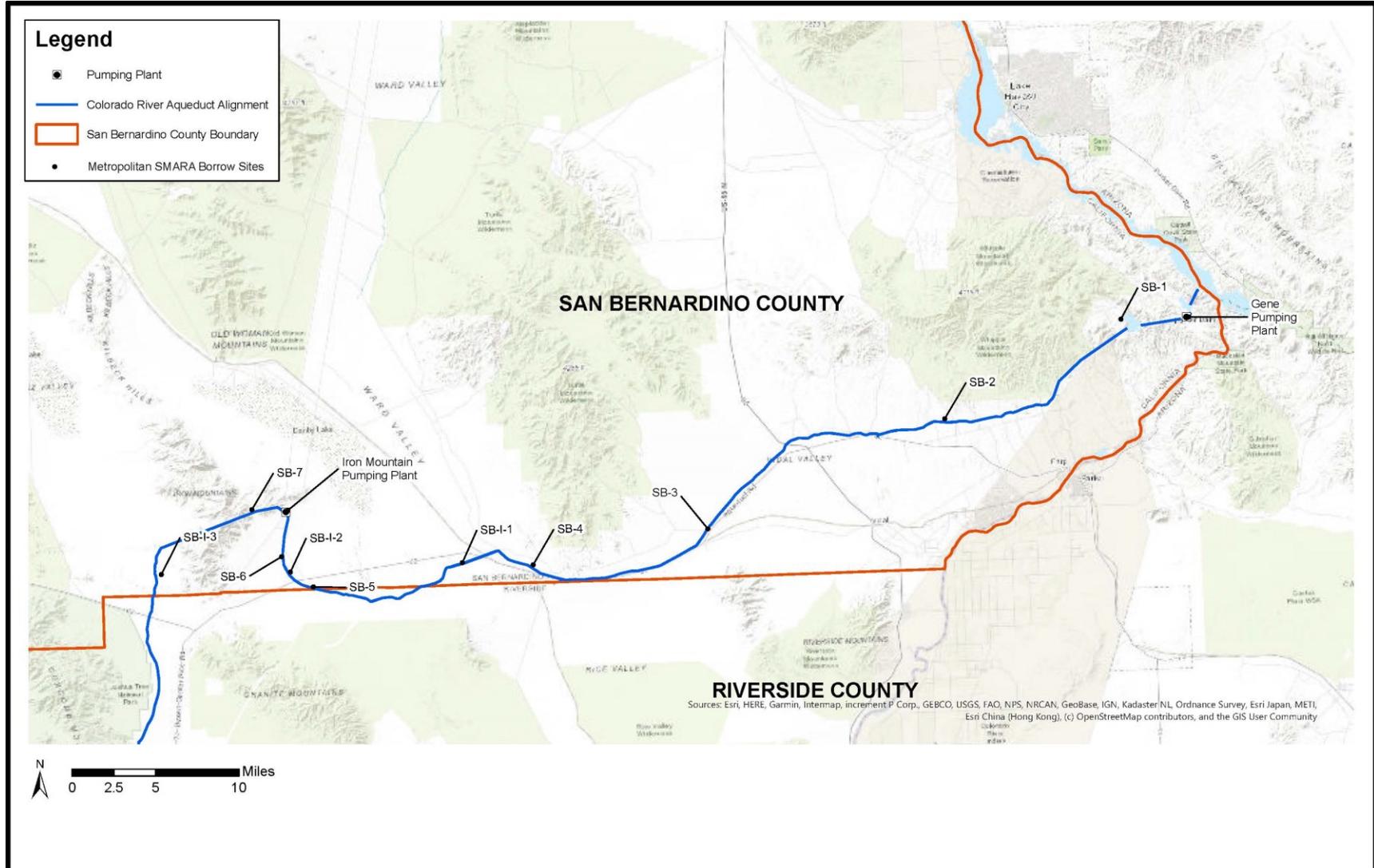


Figure 2. Project Area – Riverside County

