North Cathedral City Regional Stormwater Project

Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact

April 2023

Coachella Valley Water District
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U.S. Bureau of Land Management
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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

APPENDICES

Table of Contents

EXHIBITS

TABLES

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
ACBCI	Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
APE	Area of Potential Effect
AQMP	Air Quality Management Plan
BLM	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practice
CA	California
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
CalEEMod	California Emissions Estimator Model version 2016.3.1
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CCAA	California Clean Air Act
CDCA	California Desert Conservation Area
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CH4	Methane
City	Cathedral City
CMA	Conservation and Management Actions
CNEL	Community Noise Equivalent Level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO_2	Carbon Dioxide
CO_2eq	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Cogstone	Cogstone Resource Management Inc.
CRWQCB	California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Cultural Resources Report	Cultural Resources Assessment Report for the North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California
CVAG	Coachella Valley Association of Governments
CVCC	Coachella Valley Conservation Commission
CVMSHCP	Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
CVWD	Coachella Valley Water District
CVWMP	Coachella Valley Water Management Plan
dB	Decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DFA	Development Focus Area
DRECP	Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
EIC	Eastern Information Center
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Equivalency Analysis	North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Equivalency Analysis
ESA	Endangered Species Act
Existing Conditions Report	Morongo Wash Watershed Existing Conditions Report
FCAA	Federal Clean Air Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
Flood Control Project	Thousand Palms Watershed and the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
HMMP	Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
I-10	Interstate 10
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IS/EA	Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact
JPR	Joint Project Review
L_{dn}	Day-Night Sound Level
L_{eq}	Equivalent Sound Level
LST	Localized Significance Thresholds
LUPA	Land Use Plan Amendment
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MESA	Mapping Episodic Stream Activity
Michael Baker	Michael Baker International
MMT	Million Metric Tons
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
msl	Mean Sea Level
MT	Metric Tons
Municipal Code	City of Cathedral City Municipal Code
N_2O	Nitrous Oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standard
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NAHC	Native American Historical Commission
NCCP	Natural Community Conservation Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NO_2	Nitrogen Dioxide
Noise Element Guidelines	State Office of Planning and Research Noise Element Guidelines

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Noise Ordinance	City of Cathedral City Noise Ordinance
NO_X	Nitrogen Oxides
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
O3	Ozone
OS	Open Space
OS-W	Open Space-Water
Paleontological Resources Report	Paleontological Resources Assessment Report for the North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California
Pb	Lead
PM_{10}	Coarse Particulates
$PM_{2.5}$	Fine Particulates
PPV	Peak Particle Velocity
project	North Cathedral City Regional Stormwater Project
REAT or REAT Agencies	Renewable Energy Action Team
RECPG	Renewable Energy Conservation Planning Grants
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROG	Reactive Organic Gases
ROW	Right-of-way
RTP/SCS	Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SAA	Streambed Alteration Agreement
SB	Senate Bill
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
SCAQMD	South Coast Air Quality Management District
SEMS	Standard Emergency Management Systems

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SO_2	Sulfur Dioxide
SO_X	Sulfur Oxides
SRA	Source Receptor Area
SSAB	Salton Sea Air Basin
SWANCC	Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
T-BACT	Best Available Control Strategy for Toxics
TUA	Traditional Use Area
U.S.	United States
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VPL	Variance Process Land
VRM	Visual Resources Management
WDR	Waste Discharge Requirements
WFCA	Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area
Working Group	GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Working Group
WWRSC	Whitewater River Stormwater Channel
yr	Year
Zoning Map	City of Cathedral City Zoning Map

I. Project Information

Project Title: North Cathedral City Regional Stormwater Project[1]

Lead Agencies:

CEQA Lead Agency: Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
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Brief Project Description: CVWD proposes regional stormwater improvements that would convey stormwater flows from north of the existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks, south under the UPRR Tracks, and ultimately in a southerly direction to the Whitewater River Stormwater Channel (WWRSC).

Project Location: The North Cathedral City Regional Stormwater Project is in Cathedral City, within Riverside County, California; located in portions of Section 32, T.3.S, R.5.E and Section 5, T.4.S, R.5.E. The proposed 26.44-acre project site is located within the northwestern portion of the City, approximately 130 feet southwest of Interstate 10 (I-10) and 0.8-mile east of Gene Autry Road. Approximately 4.86 acres of the project site are located on lands managed by the BLM. Refer to *Exhibit 6, Land Ownership Information.*

General Plan Designations: Open Space-Water (OS-W) designation per the Cathedral City General Plan, as well as the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area associated with the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

Other Agency Approvals: BLM right-of-way; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) review; California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement; Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR); South Coast Air Quality Management District Fugitive Dust Plan; and UPRR right-of-way.

[1] The project was previously titled "North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I". Therefore, it should be noted that this title still appears on previously prepared project documents including the technical studies.

1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The North Cathedral City Regional Stormwater Project (proposed project or project action) Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact (IS/EA/FONSI) has been prepared by the CVWD and BLM as a joint California Environmental Quality Act/National Environmental Policy Act (CEQA/NEPA) document.

This IS/EA was prepared in accordance with the 2022 State CEQA Public Resource Code §§21000-211893, CEQA Guidelines §§15000-15387, CVWD's Local CEQA Guidelines (2019), and the BLM's NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (January 2008). This IS/EA is on-file with CVWD and the BLM.

1.2 CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The proposed project (project action) meets the definition of a "project" as defined by State CEQA Guidelines §15378; and therefore, evaluation of the potential environmental impacts and mitigation is required in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. This Initial Study has been prepared to analyze the project to determine any potential significant impacts upon the environment that would result from construction and implementation of the project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15063, this Initial Study is a preliminary analysis prepared by the CEQA Lead Agency, the CVWD, in consultation with other jurisdictional agencies, to determine whether a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report is required for the proposed project. The purpose of this Initial Study is to inform the decision-makers, affected agencies, and the public of potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project. Pursuant to State CEQA Guideline §15070, CVWD has determined that a Mitigation Negative Declaration is the appropriate CEQA document for the proposed project.

State CEQA Guideline §15070 states:

> *A public agency shall prepare or have prepared a proposed negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration for a project subject to CEQA when:*
>
> *(a) The initial study shows that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, or*
>
> *(b) The initial study identifies potentially significant effects, but:*
>
> *(1) Revisions in the project plans or proposals made by, or agreed to by the applicant before a proposed mitigated negative declaration and initial study are released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur, and*
>
> *(2) There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.*

Additionally, because the project involves improvements on Federal lands, the project is also subject to environmental assessment pursuant to NEPA (State CEQA Guidelines §§15220-15228), discussed below.

1.3 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

A portion of the Proposed Action site is located on Federal land (public land managed by the BLM) (as shown on Exhibit 6, *Land Ownership Information*, provided in Section IV, *Description of Proposed Action*

and Alternatives); therefore, the project must satisfy the requirements of NEPA. NEPA requires agencies to undertake an assessment of the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. The purpose of an Environmental Assessment (EA) is to determine the significance of the environmental effects and to look at alternative means to achieve the agency's objectives. The EA is intended to be a concise document that (1) briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); (2) aids an agency's compliance with NEPA when no EIS is necessary; and (3) facilitates preparation of an EIS when one is necessary.[2] The EA process concludes with either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a determination to proceed to preparation of an EIS. A FONSI is a document that presents the reasons why the agency has concluded there are no significant environmental impacts projected to occur upon implementation of the action.[3] For the purposes of this analysis, "effects" include:

a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

The terms "effects" and "impacts" are used synonymously. Effects include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes the effect will be beneficial.

1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

When a joint CEQA/NEPA document has been prepared, CEQA allows for a combined comment period (State CEQA Guideline §15225(a)). The IS/EA will be available for a 30-day public review period. CVWD will circulate the document along with the Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (NOI) prior to project consideration by CVWD's Board of Directors at a publicly noticed hearing. The BLM will post the document to the BLM's Federal NEPA registry website for a 30-day public comment period prior to deciding on the right-of-way grant.

1.5 RELATIONSHIP TO BLM AND REGIONAL POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS

Approximately 4.86 acres of the Proposed Action site are located on lands managed by the BLM under the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan and its amendments, including the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) and the Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) to the CDCA, described below. The BLM NEPA Handbook requires a discussion of the Proposed Action's relationship to BLM policies, plans and programs as well as the Proposed Action's relationship to non-BLM land use planning laws or requirements that may affect the Proposed Action.

[2] CEQ NEPA Regulations, 40 C.F.R. § 1508.9.

[3] Government Printing Office Electronic Information Enhancement Act of 1993, 44 U.S.C. §§ 4101-4104.

Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C. § 1701), land management agencies are required to manage Federally owned public lands in a manner that protects the quality of resources. The FLPMA provided a framework for the BLM to manage resources in perpetuity and led to the development of the CDCA Plan, which acts as the BLM's land use guide for the management of public lands and resources.

California Desert Conservation Area Plan

FLPMA directs the BLM to prepare land use plans that provide guidance on how public lands are to be managed. All activities on BLM-administered public land must be in conformance with the approved land use plan. For portions of the Proposed Action site that are on BLM lands and within the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Conservation Plan (CVMSCHP), the BLM *California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan* (1980) as amended, and *CDCA Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley* (2002) apply. The CDCA encompasses over 10 million acres of public land administered by the BLM in Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, Kern, and Inyo counties. In 2002, the BLM completed the Coachella Valley Plan Amendment, one of six major amendments to the CDCA Plan that provided planning goals for specific bioregional planning areas within the CDCA.

The CDCA Plan establishes goals for the protection and use of the CDCA and a framework for managing its various resources. The CDCA recognizes the BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) program as the tool that the BLM uses to inform its land use decisions. As part of Phase I of the DRECP, the BLM adopted an amendment to the CDCA Plan in September 2016—the LUPA to the CDCA Plan, discussed further below.

Land Use Plan Amendment

The Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) amends the CDCA Plan. The purpose of the LUPA is to conserve biological, environmental, cultural, recreation, scenic, and visual resources; respond to Federal renewable energy goals and policies, including state-level renewable energy targets; and comply with the FLPMA.

The LUPA designates land use allocations and prescribes Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs), which are a specific set of avoidance, minimization, and compensation measures, and allowable and non-allowable actions for siting, design, pre-construction, construction, maintenance, implementation, operation, and decommissioning activities on BLM land. Land use plan decisions for public lands fall into two categories: desired outcomes (goals and objectives) and allowable uses (including restricted or prohibited) and actions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes. In the LUPA, CMAs represent those management actions and allowable uses.

The Proposed Action area is not located in an area designated by the DRECP LUPA as Development Focus Areas (areas within which the activities associated with solar, wind, and geothermal development, operation, and decommissioning will be allowed, streamlined, and incentivized); Variance Process Lands (lands open for solar, wind, and geothermal energy applications with a variance process); and/or Recreation Management Areas. The CDCA Plan and Amendment, described above, apply to BLM lands within and surrounding the Proposed Action site. For the purposes of the LUPA, conservation and management actions (CMAs) that are applicable to the project are incorporated. CMAs are applicable only to the portion of the project site that is comprised of BLM lands (approximately 4.86 acres). CMAs are

considerations made by the BLM in order to derive the mitigation measures. Refer to Exhibit 6, *Land Ownership Information*.

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a collaborative effort between the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, BLM, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to advance Federal and state natural resource conservation goals and other Federal land management goals; meet the requirements of the Federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C. § 1701); and facilitate the timely and streamlined permitting of renewable energy projects in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran desert regions of Southern California. The DRECP covers approximately 22.5 million acres in the desert regions of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. The DRECP designates National Scenic and Historic Trail management corridors.

Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The Proposed Action site is located within the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area (WFCA) of the CVMSHCP. The CVMSHCP purpose is to obtain Take Authorization (Take Permits) pursuant to the ESA and the NCCP Act for Covered Activities in the Coachella Valley while balancing environmental protection with regional economic objectives and simplifying compliance with the ESA, CESA, and other applicable laws and regulations. The WFCA objectives include conserving a total of 4,140 acres which includes conserving the core habitat and associated ecological processes for Coachella Valley milk-vetch, Coachella giant sand treader cricket, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel, and Palm Springs pocket mouse; burrowing owl burrows; other conserved habitat for Le Conte's thrasher; active desert sand fields; and maintain functional biological corridors and linkages. It should be noted that the CVMSHCP applies to non-Federal lands.

City of Cathedral City General Plan and Zoning Ordinance

The Cathedral City General Plan is a comprehensive document that sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide land use and development decisions. The Proposed Action site is designated as Open Space-Water (OS-W) under the Land Use Element of the Cathedral City General Plan. The OS-W designation is used to delineate floodways, including natural and man-made floodway and drainage channels.

Cathedral City Municipal Code Title 9, *Planning and Zoning*, ensures the public health, safety and general welfare of the community and secures the social and economic advantages resulting from an orderly, planned use of land resources. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the Land Use Element of the Cathedral City General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance and *City of Cathedral City Zoning Map* (Zoning Map) identify specific land use types, intensities, and development and performance standards applicable to specific areas within the City. The Proposed Action site is currently zoned as Open Space (OS) according to the Zoning Map.

1.6 DECISION FRAMEWORK

BLM Decision to be Made

Following the environmental analysis, the BLM authorized officer will decide whether to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the right of way grant application as submitted.

Other Anticipated Processes, Coordination, and Permits

Other public agency approvals include the following: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endagnegd Species Act co review; California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement; Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR); South Coast Air Quality Management District Fugitive Dust Plan; and UPRR right-of-way.

1.7 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

CVWD is responsible for regional stormwater planning and management, and development of regional stormwater facilities within their service area within the Coachella Valley (Riverside County), and portions of Imperial County and San Diego County. CVWD is currently prioritizing stormwater management in the North Cathedral City and Thousand Palms planning units; refer to Exhibit 1, *Regional Map*. The North Cathedral City planning unit is situated in the northern portion of the North Cathedral City Watershed, on the north side of the Coachella Valley, generally located north of Interstate 10 (I-10). The North Cathedral Watershed consists of the Morongo Wash, Long and Wide Canyons, and Willow Hole subwatersheds. Similarly, the Thousand Palms planning unit is the portion of the Thousand Palms Watershed that lies within the stormwater boundary. The Thousand Palms Watershed consists of Thousand Palms Canyon and the small washes and canyons that flow from the Indio Hills.

The *Morongo Wash Watershed Existing Conditions Report* (Existing Conditions Report), dated 2013, prepared by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants, was prepared to determine areas of inundation and peak flows along the bottom of the Coachella Valley in the North Cathedral City and Thousand Palms planning units; refer to Exhibit 2, *Existing 100-Year Flood Conditions*. The study area for the analysis extended from about Palm Drive southeast along the I-10 corridor to Adams Street.

In North Cathedral City, the 100-year flood flows would inundate a corridor about 5,000 feet wide, from Morongo Wash to about the community of Thousand Palms, roughly centered on I-10. Downstream of Thousand Palms, flooding is mostly north of I-10 and the riverine flows are directed towards Sun City Palm Desert. Depths of inundation range from less than 1 to more than 10 feet.

Following the Existing Conditions Report, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants prepared the *Thousand Palms Watershed and the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project*, dated 2013, for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to develop a strategy for this planning unit for 100-year flood protection. The proposed flood control project has since been taken over by the CVWD and includes proposed levees and channels on the fan surfaces north of Thousand Palms that collect flows from the washes and canyons and direct them through the existing and proposed flood channels, ultimately into the southern entrance to the Sun City Palm Desert flood channels. However, upon further modeling, CVWD determined that this proposed flood control project would only remove about 3 to 4 square miles from the fan hazard zone, mostly north of Ramon Road near the community of Thousand Palms. The general conclusion from the two previous studies was stormwater management in the North Cathedral and Thousand Palms planning units required an integrated approach that addressed all sources of flooding to have appreciable benefits. Thus, in concert with the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project, the CVWD proposes several improvements in the site vicinity to convey Morongo Wash fan 100-year peak flows to the WWRSC; Phase I of these improvements is covered under this proposed project is depicted on Exhibits 5a and 5b, *Site Plan*. Phase II (a future project to be covered under separate environmental documentation) would create a new

bridge under I-10 near Morongo Wash and a flood channel from I-10 to the UPRR bridge to enhance flood protection.

Of these regional improvements, the CVWD proposes to convey stormwater flows from north of the UPRR tracks in a southerly direction to the WWRSC (the subject of this analysis). The proposed 26.44-acre project site is located approximately 130 feet southwest of I-10 and 0.8-mile east of Gene Autry Road; refer to Exhibit 3, *Site Vicinity Map*.

The UPRR bridge crossing at the project site was constructed and backfilled with native soils to allow for future construction of the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan under the railroad to provide a connection to the WWRSC. Flows under the UPRR bridge have been precluded until the channel improvements and slope lining (east overbank) downstream of the bridge were ready to be constructed. As such, the project would include improvements to convey flows safely and reliably beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts for tributary areas to the project site; refer to Exhibit 4, *Proposed 100-Year Flood Conditions*.

The purpose of the Federal action is to respond to a request for a right-of-way (ROW) grant under 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 2800 to construct stormwater improvements on public lands administered by BLM. The need for action is established by BLM's responsibility under Section 501 of the FLPMA, which authorizes BLM to issue ROW grants on public lands for reservoirs, canals, ditches, flumes, laterals, pipes, pipelines, tunnels, and other facilities and systems for the impoundment, storage, transportation, or distribution of water, among others.

II. Consultation

The entire Coachella Valley including the project site is located within the Plan Area for the CVMSHCP. Specifically, the project site is located within the eastern portion of the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area (WFCA) of the CVMSHCP, directly south of the Willow Hole Conservation Area and is, therefore, subject to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission's (CVCC) Joint Project Review (JPR) Process. Through the JPR review process, CVWD consulted extensively with CVCC (including USFWS, CDFW, BLM, and other agencies) to review the project's potential impacts to sensitive biological resources and consistency with the existing CVMSHCP. This process allowed for early engagement with the CVCC to discuss key environmental issues. Per the request of CVCC, CVWD conducted an Equivalency Analysis in 2016. The CVCC issued a concurrence letter from USFWS and CDFW dated March 15, 2017; refer to Appendix B, *Equivalency Analysis/Concurrence Letter, Habitat Assessment, Jurisdictional Delineation Report, Biological Resources Technical Report, and Biological Assessment*.

Additionally, the project site is located within lands managed by the Bureau Land Management (BLM), and therefore could be subject to Section 7 consultation under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) refer to Appendix B.

In addition, CVWD consulted with UPRR regarding various design and ROW aspects related to UPRR facilities and property in the project vicinity. Currently, the bridge design does not meet existing UPRR standards. As the project is seeking to improve hydrologic conditions under the bridge structure and does not propose any improvements to the bridge, a Variance is being requested by CVWD from the UPRR. The Variance would be issued by UPRR upon approval of final project plans; however, UPRR has a conditional approval at this time.

CVWD has consulted with Kinder Morgan, regarding the presence of an existing utility pipeline located in the project vicinity, but outside of the project boundaries.

This CEQA/NEPA document will be circulated for a mandatory, public review period prior the lead agency's decision on the project. No other public involvement or coordination is required.

III. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

The project is in Cathedral City, County of Riverside, California; refer to Exhibit 1. Specifically, the proposed 26.44-acre project site is located within the northwestern portion of the City, approximately 130 feet southwest of I-10 and 0.8-mile east of Gene Autry Road; refer to Exhibit 3. A UPRR alignment traverses the project site, south of and parallel to I-10. Most of the project area is vacant and undeveloped. Single-family residential uses exist immediately southeast of the project site, and golf course uses exist approximately 0.5-mile southeast of the project site.

CVWD proposes to construct a regional stormwater drain that would convey stormwater flows from north of the UPRR bridge, and under the bridge in a southerly direction to the WWRSC. The UPRR bridge was constructed over the project site but was backfilled pending future channel improvements downstream of the bridge as part of the build out of CVWD's stormwater infrastructure. This proposed project (also referred to as the "proposed action") would provide a reliable and engineered channel under the bridge to provide a long-term solution for conveying flows downstream to the WWRSC. As such, the project would include improvements to convey flows safely and reliably beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts to downstream areas, including the Thousand Palms planning unit.

3.1 ALTERNATIVE 1 – PROPOSED ACTION

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would issue the CVWD a 30-year right-of-way for the construction, maintenance, operation and termination of the stormwater channels. The primary components of the project include the placement of concrete channel protection upstream and downstream of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and levee slope protection. Additional detail is provided below (refer to Exhibits 5a and 5b):

- *Concrete Channel Lining:* The project would include concrete channel lining both upstream and downstream of the UPRR bridge location. Channel lining would extend approximately 500 feet upstream of the bridge, and a berm would be graded on the east bank to direct flows through the bridge crossing. Downstream of the bridge, channel lining would extend approximately 300 feet. The concrete-lined portion of the channel would be at an approximate three-percent grade. Channel depth would be approximately 11 feet at the UPRR bridge.

- *Bridge Improvements:* The project would include excavation, concrete lining of the bridge undercrossing, and other required improvements (e.g., bracing). Excavated materials would either be reused on-site or exported off-site. The project would lower the invert of the bridge approximately 2.5 feet from the flowline, which would meet UPRR's clearance requirements for bridges. The bottom width of the bridge undercrossing would be approximately 200 feet.

- *Earthen Channel Grading:* The project would grade a new earthen channel south of the bridge and concrete channel lining improvements described above. This channel would be graded at a one-percent slope until it meets existing grade. The earthen channel would be approximately 200 feet wide with 3:1 side slope.

- *Concrete Levee Slope Protection:* Concrete slope protection would be placed at the east overbank of the channel. The existing overbank is located approximately 800 feet southeast of the existing UPRR bridge and is currently delineated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM Map No. 06065C1576G) as a levee. However, this levee is only a sand berm and, under a future 100-year storm event, would likely fail. Thus, the project proposes to install a concrete slope at this location, consistent with current levee design criteria identified in 44 CFR 65.10, to reinforce the levee and better protect residents downstream during a 100-year storm event. A row of tamarisk trees exists at the top of the existing slope, and the concrete slope protection improvements would occur immediately west of the trees (i.e., the trees would be protected in place). The slope protection would extend for a length of approximately 4,800 linear feet.

The proposed project has been designed to convey flows associated with the 100-year storm event, both alone and in conjunction with future Phase 2 improvements that would enhance stormwater conveyance beneath I-10. As noted above, Phase II (a future project to be covered under separate environmental documentation) would create a new bridge under I-10 near Morongo Wash and a flood channel from I-10 to the UPRR bridge to enhance flood protection. No future modifications at the project site would be required to achieve 100-year storm capacity.

The proposed drainage improvements would extend from approximately 500 feet north of the UPRR alignment to approximately 6,300 feet south of the UPRR alignment, for a total length of approximately 6,800 linear feet (refer to Exhibit 3). Construction would occur as a single phase and is anticipated to last approximately nine months. Temporary construction access would be provided via Vista Chino, located approximately 0.5-mile south of the project site. A temporary construction access road would be extended from Vista Chino, extending north to the project site. All staging activities would occur within the proposed grading footprint for the drainage facility or within the footprint of the proposed temporary access road.

Operations and Maintenance

Maintenance activities would also include emergency maintenance to clear sediment deposits threatening infrastructure integrity and flow conveyance following a large storm event and invasive species control measures to protect native habitat within the project area. Maintenance activities/sediment clearing would occur on concrete lined areas north and south of the UPRR bridge and would likely be performed by a tractor or backhoe. Large debris is not expected to accumulate at this location; excess accumulation of sediment after storm events would be transferred downstream of the UPRR bridge. It is anticipated an invasive species control program would be implemented as part of the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) required under the Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) anticipated for the project. The program would include measures such as a five-year period where non-native species are controlled/removed, photo documentation, a project completion report, and annual reporting to ensure compliance with the plan.

CVWD's Operations and Maintenance Manual For Covered Activities and Facilities Within Conservation Areas

CVWD is obligated to implement avoidance and minimization measures to ensure the protection of threatened and endangered species and their habitat on CVMSHCP conservation lands within the Coachella Valley. Conservation measures in the CVMSHCP included a requirement for CVWD to develop

an Operations and Maintenance Plan (O&M Manual, 2015) for its facilities (e.g., levees, flood control channels, groundwater recharge, roads, pump stations, reservoirs, and agricultural drains) in Conservation Areas that will minimize impacts to Covered Species and natural communities. Consistent with the CVMSHCP, CVWD's O&M Manual uses a "habitat-based" approach for addressing protection of federally-listed and other special-status species as these species are typically associated with distinct habitat types. Operation and maintenance of existing CVWD facilities is needed to protect the integrity of existing infrastructure such as roads, reservoirs, wells, water control structures (pipes, conduits, culverts, etc.), pump stations, reservoirs, levees, canals, flood control channels, and distribution systems. These operational requirements are classified under the CVMSHCP as Covered Activities and are required so that existing facilities may operate efficiently and safely. An example of CVWD's Covered Activities and facilities listed in the CVMSHCP (Section 7.0, *Take Authorization for Covered Activities and Term of Permit*) and include Flood Control Facilities such as this flood improvement project which includes concrete channel lining, bridge improvements, earthen channel grading and slope protection.

CVWD's O&M Manual provides for activity-related avoidance and minimization measures as well as species-specific avoidance and minimization measures applicable to species found in each Conservation Area. Once operational, the flood control improvement project would adhere to the specific measures identified for the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area. CVWD's O&M Manual is included as an appendix to this IS/EA and is hereby incorporated by reference (State CEQA Guideline Section 15150).

Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area

In addition to improved conditions related to regional stormwater flows and flood protection, the project would also provide biological benefits within the site vicinity. Currently, wildlife cannot cross the UPRR at the project site, given that the area beneath the existing UPRR bridge has been backfilled. The creation of a permanent, unimpeded channel crossing beneath the UPRR bridge would re-establish wildlife movement between the northern and southern sides of the UPRR tracks. The project would not include any fencing, structures, or other facilities that would impede wildlife movement under the UPRR bridge. By providing a connection to the WWRSC, the project would allow for stormwater flows and associated sand transport, resulting in an increase in sand habitat within the project area.

3.2 ALTERNATIVE 2 – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Currently, sediment under the UPRR bridge is causing existing flows to become trapped between the UPRR and I-10, resulting in stormwater flowing downstream to the southeast, into the Thousand Palms planning unit; refer to Exhibit 2. With the No Action Alternative project, the proposed stormwater improvements, including placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection, would not be constructed. Thus, stormwater flows would not be conveyed beneath the bridge and floodplain impacts would not be reduced for tributary areas to the project site, including existing and planned future development. With the No Action Alternative, implementation of the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project, situated downstream of the existing flows, would only achieve flood control for approximately 3 to 4 square miles of flows and 100-year flood flows would continue to impact existing development and impede future planned development within the Thousand Palms planning unit.

✱ - Project Location

NOT TO SCALE

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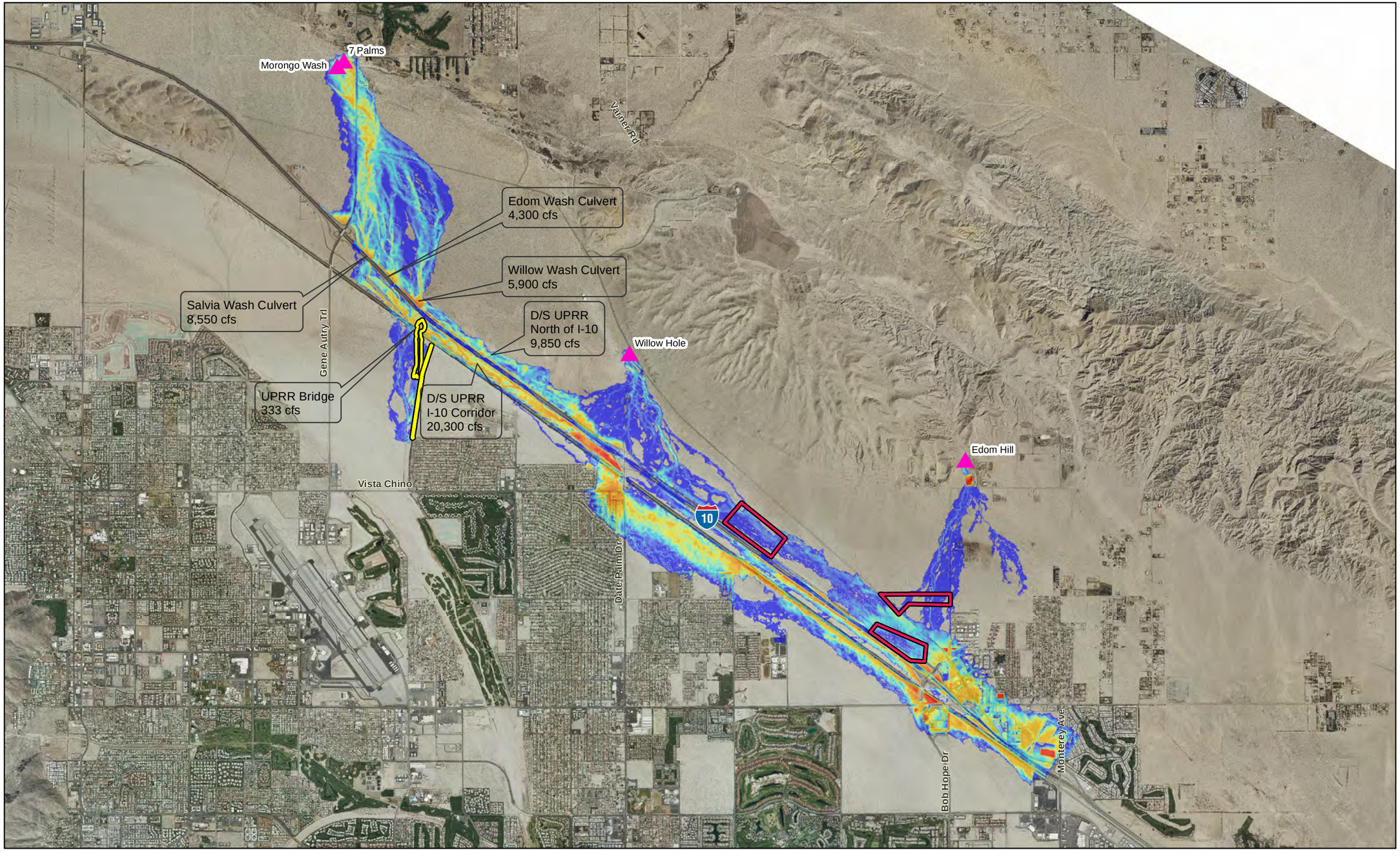
08/18 | JN 144905

NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Regional Vicinity

Exhibit 1



Legend

- Inflow Hydrographs
- Project Site
- CVWD planned facilities

Existing Conditions

Depth (ft)

- 0.06 - 0.5
- 0.5 - 1
- 1 - 1.5
- 1 - 2
- 2 - 2.5
- 2 - 3
- 3 - 3.5
- 3 - 4
- 4 - 4.5
- 4 - 5
- 5 - 7
- 7 - 9
- 9 - 11
- 11 - 16

NOT TO SCALE

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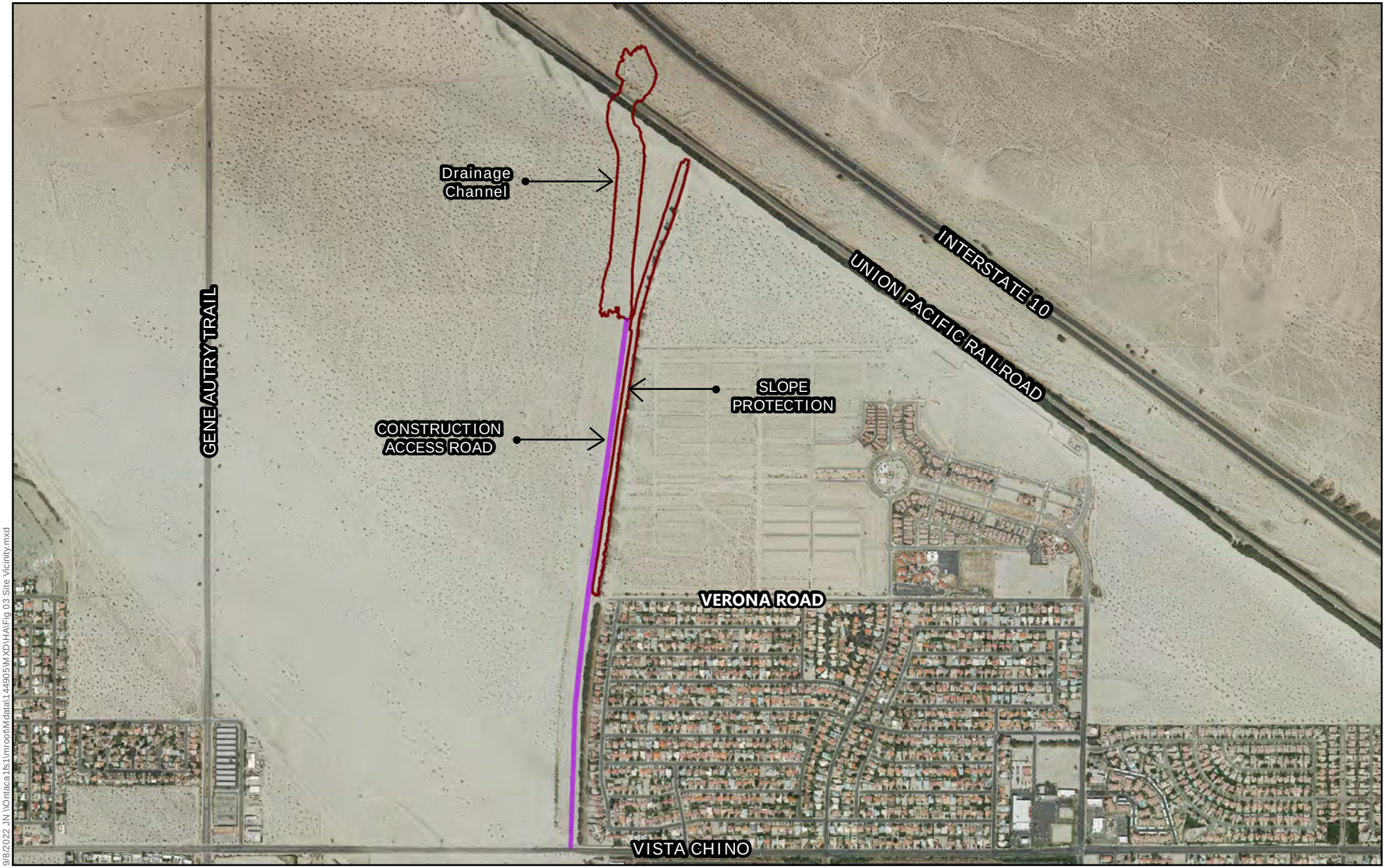
NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Existing 100-Year Flood Conditions

Exhibit 2



9/8/2022 JN \\Ontaca1fs1\mroot\M:\data\144905\MXD\IHA\Fig 03 Site Vicinity.mxd

Source: ArcGIS Online

NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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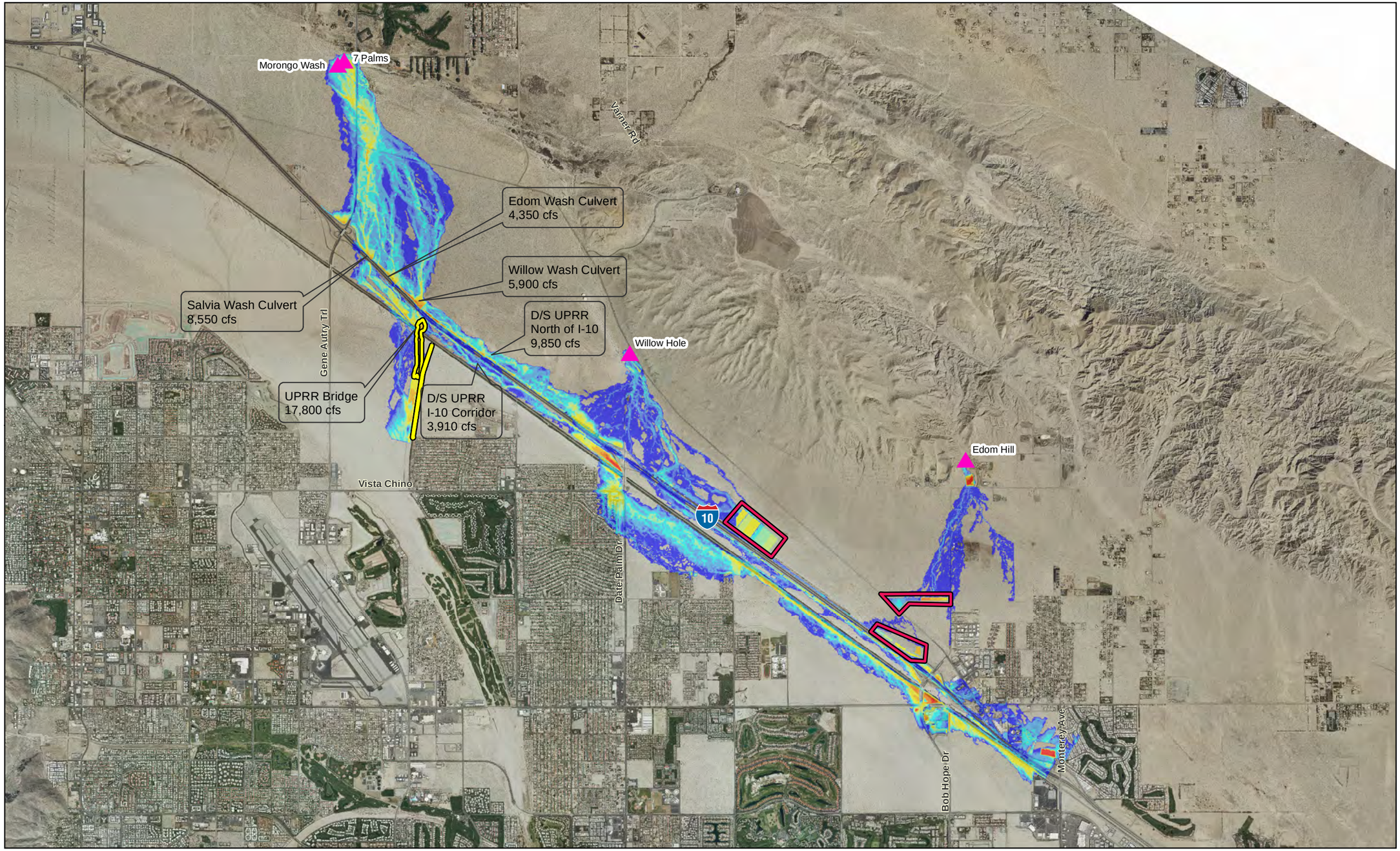
Site Vicinity

Exhibit 3



Legend

- Inflow Hydrographs
- Project Site
- CVWD planned facilities

Existing Conditions

Depth (ft)

- 0.06 - 0.5
- 0.5 - 1
- 1 - 1.5
- 1 - 2
- 2 - 2.5
- 2 - 3
- 3 - 3.5
- 3 - 4
- 4 - 4.5
- 4 - 5
- 5 - 7
- 7 - 9
- 9 - 11
- 11 - 16

NOT TO SCALE

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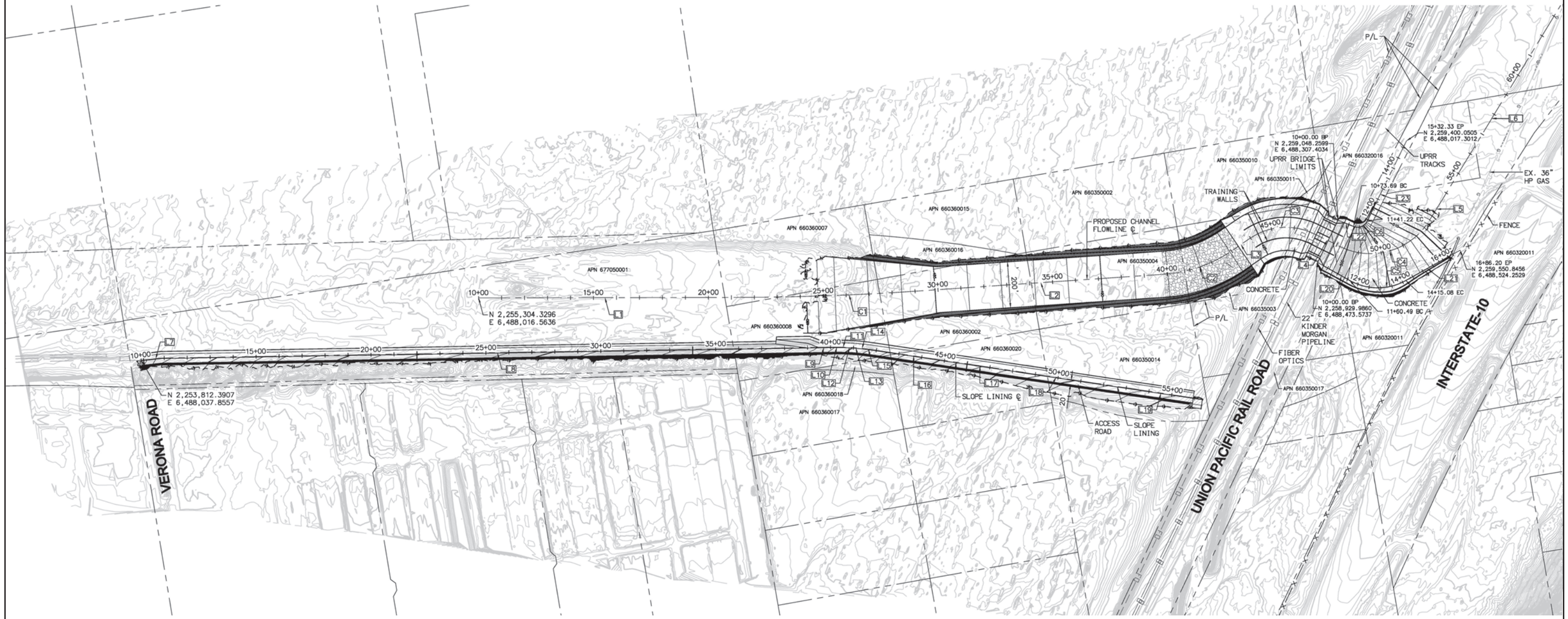
NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Proposed 100-Year Flood Conditions

Exhibit 4



NOT TO SCALE

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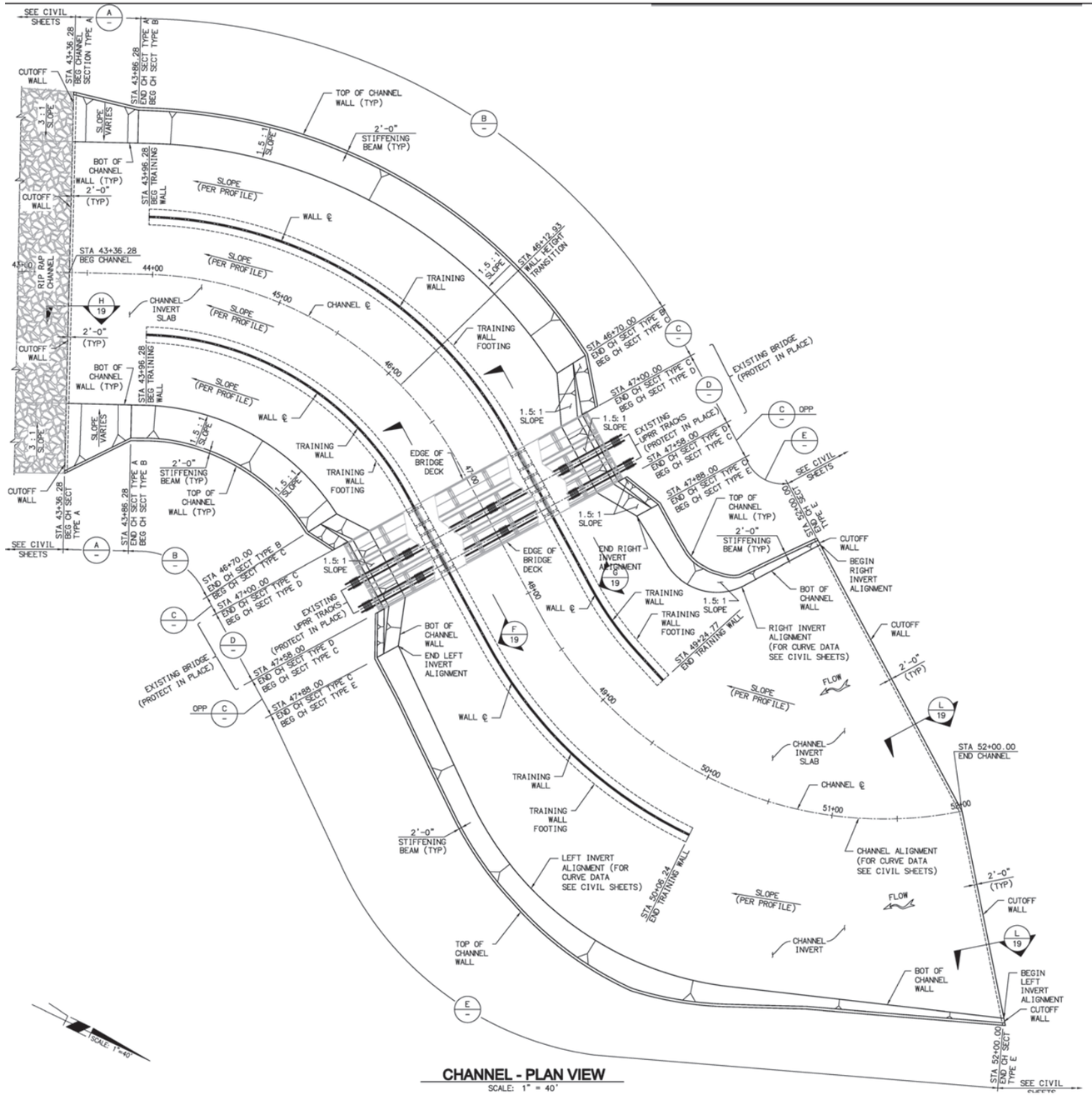
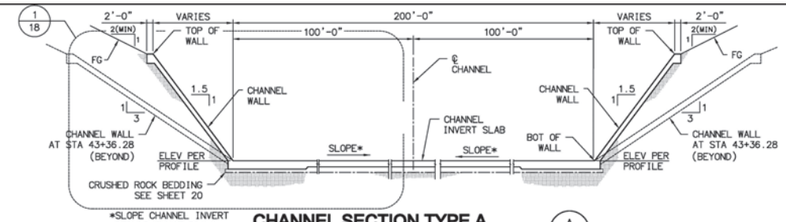
NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Site Plan

Exhibit 5a



CHANNEL - PLAN VIEW
SCALE: 1" = 40'



CHANNEL SECTION TYPE A
(LOOKING DOWNSTREAM)
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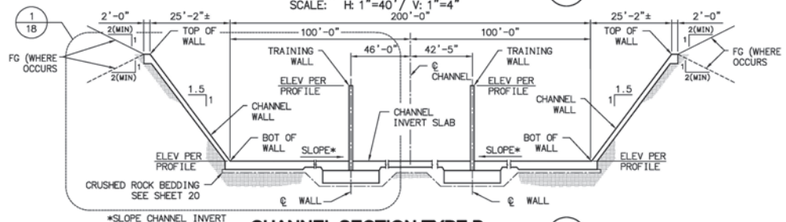

CHANNEL SECTION TYPE B
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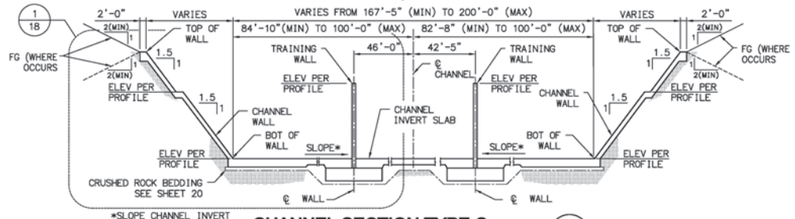

CHANNEL SECTION TYPE C
(LOOKING DOWNSTREAM)
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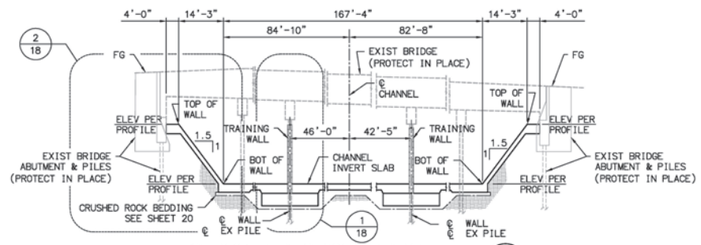

CHANNEL SECTION TYPE D
(LOOKING DOWNSTREAM)
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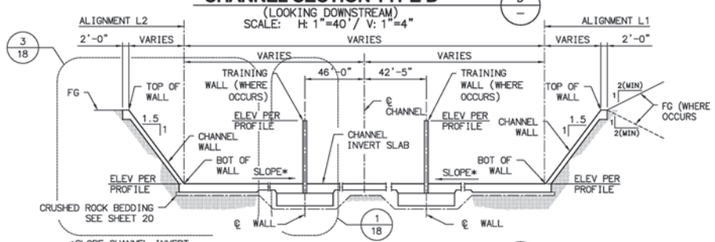

CHANNEL SECTION TYPE E
(LOOKING DOWNSTREAM)
SCALE: H: 1"=40' / V: 1"=4"

NOT TO SCALE

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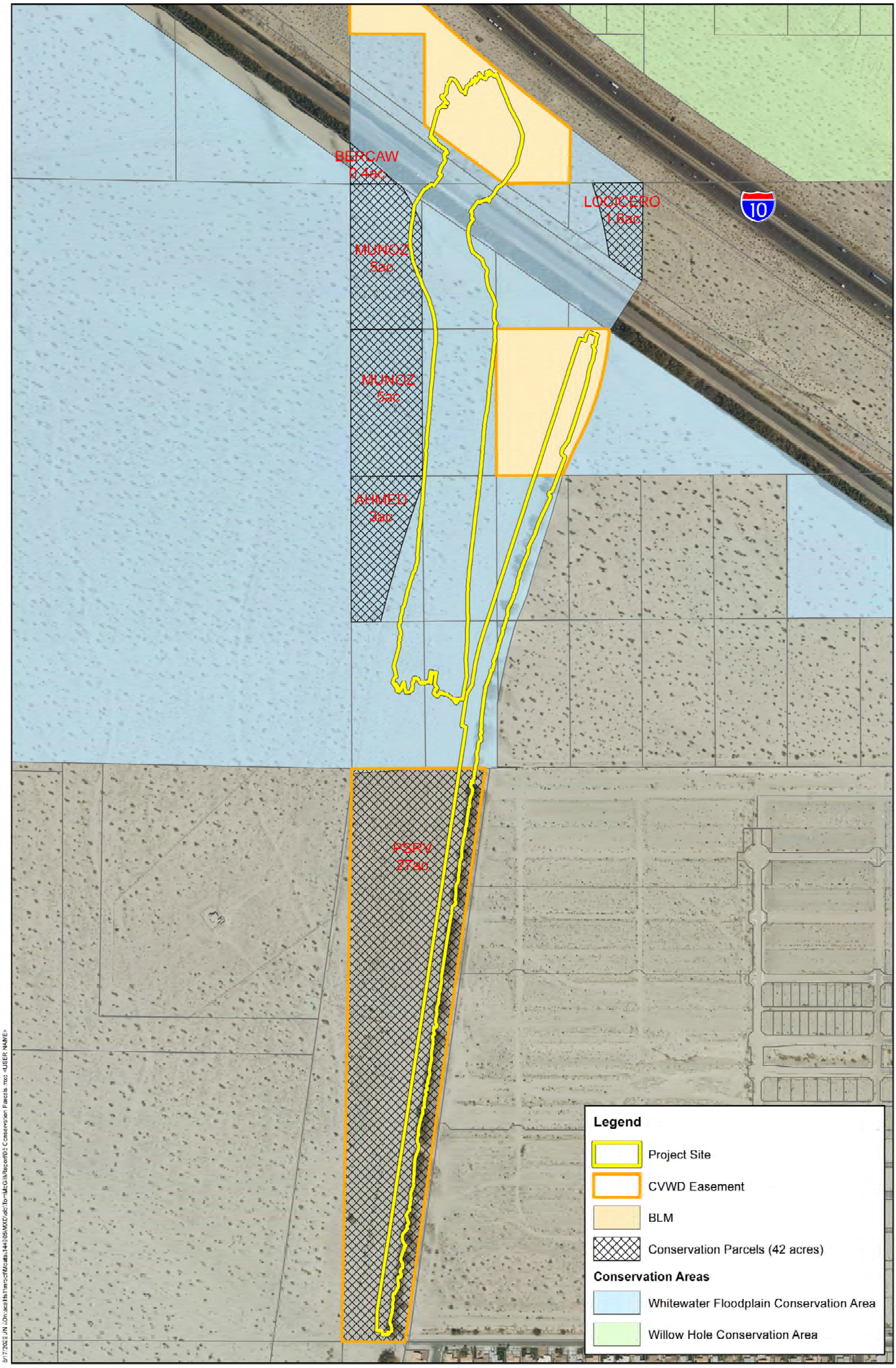
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Site Plan

Exhibit 5b



NOT TO SCALE

Michael Baker INTERNATIONAL

08/18 | JN 144905

INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Land Ownership Information

Exhibit 6

IV. Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Further Analysis

CVWD examined a range of alternatives that may lessen or avoid the environmental impacts of the proposed project, while accomplishing the project's purpose and need. These alternatives consisted of the following:

- Alternative sites were examined at project initiation to determine if any alternative locations to convey stormwater flows across the UPRR tracks towards the WWRSC would be feasible. Specifically, consideration of a new channel to the north of, and parallel to, I-10 that would flow into the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project was considered. This alternative site option would have required three new major bridge crossings (Date Palm Drive, Bob Hope Drive, and Ramon Road), numerous surface road crossings along Ramon Road, and substantial property acquisition along Ramon Road. This alternative may also require upgrades to the planned levees for the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project. Given there is an existing bridge structure along the UPRR facility at the project site, the natural flow pattern of the watershed, and consideration of buildout of CVWD's planned stormwater master plan, an alternative site was considered infeasible and eliminated from further consideration.

- At the proposed project site, several minor design variations were considered as part of the preliminary design process. One such design option included an earthen bottom and concrete banks in the upper part of the flood channel; however, with the presence of a high-pressure natural gas line beneath the channel, the high flood velocities, and the fine sediments in the bed of the flood channel, a concrete-lined channel is necessary. Other design options have included construction limits within CVWD property only and guidance walls to help distribute flows at the curve upstream of the bridge. Most of these design variations involved minor changes to optimize hydraulic operations and minimize costs associated with project construction. While all these design variations were capable of achieving the project's purpose and need, all variations were extremely minor, and none resulted in a reduction in the environmental effects of the project. Thus, these alternatives were eliminated from further consideration.

V. Affected Environment

This section describes the environmental resources and existing land uses within the project area; refer to Exhibit 3. The information in this section serves as baseline environmental setting for analyzing the proposed action and alternative.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

On-site topography ranges from approximately 457 to 600 feet above mean sea level (msl), and is generally flat, except for a small hill in the northeast corner of the project site. Most of the project site and surrounding areas are open desert and undeveloped, excluding I-10 and the UPRR alignment. The project site is underlain by Carsitas cobbly sand (2 to 9 percent) and Riverwash soils.

Immediately surrounding the project site are transportation and open space uses to the north, open space, and residential uses to the east, open space, and residential uses to the south, and open space to the west. The Morongo Wash passes through the project site, and the Whitewater River crosses south of the project site. The project site includes property owned by BLM, CVWD, and numerous private landowners within the City of Cathedral City, Riverside County; refer to Exhibit 6. As shown on Exhibit 6,

the project proposes to purchase private property, as well as acquire a right-of-way authorization for portions of property owned by BLM via right-of-way grant.

CVWD is a "Permittee" participant in the CVMSHCP, which is a comprehensive regional plan that addresses the conservation needs of a variety of wildlife and plant species in the Coachella Valley region. The project is located within the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area of the CVMSHCP.

For portions of the project site that are on BLM lands and within the CVMSCHP, the BLM *California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan* (1980) as amended, and *CDCA Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley* (2002) apply.

5.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The project site consists of undeveloped desert land, native shrubs consistent with Sonoran creosote bush scrub, and mature trees (tamarisk windrows along the UPRR and the eastern edge of the site), as well as the UPRR. Currently, public views from roadways and trails in the project area provide opportunities for public views toward visual resources such as the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, and San Bernardino mountain ranges, Flat Top Mountain, Edom Hill, and desert views. From the project area, distant views toward these ridgelines exist. There are no designated or eligible State scenic highways located near the project site or within the vicinity.[4] The nearest eligible State Scenic Highway, State Route 111, is located approximately 0.75-mile west of the project site and does not have readily available views of the project area.

Views of the project site are afforded from the residential communities located to the east and southeast, as well as views from I-10. From the east/southeast residential community, views of the project site include open desert land and native shrubs, as well as the San Bernardino Mountains beyond located to the north/northwest. Views from motorists traveling along I-10 include open desert land and surrounding mountain ridgelines in the distance. Passengers traveling along the UPRR have views of the tamarisk windrows and distant ridgelines.

5.2 AIR QUALITY

The proposed project is in the City of Cathedral City in Riverside County, California. Riverside County is subject to the provisions of the 2016 South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), which describes SCAQMD's plan to achieve Federal and State air quality standards set forth in Federal and State Clean Air Acts.

According to SCAQMD, an air quality impact is considered significant if the proposed project would violate any ambient air quality standard, contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. SCAQMD has established thresholds of significance for air quality for construction and operational activities of land use development projects such as that proposed, as shown in Table 1, *SCAQMD Regional Significance Thresholds – Pounds per Day*.

[4] California Department of Transportation, *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed June 22, 2018.

Table 1
SCAQMD Regional Significance Thresholds – Pounds per Day

Air Pollutant	Construction Activities	Operations
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	75	55
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550	550
Nitrogen Oxides (NOX)	100	55
Sulfur Oxides (SOX)	150	150
Coarse Particulates (PM10)	150	150
Fine Particulates (PM2.5)	55	55

Source: South Coast Air Quality Management District, *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*, 1993. $PM_{2.5}$ threshold adopted June 1, 2007.

The project site is located in the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and is subject to the rules and regulations imposed by SCAQMD, including Rule 403-1, which governs fugitive dust emissions from project construction within Coachella Valley. The two primary pollutants of concern in the Coachella Valley, including the project vicinity, are ozone (O_3) and particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$).

Ozone (O_3)

Ozone (O_3) is formed when by-products of combustion react in the presence of ultraviolet sunlight. This process occurs in the atmosphere where oxides of nitrogen combine with reactive organic gases, such as hydrocarbons, in the presence of sunlight. Ozone is a pungent, colorless, toxic gas and a common component of photochemical smog. Although also produced within Coachella Valley, most ozone pollutants affecting Coachella Valley are transported by coastal air mass from the Los Angeles and Riverside/San Bernardino air basins, thereby contributing to occasionally high local ozone concentrations.

Coachella Valley has a history of exceeding regulatory ozone standards, although the number of days and months the Federal one-hour standard is exceeded has dropped steadily over the past decade.

The Palm Springs monitoring station exceeds the 1-hour and 8-hour Federal and State ozone standards more frequently than the Indio site (1-hour = 20 parts per million: 8-hour = 9 parts per million). This exceedance is attributable to the Palm Springs station's location closer to the San Gorgonio Pass, where ozone is transported into the SSAB from air basins to the west.

Particulate Matter (PM_{10})

Coarse Particulate Matter (PM_{10}) consists of suspended particles of 2.5 to 10 microns in diameter, and PM_{10} is mainly sourced from smoke, dirt, and dust from factories, farming, and roads, as well as mold, spores, and pollen. PM_{10} particles can travel up to 30 miles in the air. The elderly, children, and adults with pre-existing respiratory or cardiovascular disease are most susceptible to the effects of Particulate Matter. Elevated PM_{10} levels are also associated with an increase in mortality rates, respiratory infections, asthma attacks, and hospital admissions. The SSAB is designated as a non-attainment area for PM_{10} under Federal standards in PM_{10}, which means the area does not meet the national ambient air quality standard for this pollutant. The Coachella Valley, however, became eligible for re-designation as "attainment" for PM_{10} in 2010 due to the annual average concentrations meeting the revoked Federal standard. At a public meeting on February 25, 2010, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved the Coachella Valley *PM_{10} Redesignation Request and Maintenance Plan*. SCAQMD requested re-designation of Coachella Valley from "serious non-attainment" to "attainment" for the PM_{10} National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), however, has not re-designated the PM_{10} classification for Coachella Valley, as PM_{10} levels continue to exceed Federal standards.

The SCAQMD, in conjunction with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), Riverside County, and local jurisdictions, prepared the *2003 Coachella Valley PM_{10} State Implementation Plan*, which includes PM_{10} control program enhancements and requests an extension of the region's PM_{10} attainment date. Coachella Valley is subject to the 2003 State Implementation Plan (SIP) and local dust control regulations and guidelines.

Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)

Fine Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$) consists of fine suspended particles up to 2.5 microns in diameter and is sourced mainly from automobile emissions, smoke, and smelting and processing of metals. $PM_{2.5}$ particles can remain in the air for weeks and travel many hundreds of miles. The SSAB is classified as attainment/unclassifiable for $PM_{2.5}$.

The Coachella Valley is defined as "attainment/unclassified" for $PM_{2.5}$, based on the State and Federal $PM_{2.5}$ standards, and does not require an implementation plan to demonstrate attainment.

A SIP that addresses how Southern California will meet Federal standards for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) was adopted in 2007.

Localized Significance Thresholds

SCAQMD developed localized significance thresholds (LSTs) for emissions of NO_2, CO, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ generated at new development sites (off-site mobile source emissions are not included in the LST analysis). LSTs represent the maximum emissions that can be generated at a project site without expecting to cause or substantially contribute to an exceedance of the most stringent Federal or State ambient air quality standards. LSTs are based on the ambient concentrations of that pollutant within the project Source Receptor Area (SRA), as demarcated by the SCAQMD, and the distance to the nearest sensitive receptor. LST analysis for construction is applicable for all projects that disturb five acres or less on a single day. Cathedral City is located within SCAQMD SRA 30 (Coachella Valley). Table 2, *Local Significance Thresholds (Construction/Operations)*, shows the LSTs for a 1-acre, 2-acre, and 5-acre project site in SRA 30 with sensitive receptors located within 25 meters of the project site.

Table 2
Local Significance Thresholds (Construction/Operations)

Project Size	Pollutant (pounds per day)			
	Nitrogen Oxide (NO_X)	Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Coarse Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	Fine Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)
1 Acre	118 / 118	878 / 878	4 / 1	3 / 1
2 Acres	170 / 170	1,299 / 1,299	7 / 2	5 / 2
5 Acres	270 / 270	2,292 / 2,292	14 / 4	8 / 2

Source: South Coast Air Quality Management District, *Localized Significance Threshold Appendix C – Mass Rate LST Look-Up Tables*, Revised October 21, 2009.

Toxic Air Contaminant Thresholds

SCAQMD regulates levels of air toxics through a permitting process that covers both construction and operation. SCAQMD has adopted Rule 1401 for both new and modified sources that use materials

classified as air toxics. The SCAQMD CEQA Guidelines for permit processing consider the following types of projects significant:

- Any project involving the emission of a carcinogenic or toxic air contaminant identified in SCAQMD Rule 1401 that exceeds the maximum individual cancer risk of 10 in one million if the project is constructed with best available control strategy for toxics (T-BACT) using the procedures in SCAQMD Rule 1401.
- Any project that could accidentally release an acutely hazardous material or routinely release a toxic air contaminant posing an acute health hazard.
- Any project that could emit an air contaminant not currently regulated by a SCAQMD rule, but that is on the Federal or State air toxics list.

Cumulative Emissions Thresholds

The SCAQMD's 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP) was prepared to accommodate growth, meet State and Federal air quality standards, and minimize the fiscal impact that pollution control measures have on the local economy. According to the SCAQMD *CEQA Air Quality Guidelines*, project-related emissions that fall below the established construction and operational thresholds should be considered less than significant unless there is pertinent information to the contrary. If a project exceeds these emission thresholds, the SCAQMD *CEQA Air Quality Guidelines* state that the significance of a project's contribution to cumulative impacts should be determined based on whether the rate of growth in average daily trips exceeds the rate of growth in population.

General Conformity Thresholds

The criteria for significant, adverse effects to this resource include causing or contributing to new air quality violation of any standard or increasing the frequency/severity of any existing violations, delaying timely attainment of any local standards, reductions, or other air quality milestones. For the purposes of this analysis, the determination of level of significance is based on whether the proposed project would emit emissions that would exceed SCAQMD regional emission thresholds or Federal *de minimis* thresholds for construction and operations and maintenance (O&M) activities.

5.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The biological resources analysis is based on the following technical studies (refer to Appendix B):

- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase 1, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Equivalency Analysis* (Equivalency Analysis), prepared by Michael Baker International, Inc. (Michael Baker), dated September 2016 and updated November 2016;
- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Biological Resources Technical Report* (Biological Resources Technical Report), prepared by Michael Baker, dated March 2022; and
- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Biological Assessment* (Biological Assessment), prepared by Michael Baker, dated August 2022.

The project site is located within the Morongo Wash on the western edge of Cathedral City. Most of the project is within an undisturbed open area, but approximately 20 percent of the northernmost portion of the project is within a constrained corridor located between I-10 to the north and UPRR tracks to the south which also serves as a sand transport eco-process under the CVMSHCP. According to the CVMSHCP, the vegetation on-site can be characterized as the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields vegetation community, more specifically as Active Sand Fields south of the UPRR tracks and Stabilized, Shielded Sand Fields north of the tracks. These sand fields are vegetated by species consistent with Sonoran creosote bush scrub. Overall, vegetation communities and land use within the survey area include Active Sand Fields; Stabilized, Shielded Sand Fields; Sonoran Mixed Woody and Succulent Scrub; Sonoran Creosote Bush Scrub; Tamarisk Windrow, and Developed land; refer to Biological Resources Technical Report Table 1, *Vegetation Communities and Land Uses Within the Survey Area*. On-site surface elevation ranges from approximately 478 to 509 feet above msl and generally slopes down-gradient from north to south. The project site is relatively flat with no areas of significant topographic relief, except areas associated with berms. The project would create a transport system underneath the UPRR tracks to allow water from the Morongo Wash to cross underneath the tracks. Ultimately, this would allow water from north of I-10 to connect with water south of I-10 (i.e., the Whitewater River).

Two habitat assessment surveys were conducted within the survey area aside from the focused surveys that were separately conducted. Michael Baker biologists conducted an initial field survey on August 5, 2015, to document the extent and conditions of the vegetation communities occurring within the boundaries of the survey area and to assess the potential for special-status species to occur within the survey area. Following extensive discussions with BLM staff in 2020, Michael Baker biologists conducted a second habitat assessment survey on October 20, 2020. The goal of the second survey was to determine if site conditions had changed since the last time the survey area was visited in 2015, to provide a fresh perspective on the environmental conditions, and to assess the survey area for its potential to support BLM sensitive species.

Flora

The proposed project site is located within the WFCA and approximately 390 feet south of the Willow Hole Conservation Area within the CVMSHCP; refer to Exhibit 6. As stated, the plants on the project site consist of species typically associated with Sonoran creosote bush scrub. Plant species observed within the project site include creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), cheesebush (*Ambrosia salsola*), croton (*Croton californicus*), indigo bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*), and Mediterranean grass (*Schismus* sp.). In addition, two parallel tamarisk windrows cross through the project site in a northwest to southeast orientation south of I-10, and a third windrow runs roughly north to south along the eastern edge of the site. UPRR tracks lay in between the two parallel windrows.

Fauna

During the 2015 and 2020 field surveys, several reptile, bird, and mammal species were observed. Reptiles observed included desert iguana (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*) and Colorado Desert sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes laterorepens*), among others. Birds observed included white-winged dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), Eurasian collared-dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*), and house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), among others. Additionally, observed mammalian species included desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*).

Special Status Plant Species

Based on the literature review conducted for the Equivalency Analysis and Biological Resources Technical Report, 37 sensitive plant species have been recorded in the Cathedral City, Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, and Seven Palms Valley quadrangles. In general, the potentials for special-status species to occur within the project site were determined based on the reported locations in the CDFW California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California, species records in the Calflora Database, eBird, compendia of sensitive species published by CDFW, USFWS species listings, and the CVMSHCP and associated technical documents. Additionally, the following criteria was utilized to evaluate the potential for species to occur within the survey area. The criteria were generally followed but were occasionally deviated from where known data indicated that there may still be extant records in the project vicinity.

- **Present**: the species was observed or detected within the project site during the field survey.
- **High**: Occurrence records (within 20 years) indicate that the species has been known to occur on or within one mile of the project site and the site is within the normal expected range of this species. Intact, suitable habitat preferred by this species occurs within the project site and/or there is viable landscape connectivity to a local known extant population(s) or sighting(s).
- **Moderate**: Occurrence records (within 20 years) indicate that the species has been known to occur within one mile of the project site and the site is within the normal expected range of this species. There is suitable habitat within the project site, but the site is ecologically isolated from any local known extant populations or sightings.
- **Low**: Occurrence records (within 20 years) indicate that the species has been known to occur within five miles of the project site, but the site is outside of the normal expected range of the species and/or there is poor quality or marginal habitat within the project site.
- **Not Expected**: There are no occurrence records of the species occurring within five miles of the project site, there is no suitable habitat within the project site, and/or the project site is outside of the normal expected range for the species.

Based on habitat requirements for specific species and the availability and quality of habitats needed by each sensitive plant species, the Equivalency Analysis and Biological Resources Technical Report determined the project site supports one CVMSHCP-covered plant species, Coachella Valley milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *coachellae*), which was observed during the 2016 sensitive plant surveys.

In addition, the site has a moderate or higher potential to support five sensitive plant species that are not covered under the CVMSHCP, including Borrego milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *borreganus*), ribbed cryptantha (*Cryptantha costata*), winged cryptantha (*Cryptantha holoptera*), pointed dodder (*Cuscuta californica* var. *apiculata*), and Arizona spurge (*Euphorbia arizonica*). All other sensitive plant species, covered and non-covered, have a low potential to occur or are presumed absent.

It is acknowledged that under the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), Palmer's crinklemat (*Tiquilia palmeri*), the host plant for the Coachella Valley grasshopper (*Spaniacris deserticola*), is specifically required to be protected where present in the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community; this species was not detected on-site during comprehensive sensitive plant surveys conducted in 2016 and is determined to be absent.

Descriptions of species determined to have a moderate or higher potential to occur within the project site, as well as of those covered species that are known to occur within the WFCA, are provided below. Four sensitive plant surveys were conducted on the project site between April and June 2016 to look for sensitive plants with potential to occur on the site as listed below. It should be noted that because the previous rainy season (November 2015 to April 2016) was in drought conditions, it is possible that plants that would otherwise be present may not have been visible at the time of the surveys due to poor precipitation leading up to the growing season, especially for annual plants. Based on data obtained from the Western Regional Climate Center, the total rainfall during the previous rainy season was approximately 3.11 inches as measured by the Palm Springs, California (046635) rain gauge (Western Regional Climate Center 2020).

Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch

Coachella Valley milk-vetch can be either an annual or perennial herb that blooms between February and May. It is Federally listed as endangered and is designated by the CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 1B.2, indicating that it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere and is considered fairly threatened in California, with 20 to 80 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is covered under the CVMSHCP and is identified by the BLM as a target sensitive species within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. It is endemic to California and is only known from Riverside County. It occurs in sandy soils within desert dunes and Sonoran Desert scrub, where it typically grows at elevations between 131 and 2,149 feet. Coachella Valley milk-vetch is known to occur in many locations throughout Coachella Valley, and the project site is within 100 feet of designated Critical Habitat for this species; refer to Biological Resources Technical Report Figure 7, *Critical Habitat*. Nearly all the WFCA (including the approximately 23-acre project site) has been designated as core habitat for this species. Coachella Valley milk-vetch was observed on-site during the 2016 sensitive plant surveys and is present on-site; refer to Biological Resources Technical Report Figure 8, *Special-Status Plant Observations*.

Borrego Milk-Vetch

Borrego milk-vetch is an annual herb that blooms between February and May. It is neither State nor Federally listed. It is, however, designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 4.3, indicating it is a plant of limited distribution and not very threatened in California, with less than 20 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is not endemic to California, but in California it is known to occur in Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties, where it can be found in sandy soils in Mojavean and Sonoran Desert scrub between 98 and 1,050 feet in elevation. According to records in Calflora, there are numerous historical occurrences of this species within five miles of the project site, all pre-1940s. While many of these are in developed Palm Springs and are likely extirpated, several are close to the project site (within 1.5 to2 miles) and are in areas that are still undeveloped. Although this species was not observed during the 2015 or 2020 habitat assessments or the 2016 focused rare plants surveys, Borrego milk-vetch has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Ribbed Cryptantha

Ribbed cryptantha is an annual herb that blooms between February and May. It is neither State nor Federally listed. It is, however, designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 4.3, indicating it is a plant of limited distribution and not very threatened in California, with less than 20 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is not endemic to California, but in California it is known to occur in Imperial, Inyo, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties, where it can be found in sandy soils in desert

dunes and Mojavean and Sonoran Desert scrub between 197 and 1,640 feet in elevation. Ribbed cryptantha has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Winged Cryptantha

Winged cryptantha is an annual herb that blooms between March and April. It is neither State nor Federally listed. It is, however, designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 4.3, indicating it is a plant of limited distribution and not very threatened in California, with less than 20 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is not endemic to California, but in California it is known to occur in Imperial, Inyo, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties, where it can be found in Mojavean and Sonoran Desert scrub between 328 and 5,545 feet in elevation. Winged cryptantha has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Pointed Dodder

Pointed dodder is an annual parasitic vine that blooms between February and August. It is neither State nor Federally listed. It is, however, designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 3, indicating it is under review and more information about it is needed. It is not endemic to California, but in California it is known to occur in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, where it can be found in Mojavean and Sonoran Desert scrub between 0 and 1,640 feet in elevation. Pointed dodder has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Arizona Spurge

Arizona spurge is a perennial herb that blooms between March and April. It is neither State nor Federally listed. It is, however, designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 2B.3, indicating it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and more common elsewhere, but is still not very threatened in California, with less than 20 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is not endemic to California, but in California it is known to occur in Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego counties, where it can be found in sandy Sonoran Desert scrub between 164 and 984 feet in elevation. Arizona spurge has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Triple-Ribbed Milk-Vetch

Triple-ribbed milk-vetch is a perennial herb that blooms between February and May. It is Federally listed as endangered and is designated by CNPS with the Rare Plant Rank 1B.2, indicating it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere and is considered fairly threatened in California, with 20 to 80 percent of its known occurrences threatened. It is covered under the CVMSHCP. It is endemic to California and is only known from Riverside and San Bernardino counties. It occurs in sandy or gravelly soils in Joshua tree woodland and Sonoran Desert scrub, where it typically grows at elevations between 1,476 and 3,904 feet. The nearest known record of this species in the CNDDB is approximately 9 miles northwest of the project site but was last seen in 1941; the nearest recent occurrence is from 2006 and is approximately 10 miles northeast of the project site. The project site is well outside the known elevation range for this species, and triple-ribbed milk-vetch is presumed absent from the project site.

Special Status Wildlife Species

Based on the literature review conducted for the Equivalency Analysis and Biological Resources Technical Report, 51 sensitive wildlife species have been reported in the Cathedral City, Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, and Seven Palms Valley quadrangles.

Based on habitat requirements for specific species and the availability and quality of habitats needed by each sensitive wildlife species, the Equivalency Analysis determined the project site has a moderate or higher potential to support several CVMSHCP-covered wildlife species, including Coachella giant sand treader cricket (*Macrobaenetes valgum*), Palm Springs pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris bangsi*), flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*), Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (*Uma inornata*), and Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus*; also known as the Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel).

In addition, the project site has a moderate or higher potential to support sensitive wildlife species that are not covered under the CVMSHCP, including prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), and pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*). Loggerhead shrikes were observed on-site during Michael Baker's 2015 habitat assessment. All other sensitive wildlife species, covered and non-covered, have a low potential to occur or are presumed absent, including Coachella Valley grasshopper, which is protected in Sand Dunes and Sand Fields communities but for which the host plant is not present on the project site. Descriptions of species determined to have a moderate or higher potential to occur within the project site, covered species that are known to occur within the WFCA, and other regionally significant species are provided below.

Coachella Giant Sand Treader Cricket

The Coachella giant sand treader cricket has no State or Federal designation, but it is covered under the CVMSHCP, and is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. It's known range extends through western Coachella Valley to approximately two miles west of the City of Indio. This species is dependent on active dunes and ephemeral sand fields in western Coachella Valley. It is strongly correlated with windblown habitats dominated by creosote bush, burrobush (*Ambrosia dumosa*), honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), Mormon tea (*Ephedra* spp.), desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), and sandpaper bush (*Mortonia scabrella*). Stabilized sandy environments are avoided. Adults are active in early spring and burrow underground again by mid- to late spring, and juveniles emerge in late fall. Nearly all the suitable habitat within the WFCA has been designated as core habitat for this species, which has been extensively trapped west of Gene Autry Trail (though not east, where the project site is located). Coachella giant sand treader cricket has a moderate to high potential to occur within the project site.

Palm Springs Pocket Mouse

The Palm Springs pocket mouse is designated by CDFW as a species of special concern (SSC) and is also covered under the CVMSHCP. The Palm Springs pocket mouse is also considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. It is endemic to Coachella Valley, and while its current distribution is not well known, it was historically present from San Gorgonio Pass to Joshua Tree National Park and south to Borrego Springs. This species generally occurs in creosote scrub, desert scrub, and grasslands with loose and/or sandy soils and sparse to moderate vegetative cover. These areas are typically dominated by creosote bush, brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), burrobush, and ephedra (*Ephedra californica*). They are likely dormant generally between October and March, but they may emerge periodically to feed on seed caches. Breeding occurs from January to August, peaking between March and May. Nearly all the WFCA (including the approximately 23-acre project site) has been designated by the CVMSHCP as a core habitat area and previous trapping in 2000 found the species east of Gene Autry Trail between the UPRR tracks and I-10, although it is unknown exactly where the

occurrences were in relation to the survey area. Palm Springs pocket mouse has a moderate to high potential to occur within the project site.

Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard

Flat-tailed horned lizard is designated as a BLM sensitive species and a CDFW SSC. It was previously designated as a candidate for endangered status under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) in 2015 but was rejected from full CESA listing in 2016. It is covered under the CVMSHCP and is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. This species is typically found in open, sandy habitats, usually sparsely vegetated with creosote bush and burrobush. While fine, windblown sands are preferred, excessively loose and unstable sand may also discourage this species from occurring in an area. It can be found in both active dunes and stabilized sand fields (UCR 2012). Adults are typically active anywhere from mid-February to mid-November, but they are most active between April and September. Mating occurs in May and June, with eggs hatching between July and October. Nearly half of the WFCA has been designated as predicted and potential conserved habitat for this species based on known records. There are numerous CNDDB records of this species occurring within five miles of the project site prior to 2000, but as of 2016, the last confirmed record of this species in the WFCA was in 1994. Flat-tailed horned lizard has a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

During Michael Baker's August 2015 survey, a single piece of horned lizard scat was found on-site. No other horned lizard scat was found during the survey, and no tracks or other horned lizard signs were found in the vicinity of the scat. Horned lizard tracks were found in other various locations throughout the site, but despite efforts to track the lizards, no horned lizards were found. Flat-tailed horned lizard overlaps in range in this area with the southern desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum*), and without observing any individuals, it was unable to be conclusively determined which species of horned lizard may be present on-site.

Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard

Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard is designated by USFWS as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and by CDFW as endangered under the CESA. It is a covered species under the CVMSHCP and is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. This species is only found in Coachella Valley, where it is associated with active dunes, stabilized sand fields, ephemeral sand fields, and stabilized dunes (UCR 2012). Vegetative cover is sparse to moderate and is usually dominated by creosote bush, indigo bush, honey mesquite, and four-winged saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*). This species is typically active from spring through fall, especially between April and October. Up to three clutches of eggs are laid between May and September, with juveniles emerging between August and October. Nearly all the suitable habitat within the WFCA (including the approximately 23-acre project site) has been designated as core habitat for this species, which is abundant to the west of the project site on the Whitewater Floodplain Preserve. Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard has a moderate potential to occur within the project site, which generally has suitable windblown sand habitat.

Although there is designated Critical Habitat for this species, it is located approximately 5.75 miles east of the project site at Thousand Palms. Focused surveys for this species were not conducted for this project. However, a single Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard was incidentally found within the project site during burrowing owl surveys conducted in 2016. The lizard was found within the 500-foot survey buffer of the project site, east of the north-south tamarisk windrow along the edge of the abandoned housing pads. Although it was not observed anywhere else in the 500-foot survey area of the project during any of the

other general or focused biological surveys that have been conducted, because of the availability of suitable habitat throughout and the number of CNDDB records of this species in the immediate vicinity, this species should be assumed present throughout the survey area.

Coachella Valley Round-Tailed Ground Squirrel

Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel (also known as Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel) is designated as a BLM sensitive species and a CDFW SSC. It is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. This species is typically found in scrub and wash habitats, including mesquite and creosote-dominated sand dunes, creosote bush scrub, creosote-palo verde scrub, and saltbush/alkali scrub, particularly in sandy floodplains. Ideal habitat seems to be areas where hummocks of sand accumulate at the base of large shrubs, and according to current data as described in the CVMSHCP, this species seems to particularly favor hummocks that form around mesquite. It is inactive and in its burrows from August until January. The breeding period is generally from early spring through June. Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel is known to occur in the Whitewater Floodplain Preserve to the west of Gene Autry Trail, and nearly all the WFCA (including the approximately 23-acre project site) has been designated by the CVMSHCP as core habitat for this species. Habitat within the project site is heavily dominated by creosote bush, with few, if any, mesquite. Per the CVMSHCP, this species is known to occur in the Fringe-toed Lizard Preserve in the WFCA, where 54 individuals were trapped in 1995. Although habitat is continuous between this preserve and the project site other than Gene Autry Trail, because of the age of the data and uncertainty about status (the CNDDB does not have any recent data in the project vicinity), this species was determined to have a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Prairie Falcon

Prairie falcon is designated as a CDFW Watch List species. It is a year-round resident of southern California. This species is typically found in shrub-steppe desert, grasslands, mixed shrub and grassland ecotones, agricultural fields, and alpine tundra, but particularly in open, expansive habitats. This species primarily nests on cliffs, but it will also nest opportunistically if necessary, on trees, utility towers, buildings, or even inside caves. The general nesting season extends from the beginning of March through the end of July. Prairie falcon is a species commonly sighted in the Coachella Valley in the general vicinity of the project site and has a high potential to occur as a foraging bird but would not be expected to nest on-site

American Peregrine Falcon

The American peregrine falcon is designated as a BLM sensitive species and a CDFW Fully Protected species. It was formerly listed under both the FESA and the CESA but has been delisted from both. This subspecies is a year-round resident in southern California, although other subspecies also occur during winter. Peregrine falcons are widespread and use a variety of habitat types, although they prefer cliffs or other tall areas for nesting and open landscapes for foraging. Nests are not built but are typically scraped into the surface of the nesting substrate that will be used. Eggs are laid beginning in mid-February, with young typically fledging between 35 and 42 days old and, in non-migratory populations (such as southern California), may remain dependent on parents for an additional nine to ten weeks. There is no nesting habitat within the project site or its vicinity, but there is foraging habitat and this species is known to occur in the general vicinity. The American peregrine falcon has a high potential to occur as a foraging bird but would not be expected to nest on-site.

Loggerhead Shrike

The loggerhead shrike is a year-round resident of the Mojave Desert and is designated as a CDFW SSC. This species typically occurs in open and semi-open habitats with scattered shrubs, bare ground, and low or sparse herbaceous cover but may also occur along the edges of denser habitats. The loggerhead shrike inhabits a wide variety of habitats including grasslands, agricultural fields, pastures, desert washes, Joshua tree woodland, and creosote bush scrub. These areas provide suitable hunting habitat and often contain an assortment of perches including trees, fences, posts, and utility lines required for spotting prey. Nearby impaling sites for prey manipulation and storage are also required and typically include sharp, thorny, or multi-stemmed plants and/or barbed wire fences. This species typically breeds from March to May and builds its nest 2.5 to 4 feet above ground in thorny shrubs and trees that provide concealment and protection from predators.

Loggerhead shrikes have been observed multiple times within the project's survey area, including during

both the 2015 and 2020 habitat assessments. This species is probably a year-round resident on-site. Although nesting has not been documented on-site by Michael Baker, based on the repeated presence of the species, it likely nests on-site or in the immediate vicinity.

Pocketed Free-Tailed Bat

Pocketed free-tailed bat is a designated CDFW SSC. It is found in Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial counties, where it occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands, desert scrub, desert succulent scrub, desert riparian, desert wash, alkali desert scrub, Joshua tree woodland, and palm oasis habitats. This species roosts and establishes colonies in rock crevices, caverns, and buildings. Pups are born in June and July, with lactation of maternal bats to their young continuing into August. Pocketed free-tailed bat has a moderate potential to forage within the project site but is not expected to roost on-site. Because this species is completely insectivorous, it will not be directly dependent on any on-site flora for foraging.

Other bat species, including sensitive bats, are known to occur in the project vicinity and/or the Coachella Valley as a whole. However, the analysis in this section was conducted based on the results of a records search in the CNDDB, which only noted four bat species having been reported to the database in the project vicinity. Based on an analysis of habitat preferences, two of those species were presumed absent from the site, and a third was determined to have a low potential to occur. Pocketed free-tailed bat was determined to have a moderate potential to forage within the project site based on a local occurrence record in the CNDDB.

Burrowing Owl

Burrowing owl is currently designated as a BLM sensitive species and a CDFW SSC. It is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. It is a grassland specialist distributed throughout western North America where it occupies open areas with short vegetation and bare ground within shrub, desert, and grassland environments. Burrowing owls use a wide variety of arid and semi-arid environments with well-drained, level to gently sloping areas, characterized by sparse vegetation and bare ground. They are dependent upon the presence of burrowing mammals (such as ground squirrels) for roosting and nesting habitat. The presence or absence of colonial mammal burrows is often a major factor that limits the presence of burrowing owls. Where mammal burrows are scarce, burrowing owls have been found occupying man-made cavities, such as buried and non-functioning drainpipes, stand-pipes, and dry culverts. Small mammals may also burrow beneath rocks and

debris or large, heavy objects such as abandoned cars, concrete blocks, or concrete pads. This species requires open vegetation allowing line-of-sight observation of the surrounding habitat to forage and to watch for predators. The burrowing owl nesting season generally extends from February 1 to August 31.

While suitable habitat is present throughout most of the project site, only nine suitable burrows were found within the survey area during 2016 focused burrowing owl surveys. These burrows mainly consisted of rock and debris piles and substrates composed of a mixture of loose sand and compacted fill material that provide a favorable substrate for burrow construction. Burrowing owls were not observed on-site during the 2016 focused burrowing owl surveys, but several owls were found during the final survey at a location approximately 70 feet east of the 500-foot survey buffer that was utilized. As a result of the presence of these owls just outside the survey buffer and the minimal number of suitable burrows on-site, this species is determined to have a moderate potential to occur on the project site, at least for foraging if not also occupying burrows.

Desert Tortoise

Desert tortoise is designated as threatened under both the FESA and CESA and is also a covered species under the CVMSHCP. The Mojave population of the desert tortoise inhabits areas north and west of the Colorado River in the Mojave Desert of California, Nevada, Arizona, and southwestern Utah, and in the Sonoran Desert in California. Throughout the majority of the Mojave Desert, desert tortoises occur most commonly on gentle sloping soils characterized by an even mix of sand and gravel and sparsely vegetated low-growing vegetation where there is abundant intershrub space. Typical habitat for the Mojave Desert tortoise has been characterized as creosote bush scrub below 5,500 feet above mean sea level. The desert tortoise spends 95 percent of its life underground and will opportunistically utilize burrows of various lengths, deep caves, rock and caliche crevices, or overhangs for cover. Therefore, a moderately friable soil is required to allow for burrow construction and ensure that burrows do not collapse. While the entire project site presents suitable desert tortoise habitat, no suitable tortoise burrows and very few burrows at all were observed during the habitat assessment, and the nearest known record of this species (via the CNDDB) is located over eight miles to the north of the project site. Desert tortoise has low potential to occur within the project site.

Coachella Valley Jerusalem Cricket

Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket has no State or Federal designation but is a covered species under the CVMSHCP and is considered a target sensitive species by the BLM within the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields community type. This species is most often found in western Coachella Valley, where it occurs in sandy to somewhat gravelly sandy soils and is typically found in loose windblown drift sands, especially in dunes. They appear to favor areas dominated by members of the sunflower family, particularly *Ambrosia* spp. and *Encelia* spp. Although dune habitat is present throughout the project site, according to the CVMSHCP, while nearly all the WFCA is still conserved as modeled habitat for this species, actual suitable habitat may not exist within the entire conservation area, where this species has never been found. Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket is not expected to occur within the project site.

5.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cogstone Resource Management Inc. (Cogstone) was retained to conduct a cultural and paleontological resources investigation of the project area in accordance with Section 106 and CEQA; refer to Appendix C, *Cultural and Paleontological Resources Assessment and AB 52 Letters*.

Archaeological and Historical Resources

Cogstone conducted an archaeological and historical literature and records search at the Eastern Information Center (EIC), on August 5, 2015, for the project. The results of the search indicated two prior studies included portions of the project area, while an additional 11 studies have been completed previously within a one-mile radius of the project area. One cultural resource was previously recorded within the project area: CA-RIV-6381H (P-33-009498), the UPRR (previously the Southern Pacific Railroad). The UPRR traverses the project site at the northern extent of the project area and is an active rail line. A new rail bridge (UPRR 592.05) was constructed within the project area in 2006. Three cultural resources were previously documented within a one-mile search radius. These consist of one prehistoric site, one historic-era archaeological site, and one historic-era structure; all are located within a 0.5- to 1.0-mile radius of the project area.

Cogstone requested a Sacred Lands File search of the project area from the Native American Historical Commission (NAHC) on August 8, 2015. The Sacred Lands File search did not indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources within the project area.

Cogstone performed an intensive archaeological pedestrian survey of the 26.44-acre project site on June 8, 2016. The project area is composed of relatively flat terrain with blown sand dunes and a dry wash bed consisting of sand with coarse pebbles, cobbles, and boulders. The UPRR and railroad bridge was observed in the northern portion of the project area. Modern refuse was observed throughout the area. The survey was negative for cultural resources within the project area, except for the UPRR and railroad bridge.

Tribal Cultural Resources

CVWD sent out tribal consultation letters to seven tribal governments under the provisions of CEQA and Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52), which included the list of two individuals from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (ACBCI) provided by NAHC. The ACBCI responded within the 30-day period. The tribe requested the presence of an approved Native American Cultural Resource Monitor during all ground disturbing activities and requested the record search, which was provided on June 30, 2016. The ACBCI then requested a copy of the survey results, which was also provided on June 30, 2016. No further communications were received, and AB 52 consultation is concluded.

Paleontological Resources

Cathedral City is in the northwestern portion of the Salton Trough, which is a tectonic depression about five million years old. The Santa Rosa Mountains consist of rock units of Mesozoic age (66 million years and older), and the other raised elements including Edom Hill and Flat Top Mountain are composed of Pleistocene (1.6 million to 11,000 years old) rock units. The valley floor is composed of Holocene (11,000-present) sediments.

The project area is mapped at the surface as Late Holocene alluvial wash deposits and eolian/dune deposits. Nearby are older sediments which might be present at depth and include young alluvial valley sediments, very old alluvial fan deposits, and the Ocotillo Formation.

Alluvial Wash Deposits

These unconsolidated sands and gravels were deposited in recently active channels of streams and rivers. These sediments are less than 11,700 years old and are too young to contain fossils.

Eolian and Dune Deposits

These are unconsolidated, generally well-sorted wind-blown sand which can occur as sheet sand or as dunes. These sediments are less than 11,700 years old and are too young to contain fossils.

Sediments Potentially Present Below the Surface

Young alluvial valley deposits are unconsolidated to slightly consolidated clay, silt, sand, and gravel along stream valleys and alluvial flats and are too young to contain fossils. Very old alluvial fan deposits consist of moderately well-consolidated, highly dissected boulder, cobble, gravel, sand, and silt deposits and are late to middle Pleistocene in age. The Pleistocene Ocotillo Formation forms Flat Top Mountain and consists of grey to brown, poorly indurated fanglomerates. Pleistocene sediments range between 11,700 years and 2.5 million years old and may contain fossils.

An intensive pedestrian survey of the project area was conducted on June 8, 2016. No fossils were observed during the survey. During the survey, there was generally good exposure in most areas. Surficial sediments consist primarily of unconsolidated windblown sands and dry wash bed comprised of sands with coarse pebble, cobble, and boulders.

5.5 GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Geologic Setting

The project site lies within Coachella Valley, which is located within the northwesterly portion of the Salton Trough, a narrow, low-lying tectonic depression that began forming about 5 million years ago. Coachella Valley contains a thick sequence of Miocene to Holocene sedimentary deposits. Based on Exhibit V-1, *Geologic Map of Cathedral City*, in the Cathedral City General Plan (amended June 24, 2009), the project site is situated on Holocene alluvial active channel deposits (Qw), which have no soil development, and Holocene sand dune deposits (Qds). The sand dune deposits (aeolian sediment) consist of silty, fine, and medium-grained soils.

Geologic Hazards

Faulting and Seismicity

The nearest mapped fault to the project site is the San Andreas Fault, which is approximately 1.6 miles north of the site. The site does not lie within a currently delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone.[5] Well-delineated fault lines cross through this region; however, no active faults are mapped in the immediate vicinity of the site. Therefore, active fault rupture is unlikely to occur at the project site. However, given the proximity of the project site to active and potentially active faults, the project site would likely be subject to earthquake ground motions in the future.

[5] State of California Department of Conservation, Cathedral City Quadrangle, State of California Special Studies Zones, July 1, 1974, http://gmw.conservation.ca.gov/SHP/EZRIM/Maps/CATH_CTY.PDF, accessed June 14, 2017.

Seismic-Induced Landslides

The project site is relatively flat and is not mapped as having potential for seismic-induced landsliding.[6] The project would not be susceptible to slope instability and landslides.

Liquefaction and Seismic Settlement

Seismic ground shaking of relatively loose, granular soils that are saturated or submerged can cause the soils to liquefy and temporarily behave as a dense fluid. Liquefaction is caused by a sudden temporary increase in pore water pressure due to seismic densification or other displacement of submerged granular soils. Liquefaction more often occurs in earthquake-prone areas underlain by young (i.e., Holocene age) alluvium where the groundwater table is higher than 50 feet below ground surface. Based on Exhibit V-4, *Liquefaction Susceptibility Map*, in the Cathedral City General Plan (amended June 24, 2009), the project site has low to very low liquefaction potential.

Strong ground shaking can cause the densification or compaction of soils, resulting in local or regional settlement of the ground surface. The potential for seismically induced settlement to occur is controlled by the intensity and duration of ground shaking and the density of subsurface soils. Based on Exhibit V-5, *Areas Susceptible to Seismically Induced Settlement*, of the Cathedral City General Plan (amended June 24, 2009), the project site has high susceptibility to seismically induced settlement.

Seiches

Seiches refers to the seismically induced oscillation or sloshing of water contained in an enclosed basin, such as a reservoir, pond, water storage tank, or swimming pool. Two water reservoirs owned by CVWD are located on Flat Top Mountain, which is north of the project site. Although land downgradient from these tanks is currently vacant, their damage or failure could impact future development.

Static Settlement/Compressibility

Compressible soils are generally comprised of soils that undergo consolidation when exposed to new loading, such as fill or foundation loads. Soil collapse is a phenomenon where the soils undergo a significant decrease in volume upon increase in moisture content, with or without an increase in external loads. As the project site is made up of alluvial and aeolian sediments, the site has potential for static settlement.

Soil Expansion

Expansive soils are clay-rich soils that can undergo a significant increase in volume with increased water content and a significant decrease in volume with a decrease in water content. Significant changes in moisture content within moderately to highly expansive soil can produce cracking differential heave and other adverse impacts to structures constructed on these soils. Given the relatively minor amount of clay present in soils on-site, expansive soils are not considered a hazard.

[6] Ibid.

Soil Erosion

Soil erosion is most prevalent in unconsolidated alluvium and surficial soils, which are prone to downcutting, sheet flow, and slumping and bank failure during and after heavy rainstorms. Strong wind forces can also produce varying amounts of soil erosion of unconsolidated surficial soils. Based on Exhibit V-2, *Wind Hazard Zones in the Cathedral City General Plan Area*, of the Cathedral City General Plan (amended June 24, 2009), the project site has very severe wind erosion hazard potential.

Mineral Resources

Eroding of the hills and mountains surrounding Coachella Valley has filled the valley with significant amounts of sand and gravel, known collectively as aggregate. Aggregate is a vital component required in the manufacture of asphalt, concrete, road base, stucco, plaster, and other similar construction materials.

According to Exhibit IV-10, *Mineral Resources in the Planning Area*, of the Cathedral City General Plan (amended June 24, 2009), the project site is classified as lying within MRZ-3: Areas containing mineral deposits, the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data. Development within the City has limited the ability to determine the presence or number of mineral resources.

The project site occurs on lands owned by CVWD, BLM, and private property owners. Land under BLM ownership is open to public mineral exploration, and mineral disposal under competitive and non-competitive sales of sand, gravel, rocks, and other construction materials by the BLM.

5.6 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

The proposed project site is in Coachella Valley. Topography in the area is generally characterized by alluvial fans that form the valley. The low-lying Indio Hills rise from the center of the valley, and the area is surrounded by larger mountain ranges, including the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains. Regional flows within the project area are generally in a southern direction toward the Coachella Valley Storm Water Channel, located approximately four miles south of the project site, and ultimately to the Salton Sea. However, existing flows at the project site are impeded at the UPRR bridge structure as the area beneath the bridge has been backfilled to block flows. As shown on Exhibit 2, flows from the Morongo Wash subwatershed are being re-directed between I-10 and the UPRR, flowing southeasterly into the Thousand Palms subwatershed.

The project site is in Zone A on FIRM No. 06065C1576G prepared by FEMA in 2008. Zone A corresponds to areas of 1-percent annual risk of flooding. Zone A does not have determined base flood elevations. It is acknowledged, however, that since FEMA's published 100-year flood zone mapping, hydraulic analysis has been performed for the Morongo Wash and Thousand Palms planning units within the CVWD jurisdictional boundaries. As shown on Exhibit 2, the 100-year flood zone in the project area is more extensive than shown on FIRM No. 06065C1576G.

The project site is in the Colorado River RWQCB (Region 7) watershed, as designated by the California RWQCB (CRWQCB). CRWQCB and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) implement and enforce Federal and State regulations throughout the region to assure water quality standards are met. Water quality is also monitored by CVWD through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit process and various monitoring, including those performed to satisfy SWRCB's Division of Drinking Water. These requirements help provide safe drinking water and assure that runoff leaving the

site during and after construction is not polluted and contains minimal levels of silt or other native materials.

The principal water sources for the project area and Coachella Valley are natural surface water flows, groundwater, and imported Colorado River water. Potable water is pumped from groundwater sub-basins or diverted from local streams; imported water supplies are used for groundwater recharge, irrigation, and other non-potable purposes.

The Whitewater River sub-basin underlies the project area and has the largest storage capacity of all Coachella Valley groundwater basins. According to CVWD's *Urban Water Management Plan* (2012), quality of the groundwater is generally very high. Localized water quality issues, however, such as arsenic, exist and currently require treatment to make water suitable for potable use. Concerns have been expressed about recharging the basin with Colorado River water which has a higher salinity than the existing groundwater.

As noted above, the UPRR bridge crossing at the project site was constructed and backfilled and does not currently allow stormwater to pass. This condition also prevents sand transport (via stormwater flows and wind) from occurring beneath the bridge, and precludes the associated biological benefits.

5.7 NOISE

Sound is mechanical energy transmitted by pressure waves in a compressible medium such as air and is characterized by both its amplitude and frequency (or pitch). The human ear does not hear all frequencies equally. In particular, the ear de-emphasizes low and very high frequencies. To better approximate the sensitivity of human hearing, the A-weighted decibel scale (dBA) has been developed. On this scale, the human range of hearing extends from approximately 3 dBA to around 140 dBA.

Noise is generally defined as unwanted or excessive sound, which can vary in intensity by over one million times within the range of human hearing; therefore, a logarithmic scale, known as the decibel scale (dB), is used to quantify sound intensity. Noise can be generated by several sources, including mobile sources such as automobiles, trucks, and airplanes, and stationary sources such as construction sites, machinery, and industrial operations. Noise generated by mobile sources typically attenuates (is reduced) at a rate between 3 dBA and 4.5 dBA per doubling of distance. The rate depends on the ground surface and the number or type of objects between the noise source and the receiver. Hard and flat surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt, have an attenuation rate of 3 dBA per doubling of distance. Soft surfaces, such as uneven or vegetated terrain, have an attenuation rate of about 4.5 dBA per doubling of distance. Noise generated by stationary sources typically attenuates at a rate between 6 dBA and about 7.5 dBA per doubling of distance.

There are several metrics used to characterize community noise exposure, which fluctuate constantly over time. One such metric, the equivalent sound level (L_{eq}), represents a constant sound that, over the specified period, has the same sound energy as the time-varying sound. Noise exposure over a longer period is often evaluated based on the Day-Night Sound Level (L_{dn}). This is a measure of 24-hour noise levels that incorporates a 10-dBA penalty for sounds occurring between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. The penalty is intended to reflect the increased human sensitivity to noises occurring during nighttime hours, particularly at times when people are sleeping and there are lower ambient noise conditions. Typical L_{dn} noise levels for light and medium density residential areas range from 55 dBA to 65 dBA.

Two of the primary factors that reduce levels of environmental sounds are increasing the distance between the sound source to the receiver and having intervening obstacles, such as walls, buildings, or terrain features, between the sound source and the receiver. Factors that act to increase the loudness of environmental sounds include moving the sound source closer to the receiver, sound enhancements caused by reflections, and focusing caused by various meteorological conditions.

State of California

The *State Office of Planning and Research Noise Element Guidelines* (Noise Element Guidelines) include recommended exterior and interior noise level standards for local jurisdictions to identify and prevent the creation of incompatible land uses due to noise. The Noise Element Guidelines contain a land use compatibility table that describes the compatibility of various land uses with a range of environmental noise levels in terms of the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL).

City of Cathedral City

General Plan

The Noise Element of the Cathedral City General Plan is a tool for local planners to use in achieving and maintaining land uses that are compatible with environmental noise levels. The Noise Element identified roadway traffic, UPRR, and the Palm Springs International Airport as major sources of noise within the city. Some other reported noise sources in Cathedral City include noise generators such as construction activities, industrial operations, lawnmowers, and home appliances. Table 3, *Noise/Land Use Compatibility*, presents the City's land use compatibility criteria.

Municipal Code

The *City of Cathedral City Noise Ordinance* (Noise Ordinance) is contained within *City of Cathedral City Municipal Code* (Municipal Code), Title 11, *Peace, Morals, and Safety*; Chapter 11.96, *Noise Control*. Based on Municipal Code, excessive noise is a serious hazard to the public health, welfare, safety, and the quality of life. Additionally, Section 11.96.070(B), *Disturbances from Construction Activity*, states that construction shall not occur between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on weekdays, 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays, or at any time on Sundays or holidays, from October 1 through April 30; and shall not occur between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. on weekdays, 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays, or at any time on Sundays or holidays, from May 1 through September 30, except for emergency repair of existing installations, equipment, or appliances or by permit issued by the City.

Section 11.96.030(A)(6), *Prohibited Acts*, prohibits any person to produce, suffer, or allow to be produced noise or sound that exceeds the dBA levels shown in Table 4, *Exterior Noise Limits*. Table 4 indicates exterior noise standards.

Existing Noise Sources

The project site is located on vacant, undisturbed land and is surrounded by roadway (I-10) and railroad (UPRR), open space, residential, recreational, and commercial uses. The primary sources of stationary noise in the project vicinity are urban-related activities (e.g., mechanical equipment, vehicles). The noise associated with these sources may represent a single-event noise occurrence, short-term, or long-term/continuous noise. However, most of the existing noise in the project area is generated from mobile sources, including vehicles traveling along I-10 and trains traveling along the UPRR located within the

project site. Approximately 55 trains travel through the City (and project site) daily, resulting in train noise levels of approximately 70 dBA at 50 feet during a pass-by.[7,8,9]

Table 3
Noise/Land Use Compatibility

Land Use Categories	CNEL (dBA) 50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Residential - Single Family, Duplex, Mobile Home	A	B	B	B	C	D	D
Residential - Multiple Family	A	A	B	B	C	D	D
Transient Lodging: Hotels and Motels	A	A	B	B	C	C	D
School Classrooms, Libraries, Churches, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, and Convalescent Hospitals	A	A	B	B	C	C	D
Auditoriums, Concert Halls, Amphitheaters	B	B	B	C	C	C	C
Sports Arenas, Outdoor Spectator Sports	B	B	B	B	C	C	C
Playgrounds, Neighborhood Parks	A	A	A	A	C	D	D
Golf Courses, Riding Stables, Water Recreation, Cemeteries	A	A	A	A	C	C	D
Office Buildings, Business, Commercial and Professional	A	A	A	A	B	D	D
Industrial, Manufacturing, Utilities, Agriculture	A	A	A	A	B	D	D

Notes:

- Normally Acceptable: With no special noise reduction requirements assuming standard construction.
- Conditionally Acceptable: New construction or development should be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirement is made and needed noise insulation features in the design are determined.
- Normally Unacceptable: New construction is discouraged. If new construction or development does proceed, a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirements must be made and needed noise insulation features included in the design.
- Clearly Unacceptable: New construction or development should generally not be undertaken.

[7] Federal Transit Administration, Noise Impact Assessment Spreadsheet, 2007.

[8] Terra Nova Planning & Research, Inc., *City of Cathedral City Comprehensive General Plan*, Adopted July 31, 2002, Amended November 18, 2009.

[9] CVWD telephone correspondence with Mr. Scott Strosnider, Project Manager, on January 15, 2019.

Land Use Categories	CNEL (dBA)						
	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Source: Cathedral City, *City of Cathedral City General Plan*, Noise Element, amended June 24, 2009.							

Table 4
Exterior Noise Limits

Receiving Land Use Category	Time Period	Noise Level (dBA)
Residential	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	65 dBA
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	50 dBA
Commercial/Industrial	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	50 dBA
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	40 dBA
Source: Cathedral City, *Municipal Code*, Section 11.96.030(A)(6).		

5.8 SOCIOECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The proposed project would occur on vacant, undisturbed land owned by CVWD, BLM, and several private landowners and generally surrounded by existing transportation and open space uses to the north, open space and residential uses to the east, open space and residential uses to the south, and open space uses to the west. Table 5, *Environmental Justice Demographics for the Project Area*, identifies the minority and low-income percentages of Riverside County and the incorporated communities nearest the project site.

Table 5
Environmental Justice Demographics for the Project Area

Area	Total Population	Minority[1] Population (Percent of Total)	Percent of Total Population Low-Income[2]
Riverside County	2,458,395	68%	11.2%
Cathedral City	52,220	68%	18.4%
Palm Springs	45,019	38.1%	16.4%
Rancho Mirage	17,303	20.4%	11.7%
Desert Hot Springs	32,716	72.5%	24.0%

Notes:
1 Represents the population excluding those identified as "Not Hispanic or Latino, White Alone" within the US Census.
2 Represents individuals with mean annual incomes below the annual statistical poverty level, identified by poverty status in the last 12 months, identified as "percent below poverty level" within the U.S. Census.

Source: United States Census Bureau, *QuickFacts*, https://www.census.gov, accessed September 14, 2022.

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) environmental justice guidelines, minority populations should be identified if:

- A minority population percentage either exceeds 50 percent of the population of the affected area, or
- The minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis (e.g., a governing body's jurisdiction, neighborhood census tract, or other similar unit).

As shown in Table 5, the cities of Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage contain a minority population percentage less than that of Cathedral City. Meanwhile, Riverside County, Palm Springs, and Rancho

Mirage contain a low-income population percentage less than Cathedral City. As such, per CEQ methodology, an environmental justice/minority population has been identified within Cathedral City and the project area.

5.9 RECREATION

Riverside County offers diverse recreational opportunities, including parklands, nature centers, bikeways, and open space. Additionally, there are thousands of acres of National Park and National Monument lands, U.S. Forest Service wilderness lands, BLM wilderness lands, and other recreational sites in the Coachella Valley region. According to the Cathedral City General Plan Parks and Recreation Element, there are five parks, a community center, town square and fountain of life, five golf courses, and private recreational facilities within the City. However, there are no recreational areas within or adjacent to the proposed project site. The closest recreation area is approximately 3,000 feet south of the project site (Desert Princess Country Club).

5.10 LANDS AND REALTY

The project would be on land that is under the ownership of BLM and CVWD (in whole and in easement), in addition to numerous private landowners; refer to Exhibit 6. The project involves stormwater improvements which would include the placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the existing UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection. The project site is generally vacant, undisturbed land. Immediately surrounding the project site are transportation and open space uses to the north, open space and residential uses to the east, open space and residential uses to the south, and open space uses to the west.

BLM is the Federal agency responsible for managing the public lands in accordance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), BLM's organic act, directs the BLM to prepare land use plans, which provide guidance, with public input, on how public lands are to be managed. All subsequent activities on the BLM-managed public lands must be in conformance with the approved land use plan.

BLM's California Desert Conservation Area Plan

The *California Desert Conservation Area* (CDCA) Plan (1980, as amended October 2002) provides land use plan guidance for the CDCA, which includes the project site. The CDCA, as defined in Section 601 of the FLPMA, is a 25-million-acre expanse of land in southern California designated by Congress in 1976 through the FLPMA. About 10 million acres of the CDCA are administered by BLM under its CDCA Plan. The CDCA Plan provides land use plan guidance for the entire CDCA. The CDCA has undergone numerous minor amendments over the years with more major amendments occurring in 2002.

The CDCA Plan:

1) Provides for multiple use and sustainable development of the public lands while making progress towards healthy, properly functioning ecosystems.

2) Provides for the recovery of Federal and State listed species.

3) Manages sensitive species to avoid future listing.

4) Provides recreational opportunities on public lands.

5) Makes available mineral and energy resources on public lands; and,

6) Facilitates land management consistency, management effectiveness, and cost efficiency across jurisdictional boundaries through collaboration with local governments of the Coachella Valley, State, and other Federal agencies, Tribes, and private entities.

In 2002, the BLM approved an amendment to the CDCA Plan. Under the CDCA Plan Amendment, BLM has a conservation objective of conserving at least 99 percent of extant sand dunes and sand fields, maintaining, and enhancing where feasible, aeolian and fluvial sand transport systems and avoiding disturbance and compaction of sandy habitats associated with Coachella Valley milk-vetch.

BLM's Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) was developed as an interagency plan by BLM, USFWS, the California Energy Commission (CEC), and CDFW, collectively known as the Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT or REAT Agencies) to (1) advance Federal and State natural resource conservation goals and other Federal land management goals; (2) meet the requirements of the ESA, CESA, Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, and FLPMA; and (3) facilitate the timely and streamlined permitting of renewable energy projects, all in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran desert regions of southern California.

The REAT Agencies collaborated throughout the planning process to coordinate efforts across jurisdictional boundaries. As explained in the DRECP Record of Decision (ROD), this Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA)[10] represents BLM's component of the interagency DRECP. A major component of DRECP includes helping provide effective protection and conservation of desert ecosystems while allowing for the appropriate development of renewable energy projects. The DRECP is focused on 22.5 million acres in the desert regions and adjacent lands of seven California counties, including Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego. It is an innovative landscape-level plan that streamlines renewable energy development, while conserving unique and valuable desert ecosystems and providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

On September 14, 2016, as part of Phase I, BLM signed the ROD approving its LUPA to the CDCA Plan and Bishop and Bakersfield Resource Management Plans (RMPs) as part of the DRECP, covering 10 million acres of BLM-administered lands. The LUPA represents the public-lands component of the DRECP, identifying areas appropriate for renewable energy development, as well as areas important for biological, environmental, cultural, recreation, social, and scenic conservation, consistent with the FLPMA multiple-use and sustained yield requirements. The amendments have been designed to result in an efficient and effective biological conservation and mitigation program providing renewable energy project developers with permit streamlining and cost containment while at the same time conserving, restoring, and enhancing natural communities and related ecosystems.

[10] The LUPA is a set of decisions that establishes management direction for BLM-administered land within an administrative area through amendment to existing land use plans. The DRECP BLM LUPA amends the CDCA Plan and its amendments, amongst others.

The BLM LUPA Decision Area includes BLM-administered public lands within the interagency DRECP Plan Area plus the additional BLM lands covered by the CDCA Plan that are outside the DRECP Plan Area. The LUPA Decision Area includes the CDCA and portions of the Bishop and Bakersfield RMPs, and it encompasses the Mojave Desert and the Colorado/Sonoran Desert ecoregion subareas in California, including lands in portions of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

Phase II of the DRECP focuses on better aligning local, State, and Federal renewable energy development and conservation plans, policies, and goals. This includes building from the Renewable Energy Conservation Planning Grants (RECPG) that were awarded by the California Energy Commission to counties in the DRECP plan area.

City of Cathedral City General Plan

The Cathedral City General Plan is a comprehensive document that sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide land use and development decisions. The Cathedral City General Plan is comprised of the following elements:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Parks and Recreation
- Community Image and Urban Design
- Economic and Fiscal
- Biological Resources
- Archaeological and Historic Resources
- Water Resources
- Air Quality
- Open Space and Conservation
- Energy and Mineral Resources
- Geotechnical
- Flooding and Hydrology
- Noise
- Hazardous and Toxic Materials
- Water, Sewer and Utilities
- Fire and Police Protection
- Schools and Libraries
- Health Service
- Emergency Preparedness
- Public Buildings and Facilities
- Arts and Culture

The project site is designated as Open Space-Water (OS-W) under the Land Use Element of the Cathedral City General Plan. The OS-W designation is used to delineate floodways, including natural and man-made floodway and drainage channels.

City of Cathedral City Zoning Ordinance

Cathedral City Municipal Code Title 9, *Planning and Zoning*, ensures the public health, safety and general welfare of the community and secures the social and economic advantages resulting from an orderly, planned use of land resources. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the Land Use Element of the Cathedral City General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance and *City of Cathedral City Zoning Map* (Zoning Map) identify specific land use types, intensities, and development and performance standards applicable to specific areas within the City. The project site is currently zoned as Open Space (OS) according to the Zoning Map.

Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The project site is located within the WFCA of the CVMSHCP. The CVMSHCP purpose is to obtain Take Authorization (Take Permits) pursuant to the ESA and the NCCP Act for Covered Activities in the Coachella Valley while balancing environmental protection with regional economic objectives and simplifying compliance with the ESA, CESA, and other applicable laws and regulations. The WFCA objectives include conserving a total of 4,140 acres which includes conserving the core habitat and associated ecological processes for Coachella Valley milk-vetch, Coachella giant sand treader cricket, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel, and Palm Springs pocket mouse; burrowing owl burrows; other conserved habitat for Le Conte's thrasher; active desert sand fields; and maintain functional biological corridors and linkages.

It should be noted that the CVMSHCP applies to non-Federal lands. The CDCA Plan and Amendment, described above, apply to BLM lands within and surrounding the project site.

5.11 TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

No existing roads are present at the project site. The UPRR traverses the northern portion via an existing bridge structure. East Vista Chino is located at the southern terminus of the project site, and Ventura Drive trends parallel to and east of the project site.

VI. Environmental Effects

This section discusses the potential environmental effects on resources due to implementation of the Proposed Action or Alternative. The analysis in this section evaluates each of the resource topics with respect to Alternative 1 – Proposed Action and Alternative 2 – No Action. The environmental assessment provided below discusses both direct and indirect effects; whereas, direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place, and indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable.

For the purposes of NEPA, "effects" include:

a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth-inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

Effects and impacts are used synonymously. Effects include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes the effect will be beneficial.

For the purposes of CEQA, potential environmental impacts to the existing physical conditions due to project implementation are considered. Evidence, based on factual and scientific data (including review of technical studies, planning documents, Google Earth imagery, site reconnaissance, etc.; as referenced in Section IX, *References*) is presented to show the cause-and-effect relationship between the project and potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, range, or other

parameters of a potential impact are ascertained, to the extent possible, to determine whether environmental impacts may be significant; all of the potential direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect effects are considered. Refer to Section VIII, *CEQA Considerations*, for specific environmental impacts pertaining to CEQA.

Impacts are generally classified as potentially significant impacts, less than significant impacts, or no impact. The "Level of Significance After Measures" identifies the impacts that would remain after the application of measures and whether the remaining impacts are or are not considered significant. When these impacts, even with the inclusion of measures, cannot be mitigated to a level considered less than significant, they are identified as "unavoidable significant impacts."

"Measures" would be required of the project to avoid a significant adverse impact, to minimize a significant adverse impact, to rectify a significant adverse impact by restoration, to reduce or eliminate a significant adverse impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations, or to compensate for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environment. Where necessary to offset or reduce a potential environmental impact, mitigation measures are provided, along with the discussion of any residual impact.

This section describes how the Proposed Action, or No Action Alternative may contribute to impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and which are considered "cumulative impacts." Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

The project is proposed in concert with the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project to provide 100-year flood protection for the Morongo Wash and Thousand Palms planning units. Buildout of the Thousand Palms Flood Control Project is cumulatively considered throughout this analysis. Further, other related projects and possible development in Cathedral City determined as having the potential to interact with the proposed project, to the extent that a significant cumulative effect may occur, are outlined in Table 6, *Cumulative Projects List*.

Table 6
Cumulative Projects List

No.	Name	Location	Proposed Land Use	Status
City of Cathedral City[1]				
1	Verano Recovery	Rio Vista Village, West of Landau Blvd, north of Verano Road (APN 677-050-020). The location is just east of the school.	Development of 58 single family cluster lots on 7.06 acres.	Approved
2	Sol at Verano	Rio Vista Village, North Verona Road and West of Avenida Quintana (APN 677-050-020)	Subdivision of approximately 10.1 gross acres of land into 52 single family residential lots and two common lots within the Rio Vista Village/Verano Development.	Homes Constructed
3	Cassia at Verano	North of Rio Vista Drive and west Avenida Quintana (APN 677-590-001)	Subdivision of approximately 12.5 acres into 86 single family residential lots and one common lot within the Rio Vista Village/Verano Development (Specific Plan 97-55).	Homes Constructed
4	Lennar Communities	Perpendicular (north) to San Joaquin Drive (APN 675-040-030)	Subdivision of 3.43-acre site into 11 single family residential lots.	Final Map

5	Lennar Communities	Perpendicular (north) to San Joaquin Drive (APN 675-040-032)	Subdivision of 15.64-acre site into 41 single family residential lots.	Final Map
6	Rio Vista - World Development	North of Rio Largo Road, east of Rio Guadalupe Road; and south/west of Rio Madre (APN 677-600-001)	Subdivision of a 12.36-acre parcel into 71 single family residential lots for a development and sale of homes.	Homes Constructed
7	Desert Princess Country Club	Southwest corner of South Chimayo Drive and Natoma Drive (APN 675-040-055)	Subdivision of 36.61-acre site into 122 single family lots with recreational common areas.	Homes Constructed
Notes: 1. Written Correspondence: Robert Rodriguez, Planning Manager, City of Cathedral City, September 30, 2022.				

6.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

Development of the proposed project would result in increased hardscape for the purposes of stormwater infrastructure and a reduction in the visible open space. Based on Figure 9, *DRECP LUPA Visual Resource Management Classes*, of the DRECP, portions of the project site on BLM lands have been assigned a Visual Resources Management (VRM) Class IV rating, which allows a significant amount of change at the project site. The objective of Class IV is to allow for management activities and uses requiring major modifications to the natural landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. Management activities and uses may dominate the view and be a major focus of viewer attention; however, every attempt should be made to mitigate the impacts of activities through careful location and repeating the visual elements of the landscape.

Construction of the proposed project would result in ground surface disturbances along the WWRSC. Construction activities would include excavation/grading activities. Construction-related visual impacts would include the presence of construction equipment and personnel, the movement of construction vehicles at staging areas, and material stockpiling. These visual resource impacts would be temporary in nature during the construction period (anticipated for nine months). Upon completion of construction, aesthetics and visual resources would return to pre-project conditions.

Upon completion of the proposed project, no project features would be visible from existing viewers surrounding the project site. Further, the project would protect in place the existing tamarisk windrow along the eastern bank of the WWRSC, providing screening of the project site from residences. Given the project site is in a Class IV rating area and none of the project features would be visible, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and visual impacts would be less than significant.

The nearest designated State Scenic Highway (Highway 111; eligible listing) is located approximately 3.2-miles west of the southern portion of the project site.[11] Given the existing topographic conditions and intervening structures present, no views toward the project site are afforded from this designated portion of Highway 111. No impacts would result in this regard.

Due to the nature of the proposed project (floodway improvements), the project would not result in an increase in lighting in the area. No impacts would result in this regard.

[11] California Department of Transportation, *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed March 15, 2018.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the proposed improvements would not be constructed. Existing views would remain as-is. There would be no visual impacts from the construction/grading activities and staging areas. In absence of the proposed project, however, the stormwater improvements would not be constructed. Thus, stormwater flows would not be conveyed beneath the bridge and floodplain impacts would not be reduced for tributary areas to the project site.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: The proposed project is not expected to have an adverse effect on visual resources when evaluated cumulatively with other projects in the vicinity. Cumulative development is proposed to the east of the project site (including project Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 6, as referenced in Table 6). Future development of these cumulative projects is anticipated to follow the existing development patterns to the south and east. Further, these projects would be required to undergo Cathedral City's existing design review process and would be required to comply with Municipal Code regulations pertaining to building height, setbacks, and landscaping.

The project would result in temporary visual impacts during construction activities; however, once the stormwater improvements are constructed, these temporary construction-related aesthetic impacts would cease. Further, the proposed project features, once constructed, would not be readily visible from surrounding viewers, including future residences to the east of the project site (because of the existing tamarisk windrow present along the eastern bank of the WWRSC). Thus, the proposed project would not result in significant cumulatively considerable impacts involving aesthetics/light and glare.

6.2 AIR QUALITY

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

The Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA), as amended, is the primary Federal law that governs air quality while the California Clean Air Act (CCAA) is its companion State law. These laws, and related regulations by the EPA and CARB, set standards for the concentration of pollutants in the air. At the Federal level, these standards are called National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). NAAQS and State ambient air quality standards have been established for six criteria pollutants that have been linked to potential health concerns: carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), particulate matter (PM), which is broken down for regulatory purposes into particles of 10 micrometers or smaller (PM_{10}) and particles of 2.5 micrometers and smaller ($PM_{2.5}$), and sulfur dioxide (SO_2). In addition, Federal and State standards exist for lead (Pb). The NAAQS are set at levels that protect public health with a margin of safety, and they are subject to periodic review and revision.

Federal air quality standards and regulations provide the basic scheme for project-level air quality analysis under NEPA. In addition to this environmental analysis, a parallel "Conformity" requirement under the FCAA also applies.

Short-Term Construction Emissions

Short-term air quality impacts are predicted to occur during construction operations associated with implementation of the proposed project. The project would be constructed over approximately 12 months. Construction equipment would include two cement mixers, two off-highway trucks, one excavator, one rubber-tired dozer, three tractors/loaders/backhoes, one grader, and one scraper. Emissions have been quantified based upon the duration and equipment used. It should be noted that not all equipment would be used every day, and various construction activities generate different quantities of emissions.

The analysis of daily construction emissions has been prepared utilizing the California Emissions Estimator Model version 2016.3.1 (CalEEMod). Refer to Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*, for the CalEEMod outputs and results. Table 7, *Short-Term Construction Daily Emissions*, presents the anticipated daily short-term construction emissions. As shown in Table 7, construction emissions would not exceed significance thresholds; therefore, a less than significant impact would occur regarding construction emissions.

Table 7
Short-Term Construction Daily Emissions

Emissions Source	Pollutant (pounds/day)[1]					
	ROG	NO_X	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	SO_2	CO
2018						
Unmitigated Emissions	6.33	89.15	63.04	11.82	0.15	40.55
Mitigated Emissions[2,3]	6.33	89.15	58.47	9.56	0.15	38.87
SCAQMD Thresholds	*75*	*100*	*550*	*150*	*150*	*55*
Is Threshold Exceeded After Mitigation?	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
2019						
Unmitigated Emissions	5.87	82.14	77.26	13.07	0.15	38.87
Mitigated Emissions[2,3]	5.87	82.14	72.53	10.78	0.15	38.87
SCAQMD Thresholds[2]	75	100	150	55	150	550
Is Threshold Exceeded After Mitigation?	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*

ROG = reactive organic gases; NO_X = nitrogen oxides; PM_{10} = particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or less

Notes:
1. Emissions were calculated using CalEEMod, as recommended by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD).
2. The reduction/credits for construction emission mitigations are based on mitigation included in CalEEMod and as typically required by the SCAQMD through Rule 403. The mitigation includes the following: properly maintain mobile and other construction equipment; replace ground cover in disturbed areas quickly; water exposed surfaces three times daily; cover stock piles with tarps; water all haul roads twice daily; and limit speeds on unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour.
3. Refer to Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*, for assumptions used in this analysis.

Fugitive Dust Emissions

Construction activities are a source of fugitive dust emissions that may have a substantial, temporary impact on local air quality. In addition, fugitive dust may be a nuisance to those living and working in the project area. Fugitive dust emissions are associated with ground excavation and truck travel on unpaved roadways. Fugitive dust emissions vary substantially from day to day, depending on the level of activity,

specific operations, and weather conditions. Fugitive dust from construction activities is expected to be short term and would cease upon project completion.

Dust (larger than 10 microns) generated by such activities usually becomes more of a local nuisance than a serious health problem. Of particular concern is the amount of PM_{10} (particulate matter smaller than 10 microns) generated as a part of fugitive dust emissions. PM_{10} poses a serious health hazard alone or in combination with other pollutants. $PM_{2.5}$ is mostly produced by mechanical processes. These include automobile tire wear, industrial processes such as cutting and grinding, and re-suspension of particles from the ground or road surfaces by wind and human activities such as construction or agriculture. $PM_{2.5}$ is mostly derived from combustion sources, such as automobiles, trucks, and other vehicle exhaust, as well as from stationary sources. These particles are either directly emitted or are formed in the atmosphere from the combustion of gases such as NO_X and SO_X combining with ammonia. $PM_{2.5}$ components from material in the earth's crust, such as dust, are also present, with the amount varying in different locations. As presented in Table 7, fugitive dust emissions would not exceed the established SCAQMD threshold. Therefore, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Construction Equipment and Worker Vehicle Exhaust

Exhaust emissions from construction activities include emissions associated with the transport of machinery and supplies to and from the project site, employee commutes to the project site, emissions produced on-site as the equipment is used, and emissions from trucks transporting materials to/from the site. As presented in Table 7, construction equipment and worker vehicle exhaust emissions would not exceed the established SCAQMD threshold for all criteria pollutants. Therefore, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Total Daily Construction Emissions

In accordance with SCAQMD Guidelines, CalEEMod was utilized to model construction emissions for ROG, NO_X, CO, SO_X, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. CalEEMod allows the user to input measures such as watering the construction area to limit fugitive dust. As indicated in Table 7, impacts would be less than significant for all criteria pollutants during construction. In accordance with SCAQMD Rules 402 and 403, the project would be required to reduce PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions resulting from fugitive dust. Thus, construction-related air emissions would be less than significant.

Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Asbestos is a term used for several types of naturally occurring fibrous minerals that are a human health hazard when airborne. The most common type of asbestos is chrysotile, but other types such as tremolite and actinolite are also found in California. Asbestos is classified as a known human carcinogen by State, Federal, and international agencies and was identified as a toxic air contaminant by CARB in 1986. Asbestos can be released from serpentinite and ultramafic rocks when the rock is broken or crushed. At the point of release, the asbestos fibers may become airborne, causing air quality and human health hazards. These rocks have been commonly used for unpaved gravel roads, landscaping, fill projects, and other improvement projects in some localities. Asbestos may be released to the atmosphere due to vehicular traffic on unpaved roads, during grading for development projects, and at quarry operations. All these activities may have the effect of releasing potentially harmful asbestos into the air. Natural weathering and erosion processes can act on asbestos-bearing rock and make it easier for asbestos fibers to become airborne if such rock is disturbed. According to the Department of Conservation Division of Mines and Geology, *A General Location Guide for Ultramafic Rocks in California – Areas More Likely to*

Contain Naturally Occurring Asbestos Report (2000), serpentinite and ultramafic rocks are not known to occur within the project area. Thus, there would be no impacts regarding naturally occurring asbestos.

Federal Conformity

The conformity requirement is based on FCAA Section 176(c), which prohibits Federal agencies from funding, authorizing, or approving plans, programs or projects that do not conform to State Implementation Plans (SIP) for attaining the NAAQS. Conformity requirements apply only in nonattainment and "maintenance" (former nonattainment) areas for the NAAQS and only for the specific NAAQS that are or were violated. EPA regulations at 40 CFR Section 93 govern the conformity process. Conformity requirements do not apply in unclassifiable/attainment areas for NAAQS and do not apply at all for State standards regardless of the status of the area. Moreover, according to 40 CFR Section 93.153 (Applicability of the General Conformity requirements), if the total direct and indirect emissions from the proposed project are below the General Conformity Rule *de minimis* emission thresholds, the proposed project would be exempt from performing a comprehensive Air Quality Conformity Analysis and would be in conformity with the SIP.

The Federal Air Conformity Rule *de minimis* thresholds limit construction and operational emissions to 10 tons per year with respect to any criteria pollutant identified in the FCAA (including PM_{10} and Ozone). If the 10-tons-per-year limit were exceeded, the project proponent would be required to identify any measures to reduce impacts to air quality.

The proposed project is located within the Coachella Valley portion of the Salton Sea Basin and is designated serious non-attainment for PM_{10}.

Because the proposed improvements would include Federal approval/involvement, short-term emissions attributable to the project were also evaluated in comparison to Federal general conformity thresholds. As indicated in Table 8, *Short-Term Construction Annual Emissions*, implementation of the project would not exceed applicable Federal general conformity *de minimis* levels.

Table 8
Short-Term Construction Annual Emissions

Emissions Source	Pollutant (tons/year)[1]				
	ROG[2]	NO_X	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	CO
2018					
Unmitigated Emissions	0.48	6.75	4.90	1.06	3.03
Mitigated Emissions	0.48	6.75	4.33	0.77	3.03
Federal De Minimis Level[3]	100	100	70	100	100
Is Threshold Exceeded?	No	No	No	No	No
2019					
Unmitigated Emissions	0.33	4.66	4.64	0.97	2.17
Mitigated Emissions	0.33	4.66	4.07	0.68	2.17
Federal De Minimis Level[3]	100	100	70	100	100
Is Threshold Exceeded?	No	No	No	No	No

VOC = volatile organic compounds; NO_X = nitrogen oxides; PM_{10} = particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or less

Notes:
1. Emissions were calculated using CalEEMod. See Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*, for emission model outputs.
2. Reactive organic gases (ROGs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are subsets of organic gases that are emitted from the incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons or other carbon-based fuels. Although they represent slightly different subsets of organic gases, they are used interchangeably for the purposes of this analysis.
3. De minimis levels are established within Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 93.153 (40 CFR 93.153). The project is located within the Riverside County portion of the Salton Sea Air Basin, which is Federally designated as serious nonattainment for PM_{10}.

The purposes of a general conformity review are to ensure Federal actions do not interfere with the emissions budgets in the SIP, ensure actions do not cause or contribute to new violations, and ensure attainment and maintenance of NAAQS. Because emissions attributable to the project would not exceed Federal *de minimis* levels, implementation of the project was determined to not conflict with the SIP. As a result, this impact would be considered less than significant.

As discussed above, project construction would involve everyday use of equipment and various construction activities (such as grading, excavation, and painting), which would generate different quantities of emissions. Air quality Measure AQ-1 is intended to reduce emissions of potentially harmful pollutants. This measure would be included in project grading/excavation/dust control plans during the construction period.

Although the following measures are not required to reduce emissions below regulatory thresholds identified within this environmental document, the following measures are required pursuant to SCAQMD Rule 403. It should be noted that SCAQMD Rule 403.1, which applies to projects in the Coachella Valley that disturb 5,000 or more square feet of surface area, adds a requirement for preparation and approval of a Fugitive Dust Control Plan to reduce fugitive dust and resulting particulate matter emissions.

1. Contractor would be required to ensure construction equipment, delivery trucks, worker vehicles, and haul trucks would limit idling time, where feasible, during construction.

2. Contractor would be required to ensure all construction equipment is maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications. All equipment would be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.

3. Contractor would be required to ensure all diesel-powered construction equipment would be required to utilize aqueous diesel fuels and be equipped with diesel oxidation catalysts during construction.

4. Contractor would be required to prepare an approved fugitive dust plan for the project prior to grading activities and include, but not be limited to, the following best management practices:

    - Chemically treat soil where activity would cease for at least four consecutive days
    - Cease all construction grading operations/excavation when winds exceed 25 miles per hour
    - Apply water at site and on equipment each morning and evening and during all earth-moving operations
    - Operate street-sweepers on paved roads adjacent to site
    - Establish and strictly enforce limits of grading for each phase of development

- Wash off trucks as they leave the project site as necessary to control fugitive dust emissions
- Cover all transported loads of soils, wet materials prior to transport, provide adequate freeboard (space from the top of the material to the top of the truck) to reduce PM_{10} and deposition of particulate matter during transportation
- Use track-out reduction measures, such as gravel pads, at project access points to minimize dust and mud deposits on roads affected by construction traffic

5. During site disturbance and construction activities, Contractor would be required to site all construction equipment and materials as far away from residential uses as practicable, as enforced by CVWD inspectors.
6. During site disturbance and construction activities, Contractor should utilize, where feasible, all existing power sources via temporary power poles to avoid on-site power generation.
7. Contractor would be required to adequately water imported fill and paving materials, as well as any exported material, prior to transport' cover such materials during transport; and water such materials prior to unloading.
8. Contractor would be required to adhere to SCAQMD Rule 403 during construction, ensuring the cleanup of construction-related dirt on approach routes to and from the site.
9. Contractor would be required to suspend all grading activities, as enforced by CVWD Inspectors, during first and second stage ozone episodes or when winds exceed 25 miles per hour.
10. Contractor would be required to notify CVWD of the start and end of grading and construction activities in conformance and within the time frames established in the SCAQMD 2016 AQMP.
11. Construction staging and management plans, to be prepared by the contractor, would be required to be reviewed by the CVWD inspectors and conditioned to require the application of all reasonably available methods and technologies to assure the minimal emissions of pollutants from the development.

Localized Impacts

Sensitive receptors are defined as facilities or land uses that include members of the population that are particularly sensitive to the effects of air pollutants, such as children, the elderly, and people with illnesses. Examples of these sensitive receptors are residences, schools, hospitals, and daycare centers. CARB has identified the following groups of individuals as the most likely to be affected by air pollution: the elderly over 65, children under 14, athletes, and persons with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. Sensitive receptors closest to the project site include residential uses approximately 25 meters southeast of the project site.

LSTs were developed in response to SCAQMD Governing Boards' Environmental Justice Enhancement Initiative (I-4). SCAQMD provided the *Final Localized Significance Threshold Methodology* (dated June 2003 [revised 2009]) for guidance. The LST methodology assists lead agencies in analyzing localized air quality impacts. SCAQMD provides the LST lookup tables for one, two, and five-acre projects emitting CO, NO_X, $PM_{2.5}$, or PM_{10}. The LST methodology and associated mass rates are not designed to evaluate

localized impacts from mobile sources traveling over roadways. SCAQMD notes that any project over five acres may need to perform air quality dispersion modeling to assess impacts to nearby sensitive receptors. The project is located within SRA 30.

Based on the SCAQMD guidance on applying LSTs, project construction would occur on approximately 26.44 acres. As the SCAQMD LST guidance only has thresholds for 1, 2, and 5 acres, the LST thresholds for 5 acres were conservatively utilized for the construction LST analysis. Since the nearest sensitive receptor (residential uses) is approximately 25 meters southeast of the project site, the 25-meter threshold was conservatively used. It is noted that the localized emissions presented in Table 9, *Localized Significance of Construction Emissions*, include only on-site emissions (i.e., from construction equipment and fugitive dust) and do not include off-site emissions (i.e., from hauling activities). As seen in Table 9, on-site emissions would not exceed the LSTs for SRA 30.

Table 9
Localized Significance of Construction Emissions

Source	Pollutant (pounds/day)[1]			
	NO_X	CO	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
2018				
Total Unmitigated On-Site Emissions[1]	44.86	25.36	8.42	5.29
Total Mitigated On-Site Emissions[1]	44.86	25.36	4.45	3.18
Localized Significance Threshold[2]	270	2,292	14	8
Thresholds Exceeded?	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
2019				
Total Unmitigated On-Site Emissions[1]	41.26	24.35	8.22	5.10
Total Mitigated On-Site Emissions[1]	41.26	24.35	4.24	2.99
Localized Significance Threshold[2]	270	2,292	14	8
Thresholds Exceeded?	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*

Notes:
1. Emissions were calculated using CalEEMod. See Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*, for emission model outputs.
2. The Localized Significance Threshold was determined using Appendix C of the SCAQMD *Final Localized Significant Threshold Methodology* guidance document for pollutants NO_X, CO, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. The Localized Significance Threshold was based on the anticipated daily acreage disturbance for construction (approximately 5 acres per day), the distance to sensitive receptors (approximately 25 meters; therefore, the 25-meter threshold was conservatively used), and the source receptor area (SRA 30).

Odors

According to the SCAQMD *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*, land uses associated with odor complaints typically include agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, food processing plants, chemical plants, composting, refineries, landfills, dairies, and fiberglass molding. The project would result in the construction of stormwater improvements; thus, it does not include any uses identified by SCAQMD as being associated with odors.

Construction activities associated with the project may generate detectable odors from heavy-duty equipment exhaust. Construction-related odors would be short term in nature and cease upon project completion. Any odor impacts to existing adjacent land uses would be short term and are less than significant.

Long-Term Operational Emissions

The proposed stormwater improvements would not have any operational emissions. The project proposes stormwater improvements, which would provide flood protection and wildlife movement. Emergency maintenance would occur as needed to clear sediment following a large storm event. Thus, the project would not attract or generate any new vehicular trips. Additionally, the proposed stormwater improvements would not generate any stationary source emissions. Therefore, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Localized Impacts

According to the SCAQMD LST methodology, LSTs would apply to the operational phase of a proposed project only if the project includes stationary sources or attracts mobile sources that may spend long periods queuing and idling at the site (e.g., warehouse or transfer facilities). This project does not include such uses. The project involves stormwater improvements that would not have any operational emissions. Thus, due to the lack of stationary source emissions, no long-term LST analysis is needed, and no impact in this regard would occur.

Clean Air Plan Consistency

CARB administers the air quality policy in California. The California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) were established in 1969 pursuant to the Mulford-Carrell Act. These standards are generally more stringent and apply to more pollutants than the NAAQS. In addition to the criteria pollutants, CAAQS have been established for visibility-reducing particulates, hydrogen sulfide, and sulfates. The CCAA, which was approved in 1988, requires that each local air district prepare and maintain an AQMP to achieve compliance with CAAQS. These AQMPs also serve as the basis for preparation of the SIP for the State of California.

Like the EPA, CARB also designates areas within California as either attainment or nonattainment for each criteria pollutant based on whether CAAQS have been achieved. Under the CCAA, areas are designated as nonattainment for a pollutant if air quality data show a state standard for the pollutant was violated at least once during the previous three calendar years. Exceedances affected by highly irregular or infrequent events are not considered violations of a state standard and are not used as a basis for designating areas as nonattainment.

SCAQMD is one of 35 air quality management districts in California that have prepared AQMPs to accomplish a five-percent annual reduction in emissions. On March 3, 2017, the SCAQMD Governing Board approved the 2016 AQMP, which outlines its strategies for meeting the NAAQS for $PM_{2.5}$ and ozone.

In addition to the 2016 AQMP and its rules and regulations, the SCAQMD published the *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*. SCAQMD is in the process of developing an *Air Quality Analysis Guidance Handbook* to replace the current *CEQA Air Quality Handbook* approved by the SCAQMD Governing Board in 1993. In its *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*, SCAQMD established significance thresholds to assess the impact of project-related air pollutant emissions. There are separate thresholds for short-term construction and long-term operational emissions. A project with daily emission rates below these thresholds is considered to have a less than significant effect on regional air quality.

As part of its enforcement responsibilities, the EPA requires each state with nonattainment areas to prepare and submit a SIP that demonstrates the means to attain the Federal standards. The SIP must integrate federal, state, and local plan components and regulations to identify specific measures to reduce

pollution in nonattainment areas, using a combination of performance standards and market-based programs. Similarly, under state law, the CCAA requires an air quality attainment plan to be prepared for areas designated as nonattainment regarding the Federal and State ambient air quality standards. Air quality attainment plans outline emissions limits and control measures to achieve and maintain these standards by the earliest practical date.

As previously mentioned, the project site is within the Salton Sea Air Basin, which is under the jurisdiction of SCAQMD. SCAQMD is required, pursuant to the FCAA, to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants for which the Salton Sea Air Basin is in nonattainment. To reduce such emissions, SCAQMD drafted the 2016 AQMP. The 2016 AQMP establishes a program of rules and regulations directed at reducing air pollutant emissions and achieving state (California) and federal air quality standards. The 2016 AQMP is a regional and multi-agency effort including SCAQMD, CARB, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and EPA. The plan's pollutant control strategies are based on the latest scientific and technical information and planning assumptions, including SCAG's 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 RTP/SCS), updated emission inventory methodologies for various source categories, and SCAG's latest growth forecasts (SCAG's latest growth forecasts were defined in consultation with local governments and with reference to local general plans). The project is subject to SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP. It should be noted that the SCAQMD is in the process of updating the AQMP and the document is in draft form; however, it has not yet been approved. Thus, this analysis is based on the 2016 AQMP.

Criteria for determining consistency with the 2016 AQMP are defined by the following indicators:

- *Consistency Criterion No. 1:* The proposed project would not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of existing air quality violations, or cause or contribute to new violations, or delay the timely attainment of air quality standards or the interim emissions reductions specified in the 2016 AQMP.

- *Consistency Criterion No. 2:* The proposed project would not exceed the assumptions in the 2016 AQMP or increments based on the years of the project build-out phase.

The violations to which Consistency Criterion No. 1 refers are the CAAQS and NAAQS. As shown in Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9, above, the project would not exceed the short-term construction standards and, in so doing, would not violate any air quality standards. Thus, no impact is expected, and the project would be consistent with the first criterion.

Concerning Consistency Criterion No. 2, the 2016 AQMP contains air pollutant reduction strategies based on SCAG's latest growth forecasts, and SCAG's growth forecasts were defined in consultation with local governments and with reference to local general plans. The project is consistent with the land use designation and development density presented in the City's General Plan and, therefore, would not exceed the population or job growth projections used by SCAQMD to develop the 2016 AQMP. Thus, no impact would occur, as the project is also consistent with the second criterion.

Mitigation Measures

AQ-1 Prior to the commencement of construction, the CVWD Project Engineer shall ensure all project plans and specifications stipulate that, in compliance with SCAQMD Rule 403, excessive fugitive dust emissions shall be controlled by regular watering or other dust prevention measures, as specified in the SCAQMD's Rules and Regulations. In addition,

SCAQMD Rule 402 requires implementation of dust suppression techniques to prevent fugitive dust from creating a nuisance off-site. Implementation of the following measures would reduce short-term fugitive dust impacts on nearby sensitive receptors:

- All active portions of the construction site shall be watered every three hours during daily construction activities and when dust is observed migrating from the project site to prevent excessive amounts of dust
- Any on-site stockpiles of debris, dirt, or other dusty material shall be enclosed, covered, or watered twice daily, or non-toxic soil binders shall be applied
- Disturbed areas shall be replaced with ground cover or paved immediately after construction is completed in the affected area
- On-site vehicle speed shall be limited to 15 miles per hour
- All material transported off-site shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent excessive amounts of dust prior to departing the job site

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: Implementation of Alternative 1 would have limited and short-term impacts on local and regional air quality, would not directly contribute to on-going emissions of pollutants, and is, therefore, not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on local or regional air quality when combined with projects in the vicinity.

As noted under Section VI, *Affected Environment*, the Coachella Valley is in a nonattainment area for PM_{10} under Federal standards. The 2016 AQMP adopted stricter measures than previously imposed for control of dust during site grading and development phases. These measures are integrated into the grading and construction management plans for the project.

In the operational phase, Alternative 1 would generate negligible emissions and would not adversely contribute to cumulative effects.

6.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Global Climate Change

California is a substantial contributor of global greenhouse gases (GHGs), emitting approximately 370 million tons of CO_2 per year.[12] Climate studies indicate California is likely to see an increase of three to four degrees Fahrenheit over the next century. Methane (CH_4) is also an important GHG that potentially contributes to global climate change. GHGs are global in their effect, which is to increase the earth's ability to absorb heat in the atmosphere. As primary GHGs have a long lifetime in the atmosphere, accumulate over time, and are generally well-mixed, their impact on the atmosphere is mostly independent of the point of emission.

[12] California Environmental Protection Agency, *California Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory - 2017 Edition*, http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/inventory/data/data.htm, accessed July 31, 2017.

The impact of human activities on global climate change is apparent in the observational record. Air trapped by ice has been extracted from core samples taken from polar ice sheets to determine the global atmospheric variation of CO_2, CH_4, and nitrous oxide (N_2O) from before the start of industrialization (approximately Year 1750), to over 650,000 years ago. For that period, it was found that CO_2 concentrations ranged from 180 to 300 parts per million. For the period from approximately 1750 to the present, global CO_2 concentrations increased from a pre-industrialization period concentration of 280 to 379 parts per million in 2005, with the 2005 value far exceeding the upper end of the pre-industrial period range.

Regulations and Significance Criteria

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) developed several emission trajectories of GHGs needed to stabilize global temperatures and climate change impacts. It concluded that a stabilization of GHGs at 400 to 450 parts per million CO_2 equivalent[13] (CO_2eq) concentration is required to keep global mean warming below two degrees Celsius, which in turn is assumed to be necessary to avoid significant levels of climate change.

Executive Order S-3-05, issued in June 2005, established the following GHG emission reduction targets:

- *2010:* Reduce GHG emissions to 2000 levels.
- *2020:* Reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels.
- *2050:* Reduce GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) requires CARB determine what the statewide GHG emissions level was in 1990 and approve a statewide GHG emissions limit that is equivalent to that level, to be achieved by 2020. CARB has approved a 2020 emissions limit of 427 million metric tons (MMT) of CO_2eq.

Executive Order B-30-15, issued in April 2015, requires statewide GHG emissions to be reduced 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. Senate Bill 32 (SB 32), signed into law in September 2016, codifies the 2030 GHG reduction target in Executive Order B-30-15. The bill authorizes CARB to adopt an interim GHG emissions level target to be achieved by 2030. CARB also must adopt rules and regulations in an open public process to achieve the maximum, technologically feasible, and cost-effective GHG reductions.

Due to the nature of global climate change, it is not anticipated that any single development project would have a substantial effect on global climate change. GHG emissions from the project would combine with emissions emitted across California, the United States, and the world to cumulatively contribute to global climate change.

In June 2008, the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research published a Technical Advisory, which provides informal guidance for public agencies as they address the issue of climate change in CEQA documents.[14] This is assessed by determining whether a proposed project is consistent with or obstructs the 39 Recommended Actions identified by CARB in its Climate Change Scoping Plan, which includes nine

[13] Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO_2eq) – A metric measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.

[14] Governor's Office of Planning and Research, CEQA and Climate Change: Addressing Climate Change Through California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review, 2008.

Early Action Measures (qualitative approach). The Attorney General's Mitigation Measures identify areas where GHG emissions reductions can be achieved to meet the goals of AB 32. As set forth in the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research Technical Advisory and in the proposed amendments to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.4, this analysis examines whether the project's GHG emissions are significant based on a qualitative and performance-based standard (Proposed CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.4(a)(1) and (2)).

SCAQMD Thresholds

Currently, there is no absolute consensus in the State of California among CEQA lead agencies regarding the analysis of global climate change and the selection of significance criteria. In fact, numerous organizations, both public and private, have released advisories and guidance with recommendations designed to assist decision-makers in the evaluation of GHG emissions given the current uncertainty regarding when emissions reach the point of significance. Lead agencies may elect to rely on thresholds of significance recommended or adopted by State or regional agencies with expertise in the field of global climate change.

SCAQMD formed a GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Working Group (Working Group) to provide guidance to local lead agencies on determining significance for GHG emissions in CEQA documents. As of the last Working Group meeting (Meeting No. 15) held in September 2010, SCAQMD is proposing to adopt a tiered approach for evaluating GHG emissions for development projects where SCAQMD is not the lead agency.[15]

With the tiered approach, the project is compared with the requirements of each tier sequentially and would not result in a significant impact if it complies with any tier. Tier 1 excludes projects that are specifically exempt from SB 97 from resulting in a significant impact. Tier 2 excludes projects that are consistent with a GHG reduction plan that has a certified final CEQA document and complies with AB 32 GHG reduction goals. Tier 3 excludes projects with annual emissions lower than a screening threshold. For all non-industrial projects, SCAQMD is proposing a screening threshold of 3,000 metric tons (MT) of carbon dioxide equivalent per year (CO_2eq/yr) per year. SCAQMD concluded that projects with emissions less than the screening threshold would not result in a significant cumulative impact.

Tier 4 consists of three options. Under the Tier 4 first option, SCAQMD initially outlined the project would be excluded if design features and/or mitigation measures resulted in emissions 30 percent lower than business as usual emissions. However, the Working Group did not provide a recommendation for this approach. Under the Tier 4 second option, the Working Group folded this into the third Option. Under the Tier 4 third option, the project would be excluded if it was below an efficiency-based threshold of 4.8 $MTCO_2$eq per service population (SP) per year or 3.0 $MTCO_2$eq per SP for post-2020 projects.[16] Tier 5 would exclude projects that implement off-site mitigation (GHG reduction projects) or purchase offsets to reduce GHG emission impacts to less than the proposed screening level.

[15] The most recent SCAQMD GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Working Group meeting was held on September 2010.

[16] The project-level efficiency-based threshold of 4.8 $MTCO_2$eq per SP per year is relative to the 2020 target date. The SCAQMD has also proposed efficiency-based thresholds relative to the 2035 target date to be consistent with the GHG reduction target date of SB 375. GHG reductions by the SB 375 target date of 2035 would be approximately 40 percent. Applying this 40 percent reduction to the 2020 targets results in an efficiency threshold for plans of 4.1 $MTCO_2$eq per SP per year and an efficiency threshold at the project level of 3.0 $MTCO_2$eq/year.

GHG efficiency metrics are utilized as thresholds to assess the GHG efficiency of a project on a per capita basis or on a "service population" basis (the sum of the number of jobs and the number of residents provided by a project) such that the project would allow for consistency with the goals of AB 32 (i.e., 1990 GHG emissions levels by 2020 and 2035). GHG efficiency thresholds can be determined by dividing the GHG emissions inventory goal of the State by the estimated 2035 population and employment. This method allows highly efficient projects with higher mass emissions to meet the overall reduction goals of AB 32 and is appropriate because the threshold can be applied evenly to all project types (residential or commercial/retail only and mixed use).

Project-Related Emissions

As the project involves the construction of stormwater improvements, the 3,000 $MTCO_2eq$/yr non-industrial screening threshold has been selected as the significance threshold, as it is most applicable to the project. The 3,000 $MTCO_2eq$ threshold is used in addition to the qualitative thresholds of significance set forth below from Section VII of Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines.

Project-related GHG emissions would include emissions from construction activities. Construction of the proposed project would result in direct emissions of CO_2, N_2O, and CH_4 from the operation of construction equipment. Transport of materials and construction workers to and from the project site would also result in GHG emissions. Construction activities would be short-term in duration and would cease upon project completion. Project operation would include as-needed emergency maintenance following a large storm event to clear sediment within the project area; however, the emergency maintenance activities would be temporary in nature and would result in negligible sources of operational GHG emissions.

Project-related GHG emissions would result from the proposed construction activities over the construction period. Construction GHG emissions are typically summed and amortized over the lifetime of the project (assumed to be 30 years), then added to the operational emissions.[17] Table 10, *Estimated Construction-related Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, presents the estimated CO_2, CH_4, and N_2O emissions of the project. The CalEEMod outputs are in Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*. As shown in Table 10, the project would result in 1,048.49 $MTCO_2eq$ (34.95 $MTCO_2eq$ when amortized over 30 years), which is well below the 3,000 $MTCO_2eq$/year screening threshold. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

The City of Cathedral City adopted a *Climate Action Plan* (CAP) in May 2013. The CAP is a strategy for Cathedral City to grow in a sustainable way that meets GHG reduction goals while continuing to allow for public and private development and redevelopment that will keep Cathedral City a vibrant and livable community. The project involves the construction of stormwater improvements which would provide flood protection and wildlife movement within the project vicinity. The project would not conflict with the City's CAP as the project does not change the City's land use designations and would not increase population beyond that considered in the General Plan. In addition, the project would be subject to applicable Federal, State, and local regulatory requirements, further reducing project related GHG emissions. The project would not conflict with or impede implementation of reduction goals identified in AB 32 and other strategies to help reduce GHG emissions. Therefore, project implementation would not

[17] The project lifetime is based on the standard 30-year assumption of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast Air Quality Management District, Minutes for the GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Stakeholder Working Group #13, August 26, 2009).

affect any plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Table 10
Estimated Construction-related Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Source	CO_2	CH_4		N_2O		Total Metric Tons of CO_2eq
	Metric Tons/yr	Metric Tons/yr	Metric Tons of CO_2eq[1]	Metric Tons/yr	Metric Tons of CO_2eq[1]	
Construction Emissions						
Total emissions	1,044.02	0.17	4.30	0.00	0.00	1,048.49
Total emissions (amortized over 30 years)	34.80	0.01	0.14	0.00	0.00	34.95

Notes:
1. CO_2 Equivalent values calculated using the U.S. EPA Website, *Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator*, http://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator, accessed September 14, 2022.
2. Totals may be slightly off due to rounding. Due to rounding, the results given by the equation calculations used in the Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator may not return the exact results shown in CalEEMod.

Refer to Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*, for detailed model input/output data.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the proposed stormwater improvements would not be constructed. The existing air quality emissions would not be altered by the proposed project.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: Implementation of Alternative 1 would have limited and short-term impacts regarding construction GHG emissions and would generate negligible long-term operational GHG emissions from maintenance activities. Therefore, Alternative 1 is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect regarding GHG emissions when combined with projects in the vicinity.

6.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The biological resources analysis is based on the following technical studies (refer to Appendix B):

- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase 1, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Equivalency Analysis* (Equivalency Analysis), prepared by Michael Baker International, Inc. (Michael Baker), dated September 2016 and updated November 2016
- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Biological Resources Technical Report* (Biological Resources Technical Report), prepared by Michael Baker, dated March 2022
- *North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California, Biological Assessment* (Biological Assessment), prepared by Michael Baker, dated August 2022

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

Flora

Based on the vegetation mapping system of the CVMSHCP, the vegetation on-site can be characterized as the Sand Dunes and Sand Fields natural community, more specifically as active sand fields south of the UPRR tracks and stabilized, shielded sand fields north of the tracks. These sand fields are vegetated by species consistent with Sonoran creosote bush scrub. The project would involve placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection. To minimize adverse short-term construction effects on active sand fields and stabilized, shielded sand fields, activities that may result in sand stabilization (e.g., excessive driving by vehicles or equipment) would be minimized by assigning designated construction staging areas and ensuring construction vehicles and equipment utilized within the site boundaries are washed prior to entering the site to reduce the potential for transmission of invasive weed seeds (Measure BIO-1). Further, inspection of the construction site for invasive weed species within this habitat type may be necessary to help ensure its continued integrity (Measure BIO-2). Implementation of Measures BIO-1 and BIO-2 would reduce or offset potential impacts to the sand field communities.

The project represents a beneficial impact to the active sand fields and stabilized, shield sand fields as the proposed improvements would facilitate water and sand transport from areas north of I-10 to areas south of I-10 by establishing a crossing underneath the existing railroad tracks. As detailed in the Biological Assessment, the proposed project would result in a total of approximately 21.98 acres of impacts (8.56 acres permanent and 13.42 acres temporary) to habitat within the WFCA. As a result, the CVWD agreed to place a conservation easement on 42 acres of land adjacent to the project and within the WFCA. Of these 42 acres, 21.98 acres would be used to offset the project impacts, with the remaining 20.02 acres resulting in a net increase of conservation lands to the WFCA such that the proposed project would ultimately increase the acreage of conserved core habitat for species being impacts; refer to Biological Assessment Figure 5, *Conservation Parcels* (Measure BIO-3). This 42-acre area is composed of six different privately-owned parcels, some of which are located within the WFCA and/or within the project area and all of which are located immediately adjacent to the project.

Fauna

Project-related construction activities could result in direct impacts to migratory birds. Nesting birds are protected pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The MBTA prohibits activities that result in the direct take (defined as killing, capturing, selling, trading, or transporting) of a migratory bird. The project has the potential to impact nesting birds if site disturbance associated with the project occurs during the nesting season. Measure BIO-4 would require a pre-construction clearance survey for nesting birds in the event site disturbance or any nesting habitat occurs during the avian nesting season (January 15 through August 31). The pre-construction clearance survey for nesting birds is required to be conducted within three days of the start of any ground-disturbing activities to ensure no nesting birds will be disturbed during construction. If an active avian nest is discovered during the pre-construction clearance survey, construction activities shall stay outside of a 300-foot buffer around the active nest. For raptor species, this buffer is expanded to 500 feet to further reduce potential impacts, as described above, CVWD proposes to place a conservation easement upon 42 acres of land to offset the 21.98 acres of impacts to land within the City's portion of the WFCA. This conservation easement would result in a net increase of 20.02 acres of land for the conservation area.

In addition, the project is subject to the required avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures pertaining to covered riparian bird species, identified in Section 4.4 of the CVMSHCP and described below.

The project represents a long-term beneficial impact to wildlife movement as the proposed improvements would facilitate movement from areas north of I-10 to areas south of I-10 by re-establishing a crossing underneath the existing railroad tracks. Refer to Equivalency Analysis Exhibit 10, *Biological Corridor and Ecological Processes*, for an illustration of wildlife corridors/linkages in the project area.

Special Status Plant Species

Sensitive plant surveys were conducted on April 14, April 19, May 4, and June 15, 2016, to coincide with the flowering periods of sensitive plant species known to occur in the vicinity of the project site. No additional plant surveys were done in 2020. Linear transects were walked throughout suitable habitat from west to east and spaced at 10-meter (33-foot) intervals to ensure maximum visual coverage and increase the likelihood of detecting sensitive plant species that may be growing on-site. One sensitive plant species, Coachella Valley milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *coachellae*), was observed during the focused surveys. Approximately 266 individuals were observed throughout the survey area; refer to Biological Assessment Figure 8, *Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch Habitat and Observations*. No other sensitive plant species were observed on-site during the sensitive plant surveys.

<u>Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch</u>

Construction and operations and maintenance activities associated with the project would have direct and indirect effects on Coachella Valley milk-vetch. With regards to direct effects, the project would result in the temporary loss of 13.24 acres and the permanent loss of 8.98 acres of Coachella Valley milk-vetch modeled core habitat within the WFCA. Temporary losses are primarily related to earthen grading improvements, but permanent losses are related to placement of concrete and riprap. Depending on the timing of construction in relation to the blooming season, individual plants above the surface may be lost, but much of the local population would remain in the seedbank.

With regards to indirect effects, the use of heavy equipment and construction vehicles within the action area may result in the spread of non-native weed species into and/or throughout the action area, either from areas outside or from one part of the action area to another. If these species become established and proliferate within the action area, they can outcompete Coachella Valley milk-vetch, resulting in long-term loss of the on-site population. The spread of fugitive dust related to ground disturbance can also result in long-term effects to local flora if the amount of dust is sufficient to impair photosynthetic processes. Contrarily, construction of the project would result in increased fluvial sand transport into the action area and into active sand fields in the northern part of Cathedral City. This increased fluvial sand transport would have a greater chance of dispersing Coachella Valley milk-vetch seeds to new areas downstream that currently may primarily receive sand from the action area through aeolian means of sand transport. Ultimately, the local distribution of Coachella Valley milk-vetch may increase because of project construction and its positive benefits on local fluvial sand transport.

Measure BIO-6 would require pre-construction focused surveys for Coachella Valley milk-vetch within the action area during the blooming season (generally February through May) prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. Areas where the plant is found are to be marked for avoidance as Environmentally Sensitive Areas and qualified biologists are to be present throughout construction and decommission activities. Measure BIO-7 would require all Coachella Valley milk-vetch locations identified during the pre-construction surveys be delineated on the ground and on aerial photographs, incorporated into the

construction management plans, and avoided to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, Measure BIO-8 requires preparation and implementation of a Plant Salvage and Restoration Plan to be reviewed and approved by the BLM and USFWS.

In addition, the project is subject to the required avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures pertaining to fluvial sand transport, identified in Section 4.4 of the CVMSHCP and described below.

Special Status Wildlife Species

One Federally listed special-status wildlife species, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (Federally listed as threatened, State listed as endangered, BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP) was observed on-site during 2016 focused surveys for burrowing owl (BLM sensitive species, BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, CDFW SSC, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP). Other special-status wildlife species that were observed within the survey area between 2015 and 2020 included Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*; CDFW Watch List [WL]), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter straiatus*; CDFW WL), burrowing owl, horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*; CDFW WL if the *actia* subspecies), and loggerhead shrike (CDFW SSC).

Based on the specific results of the records searches and literature reviews, a review of existing site conditions during the field surveys, and a review of specific habitat requirements, occurrence records, and known distributions for special-status wildlife species, it was determined that the overall project site has a high potential to support prairie falcon (CDFW WL), American peregrine falcon (BLM sensitive species and CDFW FP species), Coachella giant sand treader cricket (BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields and a covered species under the CVMSHCP), and Palm Springs pocket mouse (BLM sensitive species, BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, CDFW SSC, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP) and a moderate potential to support pocketed free-tailed bat (CDFW SSC), flat-tailed horned lizard (BLM sensitive species, BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, CDFW SSC, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP), and Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel (BLM sensitive species, BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, CDFW SSC, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP).

In addition, the project site has a low potential to support Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*; CDFW candidate for State listing as endangered), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*; State listed as threatened), desert tortoise (State and Federally listed as threatened, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*; BLM sensitive species, CDFW FP, CDFW WL), Lucy's warbler (*Oreothlypis luciae*; BLM sensitive and CDFW SSC), and Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*; BLM target sensitive species within sand dunes and sand fields, CDFW SSC, and a covered species under the CVMSHCP). All remaining special-status wildlife species identified by the records searches and literature reviews are not expected to occur within the survey area.

<u>Burrowing Owl</u>

A focused burrowing owl burrow survey was conducted on April 19, 2016. The survey determined the project site and survey area (i.e., areas within 500 feet of the project boundary) provide a limited amount of suitable burrows for burrowing owls, and per the current accepted survey protocol three additional surveys were conducted on May 12, June 8, and July 7, 2016. While the survey area is generally open and provides clear line-of-site opportunities favored by burrowing owls, the survey area is located within a sand transport corridor and on-site soils are dominated by loose, friable sandy material that in general does not provide favorable conditions for burrow construction. Despite systematic searches of all suitable

burrows, no burrowing owls or evidence to suggest recent use by burrowing owls was observed within the survey area during the focused surveys. However, it should be noted that six burrowing owls were observed approximately 70 feet outside the survey area to the east (i.e., approximately 570 feet east of the project site). These burrowing owls occupied three burrows outside the limits of the survey area and were found on the slopes of several remnant building pads. Because of the proximity of these owls to the survey area, it is possible that they may venture into the survey area or project site while foraging or may at some point in the future occupy the site, which had a limited number of suitable burrowing owl burrows at the time of the 2016 focused surveys. Therefore, it is determined that burrowing owls have a moderate potential of occurring on the project site. It should be noted that the suitable on-site burrows identified during the 2016 focused surveys would likely be directly affected by future water flows following project implementation, and that three of the burrows were in close proximity to (i.e., within a few hundred feet of) the proposed construction access road.

Measure BIO-5 would require a pre-construction clearance survey for burrowing owls be conducted within 30 days of the start of any ground-disturbing activities to ensure burrowing owls remain absent from the survey area.

Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard

According to the Biological Assessment, the project would result in direct and indirect effects to Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard. With regards to direct effects, the project would result in the temporary loss of 13.24 acres and the permanent loss of 8.98 acres of Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard core habitat. Temporary losses are primarily related to earthen grading improvements, but permanent losses are related to placement of concrete and riprap. Construction activity may result in the temporary or permanent displacement of individual lizards, injury or mortality of lizards that are either above the surface or subsurface or that otherwise are unable to escape, and/or increased stress to individual lizards. Lizards that are displaced from the area may encounter increased stress from being in a new environment, increased competition with other lizards, or increased risk of predation, any of which may result in injury or mortality.

With regards to indirect effects, the use of heavy equipment and construction vehicles within the action area may result in the spread of non-native weed species into and/or throughout the action area, either from areas outside or from one part of the action area to another. If these species become established or spread enough within the action area, they can potentially result in the loss of the active dune habitat if their roots stabilize the soil and prevent natural aeolian processes from occurring. The degradation and eventual loss of the active dune or “blowsand” habitat can result in additional loss of habitat for Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard within the action area. Contrarily, construction of the project would result in increased fluvial sand transport into the action area and into active sand fields in the northern part of Cathedral City. The restored flow channel would also re-establish a movement corridor for wildlife under the UPRR tracks, connecting wildlife habitats above and below the UPRR Bridge and I-10. Although the stormwater improvements would result in temporary impacts during construction and minor losses of the natural plant communities in the area, the overall benefits of restoring flows and the fluvial transport of sand in the area would have superior positive impacts to habitat, natural communities, biological corridors, and essential ecological processes (i.e., sand transport). Ultimately the project may result in increased local distribution of Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and increased quality of blowsand habitat because of improved fluvial sand transport in the area.

Additionally, Measures BIO-10 through BIO-16 are specific to reducing project impacts related to Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and the species' modeled, critical, or occupied habitat within the action area.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater improvements would not be constructed. There would be no biological resource impacts from the placement of the concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection. In absence of the proposed project, however, CVWD would not be able to reduce floodplain impacts for tributary areas to the project site. This would be considered a negative impact of the No Action Alternative. In addition, biological benefits related to wildlife connectivity and sand transport would not occur under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation Measures

The following measures are intended as avoidance, minimization, or mitigation to offset or reduce the potential impacts to the Coachella Valley milk-vetch, burrowing owl, and other special status species with potential to occur in the vicinity. The CVWD Project Engineer, Contractor, CVWD Environmental Specialist and/or Biological Monitor, and CVWD Inspector shall ensure implementation of all biological mitigation measures.

BIO-1 Invasive Weeds. Contractor shall ensure activities that may result in sand stabilization (e.g., excessive driving by vehicles or equipment) be minimized and all construction equipment be thoroughly cleaned of all weed seeds prior to entering the site boundaries to reduce the potential for transmission of invasive weed seeds.

BIO-2 Habitat Preservation. Following project completion, CVWD shall inspect the site for invasive weed species within the project site to help prevent habitat degradation and spread of invasive plants.

BIO-3 Conservation Easement. CVWD shall facilitate a conservation easement or deed title transfer to CVCC upon 42 acres of land that are under private ownership to be acquired by CVWD within the existing Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area (WFCA) of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) and adjacent to the project site. Twenty-one point ninety-eight of the 42 acres shall be used to offset the 21.98 acres of impacts to land within City of Cathedral City's portion of the WFCA from implementation of the project, resulting in a net increase of 20.02 acres of land being added to the conservation area. Long-term operations and maintenance activities will be conducted in accordance with CVWD's operations and maintenance manual (Appendix D) for facilities in conservation areas.

BIO-4 Nesting Birds. Pursuant to the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code, removal of any trees, shrubs, or any other potential nesting habitat shall be conducted outside the avian nesting season. The nesting season generally extends from January 15 through August 31 but can vary slightly from year to year based on seasonal weather conditions. A pre-construction clearance survey for nesting birds shall be conducted within three days of the start of any ground-disturbing activities to ensure no nesting birds will be disturbed during construction. The biologist conducting the clearance survey shall document a negative survey with a brief letter report indicating no impacts to active avian nests will occur. If an active avian nest is

discovered during the pre-construction clearance survey, construction activities shall stay outside of a 300-foot buffer around the active nest. For raptor species, this buffer is expanded to 500 feet. The Biological Monitor shall be present to delineate the boundaries of the buffer area and to monitor the active nest to ensure that nesting behavior is not adversely affected by the construction activity. Once the young have fledged and left the nest, or the nest otherwise becomes inactive under natural conditions, normal construction activities can occur.

BIO-5 Burrowing Owl Survey. A pre-construction clearance survey for burrowing owl(s) shall be conducted within 30 days of the start of any ground-disturbing activities to ensure burrowing owls remain absent from the survey area. Should burrowing owl(s) be found within the project footprint during the pre-construction clearance survey, CDFW shall be contacted for consultation prior to clearing and grubbing.

If burrowing owl(s) are found to occupy the project site at the time of the pre-construction clearance survey, a relocation plan shall be written, consistent with LUPA-BIO-IFS-12, -13, and -14, approved by BLM and CDFW, and implemented prior to site development. Determination of the appropriate method of relocation, such as eviction/passive relocation or active relocation, shall be based on the specific site conditions (e.g., distance to nearest suitable habitat and presence of burrows within that habitat) in coordination with BLM and CDFW. Active relocation and eviction/passive relocation require the preservation and maintenance of suitable burrowing owl habitat determined through coordination with BLM/CDFW.

BIO-6 A Qualified Biologist shall conduct pre-construction focused surveys on BLM Land for Coachella Valley milk-vetch within the project footprint during the blooming season (generally February through May) prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. Areas where the plant is found shall be marked for avoidance as Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Qualified Biologists shall be present throughout construction and decommission activities. The name and qualifications of the Qualified Biologist(s) shall be submitted to the BLM and USFWS for approval at least 30 days prior to project activities in Coachella Valley milk-vetch designated critical habitat.

BIO-7 Coachella Valley milk-vetch locations identified during the pre-construction surveys shall be delineated on the ground and on aerial photographs, incorporated into the construction management plans, and avoided to the maximum extent possible. Where avoidance is not possible, the Applicant shall follow methods described in the Plant Salvage and Restoration Plan (Measure BIO-8) to ensure seeds are salvaged appropriately and re-distributed within the action area.

BIO-8 A Plant Salvage and Restoration Plan (Restoration Plan) on BLM lands shall be submitted to the BLM and USFWS for approval in the areas of Coachella Valley milk-vetch critical habitat and Coachella Valley milk-vetch modeled habitat within the action area. The Restoration Plan shall describe topsoil salvage, recontouring and topsoil placement, and weeding maintenance for 5 years, or another period of time approved by the BLM and USFWS to ensure approximately 60 percent replacement of the affected Coachella Valley milk-vetch critical habitat and Coachella Valley milk-vetch modeled habitat. The Restoration Plan shall include seed collection and storage at an appropriate facility (e.g., Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden), reseeding in appropriate existing or restored habitat, stockpile and reapplication of topsoil,

or other similar activities. The Restoration Plan shall be submitted to the BLM and USFWS for approval 30 days prior.

BIO-9 Prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities, the Applicant shall designate an authorized biologist who will be responsible for overseeing compliance with the conservation measures outlined in this Initial Study/Environmental Assessment. The authorized biologist shall conduct a Worker Environmental Awareness Training prior to construction activities. The authorized biologist shall be available as needed for work-related activities and shall have the authority to halt work activities that are not in compliance with the conservation measures.

BIO-10 Prior to the start of construction on BLM land, exclusion fencing shall be installed along the perimeter of the work area and access route and maintained to keep Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizards from entering work areas. Exclusion fencing shall consist of a material suitable to withstand high winds, sun, and heat. The fence shall be buried 12 inches below the sand surface and extend above ground a minimum of 24 inches. Fencing shall be installed per manufacturer specifications. If the authorized biologist observes a Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard within the project area during fence installation, the lizard shall be allowed to voluntarily exit the project area. If a lizard is found within the fenced project area during construction, the authorized biologist shall ensure that construction equipment and personnel avoid the lizard. All workers shall strictly limit activities and vehicles to the designated work areas within the project footprint. Once project activities have concluded, the fencing shall be removed.

BIO-11 If any Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizards are captured within the project footprint, the lizards shall be released immediately outside the project footprint. Lizards shall be released in the shade of a shrub. No lizards shall be held in captivity or in transport for longer than 10 minutes after their initial capture within an enclosed construction area. If necessary, lizards shall be transported in clean, white, plastic 5-gallon buckets.

BIO-12 All work area boundaries associated with temporary and permanent disturbances shall be conspicuously staked, flagged, or marked to minimize surface disturbance activities. All workers shall strictly limit activities and vehicles to the designated work areas.

BIO-13 Should any Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizards be injured or killed, an authorized biologist shall be contacted immediately to investigate the incident. The authorized biologist shall be responsible for reporting the incident (via fax or email) to the USFWS within 24 hours of the incident.

BIO-14 Perennial vegetation such as creosote bush shall be avoided to the extent feasible.

BIO-15 Staging areas shall be located outside of Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard habitat (modeled, critical, or occupied habitat) on BLM lands.

BIO-16 All auger holes, trenches, pits, or other steep-sided excavations that may pose a hazard to Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizards shall be securely fenced or covered when unattended to prevent accidental death or injury.

CVMSHCP Section 4.4, Required Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

Covered Riparian Bird Species. This measure does not apply to single-family residences and any non-commercial accessory uses and structures including but not limited to second units on an existing legal lot. Riparian Habitat here refers to the following natural communities: southern arroyo willow riparian forest, Sonoran cottonwood-willow riparian forest, desert fan palm oasis woodland, and southern sycamore-alder riparian woodland in the Cabazon, Stubbe and Cottonwood Canyons, Whitewater Canyon, Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon, Thousand Palms, Indio Hills Palms, Joshua Tree National Park, Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains, Dos Palmas, Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel and Delta, and Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Areas. Covered Activities, including O&M of facilities and construction of permitted new projects, in riparian Habitat will be conducted to the maximum extent Feasible outside of the March 15 – September 15 nesting season for least Bell's vireo, and the May 1 – September 15 nesting season for southwestern willow flycatcher, summer tanager, yellow warbler, and yellow-breasted chat. If Covered Activities must occur during the nesting season, surveys shall be conducted to determine if any active nests are present. If active nests are identified, the Covered Activity shall not be conducted within 200 feet of an active nest. If surveys conducted during the nesting season document that Covered nesting riparian bird Species are not present, the Covered Activity may proceed.

Fluvial Sand Transport. Activities, including O&M of facilities and construction of permitted new projects, in fluvial sand transport areas in the Cabazon, Stubbe and Cottonwood Canyons, Snow Creek/Windy Point, Whitewater Canyon, Whitewater Floodplain, Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon, Mission Creek/Morongo Wash, Willow Hole, Long Canyon, Edom Hill, Thousand Palms, West Deception Canyon, and Indio Hills/Joshua Tree National Park Linkage Conservation Areas will be conducted in a manner to maintain the fluvial sand transport capacity of the system.

Le Conte's Thrasher. This measure does not apply to single-family residences and any non-commercial accessory uses and structures including but not limited to second units on an existing legal lot, or to O&M of Covered Activities. In modeled Le Conte's thrasher Habitat in all the Conservation Areas, during the nesting season, January 15 - June 15, prior to the start of construction activities, surveys will be conducted by an Acceptable Biologist on the construction site and within 500 feet of the construction site, or to the property boundary if less than 500 feet. If nesting Le Conte's thrashers are found, a 500-foot buffer, or to the property boundary if less than 500 feet, will be established around the nest site. The buffer will be staked and flagged. No construction will be permitted within the buffer during the breeding season of January 15 - June 15 or until the young have fledged.

Residual Impact: Residual effects include the permanent loss of 8.56 acres of land and temporary loss of 13.42 acres (total of 21.98 acres) within the WFCA. Implementation of the recommended measures would assure that potential impacts to biological resources are reduced to less than significant levels. In addition, through consultation with CVCC it was determined that CVWD would place a conservation easement upon 42 acres of land that are under private ownership to be acquired by CVWD within the existing WFCA and adjacent to the project site. Twenty-one point ninety-eight of the 42 acres would be used to offset the 21.98 acres of impacts to land within City of Cathedral City's portion of the WFCA from implementation of the project, resulting in a net increase of 20.02 acres of land being added to the conservation area.

Cumulative Impact: Development of cumulative projects could result in direct take of special-status species, special-status habitat conversion, and/or construction and post-construction disturbances to natural communities, migratory corridors, or linkages, as well as other biological resources. As with this project, however, all future cumulative development would undergo environmental review on a project-

by-project basis to evaluate potential impacts to biological resources and ensure compliance with the established regulatory framework. Cumulative impacts to biological resources would be mitigated on a project-by-project basis. Implementation of the recommended measures would reduce potential impacts to biological recourses within the project limits. Additionally, the project would provide a benefit to wildlife movement and sand habitat. Specifically, construction of the project would result in increased fluvial sand transport into the action area and into active sand fields in the northern part of Cathedral City. The restored flow channel would also re-establish a movement corridor for wildlife under the UPRR tracks, connecting wildlife habitats above and below the UPRR Bridge and I-10. Although the stormwater improvements would result in temporary impacts during construction and minor losses of the natural plant communities in the area, the overall benefits of restoring flows and the fluvial transport of sand in the area would have superior positive impacts to habitat, natural communities, biological corridors, and essential ecological processes (i.e., sand transport). Thus, project implementation would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts to biological resources.

6.5 CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

This cultural resources analysis is based on the *Cultural Resources Assessment Report for the North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California* (Cultural Resources Report) and the *Paleontological Resources Assessment Report for the North Cathedral City Improvements Project, Phase I, City of Cathedral City, Riverside County, California* (Paleontological Resources Report) prepared by Cogstone, dated December 2016 (refer to Appendix C, *Cultural and Paleontological Resources Assessment and AB 52 Letters*).

The BLM Cultural Staff determined that the State Protocol Agreement (2019) would be utilized to meet the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for this undertaking. The BLM defined the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for direct and indirect effects to historic properties and cultural resources identification efforts via Stipulation 5.2 of the State Protocol Agreement (2019). The direct APE totals 26.44 acres. The BLM defined the indirect APE to be a one-mile buffer around the Direct APE.

The Class I records search and literature review identified two previous studies within the Direct APE and 11 within the indirect APE. This record search also identified three previously recorded cultural resources; a Rock Cairn, the Union Pacific Railroad/Southern Pacific Railroad, and the former residence of Mr. Robert Darlings Davenport. The Class III archaeological inventory was negative for cultural resources within the APE excepting the railroad and railroad bridge. The entire APE is located on the unconsolidated sandy sediments from the Morongo washes. Intact subsurface resources are not anticipated.

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

Archaeological and Historical Resources

Project implementation would include concrete channel lining, bridge improvements, earthen channel grading, and slope protection. The Cultural Resources Report (provided as Appendix C) concluded that construction of the project is not expected to result in any impacts on cultural resources.

The UPRR, a cultural resource recorded within the project area, CA-RIV-6381H (P-33-009498), would not be impacted from project implementation. The rail bridge was constructed within the project area in 2006; thus, all components associated with the bridge are not historic. As such, potential impacts to a historic resource would be less than significant in this regard.

No cemeteries or human remains are known to occur on the project site or in the immediate vicinity. No prehistoric tribal cultural resources are documented within the project area. The project area is located on unconsolidated sandy sediments from the Morongo washes; thus, intact subsurface resources are not anticipated. In addition, because the proposed action would not have adverse effects on cultural resources, including Federally listed sites and sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is not warranted.

As of July 1, 2015, California Assembly Bill 52 of 2014 (AB 52) was enacted and expands CEQA by defining a new resource category: "tribal cultural resources." AB 52 establishes that "A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment" (Public Resources Code Section 21084.2). It further states the lead agency shall establish measures to avoid impacts that would alter the significant characteristics of a tribal cultural resource, when feasible (Public Resources Code Section 21084.3).

AB 52 establishes a formal project consultation process for California Native American tribes and lead agencies regarding tribal cultural resources, referred to as government-to-government consultation. Per Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1(b), the AB 52 consultation process must begin prior to release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report. Native American tribes to be included in the formal consultation process are those that have requested notice of projects proposed within the jurisdiction of the lead agency. AB 52 provides dedicated timeframes for inquires and responses regarding consultation and information sharing. AB 52 also provides for confidential information sharing between the governments involved for a meaningful consultation process.

In June 2016, CVWD distributed via certified mail AB 52 consultation letters for the proposed project, including project information, map, and contact information, to each of the seven Native American tribes previously requesting to consult on CVWD projects (a copy of the letters can be found in Appendix C, *Cultural and Paleontological Resources Assessment and AB 52 Letters*). The tribal governments that were provided an AB 52 consultation letter include the following list of recipients:

- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
- Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians

Under AB 52, Native American tribes have 30 days to respond and request further project information and request formal consultation. To date, one tribal government provided response indicating the project site is located within a known Traditional Use Area. As a result of AB 52 efforts, and to avoid a potential impact to tribal cultural resources, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requested the presence of an approved Native American Cultural Resources Monitor. As such, the project would provide cultural monitoring during earthwork activities associated with construction (Measure CR-1).

As with any project requiring earthwork, the potential exists for unknown cultural resource materials to be encountered during project construction activities. In the unlikely event resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all construction work must be halted in the vicinity of the discovery until a qualified archaeologist can visit the site of discovery and assess the significance of the cultural resource. In addition, should human remains be uncovered during project construction on Federal lands, the following protocol must be followed:

> *The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), as implemented by 43 CFR Sections 10.4–10.6, presents the procedures for the treatment of human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony located on Federal land. As the lead Federal agency on the project, BLM should be notified immediately. BLM will be responsible for government-to-government consultation with affected Native American tribes concerning all potential NAGPRA issues. If human remains are encountered during project construction in a location other than a dedicated cemetery on non-Federal lands, the steps and procedures specified in Health and Safety Code §7050.5, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(d), and Public Resources Code §5097.98 must be implemented.*

Paleontological Resources

The project area is mapped as Holocene alluvial sediments, which are too young to contain fossils. No fossil localities are known within a one-mile radius of the project area, and no fossils are known within the boundaries of Cathedral City. Further, no fossils were observed during the survey. The vertical depth of disturbance is estimated at 12.5 feet, too shallow to encounter paleontological resources. Thus, it is not anticipated that paleontological resources would be encountered during ground disturbance. In the unlikely event resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all construction work must be halted in the vicinity of the discovery until a qualified paleontologist can visit the site of discovery and assess the significance of the paleontological resource.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the concrete channel lining, bridge improvements, earthen channel grading, and slope protection would not be constructed. No earth-moving activities would be required, and no potential impact to cultural resources would occur.

Mitigation Measures

CR-1 Native American Cultural Resources Monitor. CVWD shall provide tribal monitoring during earthwork activities associated with construction of the project. If tribal or cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area would be halted and a qualified archaeologist or tribal expert would be contacted within 24-hours to evaluate the find and develop a plan for treatment of the discovery/archaeological site.

Residual Impact: In the event a discovery is made, CR-1 is intended to reduce or avoid a potential impact to a tribal or cultural resource. With adherence to this mitigation, no residual impact would occur.

Cumulative Impact: The project would not directly impact known cultural resources, and therefore, is not expected to have a significant effect on known cultural or tribal cultural resources when combined with other proposed projects in the vicinity.

6.6 GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The site does not lie within a currently delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, and the possibility for a surface rupture is considered low to none. There are, however, several fault lines in the vicinity of the project site that have the ability to cause ground-shaking. The nearest mapped fault is the San Andreas Fault, which is approximately 1.6 miles north of the site.

Project implementation would involve the placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection. Given the proximity of the project site to active and potentially active faults, the project may be subjected to strong ground-shaking and could sustain damage in the event of a major earthquake. Further, due to the relatively flat site, the project would not be susceptible to seismically induced landslides. According to the Cathedral City General Plan, the potential for liquefaction at the project site and in the vicinity is considered low (due to the depth of groundwater beneath the site exceeding 100 feet). The project site, however, has high susceptibility to seismically induced settlement. As such, the project is required to meet State, County, and local standards for construction.

The project site is made up of alluvial and aeolian sediments. Thus, the site has the potential for static settlement. The construction phase of the project would require the application of water to facilitate soil compaction. Additionally, adherence to best management practices pertaining to the application of water to facilitate soil compaction would reduce potential static settlement impacts. Given the relatively minor amount of clay present in soils on-site and the nature of the project (stormwater improvements), expansive soils are not considered a significant hazard.

According to the Cathedral City General Plan, the project site has a very severe wind erosion hazard potential. Further, as the project site is within the Morongo Wash area, erosion impact due to water is also likely. Grading and earthwork activities associated with project construction activities would expose soils to potential short-term erosion by wind and water. Further, the project would require a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in conformance with NPDES permits. The SWPPP would identify specific erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) that would be implemented to protect stormwater runoff during construction activities. Compliance with the applicable NPDES water quality requirements would reduce impacts related to substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil to a less than significant level.

The project site may have commercially viable sources of sand and gravel resources on-site. The 26.44-acre site, however, is designated by the Cathedral City General Plan as Open Space-Water (OS-W) and is not currently mined for mineral resources. The entire region within Section 32 of Township 3 South, Range 5 East, of the San Bernardino Base and Meridian, is a combination of land which is either entirely owned by the U.S. Government and administered by the BLM and/or on land where the subsurface mineral rights are owned by the U.S. Government and administered by the BLM, or on land with a right-of-way for I-10. Except for the areas covered by I-10, these areas are open to public mineral exploration, and mineral disposal under competitive and non-competitive sales of sand, gravel, rocks and other construction materials by the BLM. Development of this area with various hardscape would thus result in a loss of up to 26.44 acres of potential mineral resources.

No septic systems or alternative wastewater disposal systems are planned, and no adverse impacts would occur.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater drainage improvements would not be constructed. This alternative would result in no impacts to geology, soils, and mineral sources.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: Development of the project would provide stormwater drainage improvements and flood protection. Development in California is required to be designed and constructed in compliance with state, county and local codes with the intent to protect significant damage during seismic events; therefore, the project would not contribute to a cumulative impact to geology and soils.

The project would not directly or indirectly interfere with the extraction of aggregate materials. When evaluated with other projects in the area, the project would have a less than significant cumulative effect on mineral resources.

6.7 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

Project implementation involves the placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection (refer to Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 4). The improvements would safely and reliably convey flows beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts to downstream areas, including the Thousand Palms planning unit.

As noted above, the project site is 26.44 acres in size, and thus would disturb more than 1.0 acre of soil. Thus, CVWD requires the preparation of a SWPPP in conformance with NPDES permits prior to construction. The SWPPP includes BMPs to assure that storm flows leaving the site during and after construction are not polluted and do not contain silt or other materials. These standard requirements assure the project's potential direct and indirect impacts to water quality from runoff are less than significant.

Most domestic water delivered in the Coachella Valley is extracted from subsurface water aquifers, which are replenished by natural groundwater recharge and supplemented with imported supplies of Colorado River water. The amount of supplemental water needed to replenish the aquifer for existing and future demands has been analyzed and incorporated as part of the Coachella Valley Water Management Plan (CVWMP), dated 2012. To ensure current and future water demands can be met, the CVWMP takes into consideration many variables including, but not limited to, groundwater recharge, increasing surface water supplies, and water conservation programs. The project would require the application of water to facilitate soil compaction and to minimize fugitive dust emissions; however, the water use would be minimal and would not have an adverse impact on groundwater supply. Further, BMPs would be implemented to assure groundwater is not contaminated.

The project would include concrete channel lining approximately 500 feet upstream of the bridge and approximately 300 feet downstream of the bridge. Concrete slope projection would be placed at the east overbank of the channel and extend approximately 4,800 linear feet. Thus, project implementation would

increase impervious surface area at the project site and potentially impact groundwater recharge. The increase in impervious surface area, however, is nominal and would not substantially impact groundwater recharge on-site. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

As stated, the project would provide regional stormwater improvements that would convey stormwater flows from north of the UPRR tracks in a southerly direction to the WWRSC. The project proposes to alter the existing drainage pattern of the area to provide flood protection and wildlife movement in the project area through sediment removal (removing the existing wildlife impediment through the project site). These improvements could result in substantial erosion or siltation. As part of the operations and maintenance of the project, sediment would be cleared (via dozer/tractor/backhoe or similar equipment) on an as-needed basis to maintain the operational characteristics of the UPRR bridge. Maintenance access would be provided from north and south of the UPRR bridge. On the south, access would occur via Verona Road and across the levee and into the channel via a maintenance access ramp. On the north, access would occur via Gene Autry Trail to Salvia Road, which extends to the project site.

Construction of the project would require disturbance activities within areas of both RWQCB and CDFW jurisdictional waters. Areas of project impact are illustrated on Exhibit 7, *Jurisdictional Waters*. Based on the Jurisdictional Delineation Report (provided in Appendix B, *Equivalency Analysis/Concurrence Letter, Habitat Assessment, Jurisdictional Delineation Report, Biological Resources Technical Report, and Biological Assessment*), the project site does not contain any riparian habitat, wetlands, vernal pools, marshes, or coastal habitats. No areas of Federal jurisdiction (the Army Corps of Engineers) apply to the project site. Morongo Wash, however, exhibits evidence of an ordinary high-water mark and is considered to be an isolated feature with no connection to downstream waters. Thus, approximately 17.64 acres of Morongo Wash are subject to Colorado River Basin RWQCB jurisdiction, and the project would result impacts to 1.19 acres of this RWQCB jurisdiction. Morongo Wash is also considered a CDFW jurisdictional streambed. Approximately 21.22 acres of CDFW jurisdictional streambed and associated vegetation is located within the project site, with the project impacting 1.19 acres of this CDFW jurisdiction. Project activities within these areas are subject to jurisdiction and approval of the Colorado River Basin RWQCB pursuant to CWA Section 401 and CDFW Inland Deserts Region pursuant to Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code.

The California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act gives the State very broad authority to regulate waters of the State, which are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters. The Porter-Cologne Act has become an important tool in the post Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC)[18] and Rapanos[19] regulatory environment, with respect to the State's authority over isolated and insignificant waters. Generally, any person proposing to discharge waste into a water body that could affect its water quality must file a Report of Waste Discharge in the event there is no Section 404/401 nexus. Although "waste" is partially defined as any waste substance associated with human habitation, the RWQCB also interprets this to include fill discharged into water bodies. Measure HWQ-1 would be implemented to require regulatory approvals from the Colorado River Basin RWQCB Report of Waste Discharge (or reference of other approval).

California Fish and Game Code Sections 1600-1616 establishes a fee-based process to ensure that projects conducted in and around lakes, rivers, or streams do not adversely impact fish and wildlife resources, or,

[18] Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 531 U.S. 159 (2001).

[19] Rapanos v. United States, 547 U.S. 715 (2006).

when adverse impacts cannot be avoided, ensures that adequate mitigation and/or compensation is provided. Fish and Game Code Section 1602 requires any person, state, or local governmental agency or public utility to notify CDFW before beginning any activity that would do one or more of the following:

1) Substantially obstruct or divert the natural flow of a river, stream, or lake

2) Substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or bank of a river, stream, or lake

3) Deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it can pass into a river, stream, or lake

Fish and Game Code Section 1602 applies to all perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, and lakes in the State, as defined in the *Mapping Episodic Stream Activity (MESA) Field Guide* (2014). Measure HWQ-2 would be implemented to require regulatory approvals from the CDFW Section 1602 SAA. Impacts to jurisdictional waters of the State would be mitigated according to existing agency requirements.

Like construction activities, long-term operational maintenance activities involving sediment removal would also require regulatory approvals from the Colorado River Basin RWQCB (Report of Waste Discharge) (HWQ-1) and CDFW Section 1602 SAA (HWQ-2). Thus, potential impacts regarding erosion or siltation would be less than significant.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the proposed stormwater improvements would not be constructed and no impacts to hydrology or water quality would occur. However, existing sediment would continue to block existing flows, existing flooding conditions would continue, and existing downstream residents would not adequately be protected from 100-year stormwater flows.

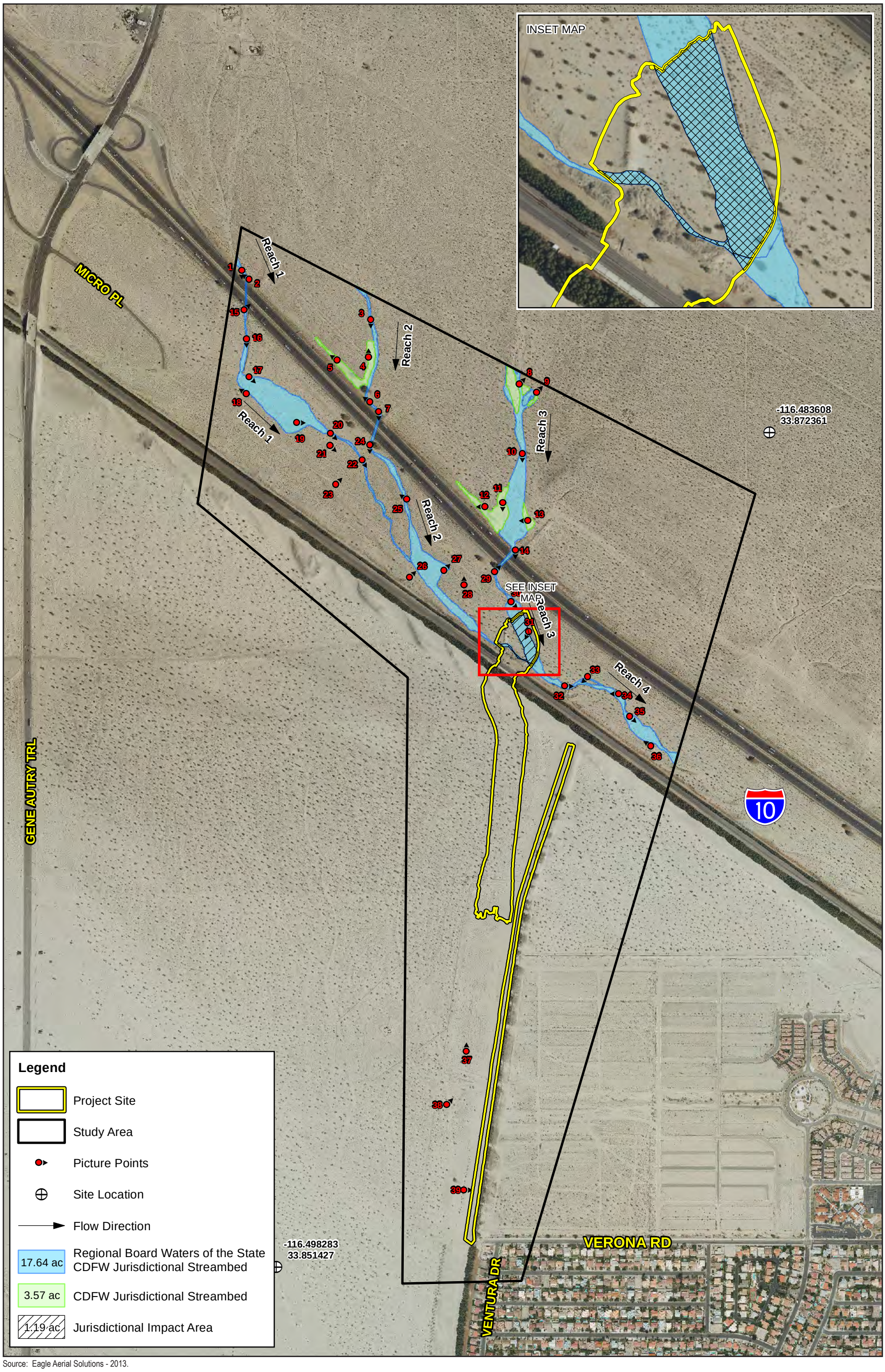
Mitigation Measures

HWQ-1 RWQCB Jurisdictional Waters. Prior to the start of construction and prior to initiation of operational routine maintenance, CVWD shall obtain a Colorado River Basin RWQCB Report of Waste Discharge approval (or reference of other approval).

HWQ-2 CDFW Jurisdictional Waters. Prior to the start of construction and prior to initiation of operational routine maintenance, CVWD shall obtain a CDFW Inland Deserts Region Section 1602 SAA pursuant to Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: The project would not create a cumulatively significant impact to stormwater runoff or have a significant adverse impact on local or regional groundwater or flood control capabilities when combined with other projects in the vicinity. Further, implementation of planned CVWD flood projects within the North Cathedral and Thousand Palms planning units would further reduce overall flooding and erosion impacts currently experienced in these floodplains. The project would not violate water quality standards or discharge requirements. The project would not generate a significant long-term demand for water. The project would not have an adverse direct effect on CVWD's groundwater replenishment facilities. The amount of water required to replenish the aquifer is analyzed for Coachella Valley as part of the CVWMP.



Source: Eagle Aerial Solutions - 2013.

NOT TO SCALE

Michael Baker INTERNATIONAL

08/18 I JN 144905

NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT
INITIAL STUDY / MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Jurisdictional Waters

Exhibit 7

6.8 NOISE

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

It is difficult to specify noise levels that are generally acceptable to everyone; what is annoying to one person may be unnoticed by another. Standards may be based on documented complaints in response to documented noise levels or based on studies of the ability of people to sleep, talk, or work under various noise conditions. All such studies, however, recognize that individual responses vary considerably. Standards usually address the needs of much of the general population.

The City's Municipal Code includes some regulations controlling unnecessary, excessive, and annoying noise within the City. As outlined in the Municipal Code, maximum noise levels are based on land use.

Short-Term Noise Impacts

Construction activities generally are temporary and have a short duration, resulting in periodic increases in the ambient noise environment. Construction of the project would occur over approximately nine months. Construction activities would include grading, bridge improvements and slope protection, and paving. Groundborne noise and other types of construction-related noise impacts typically occur during the initial demolition and earthwork phases. These phases of construction have the potential to create the highest levels of noise; however, these are generally the shortest of all construction phases. Typical noise levels generated by construction equipment are shown in Table 11, *Maximum Noise Levels Generated by Construction Equipment*.

Table 11
Maximum Noise Levels Generated by Construction Equipment

Type of Equipment	Acoustical Use Factor[1]	L_{max} at 50 Feet (dBA)
Concrete Saw	20	90
Concrete Mixer Truck	40	79
Backhoe	40	78
Dozer	40	82
Excavator	40	81
Forklift	40	78
Paver	50	77
Roller	20	80
Tractor	40	84
Water Truck	40	80
Grader	40	85
General Industrial Equipment	50	85

Note:
1. Acoustical Use Factor (percent): Estimates the fraction of time each piece of construction equipment is operating at full power (i.e., its loudest condition) during a construction operation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration, *Roadway Construction Noise Model (FHWA-HEP-05-054)*, January 2006.

Operating cycles for these types of construction equipment may involve one or two minutes of full power operation followed by three to four minutes at lower power settings. Other primary sources of acoustical disturbance would be due to random incidents, which would last less than one minute (such as dropping large pieces of equipment or the hydraulic movement of machinery lifts).

Sensitive uses surrounding the project site include residential uses along Ventura Drive (approximately 100 feet) to the project site. The nearest residential unit is approximately 95 feet from proposed improvements. These sensitive uses may be exposed to elevated noise levels during project construction. The City's Municipal Code does not establish quantitative construction noise standards. Instead, the Municipal Code has established allowable hours of construction (7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and at no time on Sundays and holidays from October 1 through April 30; and 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and at no time on Sundays and holidays from May 1 through September 30) to which the project would adhere. Thus, construction activities would be conducted during allowable daytime hours, per the City's Municipal Code.

Temporary increases in noise along the project limits during the construction period would be minimized with implementation of the noise BMPs provided below. These BMPs are integrated into the project design and are intended to minimize the temporary, construction-related noise impacts. CVWD and the construction contractor would prepare a noise plan (which would be enforced through Measure N-1) to include the following BMPs:

1. All internal combustion equipment operating at the project site would be fitted with properly operating mufflers and air intake silencers consistent with manufacturers' standards.

2. All stationary construction equipment (e.g., generators and compressors) would be located as far away from existing homes and other sensitive receptors as possible.

3. Equipment staging would be in areas that create the greatest distance practicable between construction-related noise sources and sensitive receptors.

4. Haul truck deliveries and exports would be limited to the same hours specified for the operation of construction equipment and would utilize routes that limit exposure to sensitive receptors.

5. Construction activities would be limited to the least sensitive times of the day, Monday through Friday, and generally between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., excepting emergencies and other special circumstances.

6. Stockpiling and vehicle staging areas would be located as far as practicable from homes and other noise sensitive receptors during construction activities.

These measures would ensure construction noise is consistent with the levels in Table 11. Further, as discussed in Section 6.7, *Noise*, approximately 55 trains pass through the City daily, resulting in mobile train noise levels of approximately 70 dBA at a distance of 50 feet during a pass-by. Thus, with implementation of recommended measures, construction noise impacts would be less than significant.

Project construction can generate varying degrees of groundborne vibration, depending on the construction procedure and the construction equipment used. Operation of construction equipment generates vibrations that spread through the ground and diminish in amplitude with distance from the source. The effect on buildings located in the vicinity of the construction site often varies depending on soil type, ground strata, and construction characteristics of the receiver building(s). The results from vibration can range from no perceptible effects at the lowest vibration levels, to low rumbling sounds and perceptible vibration at moderate levels, to slight damage (e.g., cracking of paint, drywall, and windows associated with buildings) at the highest levels. Groundborne vibrations from construction activities rarely reach levels that damage structures.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has published standard vibration velocities for construction equipment operations. In general, the FTA architectural damage criterion for continuous vibrations (i.e., 0.20 inch/second) appears to be conservative. The types of construction vibration impact include human annoyance and building damage. Human annoyance occurs when construction vibration rises significantly above the threshold of human perception for extended periods of time. Building damage can be cosmetic or structural. Typical vibration produced by construction equipment is provided in Table 12, *Typical Vibration Levels for Construction Equipment*.

Groundborne vibration decreases rapidly with distance. As indicated in Table 12, based on the FTA data, vibration velocities from typical heavy construction equipment operations that would be used during project construction range from 0.003 to 0.089 inch-per-second peak particle velocity (PPV) at 25 feet from the source of activity. The nearest sensitive receptors (residential uses) are located approximately 75 feet southeast of the project site. As noted in Table 12, vibration at 50 feet would range from 0.001 to 0.031 PPV. Regarding the project, groundborne vibration would be generated primarily during grading activities on-site and off-site haul-truck travel. Primary equipment for construction phases includes graders, tractors, trucks, dozers, loaders, scrapers, and backhoes. Pile driving equipment is not required. In addition, it should be noted that approximately 55 locomotive-powered trains pass by the project site each day (along the UPRR), which also contribute to the ambient vibration typically experienced in the area. A locomotive-powered train pass-by can result in vibration levels up to 85 vibration velocity levels in decibels (VdB) (or 0.009 PPV) at 50 feet.[20] Therefore, vibration from construction activities experienced at the nearest sensitive receptors (residences to the southeast) would be expected to be below the 0.20 inch-per-second PPV significance threshold. Thus, a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Table 12
Typical Vibration Levels for Construction Equipment

Equipment	Approximate peak particle velocity at 25 feet (inches/second)	Approximate peak particle velocity at 50 feet (inches/second)
Large bulldozer	0.089	0.031
Loaded trucks	0.076	0.027
Small bulldozer	0.003	0.001
Jackhammer	0.035	0.012

Notes:
1. Federal Transit Administration, *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Guidelines*, May 2006. Table 12-2.
2. Calculated using the following formula:
   $PPV_{equip} = PPV_{ref} \times (25/D)^{1.5}$

where: PPV (equip) = the peak particle velocity in in/sec of the equipment adjusted for the distance
PPV (ref) = the reference vibration level in in/sec from Table 12-2 of the FTA *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Guidelines*
D = the distance from the equipment to the receiver

Long-Term Operational Noise Impacts

Operational activities would include as-needed emergency maintenance following a large storm event to clear sediment within the project area. The emergency maintenance activities, however, would be treated similarly to construction activities in that the emergency maintenance activities would be temporary in nature and only occur within the City's allowable hours for construction activities. As such, project implementation would not increase noise within the project area, nor would it generate groundborne

[20] Federal Transit Administration, *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual*, September 2018.

vibration that would exceed the 0.20 inch-per-second PPV significance threshold. The project involves stormwater improvements and does not propose roadway improvements or involve the operation of railroads. No impacts to the UPRR alignment or capacity would result, and trains would continue to operate during the construction process as they typically do. The project would not generate any stationary noise impacts. Thus, a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

As stated, the project does not propose roadway improvements. Although the project would require operational activities that would include as-needed emergency visits to the site, the project would not attract or generate any new vehicular trips. Future stormwater improvements generated by the project would not result in additional traffic on adjacent roadways; therefore, there would be no vehicular noise increases in the vicinity of existing land uses. Thus, a less than impact would occur in this regard.

The Palm Springs International Airport is located approximately 1.45 miles southwest of the project site. The project site is located within Zone E of the airport influence area, as shown on Map PS-1, *Compatibility Map*, of the *Riverside County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan*. Project implementation would not alter the existing land use of the site and would not expose people in the project area to excessive noise levels. Thus, no impact would occur.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater improvements would not be constructed. No noise effects would occur.

Mitigation Measures

N-1 The construction contractor shall prepare a Noise Plan, to be approved by the CVWD Project Engineer, prior to grading activities. The Noise Plan shall include the following BMPs. The CVWD shall verify that these BMPs are included on project plans and specifications and shall periodically perform field verifications to ensure they are being implemented by the contractor.

1. All internal combustion equipment operating at the project site shall be fitted with properly operating mufflers and air intake silencers consistent with manufacturers' standards

2. All stationary construction equipment (e.g., generators and compressors) shall be located as far away from existing homes and other sensitive receptors as possible

3. Equipment staging shall be in areas that create the greatest distance practicable between construction-related noise sources and sensitive receptors

4. Haul truck deliveries and exports shall be limited to the same hours specified for the operation of construction equipment and shall utilize routes that limit exposure to sensitive receptors

5. Construction activities shall be limited to the least sensitive times of the day, Monday through Friday, and generally between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., excepting emergencies and other special circumstances

6. Stockpiling and vehicle staging areas shall be located as far as practicable from homes and other noise sensitive receptors during construction activities

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: The project would have short-term, localized noise impacts from construction activities and is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on noise and acoustics in the area when combined with projects in the vicinity.

6.9 SOCIOECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

Table 5 identifies minority and low-income populations of communities in proximity to the project. Construction impacts of the project are nominal, with all temporary impacts mitigated to a level not considered adverse. Once completed, the proposed regional stormwater improvements would benefit all members of the public as the improvements would provide flood protection and wildlife movement within the project area. Project operations would not generate any substantial adverse effects. Thus, project implementation would not cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts on low-income or minority populations. The project is considered beneficial to the entire community, including environmental justice population groups.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the proposed stormwater improvements would not be constructed. The existing land would remain undisturbed, and no effects related to socioeconomics or environmental justice would occur.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: The project would not directly or indirectly contribute to socioeconomic or environmental justice effects. As a result, the project would not contribute to cumulative effects associated with socioeconomic and environmental justice when combined with projects in the vicinity.

6.10 RECREATION

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The project proposes stormwater drainage improvements at a site and does not involve or affect new or existing recreational facilities. The project is not growth inducing and, therefore, would not increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities, result in the deterioration of such facilities, or require the construction of new facilities. The project would not affect recreational opportunities.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater drainage improvements would not be constructed. The existing recreational opportunities would remain as-is.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: The proposed action is an infrastructure project intended to improve stormwater drainage and provide flood protection. When combined with other projects in the vicinity, the proposed project would not create a cumulative effect on recreational facilities.

6.11 LANDS AND REALTY

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The project site is in Cathedral City, Riverside County, California. Landowners within the project alignment include BLM (conservation land), CVWD, and numerous private landowners (vacant land); refer to Exhibit 6. In addition, the UPRR traverses the project site at the northern extent of the project area and is an active rail line. CVWD consulted with UPRR regarding various design and ROW aspects related to UPRR facilities and property in the project vicinity. Currently, the bridge design does not meet existing UPRR standards. As the project is seeking to improve hydrologic conditions under the bridge structure and does not propose any improvements to the bridge, a Variance is being requested by CVWD from the UPRR. The Variance would be issued by UPRR upon approval of final project plans; however, UPRR has a conditional approval at this time.

The project involves stormwater improvements on vacant, undisturbed land. Immediately surrounding the project site are transportation and open space uses to the north, open space and residential uses to the east, open space and residential uses to the south, and open space uses to the west. Due to the nature of the project, project implementation would not divide an established community.

Consistency with the BLM's Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and CDCA Plan DRECP

CDCA Plan DRECP

The project area is located within the Coachella Valley Plan Amendment area to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan (BLM 1980, 2002). In 2002, the BLM completed the Coachella Valley Plan Amendment, one of six major amendments to the CDCA Plan that provided planning goals for specific bioregional planning areas within the CDCA. The Coachella Valley Plan Amendment approved a number of changes to the 1980 CDCA Plan, one of which was to establish habitat conservation objectives for assessing compatible uses in eight vegetation community types and developing appropriate mitigation measures. Based on those objectives, approximately 95 percent of the BLM-administered public land in the Coachella Valley was to be managed consistent with the multispecies habitat conservation objectives established through the CVMSHCP. These habitat objectives apply to all BLM-administered public lands that fall within the conservation area boundaries established through the CVMSHCP.

In addition to the DRECP Plan Area, the BLM's LUPA Decision Area includes BLM-administered public lands outside of the DRECP Plan area, but within the CDCA, for specific amendments to the CDCA Plan. The project site lies within an area that is within the CDCA but outside of the DRECP.

Based on the DRECP, the project site is not situated within any Development Focus Areas (DFAs), Variance Process Lands (VPLs), BLM Conservation Areas, or Recreation Management Areas. No Areas of Critical

Environmental Concern (ACEC), or California Desert National Conservation Lands are located on-site. The, the project area is part of a Wildlife Allocation area based upon the prior Multiple-Use Class and designation of the Coachella Valley Wildlife Habitat Management Area in the Coachella Valley Plan Amendment to the CDCA. The activities associated with the Proposed Action are consistent with the Wildlife allocation. As discussed in Table 13, *DRECP LUPA Consistency Analysis*, the project is consistent with the goals, objectives, and conservation management actions of the DRECP. Thus, no impact would occur regarding consistency with the BLM's DRECP.

Table 13
DRECP LUPA Consistency Analysis

Goals and Objectives	Consistency
Biological Resources	
Objective 1.2: Within BLM's authority, provide for wildlife crossings (underpasses and land bridges, if feasible) of appropriate size to allow wildlife movement corridors. Underpasses or bridges must be designed with behavioral attributes considered, so as to avoid population sink effects and mortalities. The use of fencing, or other structures, may be essential to direct movement and dispersal towards crossing structures.	Consistent. Construction of the project would remove the existing sediment blockage from the UPRR bridge structure, allowing for improved wildlife movement compared to the existing condition.
Objective 2.2: Maintain hydrogeomorphic processes that create habitat diversity, channel bank habitat and regeneration sites (through sediment transport, incision, and sand/silt deposition) for plants and wildlife, including single-thread channels, compound channels, and distributary networks located on alluvial fans. • Protect streams and washes, wetlands, and seasonal wetlands in all watersheds in the planning area. • Restore natural flow stream morphology at modified sites that are not in proper functioning condition.	Consistent. Construction of the project would result in improved flows that would follow the historical drainage pattern (i.e., flowing south of the UPRR alignment through the project site, towards the WWRSC), rather than the existing flows, which are being impeded by sediment beneath the UPRR bridge. Restoration of this natural flow stream would improve sediment transport downstream as well. Also, long-term maintenance of sediment removal would ensure that the stormwater infrastructure continues to work properly.
Objective 2.3: Conserve floodplain groundwater recharge, input of organic matter, and sediment deposition in the floodplain. Maintain floodplain and flood terrace fluvial processes and protect natural floodplain inundation zones to the 100-year flood plain by insuring ponding or other recharge mechanisms.	Consistent. Refer to Response to Objective 2.2, above. Further, implementation of the project would remove impediments to existing flood flows and re-establish the 100-year floodplain, further protecting existing residents downstream. Refer to Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 4.
Objective 2.4: Conserve undeveloped and natural areas within the watersheds of important riverine and drainage systems.	Consistent. Implementation of the project would result in the continued use of the site for the purposes of stormwater flows.
Objective 2.7: Conserve the geomorphic (fluvial, alluvial, and Aeolian) processes associated with sand dune formation and the sand transport corridors between the sand dunes and their sand sources.	Consistent. According to the Equivalency Analysis (Appendix B, *Equivalency Analysis/Concurrence Letter, Habitat Assessment, Jurisdictional Delineation Report, Biological Resources Technical Report, and Biological Assessment*), the function and value of the sand transport corridor between the Willow Hole Conservation Area and the Whitewater River Conservation Area would be restored and enhanced by the conveyance of stormwater between the two conservation areas.

Goals and Objectives	Consistency
Objective 2.8: Conserve or increase protective management to prevent structures capable of obstructing sand movement within sand transport areas.	Consistent. Refer to Response to Objective 2.7, above.
Cultural Resources and Tribal Interest	
Goal – Consider Native American knowledge and values in land use planning and management decisions, consistent with statute, regulation, and policy.	Consistent. As discussed in Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources above, as a result of AB 52 efforts, and to avoid a potential impact to tribal cultural resources, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requested the presence of an approved Native American Cultural Resources Monitor. As such, the project would provide cultural monitoring during earthwork activities associated with construction (Measure CR-1).
Goal – Consider Native American values and concerns about places of religious and cultural importance to Native Americans in land use planning and management decisions, consistent with statute, regulation, and policy.	Consistent. Refer to Response to Goal above.
Objective – Ensure management of cultural resources is consistent with agency responsibilities provided in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act.	Consistent. As part of the cultural and paleontological resources investigation, Cogstone conducted all work in compliance with the BLM's responsibilities under Section 110. This included a record search and Class III archaeological survey to identify any cultural resources present within the area of potential effect (APE). No cultural resources were identified within BLM lands for the project.
Objective – Ensure confidentiality of information about sensitive cultural resources consistent with Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 9 of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.	Consistent. As part of the cultural and paleontological resources investigation, Cogstone did not permit any personnel who were not a qualified archaeologist access to any cultural resources site records or maps. This meets the agency's responsibility to protect sensitive information from public access toward preventing damage to, or loss of, sites.
Objective – BLM actions and authorizations will minimize inadvertent impacts on cultural resources including places of traditional cultural and religious importance to Native Americans.	Consistent. Refer to Response to Goal above.
Paleontology	
Goal – Protect and conserve significant paleontological resources as they are discovered on public lands.	Consistent. As discussed in Section 7.5, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*, the project area is mapped as Holocene alluvial sediments, which are too young to contain fossils. No fossil localities are known within a one-mile radius of the project area and no fossils are known within the boundaries of Cathedral City. Further, no fossils were observed during the survey. The vertical depth of disturbance is estimated at 12.5 feet, too shallow to encounter paleontological resources. Thus, it is not anticipated that paleontological resources would be encountered during ground disturbance. In the unlikely event resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all construction work must be halted in the vicinity of the discovery until a qualified paleontologist can visit the site of discovery and assess the significance of the resource.
Goal – Develop specific objectives and management actions for fossil localities, when paleontological resources are discovered in the Planning Area.	Consistent. Refer to response above.

Goals and Objectives	Consistency
Soil, Water, and Water-Dependent Resources	
Soil Resources	
Goal –Where soils currently exhibit functional biological and physical characteristics that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform, minimize disturbance that could compromise these characteristics.	Consistent. Construction of the project would result in the restoration of the drainage, including the functional characteristics.
Goal – Maintain important soil ecosystem processes (e.g., nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration) and prepare for and/or respond to significant disturbances to the environment (e.g., floods, contamination) resulting from the interactions between human-caused soil disturbance and a changing climate.	Consistent. Construction of the project would result in the restoration of the drainage, including the soil ecosystem processes.
Objective – Minimize soil disturbances to reduce flooding potential and soil erosion; promote management for soils that maintains natural infiltration rates, wildlife habitat, and structural resistance to wind and water erosion.	Consistent. Construction of the project would reduce the existing flooding conditions between I-10 and the UPRR and improve drainage of the channel through the project site. The project would restore previous soil erosion patterns, would result in a long-term sediment removal plan near the bridge structure, and would restore previous areas of infiltration, wildlife movement, and water erosion patterns.
Surface Water Resources	
Goal – Ensure that any surface waters continue to perform key hydrologic and biogeochemical functions that may affect water quantity or quality.	Consistent. As discussed above, construction of the project would result in improvements to the existing stormwater channel, including hydrologic and biogeochemical functions, specifically downstream of the project.
Objective – Truncation, realignment, channelization, lining, or filling of perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral surface water resources will be minimized or eliminated where such actions could reduce any available riparian habitat, eliminate the natural buffer system for filtering runoff, or change a stream's hydrology by decreasing water storage capacity or increasing water flow velocity.	Consistent. Refer to Responses above. Construction of the project would remove an impediment of existing flows.
Visual Resources Management	
Class IV: The objective of this class is to allow for management activities and uses requiring major modifications to the natural landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. Management activities and uses may dominate the view and be a major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to mitigate the impacts of activities through careful location and repeating the visual elements of the landscape.	Consistent. As discussed in Section 7.1, *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*, upon completion of the project, no project features would be visible from existing viewers surrounding the project site. Further, the project would protect in place the existing tamarisk windrow along the eastern bank of the WWRSC, providing screening of the project site from residences. Given the project site is in a Class IV rating area and none of the project features would be visible, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Consistency with the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP)

The project site is located within the WFCA of the CVMSHCP. The project would result in a total of approximately 21.98 acres of impact to the WFCA. This would include 8.56 acres of hardscape (concrete) improvements and 13.42 acres of earthen improvements. The area of impact within the WFCA has been minimized to the maximum extent practicable. The project footprint includes the minimum improvements required to safely convey flows beneath the UPRR bridge while protecting adjacent uses during heavy storm events. The minimum amount of concrete-lined facilities has been incorporated, limited only to areas subject to high levels of erosion and scour during storm events. In addition, concrete-bottom

facilities will naturally fill with sand over time as sand transport occurs during storm events. All areas affected by project construction activities would be re-graded to match existing conditions as closely as possible.

The CVMSHCP allows for a maximum of 7 acres of development impacts on lands within the WFCA (CVWD land is considered privately owned under the CVMSHCP). As noted above, the project would impact a total of 21.98 acres of land within the WFCA. To offset impacts to 21.98 acres (8.56 acres of permanent impact and 13.42 acres of temporary impact), CVWD proposes to place a conservation easement upon the 42 acres of land that are under private ownership to be acquired by CVWD within the existing WFCA, west of the project site (Measure BIO-3). Twenty-one point ninety-eight of the 42 acres will be used to offset the 21.98 acres of land that will be impacted within the City of Cathedral City's portion of the WFCA from implementation of the project, resulting in a net increase of 20.02 acres of land being added to the conservation area. As required under the CVMSHCP, the project was subject to the CVCC's JPR Process. Through the JPR process, CVWD consulted with the CVCC to review the project's potential impacts to sensitive biological resources, and consistency with the existing CVMSHCP. Through the CVCC, the project was issued a concurrence letter from the USFWS and CDFW dated March 15, 2017, related to the proposed "Like Exchange" to offset impacts under the CVMSHCP. Thus, potential impacts related to consistency with the CVMSHCP would be reduced to less than significant levels in this regard with compliance with the CVCC JPR process and Measure BIO-3.

CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines

Per CVMSHCP Section 4.5, *Land Use Adjacency Guidelines*, the purpose of Land Use Adjacency Guidelines is to avoid or minimize indirect effects from development adjacent to or within the Conservation Areas. Adjacent means sharing a common boundary with any parcel in a Conservation Area. Such indirect effects are commonly referred to as edge effects, and may include noise, lighting, drainage, intrusion of people, and the introduction of non-native plants and non-native predators such as dogs and cats. The project site is located within the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area, and as such, the measures in the following table, Table 14, *CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines*, shall be considered and implemented where applicable.

Table 14
CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines Consistency Analysis

Guidelines	Consistency
Drainage	
Proposed Development adjacent to or within a Conservation Area shall incorporate plans to ensure that the quantity and quality of runoff discharged to the adjacent Conservation Area is not altered in an adverse way when compared with existing conditions. Stormwater systems shall be designed to prevent the release of toxins, chemicals, petroleum products, exotic plant materials or other elements that might degrade or harm biological resources or ecosystem processes within the adjacent Conservation Area.	Consistent. The proposed project would alter the flow direction of water within the Whitewater River, but all existing and future flows are still located within the Whitewater River Conservation Area. There would be no changes to the quantity or quality of runoff or other water discharged to the Conservation Area.

Guidelines	Consistency
Toxics	
Land uses proposed adjacent to or within a Conservation Area that use chemicals or generate bioproducts such as manure that are potentially toxic or may adversely affect wildlife and plant species, Habitat, or water quality shall incorporate measures to ensure that application of such chemicals does not result in any discharge to the adjacent Conservation Area.	Consistent. The proposed project would not generate toxic bioproducts or use toxic chemicals. Any spills of hazardous materials from project vehicles or equipment would be contained, cleaned up, and disposed of immediately.
Lighting	
For proposed development adjacent to or within a Conservation Area, lighting shall be shielded and directed toward the developed area. Landscape shielding or other appropriate methods shall be incorporated in project designs to minimize the effects of lighting adjacent to or within the adjacent Conservation Area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual.	Not Applicable. The proposed project would not require any additional lighting.
Noise	
Proposed development adjacent to or within a Conservation Area that generates noise in excess of 75 dBA Leq hourly shall incorporate setbacks, berms, or walls, as appropriate, to minimize the effects of noise on the adjacent Conservation Area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual.	Consistent. The proposed project would result in short-term noise and vibration as a result of construction activities. However, temporary increases in noise and vibration along the proposed project limits during the construction period would be minimized with implementation of noise BMPs which will be included in the project's Noise Plan. Therefore, the proposed project would not exceed noise and vibration thresholds identified in Section 6.7, *Noise*, of this IS/EA.
Invasives	
Invasive, non-native plant species shall not be incorporated in the landscape for land uses adjacent to or within a Conservation Area. Landscape treatments within or adjacent to a Conservation Area shall incorporate native plant materials to the maximum extent Feasible; recommended native species are listed in Table 4-112. The plants listed in Table 4-113 shall not be used within or adjacent to a Conservation Area. This list may be amended from time to time through a Minor Amendment with Wildlife Agency Concurrence.	Not Applicable. The proposed project would not require any landscaping or planting.
Barriers	
Land uses adjacent to or within a Conservation Area shall incorporate barriers in individual project designs to minimize unauthorized public access, domestic animal predation, illegal trespass, or dumping in a Conservation Area. Such barriers may include native landscaping, rocks/boulders, fencing, walls and/or signage.	Consistent. The proposed project would not change any land uses in the area other than to redirect water in the Whitewater River through the project site. No human use of the site is proposed. Thus, no additional barriers would be required.

Guidelines	Consistency
Grading/Land Development	
Manufactured slopes associated with site development shall not extend into adjacent land in a Conservation Area.	Consistent. The project would include concrete channel lining both upstream and downstream of the UPRR bridge location. Channel lining would extend approximately 500 feet upstream of the bridge, and a berm would be graded on the east bank to direct flows through the bridge crossing. Downstream of the bridge, channel lining would extend approximately 300 feet. The concrete lined portion of the channel would be at an approximate three percent grade. Concrete slope protection would be placed at the east overbank of the channel. The existing overbank is located approximately 800 feet southeast of the existing UPRR bridge. A row of tamarisk trees exists at the top of the existing slope, and the concrete slope protection improvements would occur immediately west of the trees (i.e., the trees would be protected in place). The slope protection would extend for a length of approximately 4,800 linear feet.

Consistency with the City of Cathedral City General Plan and Zoning Ordinance

As described in Table 15, *City of Cathedral City General Plan Land Use Consistency Analysis*, the proposed project is consistent with the goals, policies, and programs of the Cathedral City General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The project would not result in any change in land use or introduce new uses in comparison to existing conditions and would be consistent with the General Plan land use designation (Open Space-Water [OS-W]) and zoning (Open Space [OS]) for the site. Thus, no impact would occur regarding consistency with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Table 15
City of Cathedral City General Plan Land Use Consistency Analysis

Goal, Policy, Program, or Code	Consistency
City of Cathedral City General Plan Open Space and Conservation	
Open Space and Conservation	
Goal 1 – Environmental resources that are protected through the establishment and preservation of open space areas, which also protect residents and property from environmental hazards while providing recreational opportunities and enhancing the beauty and attraction of the community.	Consistent. It is the intent of the project to alleviate flooding conditions in the project vicinity, including existing and future residential uses downstream of the project site.

Goal, Policy, Program, or Code	Consistency
Flooding and Hydrology	
Program 1.A - Local regulations and guidelines shall be established which are consistent with the Master Plan of Drainage, direct the management of runoff, and provide for local drainage facilities which support the effective use of regional facilities.	Consistent. The project, specifically identified in the Master Plan of Drainage, consists of regional stormwater improvements that would convey stormwater flows from north of the UPRR tracks in a southerly direction to the WWRSC. Currently, there is a UPRR bridge crossing at the project site; the bridge was constructed and backfilled to allow for future construction of the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan under the railroad to provide a connection to the WWRSC. Flows under the UPRR bridge have been precluded until the channel improvements and slope lining (east overbank) downstream of the bridge were ready to be constructed. As such, the project would include improvements to convey flows safely and reliably beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts for tributary areas to the project site.
City of Cathedral City Zoning Ordinance	
Section 9.42.070, Development standards	
Areas within the OS district are to be protected from extensive building encroachment. Necessary amenities, appurtenant structures, or public services, e.g., picnic shelters, mausoleums, clubhouses, or public buildings, may be allowed in those areas where such facilities are warranted or necessary provided approval is granted under appropriate provisions of this code. Notwithstanding the foregoing, structures to house the cultivation of medical cannabis consistent with the requirements of Chapter 9.108 may be allowed within the OS district.	Consistent. The project proposes necessary stormwater infrastructure to support drainage through the project site, protecting residential uses downstream of the project site.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater improvements would not be constructed. The existing land uses would remain as-is and no impacts to land use would occur.

Mitigation Measures

Refer to Measure BIO-3.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: When combined with other projects in the surrounding area, the project would not contribute to land use compatibility impacts; therefore, the project is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on land use and planning.

6.12 TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

Implementation of the project would not impact the transportation/circulation system, as the project involves stormwater infrastructure and would not alter the existing system or increase the number of trips on the road. However, temporary construction-related traffic would occur. To gain access to the project site, a new temporary road would be constructed along the western portion of the project site, with an

entrance/exit driveway at E. Vista Chino. This new access road and these increased construction-related trips would be short term and would cease upon project completion. Upon project completion, the access road would be returned to the pre-project conditions. Thus, short-term construction-related traffic impacts would be less than significant.

Alternative 2 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the stormwater improvements would not be constructed. No short-term construction-related trips or operational trips would result. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures

No measures are required.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impact: When combined with other projects in the surrounding area, the project would not contribute to traffic/circulation impacts during operation and would have no adverse impacts during construction; therefore, the project is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on transportation/circulation.

VII. CEQA Considerations

This section analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with the project. The issue areas evaluated in the Initial Study include the following list resource areas; many of which are addressed in Section VI, *Environmental Effects*:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

Pursuant to the 2023 State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G Environmental Checklist Form, and CVWD's Local CEQA Guidelines, the environmental analysis in this section is patterned after the Initial Study Checklist recommended by the CEQA Guidelines and used by CVWD in its environmental review process. For the preliminary environmental assessment undertaken as part of the Initial Study's preparation, a determination that there is a potential for significant effects indicates the need to analyze the development's impacts more fully and to identify mitigation.

For the evaluation of potential environmental impacts, the questions in the Initial Study Checklist are stated and an answer is provided according to the analysis undertaken as part of the Initial Study. The analysis considers the long-term, direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the development. To each question, there are four possible responses:

- *No Impact*. The project would not have any measurable environmental impact on the environment.
- *Less Than Significant Impact*. The project would have the potential for impacting the environment, although this impact would be below established thresholds that are considered to be significant.
- *Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated*. The project would have the potential to generate impacts which may be considered a significant effect on the environment, although measures or changes to the project's physical or operational characteristics can reduce these impacts to levels that are less than significant.

- *Potentially Significant Impact*. The project would have impacts which are considered significant, and additional analysis is required to identify measures that could reduce these impacts to less than significant levels.

Where potential impacts are anticipated to be significant, measures are required, so that impacts may be avoided or reduced to insignificant levels.

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
7.1 AESTHETICS: Would the project				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?				✓
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓
c. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓	
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?				✓
7.2 AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES: In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:				
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				✓
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?				✓

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause re-zoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 122220(g)), timberland as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?				✓
d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use?				✓
7.3 AIR QUALITY: Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?			✓	
b. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable Federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?		✓		
c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?		✓		
d. Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?			✓	
7.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES: Would the project:				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?		✓		

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?		✓		
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on Federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?				✓
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?		✓		
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?		✓		
f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?		✓		
7.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES: Would the project:				
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?			✓	
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?		✓		
c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?			✓	
7.6 ENERGY: Would the project:				
a. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?			✓	
b. Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?			✓	

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
7.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS: Would the project:				
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
1) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.				✓
2) Strong seismic ground shaking?			✓	
3) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?			✓	
4) Landslides?				✓
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?		✓		
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?			✓	
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the California Building Code (2001), creating substantial risks to life or property?				✓
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?				✓
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?			✓	
7.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Would the project:				
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓	

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓	
7.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS: Would the project:				
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?				✓
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓	
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				✓
d. Be located on a site, which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				✓
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?			✓	
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?				✓
7.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY: Would the project:				
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?		✓		

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			✓	
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
1) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?		✓		
2) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?			✓	
3) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?		✓		
4) Impede or redirect flood flows?			✓	
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?			✓	
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?		✓		
7.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING: Would the project:				
a. Physically divide an established community?				✓
b. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?				✓
7.12 MINERAL RESOURCES: Would the project:				
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource of value to the region and the residents of the state?				✓

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?				✓
7.13 NOISE: Would the project result in:				
a. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?		✓		
b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			✓	
c. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				✓
7.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING: Would the project:				
a. Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?			✓	
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓
7.15 PUBLIC SERVICES: Would the project:				
a. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
1) Fire protection?				✓

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
2) Police protection?				✓
3) Schools?				✓
4) Parks?				✓
5) Other public facilities?				✓
7.16 RECREATION:				
a. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?				✓
b. Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?				✓
7.17 TRANSPORTATION: Would the project:				
a. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?			✓	
b. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?				✓
c. Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				✓
d. Result in inadequate emergency access?			✓	
7.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:				
a. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
1) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or				✓
2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.		✓		
7.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS: Would the project:				
a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, or wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?			✓	
b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?				✓
c. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?				✓
d. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?				✓
e. Comply with Federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?				✓

CEQA THRESHOLD	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
7.20 WILDFIRE: If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?				✓
c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				✓
d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?				✓
7.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:				
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?		✓		
b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?		✓		
c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		✓		

7.1 AESTHETICS

Response 7.1(a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

No Impact. A scenic vista is generally defined as a view of undisturbed natural lands exhibiting a unique or unusual feature that comprises an important or dominant portion of the viewshed. Scenic vistas may also be represented by a particular distant view that provides visual relief from less attractive views of nearby features. Other designated Federal and State lands, as well as local open space or recreational areas, may also offer scenic vistas if they represent a valued aesthetic view within the surrounding landscape of nearby features.

The project site is not situated within an area designated as a scenic vista. There are no public stationary vantage points that afford views to visual resources, as well as the project site. Thus, no impacts to a scenic vista would result.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.1(b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No Impact. Refer to Section 6.1, *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.1(c) In non-urbanized areas, would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project is located within a non-urbanized area. Refer to Section 7.1; the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.1(d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No Impact. Refer to Section 6.1.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Response 7.2(a) Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

No Impact. The project site is not designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring

Program (FMMP).[21] Based on the City's General Plan, the project site is not identified as Farmland of Local Importance. As the project site consists of vacant land, project implementation would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. No impacts are anticipated in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.2(b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact. The project site is currently zoned as "Open Space (OS)" by the City's Zoning Map. Further, there are no Williamson Act or agriculturally zoned properties within or adjacent to the project site.[22] Thus, project implementation would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.2(c) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause re-zoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 122220(g)), timberland as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

No Impact. The project site is currently zoned as "Open Space (OS)" by the City's Zoning Map. Thus, project implementation would not conflict with the existing zoning for, or cause the re-zoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. Further, there are no forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production properties surrounding the project site. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.2(d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. Refer to Response 7.2(c). The project site is not occupied by or used for forest land; therefore, no impact to forest land would occur as a result of the project.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.2(e) Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. Refer to Responses 7.2(a) through 7.2(d). No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

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[21] California Department of Conservation, *Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program*, *California Important Farmland Finder*, http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/Index.aspx, accessed June 28, 2018.

[22] California Department of Conservation, Riverside County Williamson Act FY 2015/2016 Sheet 2 of 3, 2016.

7.3 AIR QUALITY

Response 7.3(a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in Section 7.2, *Air Quality*, emissions attributable to the project would not exceed Federal *de minimis* levels and implementation of the project was determined to not conflict with the SIP. As a result, this impact would be considered less than significant. Further, as shown in Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9, the project would not exceed the short-term construction standards and in so doing would not violate any air quality standards pertaining to the SCAQMD's AQMP. The project is consistent with the land use designation and development density presented in the City's General Plan and, therefore, would not exceed the population or job growth projections used by the SCAQMD to develop the AQMP. Thus, less than significant impacts would occur pertaining to consistency with the AQMP.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.3(b) Would the project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable Federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. As discussed in Section 6.2, although implementation of the project would have limited and short-term impacts on local and regional air quality, the project would not directly contribute to on-going emissions of pollutants and is, therefore, not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on local or regional air quality when combined with projects in the vicinity.

As noted in Section 6.2, Coachella Valley is in a nonattainment area for PM_{10} under Federal standards. The 2016 AQMP adopted stricter measures than previously imposed for control of dust during site grading and development phases. These measures are integrated into the grading and construction management plans for the project and are incorporated as Measure AQ-1. Thus, the project would not be significantly cumulatively considerable.

In the operational phase, the project would generate negligible emissions and would not adversely contribute to cumulative effects.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure AQ-1.

Response 7.3(c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. As discussed in Section 6.2, the localized emissions presented in Table 9, include only on-site emissions (i.e., from construction equipment and fugitive dust) and do not include off-site emissions (i.e., from hauling activities). As shown in Table 9, on-site emissions would not exceed the LSTs for SRA 30. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur regarding construction emissions.

As discussed in Section 6.2, the project would generate negligible emissions in the operational phase and would not result in long-term air quality impacts to sensitive receptors. No operational impacts to sensitive receptors would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure AQ-1.

Response 7.3(d) Would the project create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in Section 6.2, construction activities associated with the project may generate detectable odors from heavy-duty equipment exhaust. Construction-related odors would be short term in nature and cease upon project completion. Any odor impacts to existing adjacent land uses would be short term and are less than significant. No operational impacts involving the creation of objectionable odors would result.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Response 7.4(a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.4, *Biological Resources*.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16.

Response 7.4(b) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.4.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3.

Response 7.4(c) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on Federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No Impact. As discussed in Section 6.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, construction of the project would require disturbance activities within areas of both RWQCB and CDFW jurisdictional waters. Areas of project impact are illustrated on Exhibit 7. The project site does not contain any riparian habitat, wetlands, vernal pools, marshes, or coastal habitats. No areas of Federal jurisdiction (Army Corps of Engineers) apply to the project site. Thus, although project activities within these areas are subject to jurisdiction and approval of the Colorado River Basin RWQCB pursuant to CWA Section 401 and CDFW Inland Deserts Region pursuant to Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code (Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2, respectively), no impacts to Federally protected wetlands would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.4(d) Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.4.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure BIO-4.

Response 7.4(e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. The project would not require the removal of any trees, as the existing tamarisk trees along the UPRR and the eastern edge of the site would be protected in place. As indicated in Responses 7.4(a) through 7.4(d), the project would not result in significant impacts to biological resources following conformance with Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16. Thus, with compliance with recommended measures, no conflicts with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources would occur, and impacts in this regard would be reduced to less than significant levels.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16.

Response 7.4(f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.4.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16.

7.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Response 7.5(a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site was negative for cultural resources excluding the UPRR; refer to Section 6.5, *Cultural Resources*. The UPRR [CA-RIV-6381H (P-33-009498)] traverses the northern extent of the project area and is an active rail line. A new rail bridge (UPRR 592.05) was constructed within the project area in 2006; thus, all components of the bridge are not historic. Further, existing UPRR tracks would be protected in place during project construction. Thus, project implementation would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource as defined by CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.5(b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. The project site was negative for archaeological resources; refer to Section 6.5. Notwithstanding, Measure CR-1 would minimize impacts

related to potential unknown archaeological resources. Measure CR-1 would require tribal monitoring during earthwork activities and includes measures necessary in the event that tribal or cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities. With adherence to Measure CR-1, project implementation would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. Impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure CR-1.

Response 7.5(c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Less Than Significant Impact. Refer to Section 6.5.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.6 ENERGY

Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines is an advisory document that assists environmental document preparers in determining whether a project will result in the inefficient, wasteful, and unnecessary consumption of energy. The analysis relies upon Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines, which includes the following criteria to determine whether this threshold of significance is met:

- **Criterion 1**: The project's energy requirements and its energy use efficiencies by amount and fuel type for each stage of the project including construction, operation, maintenance and/or removal. If appropriate, the energy intensiveness of materials may be discussed.
- **Criterion 2**: The effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies and on requirements for additional capacity.
- **Criterion 3**: The effects of the project on peak and base period demands for electricity and other forms of energy.
- **Criterion 4**: The degree to which the project complies with existing energy standards.
- **Criterion 5**: The effects of the project on energy resources.
- **Criterion 6**: The project's projected transportation energy use requirements and its overall use of efficient transportation alternatives.

Quantification of the project's energy usage is presented and addresses **Criterion 1**. The discussion on construction-related energy use focuses on **Criteria 2, 4,** and **5**. The discussion on operational energy relates to **Criteria 2** through **6.**

Response 7.6(a) Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Less Than Significant Impact.

Project-Related Sources of Energy Consumption

This analysis focuses on one source of energy that is relevant to the proposed project: fuel consumption during construction. It should be noted that as a stormwater improvements project, natural gas consumption is minimal during project construction and would not occur during project operation. The project would also not use electricity during construction or operation. As such, this analysis does not include natural gas and electricity as a source of project-related energy consumption. Furthermore, the project would not generate additional vehicle trips during operation [outside of routine O&M activities] and therefore would consume minimal vehicle fuel. The amount of construction fuel consumption was estimated using the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) Emissions Factor 2017 (EMFAC2017) computer program which provides projections for typical daily fuel usage in Riverside County. The estimated construction fuel consumption is based on the project's construction equipment list timing/phasing and hours of duration for construction equipment, as well as vendor, hauling, and construction worker trips. The results of the CalEEMod modeling are included in Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data*.

The project's primary source of energy consumption (i.e., vehicle fuel consumption) would occur from the use of construction equipment on-site and mobile trips to and from the project site by construction workers and vendors. The project's estimated construction energy consumption is summarized in Table 16, *Construction Energy Consumption*. As shown in Table 16, the project's construction fuel consumption would be approximately 117,968 gallons and would increase the County's consumption by 0.0607 percent **(Criterion 1)**.

Table 16
Construction Energy Consumption

Energy Type	Project Annual Energy Consumption[1]	Riverside County Annual Energy Consumption[2]	Percentage Increase Countywide[2]
Fuel Consumption[3]			
Construction (Heavy-Duty Diesel Vehicle) Fuel Consumption[2]	117,968 gallons	194,496,204 gallons	0.0607%
Notes: MWh = megawatt hours 1. As modeled in CalEEMod version 2016.3.1. 2. The project's construction fuel consumption is compared with the projected Countywide heavy-duty vehicle/diesel fuel consumption in 2023 (when construction starts), as calculated from the California Air Resources Board EMFAC2021. EMFAC2017 Model data source: https://arb.ca.gov/emfac/2017/, accessed September 6, 2022. 3. The project would not increase vehicular trips. As such, the project would not result in operational fuel consumption.			
Refer to Appendix A, *Air Quality Emissions Data* for assumptions used in this analysis.			

Construction-Related Energy Consumption

Project construction would consume energy in two general forms: (1) the fuel energy consumed by construction vehicles and equipment; and (2) bound energy in construction materials, such as asphalt, steel, concrete, pipes, and manufactured or processed materials such as lumber and glass.

Fossil fuels used for construction vehicles and other energy-consuming equipment would be used primarily during grading and construction. Fuel energy consumed during construction would be temporary and would not represent a significant demand on energy resources. As indicated in Table 16, the project's fuel consumption from construction would be approximately 117,968 gallons, which would

increase fuel use in the County by 0.0607 percent. As such, construction would have a nominal effect on the local and regional energy supplies (**Criterion 2**).

Additionally, some incidental energy conservation would occur during construction through compliance with State requirements that equipment not in use for more than five minutes be turned off. Project construction equipment would also be required to comply with the latest United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and CARB engine emissions standards. These emissions standards require highly efficient combustion systems that maximize fuel efficiency and reduce unnecessary fuel consumption. Due to increasing transportation costs and fuel prices, contractors and owners have a strong financial incentive to avoid wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy during construction (**Criterion 4**).

Significant reductions in energy inputs for construction materials can be achieved by selecting green building materials composed of recycled materials that require less energy to produce than non-recycled materials.[23] The integration of green building materials can help reduce environmental impacts associated with the extraction, transport, processing, fabrication, installation, reuse, recycling, and disposal of these building industry source materials.[24] The project-related incremental increase in the use of energy bound in construction materials such as asphalt, concrete, pipes and other manufactured or processed materials (e.g., lumber and gas) would not substantially increase demand for energy compared to overall local and regional demand for construction materials. It is noted that construction fuel use is temporary and would cease upon completion of construction activities. There are no unusual project characteristics that would necessitate the use of construction equipment that would be less energy-efficient than at comparable construction sites in the region or State. Therefore, fuel energy and construction materials consumed during construction would not represent a significant demand on energy resources (**Criterion 5**).

Overall, construction fuel consumption would not be any more inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary than other similar development projects of this nature. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Operational Energy Consumption

The proposed stormwater improvements would not consume substantial energy during operation. The project proposes stormwater improvements, which would provide flood protection benefits. Periodic maintenance would occur as needed to clear sediment following a large storm event. Thus, the project would not attract or generate substantive new vehicular trips, and operational vehicle-related energy consumption is considered nominal. Additionally, as a stormwater improvement project, no natural gas and electricity would be used on-site during operations. Therefore, impacts related to the project's operational energy consumption would be less than significant (**Criteria 2 through 6**).

Overall, project construction and operations would not result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Less than significant impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

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[23] California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, *Green Building Materials*, https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/greenbuilding/materials#Material, accessed September 6, 2022.

[24] Ibid.

Response 7.6(b) Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

Less Than Significant Impact. As a stormwater infrastructure project with minimal energy consumption, the proposed project is not anticipated to conflict with or obstruct the General Plan or a State plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Specifically, as shown in Table 16, the project's construction fuel consumption would increase the County's consumption by 0.0607 percent, and would not consume substantive energy during project operation. Further, as discussed in Response 7.6(a), the project would be required to adhere to all applicable Federal, State, and local requirements pertaining to energy efficiency. Therefore, less than significant impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Response 7.7(a) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

1) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

No Impact. The project site does not lie within a currently delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone; refer to Section 6.6, *Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources*. Thus, project implementation would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects related to rupture of a known earthquake fault. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

2) Strong seismic ground shaking?

Less Than Significant Impact. Given the proximity of the project site to active and potentially active faults, the project may be subjected to strong seismic ground shaking; refer to Section 7.6. The proposed regional stormwater improvements would not subject people to substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic ground shaking. Impacts would be less than significant following conformance with State, County, and local standards for construction.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

3) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Less Than Significant Impact. According to the *Cathedral City General Plan*, the potential for liquefaction at the project site and in the vicinity is considered low to very low; refer to Section 7.6. The project site, however, has high potential for seismically induced settlement. The proposed regional stormwater improvements would not subject people to substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground failure. Impacts would be less than significant following conformance with State, County, and local standards for construction.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

4) Landslides?

No Impact. Due to the relatively flat site with gentle sloping, the project would not be susceptible to seismically induced landslides; refer to Section 6.6. No impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.7(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. The project site has a very severe high wind erosion hazard potential and would likely be subjected to water erosion hazards due to its location within the Morongo Wash Area; refer to Section 6.6 and Section 6.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*. Compliance with the applicable NPDES water quality requirements would reduce the project's construction-related impacts related to substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil to a less than significant level.

The project's operational maintenance activities would not result in substantial soil erosion following implementation of Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

Response 7.7(c) Would the project be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in an on-site or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

Less Than Significant Impact. Lateral spreading is a phenomenon in which large blocks of intact, non-liquefied soil move down a slope on a liquefied soil layer. Lateral spreading is often a regional event. For lateral spreading to occur, the liquefiable soil zone must be laterally continuous, unconstrained laterally, and free to move along sloping ground. The project site has low susceptibility for liquefaction and would not be susceptible to landslides. Thus, project implementation is not anticipated to induce lateral spreading.

The project site is underlain by alluvial and aeolian sediments with the potential for static settlement; refer to Section 6.6. Impacts would be less than significant following conformance with construction best practices (i.e., application of water to facilitate soil compaction). Thus, impacts concerning unstable geologic units or soils would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.7(d) Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?

No Impact. Given the relatively minor amount of clay present in soils on-site, expansive soils are not considered a hazard; refer to Section 6.6. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.7(e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

No Impact. No septic tanks or alternative wastewater systems would be constructed as part of the project. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.7(f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project's ground disturbance activities are not anticipated to uncover paleontological resources; refer to Section 6.5. Further, no unique geologic features occur within the project boundaries. Impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Response 7.8(a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project implementation would result in construction-related GHG emissions; refer to Section 6.3, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*. As shown in Table 10, the project would result in 1,048.49 $MTCO_2eq$ (34.95 $MTCO_2eq$ when amortized over 30 years), which is well below the 3,000 $MTCO_2eq$/year screening threshold. Project operations would include as-needed emergency maintenance following a large storm event to clear sediment from the project area. Maintenance activities would be temporary in nature and would generate negligible sources of GHG emissions. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.8(b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project implementation would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions; refer to Section 6.3.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Response 7.9(a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

No Impact. The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. The project is limited to regional stormwater improvements. As part of the project's ongoing operations and maintenance, sediment would be cleared on a regular basis to maintain the operational characteristics of the UPRR bridge. These activities, however, would not involve the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(b) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact. During project construction, there would be the potential for release of hazardous materials into the environment, particularly those associated with construction vehicles and materials (i.e., motor oil, solvents, diesel fuel, etc.). Due to the project's anticipated short-term construction schedule (anticipated for nine months), project construction is not anticipated to involve a significant hazard associated with the release of hazardous materials. The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, and there are no known hazardous conditions applicable to the project site.[25]

Concerning long-term operations, the project's proposed drainage improvements would not involve a change in use which would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. No long-term impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

No Impact. The nearest school to the project site is Rio Vista Elementary School, which is located approximately 0.58-mile east of the project site at 67-770 Verona Road. As indicated in Table 6, no schools are proposed within one-quarter mile of the project site. Thus, the project would not emit or handle hazardous materials within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(d) Would the project be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

No Impact. The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.[26] No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?

[25] California Environmental Protection Agency, *Cortese List Data Resources*, http://calepa.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/CorteseList/, accessed July 2, 2018.

[26] Ibid.

Less Than Significant Impact. The Palm Springs International Airport is located approximately 1.45 miles southwest of the project site. The project site is located within Zone E of the airport influence area, as shown on Map PS-1, *Compatibility Map*, of the *Riverside County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan*. The project's proposed stormwater drainage improvements would not alter the site's existing land use in a way that would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. Utilizing the Standard Emergency Management Systems (SEMS), Cathedral City has developed its own Emergency Operations Plan to anticipate and comprehensively plan for a variety of manmade and natural disasters. According to the *Cathedral City General Plan*, East Palm Canyon Drive, Dinah Shore Drive (Mid-Valley Parkway), Ramon Road, and I-10 are major intercity and regional access roads serving the City. The City also maintains an Emergency Operations Center located over three miles to the southeast of the project site at Fire Station 412 (32100 Desert Vista Road).

The project is limited to the re-establishment of a regional stormwater drain that would convey stormwater flows north of the UPRR bridge, and under the bridge in a southerly direction to the WWRSC. As depicted on Exhibit 3, no existing roads are present at the project site. Thus, the proposed improvements would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.9(g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

No Impact. Cathedral City is not designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.[27] Further, the regional stormwater improvements proposed would not increase exposure of persons to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. No impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Response 7.10(a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*. Project implementation would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise degrade surface or groundwater quality following preparation of a SWPPP in

[27] California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, *Cathedral City Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA*, https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/wildland-hazards-building-codes/fire-hazard-severity-zones-maps/, accessed September 12, 2022.

conformance with NPDES permits prior to construction, as well as implementation of Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

Response 7.10(b) Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would involve minimal water use during construction and would not have an adverse effect on groundwater supply; refer to Section 6.7. Further, the increase in impervious surface area would be nominal and would not substantially impact groundwater recharge on-site and would not have the capacity to impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.10(c) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:?

1) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.7, as well as Table 13. Construction of the project would result in improved flows that would follow the historical drainage pattern, rather than existing flows, which are impeded by sediment build up. Redirected flows would not reduce the effective conveyance or capacity of downstream within the WWRSC. As part of the operations and maintenance of the project, sediment would be cleared (via dozer or similar equipment) following large storm events to maintain the operational characteristics of the UPRR bridge. Long-term operational maintenance activities involving sediment removal would also require regulatory approvals from the Colorado River Basin RWQCB Report of Waste Discharge (HWQ-1) and CDFW Section 1602 SAA (HWQ-2). Implementation of Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2 would ensure impacts are less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

2) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project implementation involves the placement of concrete channel protection on both sides of the UPRR bridge, bridge improvements, channel grading, and slope protection. These improvements would restore the area's historical drainage pattern to safely and reliably convey flows beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts to downstream areas, including the Thousand Palms planning unit. As concluded in Response 7.10(b) above, the project would not involve a substantial increase in impervious conditions when compared to existing conditions. As discussed in Section 6.7, to further reduce potential impacts pertaining to on- or off-site flooding, project construction would avoid alteration of the 100-year floodplains (LUPA-SW-16) and would be required to prepare and implement a SWPPP in conformance with NPDES permits. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

3) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. As stated above, the project would not result in a substantial alteration of drainage patterns on-site, a substantial increase in runoff, or additional sources of polluted runoff; refer to Responses 8.10(a), 8.10(c) and Section 6.7. Project implementation would result in a nominal increase in impermeable surfaces when compared to existing conditions. Thus, the project would not create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. Implementation of Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2 would ensure impacts are less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

4) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is in Zone A on Flood Insurance Rate Map No. 06065Cl576G prepared by FEMA in 2008. Zone A corresponds to areas of one-percent annual risk of flooding. The project has been sized to convey flows associated with the 100-year storm event, both alone and in conjunction with future Phase 2 improvements that would enhance stormwater conveyance beneath I-10. The project would redirect flood flows and restore the area's historical drainage pattern to safely and reliably convey flows beneath the bridge, reducing floodplain impacts to downstream areas, including the Thousand Palms planning unit. Overall, the intent of the project is to protect downstream residents and future development from the 100-year flood zone. Construction within, or alteration of, 100-year floodplains would be avoided where possible, and permitted only when all required permits from other agencies are obtained (LUPA-SW-16). In conclusion, impacts would be beneficial in relation to flood protection, and less than significant impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.10(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

Less Than Significant Impact. Refer to discussion above regarding flood hazard conditions. The project site is not located with an area subject to tsunami or seiche conditions. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.10(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Response 7.10(a), above. Project implementation would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or have the capability to conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality/groundwater management plan, following preparation of a SWPPP in conformance with NPDES permits prior to construction, as well as implementation of Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures HWQ-1 and HWQ-2.

7.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Response 7.11(a) Would the project physically divide an established community?

No Impact. Refer to Section 6.11, *Lands and Realty*. Due to the nature of the project, project implementation would not divide an established community. No impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.11(b) Would the project cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

No Impact. Refer to Section 7.11. Project implementation would not result in any change in land use or introduce new uses in comparison to existing conditions. In addition, the project would be consistent with the General Plan land use designation (OS-W) and zoning (OS) for the project site, as well as consistent with the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan. As a result, project implementation would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. No impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

Response 7.12(a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact. Refer to Section 6.6, *Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources*. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.12(b) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

No Impact. Refer to Section 7.6. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.13 NOISE

Response 7.13(a) Would the project result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Refer to Section 6.8, *Noise*. The project's short-term construction-related noise impacts would be less than significant with implementation of recommended measures. Further, project operations would not introduce stationary noise sources. Thus, with implementation of the recommended measures, project implementation would not expose people

to or generate noise levels in excess of applicable noise standards and impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure N-1.

Response 7.13(b) Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less Than Significant Impact. Refer to Section 7.8 and Table 12. Vibration from construction activities experienced at the nearest sensitive receptors (residences to the southeast) would be expected to be below the 0.20 inch-per-second PPV significance threshold. Thus, the project would not expose persons to or generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels and impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.13(c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No Impact. Refer to Section 7.8. The project site is in Zone E of the Palm Springs International Airport influence area; however, the project would not alter the existing land use of the site and would not expose people in the project area to excessive noise levels. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Response 7.14(a) Would the project induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project is consistent with the land use designation and development density presented in the *Cathedral City General Plan* and with the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan; therefore, the project would not induce substantial population growth either directly or indirectly. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.14(b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact. No housing is present within the project boundaries. Thus, project implementation would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

Response 7.15(a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

1) Fire protection?

<u>*No Impact*</u>. The Cathedral City Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency services for the City. The Fire Department operates three facilities in the City. The City's Headquarters Fire Station is located at 32-100 Desert Vista Road, while the two remaining facilities are located at 36913 Date Palm Road and 27610 Landau Boulevard.[28]

The proposed regional stormwater improvements would not create any new uses that would result in new demand for additional new or altered fire protection facilities and would not alter the Fire Department's adopted service ratios or response times. No impacts would occur in this regard.

<u>*Mitigation Measures:*</u> No measures are required.

2) Police protection?

<u>*No Impact*</u>. The Cathedral City Police Department provides police protection services for the City. The Police Department is located at 68-700 Lalo Guerrero. The Police Department patrols approximately 21.5 square miles and on average responds to 42,500 calls for service per year with an average response time of 4.8 minutes for priority calls.[29]

The project would not directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth. The proposed regional stormwater improvements would not create a new demand for additional police protection facilities and would not alter the Police Department's adopted service ratios or response times. No impacts would occur in this regard.

<u>*Mitigation Measures:*</u> No measures are required.

3) Schools?

<u>*No Impact*</u>. The project does not propose the addition of residential uses, nor does it propose non-residential uses that could indirectly result in population growth within the area. Further, the proposed project is consistent with the land use designation and development density presented in the *Cathedral City General Plan* and is consistent with the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan. The project would not result in increased population growth; therefore, project implementation would not generate additional demand for schools. No impacts would occur in this regard.

<u>*Mitigation Measures:*</u> No measures are required.

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[28] Cathedral City Fire, *Contact*, http://www.cathedralcityfire.org/contact, accessed September 14, 2022.

[29] Cathedral City Police, *Patrol*, http://www.cathedralcitypolice.com/departments/patrol/, accessed September 14, 2022.

4) Parks?

No Impact. Due to the nature of the project, no new residents would be generated which would impact or create the need for new parks and recreational facilities. Further, the project is consistent with the land use designation and development density presented in the Cathedral City General Plan and with the North Cathedral City Stormwater Master Plan. As the project would not result in increased population growth, no impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

5) Other public facilities?

No Impact. Due to the nature of the project, no new residents would be generated which would impact or create the need for other new public facilities (i.e., libraries). As the project would not result in increased population growth, no impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.16 RECREATION

Response 7.16(a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact. Refer to Response 7.15(a)(4). The project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.16(b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

No Impact. Refer to Response 7.15(a)(4). The project would not involve the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.17 TRANSPORTATION

Response 7.17(a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Less Than Significant Impact. Implementation of the project would not involve significant impacts to the transportation/circulation system; refer to Section 6.12, *Transportation/Circulation*. There are no transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities on the project site. Although project construction would result in temporary construction-related traffic, project operations would generate negligible trips associated with as-needed maintenance activities. The project's impacts related to programs, plans, ordinances and/or policies addressing the circulation system would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.17(b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

No Impact. The project is not anticipated to result in a conflict with, nor would it be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b). As a proposed stormwater conveyance facility, the project would not result in the development of land uses that would generate vehicle miles traveled (VMT) resulting in a significant impact on the environment. While the project would require maintenance after storm events to clear sediment and ensure adequate conveyance capacity, these activities would be sporadic, short-term, and would generate negligible VMT during long-term operations. In addition, while the project would generate VMT during the construction phase for construction employees, equipment, deliveries, etc., these effects would be limited in duration and would cease once construction is completed. As such, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.17(c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

No Impact. The project is limited to the re-establishment of a regional stormwater drainage system. No hazardous design features are proposed as part of the project since no alteration to the existing circulation system would occur. As indicated in Response 7.17(a), project implementation would not involve a new use which would generate new or additional vehicle trips in the area during project operations. The project would construct a temporary access road with ingress/egress on Vista Chino (refer to Exhibit 3). Upon completion of construction, however, the road would be removed and returned to the existing condition. The temporary impacts are not anticipated to result in hazardous conditions along Vista Chino. Thus, the project would not substantially increase hazards due to a design feature or incompatible use.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.17(d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

Less Than Significant Impact. A discussion concerning the City's established emergency response procedures and evacuation plans is provided in Response 7.9(g). Although project construction would generate temporary construction-related traffic, impacts would be short-term in nature and would cease upon project completion. Construction-related impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

As discussed, project implementation would not involve a new use which would generate new or additional vehicle trips in the area during project operations. Thus, project implementation would not result in inadequate emergency access and no operational impacts would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Response 7.18(a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

1) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or

No Impact. As discussed in Section 7.5, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*, no impacts to an historic resource pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k) have been identified. As such, no impacts related to historic tribal cultural resources would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. The CVWD distributed letters to potentially affected Native American tribes which have cultural and traditional affiliation with the project area; refer to Section 7.5. As discussed, one tribal government provided response indicating the project site is located within a known Traditional Use Area. As a result of AB 52 efforts, and to avoid a potential impact to tribal cultural resources, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requested the presence of an approved Native American Cultural Resources Monitor. As such, the project would provide cultural monitoring during earthwork activities associated with construction (Measure CR-1). Following implementation of Measure CR-1, impacts concerning undiscovered tribal cultural resources would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measure CR-1.

7.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Response 7.19(a) Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, or wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project would not involve water, wastewater, electric, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. The proposed facility is a stormwater drainage improvement project that would provide benefits in relation to flood protection, the environmental effects of which are analyzed herein within this Initial Study. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.19(b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?

No Impact. Refer to Section 6.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*. The project's proposed improvements would not increase demands on existing water service facilities. It is not anticipated that any new or expanded water entitlements would be required as a result of project implementation. No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.19(c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

No Impact. The project would not generate wastewater. The project would not develop a new land use which would require the expansion of wastewater treatment facilities to serve the project site or affect CVWD's ability to provide adequate wastewater treatment service. No impact would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.19(d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

No Impact. Cathedral City receives private solid waste disposal services from Burrtec Waste & Recycling. Collected solid waste is transported to the Edom Hill Transfer Station for eventual disposal at the landfills identified in Table 17, *Landfills Serving the City*.

Project construction would generate limited quantities of debris during the construction process. As such, it is anticipated the landfills identified in Table 17 would have adequate capacity to accommodate project-generated construction waste.

Additionally, all construction activities would be subject to conformance with relevant Federal, State, and local requirements related to solid waste disposal. Specifically, the project would be required to demonstrate compliance with the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939), which requires all California cities to "reduce, recycle, and re-use solid waste generated in the State to the maximum extent feasible." The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 requires that at least 50 percent of waste produced is recycled, reduced, or composted. The project would also be required to demonstrate compliance with the 2016 (or most recent) Green Building Code, which includes design and construction measures that act to reduce construction-related waste though material conservation measures and other construction-related efficiency measures. Compliance with these programs would ensure the project's construction-related solid waste impacts would be less than significant.

Concerning project operations, the project would not result in any new land uses capable of producing substantial amounts of solid waste. No operational impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Table 17
Landfills Serving the City

Landfill/Location	Maximum Daily Throughput (tons per day)	Remaining Capacity (cubic yards)	Anticipated Closure Date
Azusa Land Reclamation Co. Landfill 1211 West Gladstone Street, Azusa, CA 91702	8,000	51,512,201	2045
Badlands Sanitary Landfill 31125 Ironwood Avenue, Moreno Valley, CA 92555	4,800	15,748,799	2022
El Sobrante Landfill 10910 Dawson Canyon Road, Corona, CA 91719	16,054	145,530,000	2045
Frank R. Bowerman Sanitary Landfill 11002 Bee Canyon Access Road, Irvine, CA 92618	11,500	205,000,000	2053
Lamb Canyon Sanitary Landfill 16411 State Highway 79, Beaumont, CA 92223	5,500	19,242,950	2029
Olinda Alpha Sanitary Landfill 1942 North Valencia Avenue, Brea, CA 92823	8,000	34,200,000	2021
Salton City Solid Waste Site 935 West Highway 86, Salton City, CA 92275	6,000	65,100,000	2038
Sycamore Landfill 8514 Mast Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92071	5,000	113,972,637	2042
Source: CalRecycle, http://calrecycle.ca.gov/SWFacilities, accessed September 12, 2022.			

Response 7.19(e) Would the project comply with Federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No Impact. Refer to Response 7.19(d).

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.20 WILDFIRE

Response 7.20(a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. The proposed project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area or land classified as a very high fire hazard severity zone.[30] No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.20(b) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

No Impact. The proposed project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area or land classified as a very high fire hazard severity zone.[31] No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.20(c) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

No Impact. The proposed project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area or land classified as a very high fire hazard severity zone.[32] No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

Response 7.20(d) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

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[30] California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, *Cathedral City Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA*, https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/wildland-hazards-building-codes/fire-hazard-severity-zones-maps/, accessed September 12, 2022.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

No Impact. The proposed project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area or land classified as a very high fire hazard severity zone.[33] No impacts would occur in this regard.

Mitigation Measures: No measures are required.

7.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS

Response 7.21(a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number, or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. As discussed in Section 6.4, *Biological Resources*, and Section 7.4, *Biological Resources*, the project site is characterized by active sand fields and stabilized, shielded sand fields containing plants consistent with a Sonoran creosote bush scrub community. The project's potential impacts to sensitive species, wildlife habitat, and sensitive biological resources would be less than significant following conformance with Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16. Overall, with implementation of recommended measures, the project is not anticipated to reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

As indicated in Section 7.5, *Cultural Resources* and Section 7.18, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, implementation of Measure CR-1 would reduce the project's potential impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources. The project site was negative for cultural resources excluding the UPRR, which was modified in 2006 and, thus, is not considered historic under CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. The project, therefore, is not anticipated to eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Measures BIO-1 through BIO-16 and Measure CR-1.

Response 7.21(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Given the project is a regional stormwater improvements project, the project would not result in substantial population growth within the area, either directly or indirectly. Although the project may incrementally affect other resources that were determined to be less than significant, the project's contribution to these effects is not considered "cumulatively considerable" in consideration of the relatively nominal impacts of the project. Implementation of the mitigation measures at the project level would reduce the potential for the

[33] Ibid.

incremental effects of the project to be considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, current projects, or probable future projects.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Sections 7.1 through 7.18.

Response 7.21(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less Than Significant Impact With Measures Incorporated. Previous sections of this IS/MND reviewed the project's potential impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, geology and soils, greenhouse gases, hydrology/water quality, noise, hazards and hazardous materials, traffic, and other issues. As concluded in these previous discussions, the project would result in less than significant environmental impacts with implementation of the mitigation measures. Therefore, with incorporation of the mitigation program, the project would not result in environmental impacts that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Sections 7.1 through 7.18.

VIII. References

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IX. Consultation, Coordination, and List of Preparers (NEPA and CEQA)

The BLM seeks comments from and works closely with other regulatory agencies that administer laws, regulations, and standards that may be applicable to the Proposed Action. The following agencies and organizations were consulted during preparation of this IS/EA:

- Coachella Valley Conservation Commission
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Department Fish and Wildlife
- City of Cathedral City
- Union Pacific Railroad

9.1 SECTION 7 CONSULTATION

The project has been determined to require a consultation under Section 7 of the FESA between BLM and USFWS to determine whether the proposed action may affect any of the Federally listed species known to occur in and around the project area. Specifically, the Federally listed species subject to Section 7 consultation are the Coachella Valley milk-vetch and Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard.

BLM biologist Mr. Bjornstrom began the process of informal consultation with USFWS biologist Felicia Sirchia under Section 7 of the FESA on January 20, 2022. On January 26, 2022, Mr. Bjornstrom and Ms. Sirchia proposed species-specific avoidance and minimization measures for the project, and following several revisions, the species-specific measures were finalized and incorporated into the BRTR on March 24, 2022. Mr. Bjornstrom and Michael Baker biologist Mr. Ryan Winkleman held a phone call on April 14, 2022, to discuss project design and potential impacts. Following this call, Mr. Bjornstrom and Mr. Winkleman gathered material for Mr. Bjornstrom to submit a letter to Ms. Sirchia seeking concurrence that the project may affect but would be unlikely to adversely affect Federally-listed species within the action area. To make a final recommendation, an on-site field meeting occurred on May 26, 2022, between Mr. Bjornstrom, Ms. Sirchia, Mr. Winkleman, and CVWD biologist Mr. Solan Watts. Based on the results of this field meeting, the USFWS requested that the project proceed with formal Section 7 consultation with the BLM as the Federal lead agency, to which the BLM agreed. The formal Section 7 consultation is ongoing.

9.2 SECTION 106 CONSULTATION

Under the FLPMA, BLM is charged with managing public lands in a manner that will "protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values." Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as implemented at 36 CFR Part 800, requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The Revised State Protocol Agreement (2014) between the California State Director of the BLM and the California and Nevada SHPOs defines the roles and relationships between the SHPO offices and the BLM under the National Programmatic Agreement. The State protocol is intended to ensure the California BLM operates "efficiently and effectively in accordance with the intent and requirements of the NHPA." The protocol streamlines the Section 106 process by not requiring case-by-case consultation with the SHPO on most individual undertakings.

9.3 NATIVE AMERICAN CONSULTATION

Pursuant to the formal notification requirements of Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) consultation regarding Tribal Resources under CEQA Public Resources Code (PRC) §21080.3.1: AB 52 (Gatto, 2014), CVWD sent written letters on/about June 9, 2016, requesting consultation on the Proposed Action to the following local tribal governments [those of which that have previously requested AB 52 consultation on CVWD projects]:

- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
- Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians

On June 15, 2016, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (ACBCI) provided a written AB 52 response letter requesting the presence of an approved Native American Cultural Resources Monitor(s) during any ground-disturbing activities, a cultural resources inventory of the project site by a qualified archaeologist prior to construction, and a copy of the cultural resources report. The ACBCI tribal government responded with a second written letter on June 30, 2016, stating the project site is not located within the boundaries of the ACBCI reservation but is within the Tribe's Traditional Use Area (TUA). Again, ACBCI requested monitoring during construction activities, as well as a copy of the cultural resource inventory/survey of the site. A copy of the record search and survey results were provided via email by CVWD to the ACBCI on/about June 30, 2016. No further communications were received from ACBCI. No other tribal government requested project-specific AB 52 consultation. CVWD asserts that project-specific AB 52 consultation is concluded for this proposed project.

OTHER CONSULTATIONS

CVWD has consulted with UPRR regarding various design and ROW aspects related to UPRR facilities and property.

PREPARED BY:

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Frances Yau, Michael Baker International

Ryan Winkleman, Michael Baker International

Molly Valasik, Cogstone Resource Management

REVIEWED BY:

_____

BLM Environmental Coordinator Date

X. Freedom of Information Act Considerations (NEPA)

Public comments submitted for this environmental assessment, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at BLM's Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

XI. Findings of No Significant Impact (NEPA)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NAME OF PROJECT: NORTH CATHEDRAL CITY REGIONAL STORMWATER PROJECT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION HAVE BEEN ASSESSED. BASED ON THE ANALYSIS PROVIDED IN THE ATTACHED EA, I CONCLUDE THE APPROVED ACTION IS NOT A MAJOR FEDERAL ACTION AND WILL RESULT IN NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE CRITERIA IN TITLE 40 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS 1508.18 AND 1508.27. PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT TO FURTHER ANALYZE POSSIBLE IMPACTS IS NOT REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SECTION 102(2)(C) OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969.

_____

Field Manager Date

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

XII. Mitigated Negative Declaration (CEQA)

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

This project would potentially affect the environmental factors checked below, involving at least one impact that is "Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated" as indicated by the checklist within the Initial Study (Section VII. CEQA Considerations).

☐	Aesthetics	☐	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	☐	Air Quality
☒	Biological Resources	☒	Cultural Resources	☐	Energy
☒	Geology /Soils	☐	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐	Hazards & Hazardous Materials
☒	Hydrology / Water Quality	☐	Land Use / Planning	☐	Mineral Resources
☒	Noise	☐	Population / Housing	☐	Public Services
☐	Recreation	☐	Transportation	☒	Tribal Cultural Resources
☐	Utilities/Service Systems	☐	Wildfire	☐	Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

_____ _____

Signature Date