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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT
ORANGE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

Notice of Preparation

Date: October 5, 2023

To: State Clearinghouse, Public Agencies, Interested Parties

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Notice of a Public Scoping Meeting for the South Basin Groundwater Protection Project**

Location: Various locations in Irvine and Santa Ana - see Figures 1 and 2

Applicant: Orange County Water District.
18700 Ward Street
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Project Contact: Orange County Water District
Shawn Nevill, Principal Planner
18700 Ward Street
Fountain Valley, CA 92708
Email: snevill@ocwd.com
Office: (714) 378-3256

Notice is hereby given that the Orange County Water District (OCWD) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for implementation of the South Basin Groundwater Protection Project Interim Remedial Action Plan (proposed Project).

Project Background

Since 2006 the OCWD has been investigating potential sources of volatile organic compounds (VOC) and perchlorate that were detected within Irvine Ranch Water District's production well IRWD-3, located north of Dyer Road and west of State Route 55 (**Figure 1**). Between 2006 and 2020, multiple phases of investigation were conducted by OCWD to define the nature and extent of groundwater contamination so that groundwater cleanup remedies could be evaluated. OCWD's investigations included the installation of 39 groundwater monitoring wells, over 200 cone penetration test borings, bi-annual groundwater sampling and data analysis, and groundwater modeling. These investigations have identified a plume of groundwater contamination bisected by the CA-55 freeway and roughly bounded by East Edinger Avenue on the north; Main Street on the west and south; Von Karman Avenue on the southeast; and Barranca Parkway and Red Hill Avenue on the northeast, which is referred to as the South Basin

groundwater contamination plume. To distinguish cleanup efforts by responsible parties from those of the OCWD, the South Basin was divided into two operable units (OU). Operable Unit 1 is groundwater contamination that exists within the property boundaries of the source sites. Operable Unit 2 (OU2) is defined as the groundwater that exists off the property of numerous groundwater contamination source sites where groundwater contaminant plumes emanating from the individual source sites have migrated and commingled.

To address the groundwater contamination in OU2, OCWD prepared a feasibility study (the “Feasibility Study”) to ensure that appropriate remedial alternatives are developed and evaluated for OU2, and an appropriate remedy selected. As part of the Feasibility Study, a remedial technologies screening analysis was performed to screen out technologies that were determined to be less effective, not implementable, or not cost-effective relative to other technologies. Those technologies that were retained were developed into a reasonable number of alternatives that were further evaluated based on the nine criteria defined in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), 40 CFR § 300.430 (e)(9)(iii). These criteria include 1) overall protection of human health and the environment, 2) compliance with applicable, relevant, and appropriate requirements, 3) long-term effectiveness and permanence, 4) reduction of toxicity, mobility, or volume through treatment, 5) short-term effectiveness, 6) implementability, 7) cost, 8) state acceptance, and 9) community acceptance.

Project Description

OCWD selected Alternative 3 from the Feasibility Study as the proposed Project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis. The proposed Project would include the installation of groundwater extraction wells and conveyance piping, filtration to reduce sediment load, treatment with liquid-phase granular activated carbon (“GAC”) to reduce volatile organic compound (VOC) concentrations, discharge treated water to the sewer, and further treatment by the public-owned treatment works at Orange County Sanitation District Plant 1 and the Orange County Water District Groundwater Replenishment System Advanced Wastewater Purification Facility. The proposed Project would comprise approximately eight extraction well alignments, consisting of a total of approximately 75 extraction wells, approximately 84 monitoring wells, approximately 10,000 feet of collection and discharge piping, and local treatment systems for suspended sediment and contaminant removal. **Figure 2** shows the general locations of the proposed Project infrastructure. The overall alignments for the proposed Project infrastructure have been identified in Figure 2; however, the precise location, number, and configuration for each facility component (e.g., wells, pipelines, and treatment facilities) will be determined during the project design phase. As a result, the EIR will evaluate the proposed Project at a program level and future project-level CEQA analysis will be performed when the project design phase is completed and specific implementing actions are identified.

Preliminary List of Alternatives to be Addressed in EIR

The following includes a preliminary list of alternatives that OCWD may include in the Alternatives section of the EIR.

No Project Alternative. This Alternative includes no installation of wells, pipelines, or treatment facilities. Under this Alternative no monitoring or other remedial action of OU2 groundwater by OCWD would occur

In-Situ Chemical Oxidation. This Alternative includes the installation of injection wells to inject chemical oxidants to degrade the environmental contaminants in the groundwater. This Alternative would not include extraction wells, pipelines, or treatment facilities and would not convey treated groundwater to the sewer system for additional treatment.

Treatment Using Groundwater Extraction and Injection to Basal Sand. This Alternative would install extraction wells, pipelines, and treatment facilities similar to the proposed Project. However, instead of conveying the treated groundwater to the sewer for further treatment, as anticipated with the proposed Project, the treated groundwater would be injected into the subsurface Basal Sand aquifer through the installation of new injection wells.

Issues to be Addressed in the EIR

OCWD will perform a comprehensive program-level evaluation of the potential impacts and environmental effects of the proposed Project in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and will determine if the proposed Project would have potentially significant impacts. The EIR will assess and disclose any reasonably foreseeable direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that would likely result from the construction and operation of the proposed Project. The EIR will identify mitigation measures, if necessary, to avoid, minimize, and offset potentially significant impacts of the proposed Project. The EIR will also describe the alternatives screening analyses conducted for the proposed Project and evaluate alternatives to the proposed Project that would avoid, minimize, and offset potentially significant impacts of the proposed Project while attempting to meet the objectives of the proposed Project.

Based on the project description and the lead agency's understanding of the environmental issues associated with the proposed Project, the following environmental effects will be analyzed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geological and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems

Due to the nature of the proposed Project, OCWD anticipates that the construction of the proposed Project could result in potential short-term air quality, noise, and transportation impacts. Technical analysis will be provided in the EIR to comprehensively determine whether significant impacts will occur. The list provided above omits the Agriculture and Forestry Resources section, Mineral Resources section, Population and Housing section, Public Services section, Recreation section, and the Wildfire section of the CEQA Appendix G Checklist and will not be discussed in the EIR as the environmental factors associated with these sections are not applicable and would not trigger impacts from the proposed Project as discussed below:

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The project site is not located on land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance; land zoned for agricultural use, forest land, timber land; or land under a Williamson Act Contract. The proposed Project would be constructed on land designated by the California Department of Conservation's (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) as Urban/Built Up Land. Therefore, environmental factors affiliated with the Agricultural and Forestry Resources section of the CEQA Appendix G Checklist are not applicable and would not trigger impacts from the proposed Project.

Mineral Resources

According to the General Plans of the cities of Santa Ana and Irvine, the project site is not identified as a known mineral resource zone and does not have a history of mineral extraction uses. Therefore, environmental factors affiliated with the Mineral Resources section of the CEQA Appendix G Checklist are not applicable and would not trigger impacts from the proposed Project.

Population and Housing

The proposed Project is a groundwater remedial project and does not include the construction of new housing. As such, the proposed Project would not directly induce population growth that is not accounted for by the cities of Santa Ana and Irvine and would not induce population growth or displace people or housing.

Public Services

The proposed Project would not result, directly or indirectly, in an unplanned increase in population. Because the proposed Project is a groundwater remedial project that would not include any habitable structures, the proposed Project would not require the construction or expansion of public facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Recreation

As discussed above, the proposed Project would not result, directly or indirectly, in an unplanned increase in population. In addition, no above ground facilities would be proposed within areas with recreational facilities that would permanently remove an existing recreational facility. Because the proposed Project is a groundwater remedial project, the proposed Project would not require the construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Wildfire

The General Plans of the cities of Santa Ana and Irvine do not identify the project site as being within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a State Responsibility Area and does not have a history of wildfire events. Therefore, environmental factors affiliated with the Wildfire section of the CEQA Appendix G Checklist are not applicable and would not trigger impacts from the proposed Project.

Responsible and Trustee Agencies

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being sent to the State Office of Planning and Research, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and other interested parties. OCWD encourages you to express views as to the scope and content of the environmental information in connection with the proposed Project.

Scoping Meeting

Pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21083.9 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, OCWD, as the Lead Agency for the proposed Project, will conduct a Scoping Meeting for the purpose of soliciting oral and written comments from all interested parties, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by

law, trustee agencies, and involved federal agencies, as to the appropriate scope and content of the Draft EIR. The Scoping Meeting will involve a presentation about the proposed Project and the environmental review process and schedule. The Scoping Meeting is for information-gathering and is not a public hearing. No decisions about the proposed Project will be made at the Scoping Meeting.

The scoping meeting will be held **October 19, 2023, 3:00 p.m.**, in-person at the Orange County Water District located in Fountain Valley, California. The location, date and time details of the proposed Project's Scoping Meeting are as follows:

Location: Orange County Water District Board Room, 18700 Ward Street, Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Date and Time: October 19, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

OCWD will consider all written comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed Project received during the 30-day NOP public review period. All written comments received will be reviewed and considered by OCWD as part of the environmental analysis of the proposed Project and will become a part of the public record for the Draft EIR. OCWD encourages all interested individuals and organizations to attend this meeting in person. Interested parties wishing to provide comments or public testimony in response to this NOP are encouraged to provide them in writing, as described under "Submittal of Written Comments," below.

Review and Response Period

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, this NOP is being circulated for a 30-day comment period. As such, the 30-day public review period for the NOP will begin **October 5, 2023**, and ends **November 6, 2023**. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082(b), responses to this NOP must be provided during this public review period to be reviewed and considered by OCWD. **OCWD requests that written comments be provided at the earliest possible date, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 6, 2023.**

Upon completion, the Draft EIR will be available for public review at OCWD, 18700 Ward Street, Fountain Valley, CA 92708 and on OCWD's website at: <https://www.ocwd.com/working-with-us/public-notices/>.

Submittal of Written Comments

Please send written/typed comments (including name, email, telephone number, and/or other contact information) electronically or by mail to the following:

Attention- Shawn Nevill
18700 Ward Street,
Fountain Valley, CA 92708
Email: sneville@ocwd.com

All written responses will be included as Appendices in the Draft EIR and their contents considered in accordance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and OCWD policies and procedures.

ALL INTERESTED PARTIES ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING TO ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR. ATTENDEES WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE INPUT TO THE CONSULTANTS PREPARING THE EIR.

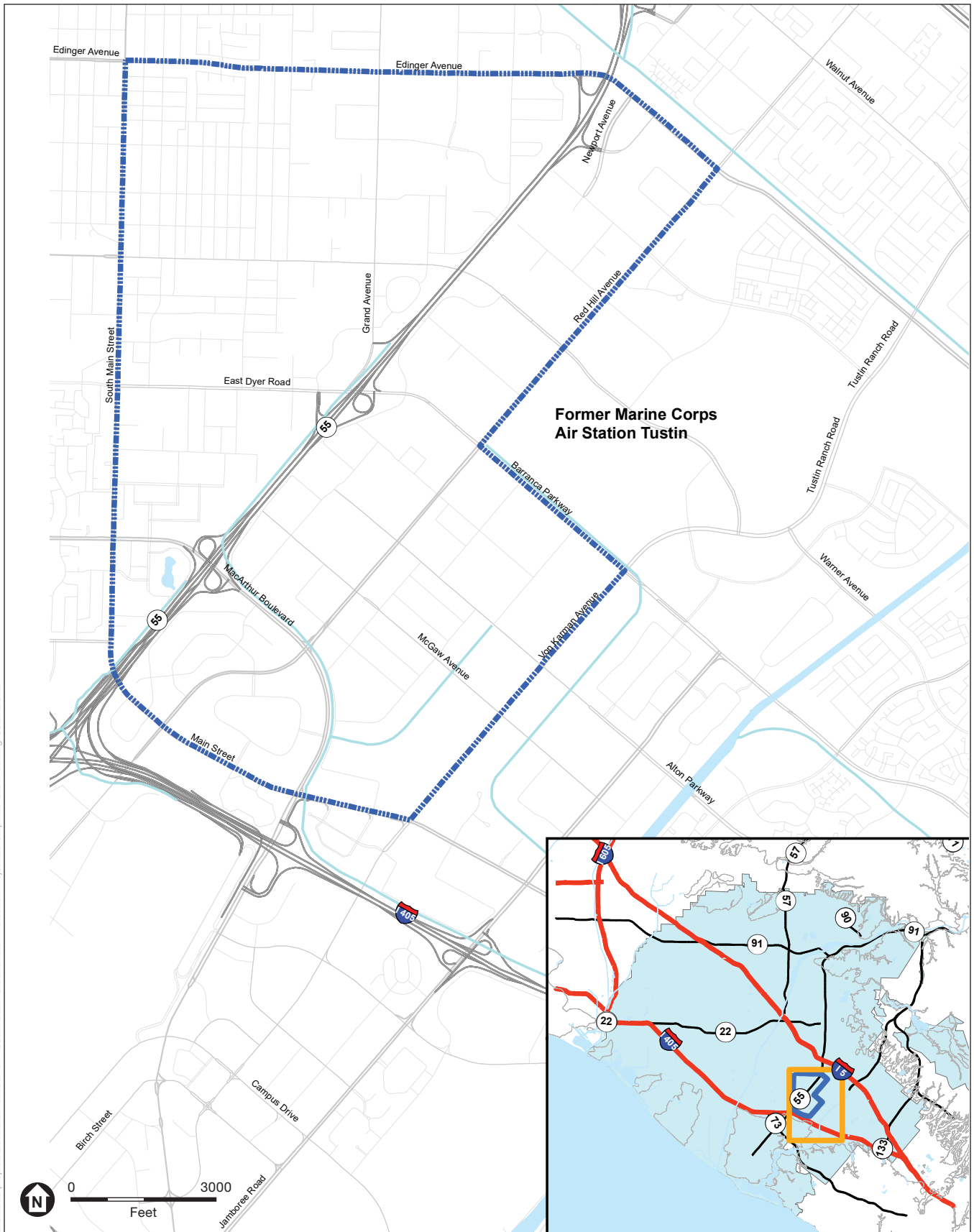


Shawn Nevill, Principal Planner

11-5-23

Date

Orange County Water District



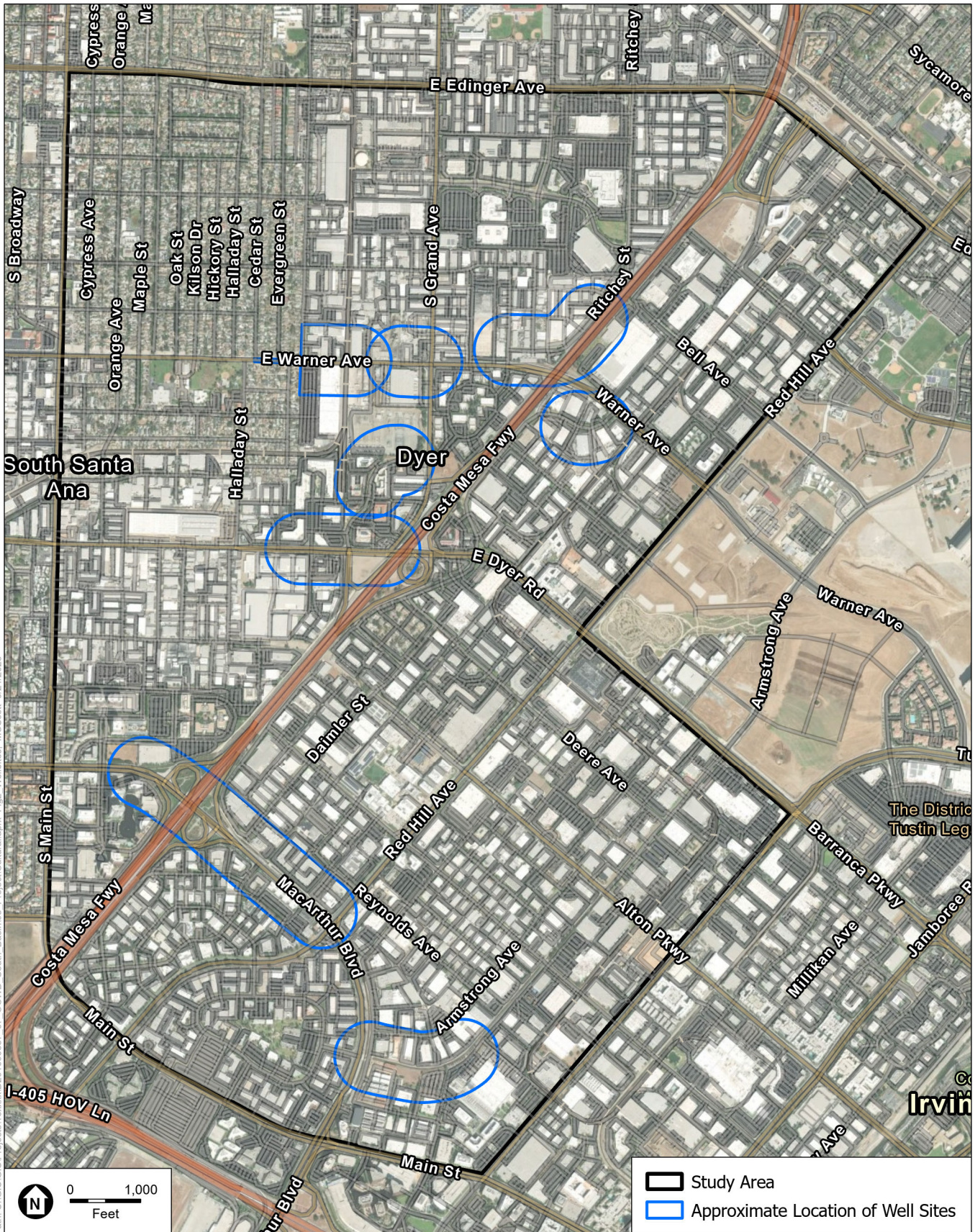
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SOURCE: Hargis+Associates, Inc., 2019

South Basin Groundwater Protection Project

Figure 1
Location Map





Path: U:\GIS\GIS\Projects\16xxxx\1201600387_07_OCWD_South_Basin\03_Project\Cultural.aprx Fig2_WellSites_MCScott_9/21/2023

SOURCE: ESA, 2023

South Basin Groundwater Protection Project

Figure 2
South Basin Proposed Extraction Well Locations

