

PUBLIC NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge In Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse Draft Environmental Impact Report

To: Mailing List

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

State Clearinghouse Number: 2018071021

Project Title: San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge In Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse - Draft Environmental Impact Report

Project Location County of Los Angeles

Summary

This Notice of Availability (NOA) has been prepared to notify responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties that the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Sanitation Districts), as the Lead Agency, has independently chosen to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the San Gabriel River Watershed Project to Reduce River Discharge in Support of Increased Recycled Water Reuse (proposed project). The Sanitation Districts has prepared this NOA in accordance with the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Section 15087).

The purpose of the Draft EIR is to allow the Sanitation Districts to evaluate the potential approval of the proposed project. This notice provides the general public, the local community, responsible agencies, and other interested parties with a summary of the proposed project, potential significant environmental impacts, information regarding the availability of the Draft EIR for public review, and the timeframe for submitting comments on the Draft EIR and public hearing. During preparation of the Final EIR, the Sanitation Districts will include responses to comments received during the comment period of this Draft EIR.

Background

The Sanitation Districts are proposing to incrementally reduce discharges of recycled water from five water reclamation plants (WRPs), including the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP, each of which currently discharges into the San Gabriel River, San Jose Creek, or Coyote Creek. The locations of the five WRPs are shown in Figure 1. The Pomona WRP currently discharges recycled water

to San Jose Creek. The San Jose Creek WRP, Whittier Narrows WRP, and Los Coyotes WRP each discharges to the San Gabriel River. The Long Beach WRP discharges to Coyote Creek at the confluence with the San Gabriel River. The project study area includes the San Gabriel River and San Jose Creek.

The diverted water would supply recycled water programs implemented by other agencies. The proposed reduction in water discharges would occur over time, and would not involve any construction activities or other physical changes to the environment other than the decreased volume of discharge. Future construction of infrastructure projects to deliver recycled water will be covered under separate CEQA compliance documents prepared by the implementing agencies.

Purpose and Need

The proposed project would facilitate the increased use of recycled water consistent with state law and policy, including Water Code sections 461, 13500 *et seq.*, and 13575 *et seq.*; Government Code Section 65601 *et seq.*; The State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) Policy for Water Quality Control for Recycled Water (Recycled Water Policy); and the Executive Order issued by the Governor on April 25, 2014. The Executive Order promotes the development of recycled water to serve areas in need and encourages the SWRCB to expedite requests to change water permits to enable those deliveries. The Sanitation Districts are proposing to submit one Wastewater Change Petition per WRP pursuant to California Water Code Section 1211 to change the place and purpose of use of recycled water, while maintaining sensitive habitat supported by historic effluent discharges. A total of four petitions will be submitted for the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP. The SWRCB 1211 Order WW0098 for the Whittier Narrows WRP for the change in place of use, purpose of use and quantity of treated wastewater currently discharged to the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel River was approved in December 2018. The Whittier Narrows WRP is included in this Draft EIR for evaluation of cumulative impacts of reduced discharges of recycled water to the San Gabriel River Watershed.

In its Recycled Water Policy, the SWRCB has set a goal of increasing the use of recycled water to 1.5 million acre-feet (MAF) per year by 2020 and to 2.5 MAF per year by 2030. One of the SWRCB's goals is to substitute as much recycled water for potable water as possible by 2030. "The purpose of the [Board's Recycled Water Policy] is to encourage the safe use of recycled water from wastewater sources...." (SWRCB 2018).

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2018/rs2018_0057.pdf

The objectives of the proposed project are as follows:

- Consistent with State law and policy, support increased recycled water use through maximizing the availability of treated effluent that would otherwise be discharged to flood control channels within the San Gabriel River watershed
- Sustain or, if feasible, enhance sensitive habitats that have benefitted from historical treated effluent discharges to the San Gabriel River watershed through more efficient discharges from Sanitation Districts' WRPs.

Project Description

The Sanitation Districts are proposing to incrementally reduce discharges of recycled water from the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP. The proposed use of the recycled water would be implemented by water agencies and other users over time, and depending on future needs for non-potable water. The Sanitation Districts will continue to maintain the ability to discharge treated water at the same points but anticipates discharging lesser quantities. A brief description of the proposed project's discharge operation modifications is provided below:

- The San Jose Creek WRP discharge is currently rotated between five discharge locations within the San Gabriel River watershed as show on in Figure 1. The use of the discharge locations is irregular throughout the year and varies year-to-year, depending on the availability of groundwater recharge facilities and channel maintenance activities. Under the proposed project, discharges from the San Jose Creek WRP at discharge point SJC002 would be reduced from an annual average of approximately 9.48 million of gallons per day (MGD) to a minimum monthly average of approximately 5 MGD. Although the total annual volume would be reduced, the new monthly average discharge would provide a more consistent discharge rate compared to existing conditions. Discharges would be timed to more efficiently meet the water demand needs of sensitive habitat. The diverted water would be conveyed for beneficial reuse to groundwater recharge basins or other reuse facilities.
- The Pomona WRP discharges into a concrete-lined portion of San Jose Creek which contains no sensitive habitat. As San Jose Creek nears the San Gabriel River, the concrete lining gives way to a soft-bottom reach. Current and historic groundwater upwelling occurs within the lined portion of San Jose Creek upstream of the transition location. The proposed project would result in zero discharge from the Pomona WRP. The Pomona WRP discharges an average of approximately 3.27 MGD is discharged to the South Fork San Jose Creek.
- The Whittier Narrows WRP has three discharge locations but only one of these is tributary to the San Gabriel River. A recently approved modification to discharge from the Whittier Narrows WRP (SWRCB Order WW0098) will reduce discharges to the San Gabriel River by approximately 1 percent (0.01 MGD). This modification was covered by a separate CEQA document in 2018. The Whittier Narrows WRP discharges an average of approximately 1.19 MGD to the San Gabriel River.
- The Los Coyotes WRP discharges into a concrete-lined portion of the San Gabriel River. Discharge flow is contained within the low-flow channel of the river under typical dry-weather conditions. This project proposes to maintain a minimum discharge flow of 2 MGD to prevent the low-flow channel from going completely dry downstream of the plant. The Los Coyotes WRP discharges an average of approximately 17.0 MGD to the San Gabriel River.
- The Long Beach WRP discharges into the concrete-lined Coyote Creek approximately 3,000 feet before the start of the San Gabriel River estuary. Urban runoff and natural flows in Coyote Creek upstream of the Long Beach WRP maintain a consistent flow in the creek at the discharge location. This project proposes a minimum discharge flow of zero from the

Long Beach WRP.¹ The Long Beach WRP discharges an average of approximately 6.72 MGD to the Coyote Creek.

Potential Significant Environmental Impacts

A summary of environmental impacts addressed in the Draft EIR is presented below:

Biological Resources: The proposed project would reduce discharges from five WRPs. Potential sensitive biological resources within and along the San Gabriel River and other tributaries could be impacted by changes in operations under the proposed project. All potential impacts to biological resources have been further evaluated in the Draft EIR. Analysis shows that the proposed project would have no impact or a less than significant impact after implementation of mitigation measures.

Hydrology and Water Quality: The Sanitation Districts are proposing to reduce discharges of recycled water from five WRPs including the San Jose Creek WRP, the Pomona WRP, the Whittier Narrows WRP, the Los Coyotes WRP, and the Long Beach WRP, each of which currently discharges into the San Gabriel River or San Jose Creek. The Draft EIR has evaluated potential hydrology and water quality impacts of the proposed changes in operation on the tributaries and groundwater resources within the San Gabriel River Watershed. Analysis shows that the proposed project would have no impact or a less than significant impact.

Recreation: The proposed project does not propose development that could result in an increased demand for the use of park or other recreational facilities in the area. However, the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area is a popular recreation area, and the proposed project could affect the open space resources or infringe on public access. All potential impacts to recreation opportunities and facilities with implementation of the proposed project have been further evaluated in the Draft EIR. Analysis shows that the proposed project would have no impact or a less than significant impact.

¹ In addition, the Long Beach WRP would increase contributions to the Alamitos Seawater Intrusion Barrier injection well system and may increase recycled water available for other reuse projects. Los Coyotes, Pomona, and Whittier Narrows WRPs would also increase contributions to recycled water use projects

Public Review and Public Hearings

Pursuant to Section 21092 of the Public Resources Code, the Draft EIR will be available for public review beginning on August 2, 2019 and ending on September 16, 2019. As part of the review process, this Notice of Availability is being sent to responsible, trustee, and interested agencies as well as interested individuals. Written comments on the Draft EIR should be sent to the following individual:

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The Draft EIR is available for review online at www.lacsds.org. Hard copies of the Draft EIR are also available for public review at the following location:

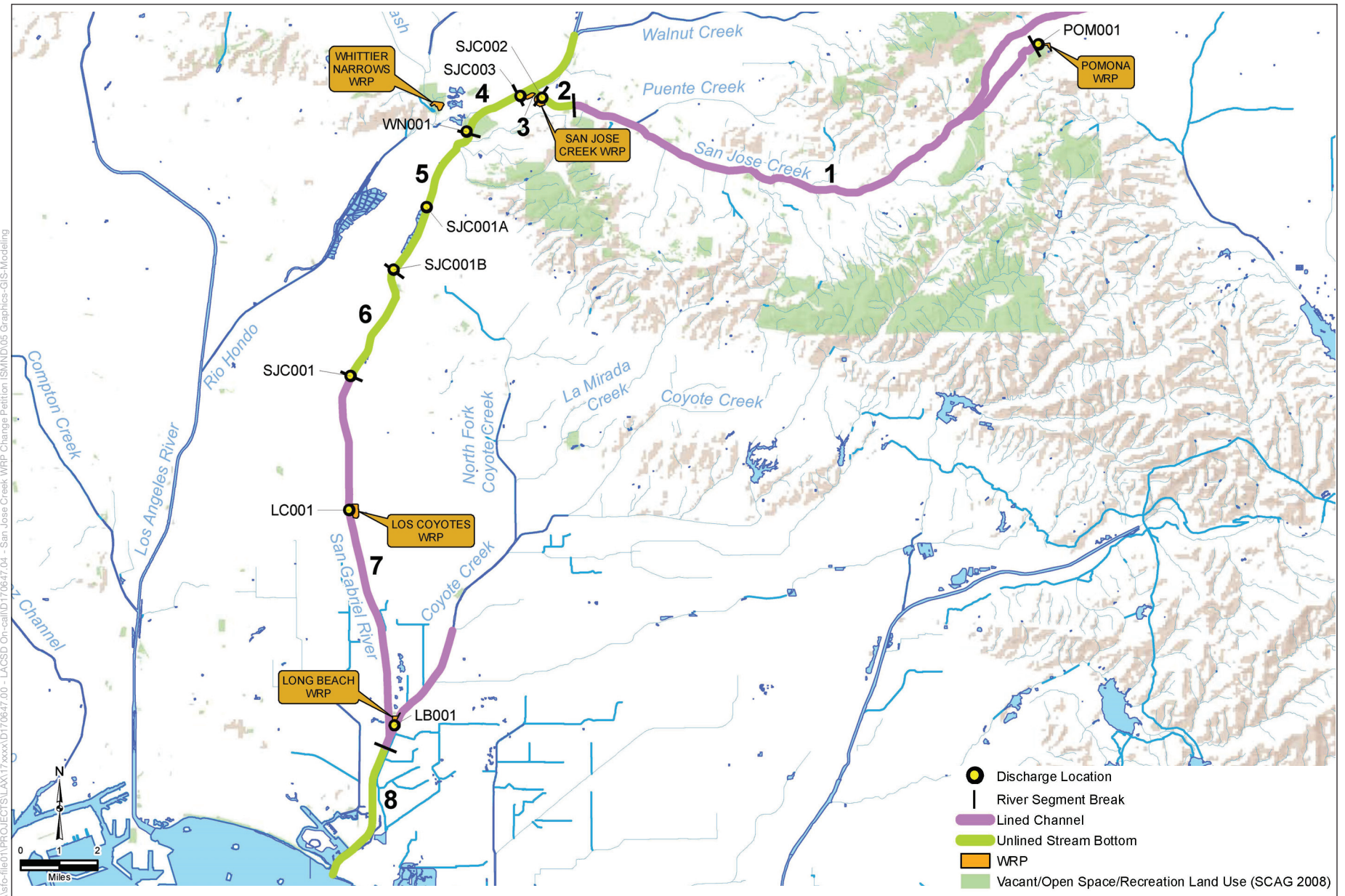
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Public Counter
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601

A public hearing will be held at the date and location noted below. At the public hearing, a brief presentation and overview of the proposed project will be provided. After the presentation, oral and written comments will be accepted.

Date: August 21, 2019

Time: 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Location: Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
District's Board Room
1955 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601



SOURCE: SANITATION DISTRICTS, 2019

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