

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

**Santa Ana River and Mill Creek Water Rights Application  
and Groundwater Management Plan**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (District) in its role as Lead Agency has completed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project described below and invites comments on the adequacy and completeness of the environmental analyses and mitigation measures described in the Draft EIR. The public hearing to consider the Draft EIR will be held at a meeting of the District at 7:00 pm on August 10, 2004 at the District offices: 1630 West Redlands Boulevard Redlands, CA 92373.

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The project location is the District service area, approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles in the semiarid San Bernardino Valley of San Bernardino County, California. The service area overlies the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin. The Bunker Hill Basin extends northwest to the San Gabriel Mountains, on the south to the Crafton Hills, on the east to the San Bernardino Mountains, and on the southwest to a low, east-facing escarpment of the San Jacinto fault. Alluvial fans extend from the base of the mountains and hills that surround the valley and coalesce to form a broad, sloping alluvial plain in the central part of the valley with porous sandy soils within the Santa Ana River wash area (Wash Area), which has been used traditionally for percolation basins for groundwater recharge.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW:** The District and its predecessors have conducted groundwater recharge activities since 1912 in areas overlying the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin in the San Bernardino Valley. The District's mission is to ensure recharge of the basin in an environmentally and economically responsible way, using local native surface water to the maximum extent practicable. The District strives to improve the supply and quality of groundwater, balancing such demands with those of land, mineral, and biological resources.

Within the past decade, several developments have occurred on the Santa Ana River that have the potential to affect the District's ability to achieve its mission. One of these is the completion in 1999 of Seven Oaks Dam, which has modified the hydrologic regime of the Santa Ana River to address flood risk by attenuating peak flows. Additionally, a number of parties have submitted applications to appropriate water from the Santa Ana River, including one party that proposes to divert water from behind Seven Oaks Dam, upstream of the District's historical points of diversion. The completion of Seven Oaks Dam and the pending water rights applications suggest that overall water management in the Upper Santa Ana River may be modified within the next several years. In light of the potential changes in water management on the Upper Santa Ana River, and to ensure that its groundwater recharge activities continue to be conducted in the most prudent and efficient manner, the District is proposing the following three actions that constitute the Proposed Project:

1. Obtain a permit from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to appropriate water from the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek consistent with the District's existing rights and practices;
2. Establish an updated operations plan for the District's groundwater recharge activities (Program for Effective Recharge Coordination or PERC); and
3. Obtain an access agreement, if necessary, with the San Bernardino County Flood Control District, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, and Orange County Flood Control District (collectively, the "Local Sponsors") to address the District's groundwater recharge activities in

the context of flood control operations of Seven Oaks Dam pursuant to the long-term operations plan for the dam.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FINDINGS:** The Draft EIR has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. The Draft EIR prepared for the project identifies and discusses potential impacts, mitigation measures, and monitoring requirements for identified subject areas. Potential significant effects on the environment are anticipated in the following area: Hydrology and Water Quality. Reductions in District recharge operations in accordance with the PERC criteria for high-groundwater conditions would result in reduced groundwater levels. Under some circumstances, the reductions could represent substantial depletion of local groundwater supply. This effect would be potentially significant.

**PUBLIC HEARING: August 10, 2004 at 7:00 P.M.  
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District  
1630 W. Redlands Blvd., Suite A  
Redlands, CA 92373**

**All interested persons are encouraged to attend the public hearing and to present written and/or oral comments on the Draft EIR.**

**DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY:** Copies of the draft EIR will be available for public review and may be obtained on and after June 29, 2004 at the District offices at the address shown above, at the Redlands Public Library (A.K. Smiley), and at the Mentone, Loma Linda, Highland, Grand Terrace, and San Bernardino branches of the San Bernardino County Public Library.

**HOW TO COMMENT:** Written comments may be provided to Mr. Lawrence Libeu, General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, by mail at: 1630 West Redlands Boulevard, Redlands, CA 92373; by fax at: (909) 793-0188, prior to the close of public review period at 5 p.m. on August 12, 2004, or provide testimony at the public hearing on the date and time specified above.

**Note:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this hearing, please contact the District at (909) 793-2503. Notification at least 48 hours prior to the public hearing will enable District staff to make reasonable accommodations.