****

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY**

**OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/**

**SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE**

**UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER WASH HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date:** | December 6, 2019 |
| **To:** | Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties |
| **Subject**: | Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Environmental Impact Report |
| **Project:** | Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan |
| **Lead Agency:** | San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District |
| **Review  Period:** | December 6, 2019, through January 20, 2020 |
| **Project Location**: | The Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan Planning Area is generally bounded by Greenspot Road to the north and east, Alabama Street on the west, and the Santa Ana River Wash to the south, within the City of Highland, the City of Redlands, and a portion of unincorporated San Bernardino County. |

**Project Description:** The San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (Conservation District) as the Lead Agency has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/SEIR; FWS–R8–ES–2019–N111, SCH 2004051023) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan (Wash Plan). The proposed project is adoption and implementation of the Wash Plan, which will provide a coordinated process for permitting and mitigating specific public and private projects, referred to as Covered Activities, that may result in take of five rare, threatened and endangered species within a 4,892-acre portion of the Santa Ana River Wash in the City of Highland, City of Redlands, and a small portion of unincorporated San Bernardino County.

Covered Activities implemented by the Conservation District and Participating Entities include construction, operation and/or maintenance of land or facilities associated with 1) aggregate mining, 2) water conservation, 3) wells and water infrastructure, 4) transportation, 5) flood control, 6) trails, 7) habitat enhancement, and 8) agriculture. Mitigation for the Covered Projects under the Wash Plan would result in permanent conservation and management of 1,659.9 acres of native habitat for the benefit of slender-horned spineflower, Santa Ana River woolly-star, cactus wren, California gnatcatcher, and San Bernardino kangaroo rat.

Approval of the Wash Plan would provide the Conservation District with an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Federal Endangered Species Act. Under the provisions of the ITP, the Conservation District may extend Wash Plan take coverage to other Participating Entities implementing Covered Projects through a Certificate of Inclusion process.

The EIS component of the DEIS/SEIR was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) under the oversight of the Service as the NEPA Lead Agency. In accordance with NEPA, the Service is publishing a separate NEPA Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. Information about the Federal Register NOA is available at the following Service website: <https://www.fws.gov/carlsbad/HCPs/HCP_Docs.html>.

The purpose of the DEIS/SEIR process is to provide stakeholders, agencies and the public with an opportunity to consider the proposed project. The DEIS/SEIR describes the project objectives, analyzes the potential impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed project, and identifies potential measures to minimize, avoid, or mitigate significant adverse effects on environmental resources.

**Project Objectives:** The primary objectives of the proposed project are to:

* Ensure the continued ability of the Conservation District to replenish the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin with native Santa Ana River water using existing and potential future water recharge facilities in the Wash Plan;
* Ensure the continued ability of the San Bernardino County flood Control District (SBCFCD) to protect land and property by managing the floodwaters of the Santa Ana River and its local tributaries (Mill Creek, Plunge Creek, and City Creek);
* Conserve, maintain and restore habitat for sensitive, threatened, or endangered species populations on the project site in perpetuity as mitigation for impacts from Covered Activities such as mining, designation of areas for future roadways or water spreading facilities;
* Accommodate the relocation and expansion of aggregate mining quarries to support long-term availability of high quality aggregate for local and regional use on land adjacent to existing quarries;
* Accommodate arterial roads and highways to provide safe modes of travel; and
* Provide trails for public enjoyment of the natural environment.

**Potential Environmental Impacts**: The DEIS/SEIR discusses the proposed project’s impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed project, and identifies where significant environmental impacts may occur. The analysis outlines mitigation strategies to be implemented by the Conservation District to avoid or minimize impacts wherever feasible. The DEIS/SEIR anticipates that the proposed project may have significant and unavoidable effects on the environment in the following resource areas:  Air Quality. In addition, the Wash Plan and associated Covered Activities are not anticipated to foster substantial economic or residential growth in the region and thus are not likely to result in growth that produces significant and unavoidable secondary effects.

**Public Meetings:** Two public meetings will be held to receive comments regarding the content of the DEIS/SEIR. The public meetings will include a brief presentation to provide an overview of the proposed project and the CEQA process. Written comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit comments in writing at the public meetings. Written comments may also be submitted anytime during the DEIS/SEIR review period. The public meetings will be held as follows:

**Thursday, January 9, 2020**   
2:00 p.m.   
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District   
1630 West Redlands Blvd, Suite A

Redlands, CA 92373

**Thursday, January 9, 2020**  
5:30 p.m.   
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District   
1630 West Redlands Blvd, Suite A

Redlands, CA 92373

**Availability of the SEIR**: Copies of the Supplemental EIR will be available for review at the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (1630 West Redlands Blvd, Suite A, Redlands CA 92373) during regular business hours starting Friday, December 6, 2019. The SEIR will be circulated for a 45-day period for public review, beginning December 6, 2019, and ending on January 20, 2020. Copies of the SEIR will also be available at the following libraries:

A.K. Smiley Library  
125 West Vine Street   
Redlands, CA 92373

Highland Sam J. Racadio Library & Environmental Learning Center  
7863 Central Avenue   
Highland, CA 92346

**Agency and Public Comments:** In accordance with the time limits mandated by CEQA, comments on the SEIR must be received by the Conservation District no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 20, 2020. Please submit written comments to:

**By U.S. Mail**:   
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District   
c/o Daniel Cozad

1630 West Redlands Blvd, Suite A

Redlands, CA 92373

**By Email:**   
[dcozad@sbvwcd.org](mailto:dcozad@sbvwcd.org)

**The DEIS/SEIR can be viewed online at**:  
https://www.sbvwcd.org/wash-plan/hcp.html

**For more information, please contact:**  
Daniel Cozad

General Manager  
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District  
(909) 793-2503

**Hazardous Material Statement:** The project site is not listed on any list of hazardous waste sites prepared pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.