



**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN**

Date: May 17, 2021
To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties
Subject: Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Report
Project: Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan
Lead Agency: San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
Review Period: May 17, 2021, through July 16, 2021
Project Location: The Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan Planning Area is in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, California, and encompasses approximately 862,966 acres.

Project Description: The San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) as the Lead Agency has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR; SCH #2018121017) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (Upper SAR HCP or HCP). The Proposed Project includes the adoption and implementation of the Upper SAR HCP, which will provide a framework to protect, enhance, and restore the habitat for specifically identified plant and animal species (Covered Species), while streamlining permitting for specified projects (Covered Activities) in a specified Permit Area. The term Proposed Project, as used in this EIR, for CEQA purposes, is defined as the adoption and implementation of the Upper SAR HCP and associated Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) for Permittee Covered Activities. Therefore, the Proposed Project evaluated in this DEIR is focused on the potential direct and indirect impacts that could result from the implementation of conservation actions and the issuance of ITPs for Covered Activities.

For biological resources and hydrology, the Proposed Project impacts address the net effect of implementing the conservation actions in context with the Covered Species habitat impacts. The Proposed Project is specifically designed to offset (minimize and mitigate) Covered Activity habitat and streamflow impacts on Covered Species.

The analyses presented in this EIR are focused on the direct and indirect impacts that may result from implementing the Proposed Project, which include the following major elements:

- Issuance of permits for the incidental take of 20 of the 22 Covered Species.
- Conservation and restoration activities within an HCP Preserve System to be established and managed for Covered Species habitat.

- Additional actions to improve aquatic, riparian, and alluvial scrub habitats, as well as additional sensitive habitats throughout the Upper Santa Ana River watershed (i.e., not necessarily within the HCP Preserve System).
- Species-specific conservation measures that also include the re-establishment of native fish species, through processes of captive headstarting and translocation, to create additional resilience to extinction by establishing redundant populations in the Upper Santa Ana River watershed mountain tributary streams.
- Upper SAR HCP Preserve System management and monitoring, including habitat improvement, the control of nonnative species (flora and fauna), Covered Species captive headstarting and translocation activities, species surveys and research, additional vegetation management to reduce fire potential, site cleanup, preserve patrols, and others.

Project Goals and Objectives: The Proposed Project would accomplish the following HCP within the HCP Preserve System:

- **HCP Goal 1:** Conserve Covered Species and manage their habitats to contribute to the recovery of listed species or those that may become listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act.
- **HCP Goal 2:** Maintain or simulate natural ecological processes necessary to maintain the functionality of the natural communities and habitats upon which the Covered Species depend within the HCP Preserve System and to the greatest extent possible outside the HCP Preserve System.
- **HCP Goal 3:** Maintain or increase habitat connectivity in the HCP Preserve System and to adjacent protected habitat areas to reduce isolation between metapopulations of Covered Species.
- **HCP Goal 4:** Actively manage lands within the HCP Preserve System for the benefit of Covered Species to maintain or increase the health of populations.

The following Proposed Project objectives would support the HCP Goals:

- **Objective 1:** Conserve, restore/rehabilitate, and manage a minimum of 1,348.8 acres of native habitat for Covered Species in the HCP Preserve System over the duration of the life of the permit.
- **Objective 2:** Reduce anthropogenic and environmental threats to Covered Species and their habitats within the HCP Preserve System.
- **Objective 3:** Maintain and successfully enhance existing and new Santa Ana sucker habitats.
- **Objective 4:** Maintain and successfully enhance existing San Bernardino kangaroo rat habitats.
- **Objective 5:** Implement successful conservation measures to promote the recovery of Covered Species.
- **Objective 6:** Conduct scientific research in order to improve our knowledge and fill existing and future data gaps.

Potential Environmental Impacts: The DEIR discusses the Proposed Project's impacts associated with implementation and management of the Proposed Project and identifies where significant environmental impacts may occur. The analysis outlines mitigation strategies to be implemented by the Valley District and Permittees to avoid or minimize impacts wherever feasible. The DEIR anticipates that the Proposed Project may have significant and unavoidable effects on the

environment in the following resource areas: Air Quality, Biological Resources, Hydrology, and Tribal Cultural Resources. In addition, the HCP would not have any direct growth-inducing impacts because no development that would increase the demand for water and wastewater services would be specifically authorized. The Proposed Project would not confer or imply authorization of specific activities or projects and all Covered Activities and projects would be subject to the approval authority of the individual Permittee Agencies in whose jurisdiction the activity or project would occur. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in direct or indirect growth-inducing impacts.

Public Meeting: In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines §15105, this Draft EIR has been submitted to the OPR State Clearinghouse for review by State agencies and is available for public review and comment for a 60-day review period. All comments should be directed to:

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
Heather Dyer, CEO/General Manager
380 East Vanderbilt Way, San Bernardino, CA 92408
Email: uppersarhcp@icf.com

During the 60-day review period, Valley District will conduct one public meeting open to the general public. The public meeting will include a brief presentation providing an overview of the Proposed Project, CEQA process, and findings of the Draft EIR. The meeting will be held as a Zoom meeting on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Zoom meeting will be publicly accessible at the following link during the designated meeting time, <https://sbvmwd.zoom.us/j/89451224320>.

Agency and Public Comments: Comments on the Draft EIR will be accepted in writing via mail or email. Written comments may be submitted anytime during the Draft EIR review period. All written comments received on the Draft EIR will be considered, and responses will be included in the Final EIR. In accordance with the time limits mandated by CEQA, comments on the Draft EIR must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the 60-day review period. Please submit written comments to:

By U.S. Mail:

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
c/o Heather Dyer, CEO/General Manager
380 East Vanderbilt Way
San Bernardino, CA 92408

By Email:

uppersarhcp@icf.com

The DEIR can be viewed online at:

www.uppersarhcp.com

For more information, please contact:

Heather Dyer
CEO/General Manager
San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
uppersarhcp@icf.com