



Notice of Availability and Public Meeting Notice – Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the San Juan Watershed Project

San Juan Watershed Project

To: California Office of Planning and Research; Responsible and Trustee Agencies; County Clerks; and Other Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Availability of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report and Public Meeting Notice

Project: San Juan Watershed Project

Lead Agency: Santa Margarita Water District

Project Description: The Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD), in conjunction with South Coast Water District (SCWD), is proposing to the San Juan Watershed Project (proposed project) that would develop facilities to manage surface water resources to enhance groundwater resources of the San Juan Groundwater Basin. The proposed project would increase the capture and storage of urban runoff and stormwater, optimize the use of recycled water for beneficial reuse, minimize the potential for undesirable impacts, and augment local groundwater supplies to reduce the region's dependence on imported water. SMWD, acting as Lead Agency, has prepared a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide decisionmakers, the public, and trustee agencies with information about the potential effects on the local and regional environment associated with implementation of the proposed project.

The proposed project would occur within the San Juan Creek Watershed, within Southern Orange County on the western flank of the Santa Ana Mountains, and would be constructed in multiple phases. The first phase (Phase I) would include installation of three rubber dams within San Juan Creek that would act as in-stream detention facilities for both dry weather and wet weather flows within San Juan Creek and Arroyo Trabuco. The dams would promote in-stream recharge of the groundwater basin by allowing for the ponded water to naturally infiltrate into the stream bed. In the case of certain storm events, the rubber dams would deflate to allow full passage of the stormwater flow downstream to the Doheny State Beach. Each dam would be operated by a control building that would house equipment for telemetry, dam controls, surveillance, and compressed air. Phase I may also include upgrades to the existing City of San Juan Capistrano Ground Water Recovery Plant (CSJC GWRP) to improve treatment efficiencies of the treatment processes at the facility. The three Phase I rubber dams would be located in the southwestern portion of the San Juan Groundwater Basin within the cities of San Juan Capistrano and Dana Point.

Subsequent phases of the proposed project would develop more aggressive surface water and groundwater management practices to maximize use of the available storage capacity with both stormwater and recycled water. Facilities associated with the proposed project's subsequent phases include construction of additional rubber dams within San Juan Creek and/or Arroyo Trabuco, recycled water conveyance pipelines, groundwater extraction wells, additional upgrades at the existing CSJC GWRP, and upgrades at the existing SCWD Groundwater Recovery Facility (GWRF).

Project Objectives: The primary objectives of Phase I of the proposed project include:

- Augment local water supplies through increased stormwater recharge in San Juan Creek.
- Reduce loss of potential groundwater recharge to Pacific Ocean.
- Continue implementing groundwater management practices through the SJBA APM Plan to maintain and augment beneficial uses of the resource in an environmentally sound and cost-efficient manner.
- Manage recharge in such a way that allows for maintenance of the San Juan Creek channel's full capacity during storm events.

The primary objectives of the subsequent phases of the proposed project include:

- Enable recharge of the San Juan Groundwater Basin with recycled water through the utilization of existing treatment facilities and construction of new conveyance facilities (pipelines) and rubber dams.
- Enable additional groundwater recovery through the expansion of existing treatment facilities, utilization of existing and potentially new extraction wells, and conversion of private groundwater pumpers to alternative sources of water.

Potential Environmental Impacts: The Draft PEIR assesses construction and operation of the proposed project, and identifies where significant environmental impacts may occur. The analysis outlines mitigation strategies to be implemented by SMWD to avoid or minimize impacts wherever feasible. The Draft PEIR does not identify any unavoidable significant environmental impacts.

Public Meeting: One public meeting will be held to receive comments regarding the content of the Draft PEIR. 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 Draft PEIR review period. The public meetings will be held **Tuesday, January 30, 2018** from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the **San Juan Capistrano Community Center**, located at **25925 Camino Del Avion, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675**.

Availability of the Draft PEIR: Copies of the Draft PEIR will be available for review at the Santa Margarita Water District (26111 Antonio Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688) during regular business hours starting December 21, 2017. The Draft PEIR will be circulated for a 65-day period for public review, beginning December 21, 2017 and ending on February 23, 2017. Copies of the Draft PEIR will also be available at the following libraries:

San Juan Capistrano Library
31495 El Camino Real
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

Dana Point Library
33841 Niguel Road
Dana Point, CA 92629

The Draft PEIR can also be viewed online at: <http://www.sanjuanwatershed.com>.

Agency and Public Comments: Comments on the Draft EIR must be received **no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 23, 2017**. Please submit written comments to:

By U.S. Mail:

- Tom Barnes, Environmental Science Associates
- 626 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1100
- Los Angeles, CA 90017

By Email:

- tbarnes@esassoc.com

For more information, please contact:

Don Bunts, Chief Engineer

Santa Margarita Water District

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