Notice of Availability
Draft Environmental Impact Report
2023 Strategic Water Resources Plan Update
Palmdale Water District

State Clearinghouse # 2023080290

Project Applicant/Proponent: Palmdale Water District (PWD)
2029 E Ave Q, Palmdale, CA 93550

Notice is hereby given that a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2023 Strategic Water Resources Plan Update (Project) is available for public review. PWD is the Lead Agency, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Project Location:

The proposed Project is located throughout PWD's 47-square mile service area in the Antelope Valley area of Los Angeles County, California. A portion of the Palmdale Ditch component of the Project extends south of the PWD service area and a portion of the conveyance facilities to the Upper Amargosa Creek Water Recharge Project extend north of the PWD service area in unincorporated Los Angeles County (Figure 1). The Project site is located in the Palmdale and Ritter Ridge U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles (Figure 2).

Project Description:

PWD has updated its Strategic Water Resources Plan (SWRP). The goal of this SWRP Update was to reevaluate PWD's ability to meet the demands of both current and future customers through the year 2050 while aligning with PWD's mission, vision, and core values. The SWRP Update, completed in June 2023, gives a new look at PWD's long-term plan for supplying water to its customers. It looks at PWD's current mix of water sources, which includes groundwater, surface water, imported water, and recycled water. The aim was to find the best way to meet the needs of a growing population under changing future conditions. A Preferred Strategy was identified that optimizes PWD's mix of water sources up to the year 2050; focusing on three fundamental timeframes: today (2023-2025), near-term (2025 to 2035), and long term (2035 to 2050).

The Preferred Strategy, also referred to as the 'proposed Project' in this EIR, and described herein, includes proposed actions that make the most of local water supplies and facilities. It also aims to increase water storage in the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin. This is to make sure there is enough water during times when there is a shortage of imported water. The SWRP Update is meant to act as a guide to the PWD Board of Directors and staff as PWD works on and updates other planning documents and undertakes key decisions and projects to prepare the PWD for the future. These documents include the urban water management plan, water system plan, financial plans, and other planning documents.

The proposed Project consists of the following components:

Imported Supplies

Under the proposed Project, PWD would maximize its existing Table A allocations by recharging unused and untreated imported water to meet potable demands directly. Up to 1,200 acre-feet (AF) of imported

supplies would be recharged to the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin each year via the Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project. Imported water beyond existing contracts would not be purchased. Existing turnouts, conveyance, recharge and treatment would be used to maximize current Table A water allocations; no new facilities would be constructed

The environmental impacts of the Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge Project are not analyzed further in the EIR because it has been previously evaluated under CEQA, and discretionary permits, including from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) have already been obtained. Likewise, the environmental impacts of SWP facilities are not analyzed further in the EIR because the SWP has been previously evaluated under CEQA.

Pure Water Antelope Valley Project and Recycled Water Injection

Under the Preferred Strategy, PWD would maximize beneficial use of recycled water through construction and implementation of an approximately 5 million gallon per day advanced water treatment plant, referred to as Pure Water Antelope Valley project. The Pure Water Antelope Valley project would be located on vacant property between East Avenue Q and 25th Street East, near Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant. The Pure Water Antelope Valley project is conceptual in capacity and CEQA evaluation is anticipated in the future.

Under the proposed Project, PWD would store the entitled recycled water in the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin by injecting it into the groundwater basin. PWD would install injection wells to be used for the injection of purified water from the future Pure Water Antelope Valley Advanced Water Purification Facility. Tertiary effluent from Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant would be conveyed to the Pure Water Antelope Valley facility for advanced treatment, consisting of membrane filtration, reverse osmosis, and an advanced oxidation process. Up to 5,000 AFY of advanced treated recycled water would be injected into the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin each year. PWD would be subject to a 10 percent leave-behind requirement, resulting in approximately 4,500 AFY of supply available for pumping. Up to five new recycled water injection wells would be needed if more recycled water is received. The locations of the recycled water injection wells are anticipated to be within the Pure Water Antelope Valley property. New recycled water conveyance pipelines would be needed between the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant and the Pure Water Antelope Valley facility, and between the Pure Water Antelope Valley facility and the new injection wells. Conveyance pipeline locations would be constructed within existing roadways whenever possible. The tertiary effluent pipeline would be constructed along 30th Street East, East Avenue Q, and 25th Street East. The brine line would be constructed along 25th Street East, Avenue P, and 40th Street East to connect to the planned brine ponds. CEQA evaluation would be conducted in the future for the Pure Water Antelope Valley project, including its associated recycled water conveyance and injection facilities, and brine ponds.

Existing Wells Rehabilitation and/or Replacement

PWD currently operates 22 groundwater wells in the Antelope Valley Basin with a maximum pumping volume of approximately 11,000 AFY. Under the proposed Project, PWD would rehabilitate and/or replace the existing PWD wells to maintain existing pumping capacity and enable greater pumping during dry years. Implementation of this component would improve the resilience of the production wells to maintain baseline groundwater pumping capacity. Under the proposed Project, PWD would proceed with the rehabilitation and replacement of its wells as recommended in the 2020 Well Rehabilitation Prioritization Program to maintain current pumping capacity, which includes replacement of five (5) existing wells. Replacement wells would occur in the same physical location as existing wells.

New Groundwater Production Wells

Under the proposed Project, PWD would increase groundwater production by 3,200 AFY using existing and new wells. PWD would construct new wells to pump the banked water and connect to the existing distribution system for use during dry or drought periods. In addition, PWD would purchase 1,000 AFY of groundwater production rights from other pumpers in the Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin. In total, seven new wells would be drilled and equipped to extract the purchased groundwater rights and to extract banked water (assuming a well capacity of 1.7 million gallons per day per well). The location of the new wells is currently undetermined. Conveyance pipeline locations are yet to be determined but would be constructed within existing roadways whenever possible. CEQA documentation for new groundwater production wells was prepared by PWD in 2018. Accordingly, the environmental impacts of new groundwater production well facilities are not analyzed further in the EIR because they have been previously evaluated under CEQA.

Local Surface Water

The proposed Project includes future sediment removal at Littlerock Reservoir in order to maintain storage capacity. PWD's ongoing sediment removal activities have allowed for the maintenance of the current reservoir storage capacity. PWD would continue with these efforts to remove approximately 38,000 cubic yards of annual sedimentation every one to two years, depending on sediment inflow to the reservoir.

Environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Littlerock Reservoir Sediment Removal Project were evaluated in the Littlerock Reservoir Sediment Removal Project EIR, which was adopted by PWD in 2017. The Littlerock Reservoir Sediment Removal Project EIR is incorporated into the EIR by reference. The environmental impacts of the Littlerock Reservoir Sediment Removal Project are not analyzed further in the EIR because the Littlerock Reservoir Sediment Removal Project has been previously evaluated under CEQA and discretionary permits, including from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) have already been obtained.

The Palmdale Ditch (Ditch) is an 8.5-mile-long conveyance system that transports water from Littlerock Reservoir to Lake Palmdale for treatment and use as potable supply within PWD's service area. Approximately 30 percent of the Ditch is either lined with concrete or passes through culverts and tunnels, while almost 70 percent of its length remains an unlined, open earthen ditch. It is estimated that up to 25 percent of water supplies are lost due to evaporation and seepage from the Ditch. To reduce conveyance losses and increase local water supply, PWD would improve the Ditch by replacing the remaining open channel segments with a buried pipeline and increasing the design flow from approximately 20 cfs to 60 cfs. The Ditch conversion is expected to provide an additional 1,450 AFY of local supplies. PWD has received grant funding from both DWR and the United States Bureau of Reclamation to support the Ditch improvements.

Conservation

Under the proposed Project, PWD would continue to monitor and report on effectiveness of conservation programs; regularly review and coordinate PWD and City Ordinances and Policies; coordinate its conservation efforts with other Antelope Valley water purveyors; and achieve conservation objectives set by the State as part of Assembly Bill (AB) 1668 and Senate Bill (SB) 606. No activities that meet the definition of a "Project" under CEQA are planned for conservation activities and therefore no CEQA documentation is required.

Significant Environmental Effects:

Analysis of environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project identified potentially significant impacts in the following areas: Aesthetics, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Resources, Energy, Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources, Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Wildfire, Hydrology, Groundwater, and Water Quality, Noise and Vibration, Recreation, Transportation, and Utilities, Service Systems, and Public Services. With the exception of Cultural and Tribal Resources, impacts would be mitigated to less-than-significant levels by implementation of mitigation measures. The Draft EIR found that the proposed Project may result in significant and unavoidable impacts under the issue of causing a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The Palmdale Ditch Conversion Project would require the near-total demolition of the Palmdale Ditch, including the demolition of all or nearly all its character-defining features and the Project would materially impair the Palmdale Ditch as defined by Section 15064.5(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. The mitigation measures would involve preparation of a Historic American Engineering Record documentation, but effects would remain significant and unavoidable.

Presence of Sites on List of Sites Enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code:

Analysis of the Draft EIR determined that the proposed Project is not present on any of the lists of sites enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code including, but not limited to, lists of hazardous waste facilities, land designated as hazardous waste property, hazardous waste disposal sites and others, and the information in the Hazardous Waste and Substances Statement required under subdivision (f) of that Section.

Document Availability:

The Draft EIR and its supporting technical studies are available for public review on PWD's website (https://www.palmdalewater.org/our-customers/projects/capital-projects/strategic-water-resources-plan/) and during regular business hours at the following locations:

- Palmdale Water District Headquarters, 2029 E Avenue Q, Palmdale CA 93550
- Palmdale City Library, 700 E Palmdale Boulevard, Palmdale CA 93550

Public Review Period:

The 45-day public review period for the Draft EIR is from September 27, 2024 through November 11, 2024.

Comments:

The public is encouraged to submit written comments to Scott Rogers, Engineering Manager, Palmdale Water District, 2029 E Avenue Q, Palmdale, CA 93550 no later than 5:00 PM on November 11, 2024. Alternatively, you may e-mail your comments to Scott Rogers at srogers@palmdalewater.org.

Signature:

Title: Engineering Manager

Attachments:

Figure 1: Regional Location Map
Figure 2: Project Vicinity (USGS Topography)

FIGURE 1: REGIONAL LOCATION

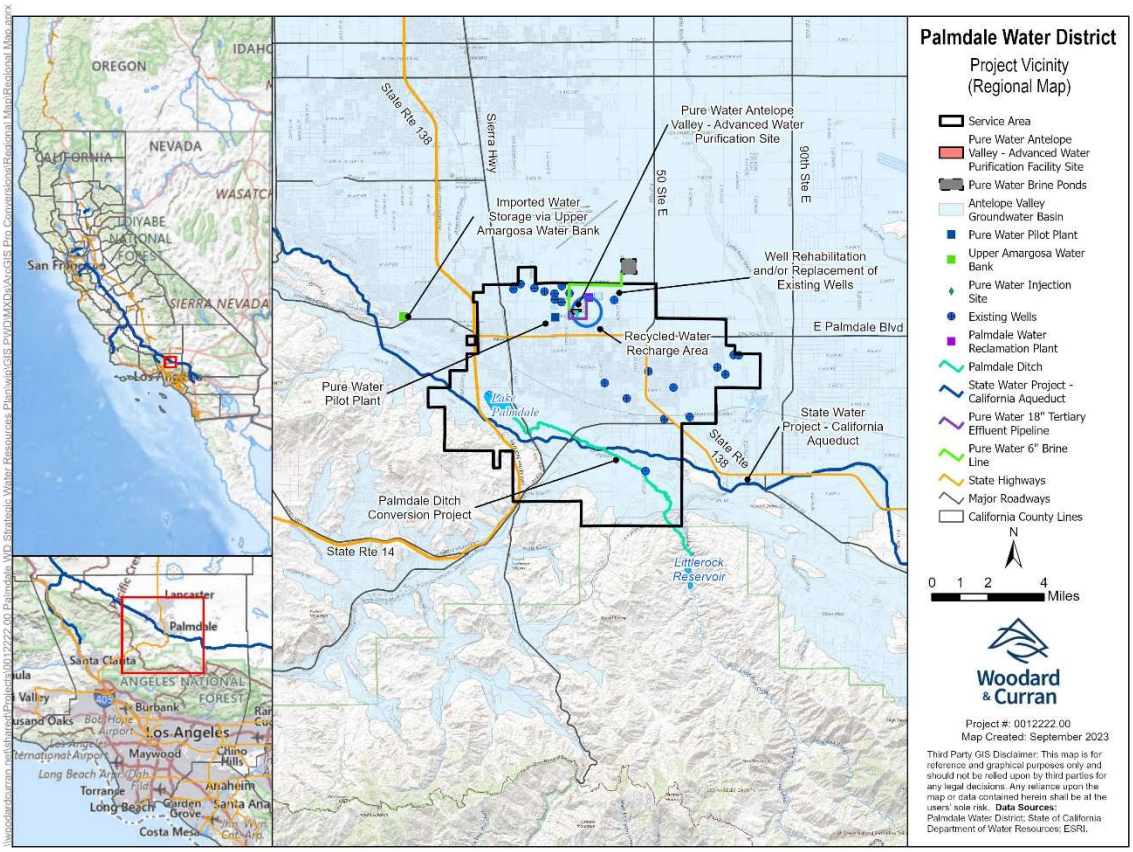

FIGURE 2: PROJECT VICINITY (USGS TOPOGRAPHY)