

Notice of Preparation

Date: February 13, 2017

To: California Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report

Project: 2016 Water System Master Plan

Lead Agency: Palmdale Water District

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify agencies and interested parties that the Palmdale Water District (PWD) is preparing a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for its 2016 Water System Master Plan (WSMP or proposed project).

PWD has prepared the WSMP to determine the facilities required to meet rising water demands within the PWD service area over the next 25 years. The proposed project would construct water system improvements throughout the 47-square mile PWD service area in order to meet PWD's potable water system current and future needs. The PWD service area is located within the Antelope Valley area of Los Angeles County. **Figure 1** provides a map of the service area, and **Figure 2** provides the locations of the project components. The WSMP identifies existing system deficiencies that need to be corrected as well as future facilities to be implemented in the near term (by 2020) or longer term (by 2030 and beyond). The PEIR will evaluate the WSMP's near term improvements on a project-level basis (per CEQA Guidelines Section 15161) and the longer term improvements on a program-level basis (per CEQA Guidelines Section 15168). The components analyzed at the project level include three booster pump stations, three storage tanks and transmission pipelines. The program-level components include additional pump stations, storage tanks and transmission pipelines, as well as production wells that will be built in accordance with growth projections in the PWD service area.

PWD is soliciting the views of interested persons and agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be evaluated in the PEIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description provided in this NOP and provide comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency. The PEIR will be used by PWD when considering approval of the WSMP.

Comment Period: In accordance with the time limits mandated by CEQA, comments on the NOP must be received by PWD no later than 30 days after publication of this notice. Please send your comments to the contact person shown below, by 5:00 p.m. on **March 15, 2017**.

CONTACT: Matthew Knudson
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PHONE: (661) 947-4111

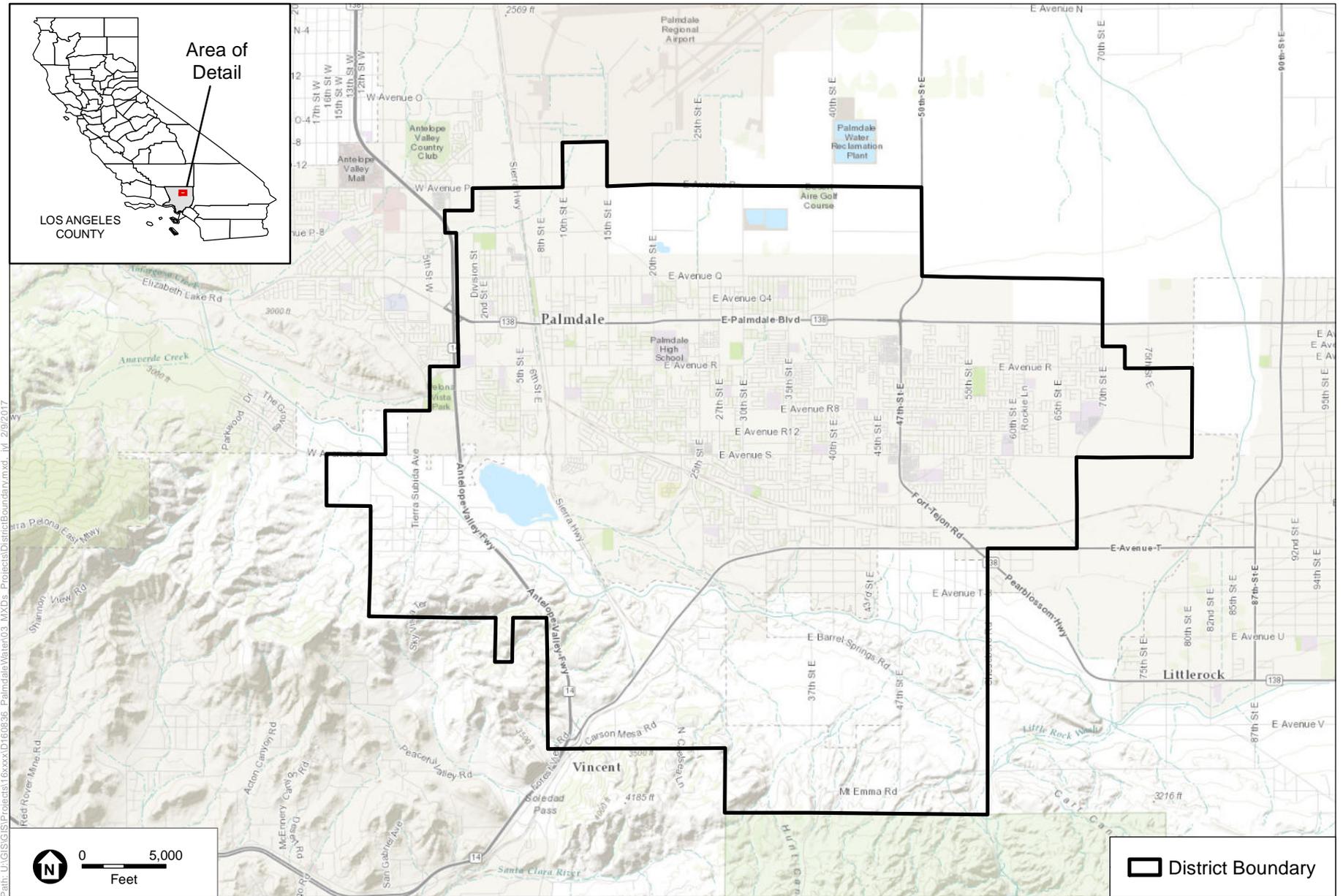
EMAIL: mknudson@palmdalewater.org

Scoping Meeting: One public scoping meeting will be held to receive public comments regarding the scope and content of the PEIR. The public scoping meeting will be open to the public as follows:

DATE: March 13, 2017

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Palmdale Water District – Board Room
2029 East Avenue Q, Palmdale, CA 93550



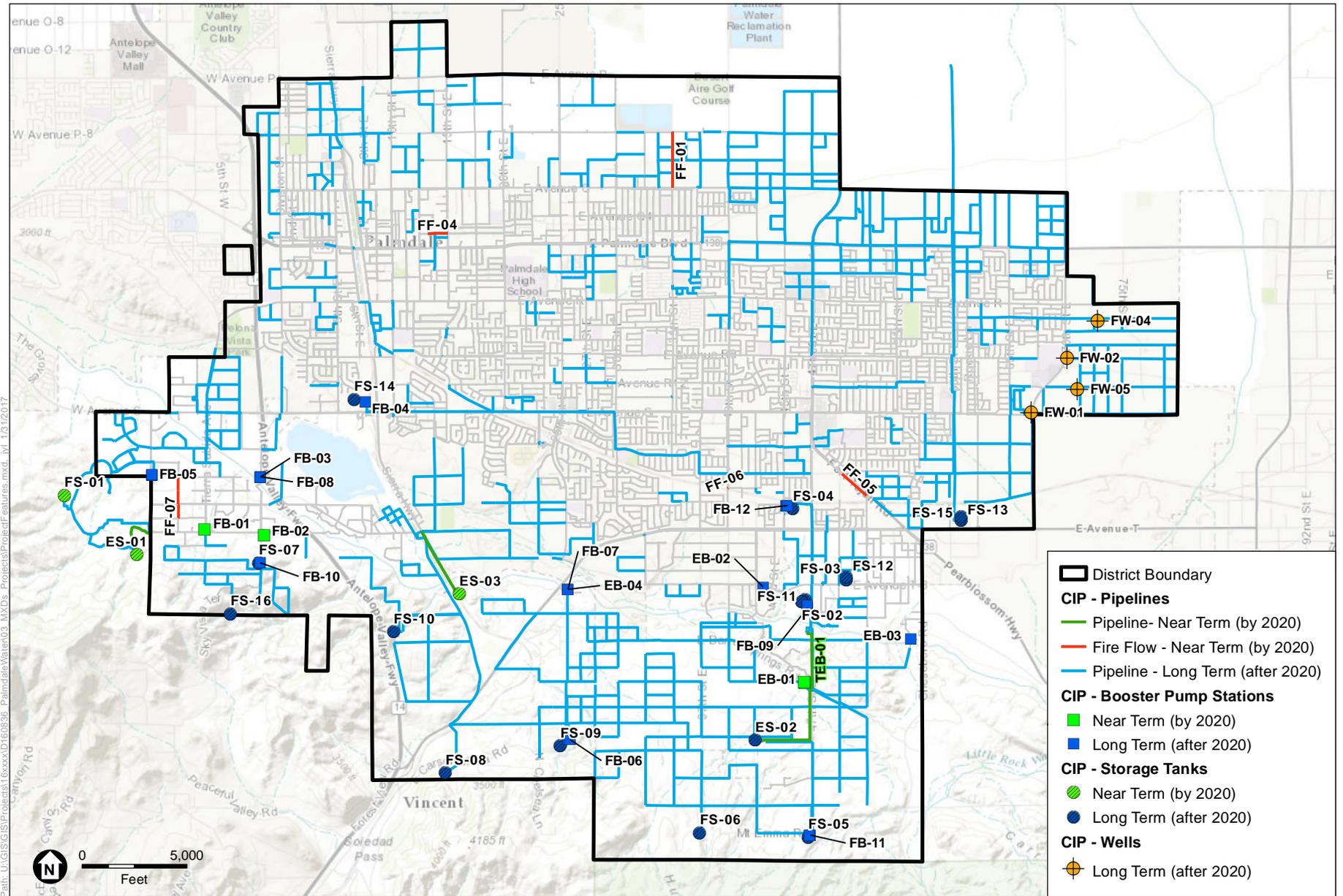
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SOURCE: ESRI

Palmdale Water District

Figure 1
District Boundary





SOURCE: Palmdale Water 2017

Palmdale Water District

Figure 2
2016 Water System Master Plan
Proposed Components



1. Introduction

Palmdale Water District (PWD), as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is proposing to implement the 2016 Water System Master Plan (WSMP or proposed project) that outlines a programmatic plan for developing PWD's potable water system over the next 25 years. The proposed project would involve construction of water system improvements throughout the PWD service area in order to meet potable water system needs. The WSMP identifies existing system deficiencies that need to be corrected as well as future facilities to be implemented in the near term (by 2020) or longer term (by 2030 and beyond).

2. Project Background

PWD was founded in 1918 as an irrigation district that supplied water mainly to farms for agricultural use. As a result of the City of Palmdale's rapid population growth during the early 1950s, PWD shifted to providing predominantly municipal and industrial services. PWD currently provides potable water to municipal, industrial and agricultural customers within a 47-square mile service area in the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County (Figure 1). PWD currently serves a population of approximately 120,000 people and over 27,000 active customer accounts through three sources of water supply: imported water from the State Water Project (SWP), local groundwater, and local surface runoff collected at the Littlerock Reservoir and conveyed to Lake Palmdale through Palmdale Ditch.

The 2016 WSMP was prepared as an update to PWD's previous Draft Water System Master Plan completed in 2007. Following the recession in the late 2000's, building development activity slowly started resuming in 2012 and California entered into a five-year drought with strict water conservation goals established by the State. In 2015, PWD served the least amount of water over the last 30 years. PWD's service area population is expected to more than double over the next 25 years, which will cause water demands to more than double. A Strategic Water Resources Plan was developed in 2010 by PWD to address these demands and identifies a number of water resource options available to meet these needs (PWD 2016).

PWD prepared the 2016 WSMP in order to provide cost-effective and fiscally responsible water services that meet the water quantity, water quality, system pressure, and reliability requirements of its customers. The WSMP evaluates the existing water system deficiencies and future facility requirements and serves as a guideline for the planning of the build-out of PWD's potable water system to 2040 and beyond. The WSMP provides details for its proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) consisting of recommended projects that will allow PWD to address existing system deficiencies, replace aging infrastructure, and provide the facilities necessary to meet future growth. The improvements described in the CIP are the project components that will be analyzed in the PEIR.

3. Project Objectives

The primary objectives of the proposed WSMP are to:

- Provide cost-effective and fiscally responsible water services that meet the water quantity, water quality, system pressure, and reliability requirements of PWD customers;
- Improve or replace existing PWD water system infrastructure;
- Provide future water system infrastructure necessary to meet projected growth of PWD service area;
- Ensure a potable water supply capable of meeting overall annual water demand that is projected to double over the next 25 years.

4. Project Location

The proposed project would be constructed within PWD's 47-square mile water district service area, which is located in the Antelope Valley area of Los Angeles County, California. The service area is composed of the City of Palmdale and portions of unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County. Figure 1 provides a map of the PWD service area; Figure 2 provides the locations of the system improvements associated with the proposed project.

5. Project Description

The proposed project would implement the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) included in the WSMP. The recommended projects in the CIP allow PWD to address existing hydraulic system deficiencies, replace aging infrastructure, and provide the facilities necessary to meet future growth. The major categories of facilities in the proposed project consist of distribution pipelines, storage tanks, and pump stations. Projects are categorized into five-year planning stages starting in 2015 through 2030, as follows: 2015-2020, 2021-2025, and 2026-2030. Projects addressed in the 2015-2020 planning stage are considered near-term project components and will be evaluated at a project level in the PEIR, while projects addressed in the later planning stages are considered long-term project components and will be evaluated at a programmatic level in the PEIR.

Near-Term Project Components

Improvements to address existing water system deficiencies that critically affect the ability of PWD to provide a reliable water supply to its customers are assigned highest priority and are scheduled to be constructed prior to 2020. These near-term projects involve either the construction of new facilities to compensate for future growth or the improvement of existing facilities that require replacement or upgrades due to system deficiencies. These project components include three storage tanks, three booster pump stations, and segments of transmission pipelines.

Storage Tanks

The proposed project would construct three storage tanks to meet existing storage deficiencies within each tank's respective pressure zone. Two storage tanks, ES-01 and FS-01, would be constructed approximately 300 feet and 500 feet, respectively, west of PWD's western service boundary. The storage

tanks would be constructed with the new Quail Valley development, located approximately 1 mile southwest of Lake Palmdale in an unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County. Storage tank ES-01 would have a 1.0 million gallon (MG) capacity and serve the 3600W pressure zone, and storage tank FS-01 would have a 0.75 MG capacity and serve the 3400W pressure zone. The third storage tank, ES-03, would be constructed near the intersection of Sierra Highway and Rae Street and within the PWD's service area. The storage tank would have a capacity of 4.2 MG and serve the 2950 pressure zone.

Pump Stations

The proposed project would also install three new pumps at existing pump stations to meet fire flow requirements and improve upon hydraulic deficiencies. New pumps would be installed at the existing V-5 Booster Station (EB-01), near the northwest corner of 47th Street East and Barrel Springs Road, to meet fire flow requirements for the 3400E pressure zone. The improvements would expand total capacity to 3,500 gpm. New pumps also would be installed at the existing 3600 Ft Booster Pump Station (FB-01), near the intersection of Tierra Subida Avenue and Lakeview Drive, and the existing El Camino Underground Pump Station (FB-02), near the intersection of El Camino Drive and Lakeview Drive, to serve the 3400W pressure zone and the new Quail Valley development. Total capacity would be 300 gpm and 650 gpm, respectively.

Pipelines

The proposed project would construct multiple segments of transmission pipelines throughout the PWD service area as part of its 2015-2020 planning horizon for CIP implementation. The pipelines category includes fire flow projects, age-based pipeline improvements, and pipeline expansion projects. Segments of pipeline construction include the following estimates:

Fire Flow Projects

- Approximately 2,675 feet of pipeline replacement along 35th Street East, connecting between East Avenue Q and the Palmdale Water Reclamation Plant (FF-01);
- Approximately 965 feet of pipeline along Avenue Q-6 between 12th Street East and 15th Street East (FF-04);
- Approximately 1,570 feet of pipeline along Fort Tejon Road and 52nd Street East (FF-05);
- Approximately 48 feet of pipeline on Avenue S-10 between 40th Street East and 42nd Street East (FF-06);
- Approximately 1,400 feet of pipeline north of Barrel Springs Drive and Camares Drive, within the Quail Valley development area (FF-07).

Pipeline Improvements and Expansion

- Pipeline connecting Avenue P-14 and East Avenue P-12 along 4th Street East;
- Pipeline along 47th Street East, connecting the proposed improvements at pump station EB-01 south and then extending the pipeline west through undeveloped land to an existing deficiency recommended tank;
- Pipeline along Sierra Highway, connecting an existing storage tank and pump station southeast to an existing deficiency recommended tank;

- Pipeline west of Lakeview Drive through undeveloped land connecting to the proposed storage tank ES-01.

Long-Term Project Components

Improvements that address existing system deficiencies that are not considered immediately critical or high priority to PWD are proposed as long-term project components. The construction of these projects would start in 2021 and continue through buildout which is anticipated to be in 2040. The phasing of the long-term project improvements are based upon many factors, such as the actual rate of growth and the timing of developments expected in the PWD service area. The long-term project components would include the construction of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities, and would consist of 16 storage tanks, 7 new pumps at five existing pump stations, 6 new pump stations, 5 production wells, and over 700,000 feet of transmission pipelines ranging from 6-to 24-inches in diameter. Since the long-term buildout of these project components is based on the projected demands for each pressure zone and is subject to the availability of funds, the phasing of the long-term projects is presented as a planning guideline for their future implementation. Precise locations for all proposed facilities are not established and facilities will be constructed or improved on an as needed basis.

6. Discussion of Potential Environmental Impacts

In accordance with Section 15126 of the CEQA Guidelines, the PEIR will assess the physical changes to the environment that would likely result from construction and operation of the proposed project, including direct, indirect and cumulative impacts and growth-inducing impacts. The PEIR will provide an assessment of impacts at the project level for facilities proposed to be implemented by 2020 (CEQA Guidelines Section 15161) and at the program level for facilities proposed to be implemented after 2020 (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168). A subsequent assessment of impacts may be required in accordance with CEQA prior to implementation of project facilities to be built after 2020.

Potential impacts of the proposed project are summarized below. The PEIR will identify mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts of the proposed project. The PEIR also will discuss alternatives to the proposed project, based on the determination of impacts, including the no-project alternative.

Aesthetics

Views in the project area consist mainly of residential and agricultural land uses, public facilities, open space and distant mountains vistas. Although there are no officially designated or eligible California State Scenic Highways within PWD's service area, some roadways may be considered scenic. Implementation of the proposed project would require construction of aboveground facilities such as pump stations, storage tanks, and wells. The PEIR will evaluate the potential for construction and operation of the proposed project to affect aesthetic resources, including potential impacts to scenic vistas and views, impacts to the visual character of sites that would support aboveground facilities, and the potential for new light or glare.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The proposed project area includes lands that are classified by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as Urban and Built-up Land and as Prime Farmland. Much of the PWD service area is urbanized; however, there are agricultural lands along the service area perimeter. Implementation of the WSMP would not be expected to result in the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use; although small localized changes could result. The PEIR will evaluate whether the proposed project would impact Prime Farmland or whether any agricultural or forestry land would be converted to non-agricultural or non-forestry uses.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Construction and operation of the proposed project could cause air emissions. Air emissions could result from construction equipment exhaust, ground disturbance during construction, material hauling, construction employee-commute travel, vehicle operational maintenance trips, and vehicle trips associated with any increases in employment. Operation of the facilities may potentially generate emissions associated with energy use and from mobile sources that may include deliveries and maintenance, and operation of the pump stations and wells. The PEIR will estimate pollutant emissions from construction and operational activities and will develop mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the generation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with construction and operations. The PEIR will estimate construction-related emissions and long-term operational emissions, including total CO₂-equivalent emissions for evaluating the effects of GHGs. The PEIR will examine the project's effects on global climate change and evaluate consistency of the project with the State's GHG emissions reduction goals. The PEIR will identify feasible mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts.

Biological Resources

The proposed project could result in changes to wildlife habitat and disturbance of sensitive species during construction or operation. Site grading and introduction of new aboveground storage facilities, especially in currently undeveloped areas on the perimeter of PWD's service area, could impact existing floral and faunal species or their habitats. The PEIR will evaluate the potential for construction and operation of the proposed project to affect biological resources, and will also discuss local ordinances and state and federal regulations governing biological resources. The PEIR will develop mitigation measures as necessary to avoid, minimize, and offset potentially significant impacts.

Cultural Resources

The proposed project would require construction of facilities and pipelines that could disturb known or unknown archeological sites, paleontological resources, and/or human remains where groundbreaking activities occur. The PEIR will assess the potential effects of the proposed project on cultural resources, including archaeological, historic, paleontological, and Native American resources, including Tribal cultural resources identified during the consultation process required by Assembly Bill 52. Mitigation measures will be identified if necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

PWD is located in the Antelope Valley, which is a seismically active region in California. The construction of new facilities could be subject to potential seismic hazards including ground shaking. In addition, construction activities could expose soils to storm water erosion. The PEIR will evaluate geologic hazards in the region and in PWD's service area, such as the potential for ground shaking, liquefaction, expansive soils and landslides, and will identify mitigation measures if necessary to reduce potentially adverse effects to proposed facilities.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Excavation activities during construction of new pipelines, pump stations, and wells could uncover contaminated soils or hazardous substances that pose a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. The PEIR will assess the potential for encountering such hazards and identify mitigation measures, if necessary, to ensure that any hazards encountered during construction would be handled in accordance with applicable regulations. Operation of some project components may require transport, use, and disposal of regulated materials. The PEIR will assess the potential for the public or the environment to be affected by accidental release of hazardous materials due to project operation and will develop mitigation measures if necessary to minimize potentially significant effects.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Construction and operation of the proposed project could affect water quality and drainage patterns. Excavation and construction activities could affect water quality if sediment or spills run off the project construction sites. The PEIR will identify water quality protection measures required during construction activities such as sediment fencing and spill prevention and containment. The proposed project could also involve the construction of up to 5 production wells on the eastern portion of PWD's service area to increase water supply reliability. The PEIR will analyze, on a programmatic level, potential impacts of construction and operation of the production wells. The PEIR will evaluate the project's potential impacts on hydrology and water quality, and, for potentially significant impacts will identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts.

Land Use and Recreation

The proposed project would construct facilities primarily within residential, developed areas. There are several proposed facilities in the southeastern portion of PWD's service area that would be installed in undeveloped areas. In addition, a new storage tank would be installed over the western boundary of PWD's service area on undeveloped land. The PEIR will evaluate the compatibility of the proposed project components with surrounding land use and recreational facilities and will identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts.

Mineral Resources

The proposed project would involve ground-disturbing activities that could impact the availability of known mineral resources. Littlerock Wash is identified as mineral resource zone within the PWD service area and is mined for sand and gravel for aggregate use in construction activities. The PEIR will identify if impacts to mineral resources would result from implementation of the proposed project.

Noise

Implementation of the proposed project would require construction and operation of project elements that would potentially generate noise and vibration. Construction activities that could be a significant source of noise and vibrations include trucking operations, use of heavy construction equipment (e.g., graders, cranes, and frontend loaders), pile driving activities, and well drilling. During project operations, fixed sources of noise could be established. The PEIR will describe the City of Palmdale and Los Angeles County noise policies and ordinances. The PEIR will identify potential noise impacts associated with construction and operation and develop mitigation strategies if necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts.

Population and Housing/Growth Inducement

Implementation of the proposed project would improve the potable water system within PWD's service area and for projected population growth in the service area. The proposed project would not build new housing or otherwise have a direct impact on population growth in the project area, nor would it require displacement of existing residents. The PEIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed project to indirectly induce growth and result in secondary environmental effects associated with growth.

Public Services, Utilities, and Energy

Implementation of the proposed project is unlikely to affect demand for public services, or, by themselves, to require new or expanded facilities for public service providers. The PEIR will, however, assess the potential for the proposed project to affect police and fire protection services, schools, parks and recreational facilities, such that new or expanded buildings or structures may be required that would, in turn, potentially affect the environment.

The proposed project could result in the temporary disruption of services to adjacent land uses. The PEIR will describe the existing water, electricity, telecommunications, and gas utilities serving the local communities. Existing and projected regional utility supplies, demands, and facilities will be described along with any constraints or service deficiencies in the region. The PEIR will evaluate the project's potential to affect utilities and will identify necessary mitigation measures to reduce any potentially significant impacts.

Traffic and Transportation

Construction of the proposed project could affect traffic on local roadways as a result of vehicle trips associated with hauling of material and equipment, road closures and detours, and increase in traffic hazards caused by construction activities. Additionally, the construction of pipelines would occur primarily in established roadways, which would impact circulation patterns in the City of Palmdale. The PEIR will evaluate the potential for construction vehicles, lane closures, or road closures to impact traffic and circulation and will identify mitigation strategies to reduce any potentially significant impacts.