NOTICE OF PREPARATION & NOTICE OF INTENT
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Thousand Palms Flood Control Project
Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement

Introduction

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) intend to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the **Thousand Palms Flood Control Project (TPFCP, Project, or Proposed Action)** proposed by CVWD in order to comply with both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). CVWD is the CEQA lead agency and USACE is the NEPA lead agency for the Project. The CVWD and USACE invite your written comments as to the scope of the environmental analysis topics and identification of potential environmental issues related to the Project. The 30-day public scoping period runs from November 18, 2016 to December 19, 2016. **A public scoping meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on December 6, 2016 at the Thousand Palms Community Center located at: 31189 Robert Road, Thousand Palms, CA 92276.**

Project Location

The Project site is located in the Thousand Palms area of the Coachella Valley, within north-central Riverside County between the Indio Hills and Interstate 10 (I-10). The unincorporated community of Thousand Palms, located south and east of the Project, is roughly 10 miles east of the City of Palm Springs and immediately north of the City of Palm Desert. The Project is located along the southern boundary of the Thousand Palms conservation area of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) and the Coachella Valley Preserve (see attached Project Map).

Summary Description of the Proposed Project (Alternative 1)

The proposed Project consists of a series of flood control improvements designed to meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 0.01 chance, or 100-year, flood event thereby providing flood protection for developed and planned development areas in Thousand Palms and the vicinity. The need for flood control has increased substantially in recent years due to continued growth and development in the Coachella Valley. The proposed Project is also designed to support continued aeolian (wind-driven) transport of sand to the Coachella Valley Preserve, where it forms habitat for the sensitive Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (State-listed as endangered and federally-listed as threatened). The proposed Project is linear in nature, consisting of four reaches, and is generally located on the northern and eastern margins of the community of Thousand Palms.

Components of the proposed Project include levees, channels, culverts, and a sediment basin. The levees and channels would be comprised of compacted native soil with a layer of soil cement to protect the structures from erosion.

Project Details

Reach 1 is comprised of an approximately 12,700-foot-long (2.4-mile) levee (Levee 1). The Levee 1 height would vary from about 5 to 14 feet depending on topography and ground slope. A minimum 12-foot access (patrol) road would be provided on the top of the levee, as well as an unpaved embankment access road on the downstream (west side) of the levee for operations and maintenance (O&M) purposes. Levee 1 would initiate roughly 0.1 mile east of the intersection of Vista Chino (Avenue 28) and Rio del Sol, on the south side of Vista Chino, and extend in an east-southeasterly direction. The levee would generally run parallel to the north of Southern California Edison's utility corridor. Levee 1 would cross over Sierra del Sol, Desert Moon Drive, and Via Las Palmas. Culverts and road crossings of the levee would be constructed at Desert Moon Drive and Via Las Palmas. Water and sediment which flows from the Indio Hills would flow naturally toward Reach 1 and be diverted to the 550-acre floodway located along the levees and in the active wind corridor between Reach 1 and Reach 3 (described below). A sediment basin would be installed at the downstream end of Reach 1 in order to trap sediment, slow the velocity of stormwater flow across the Preserve, and avoid adverse effects associated with erosion or channel migration.

Reach 2 is comprised of an approximately 1,700-foot-long (0.32-mile) levee (Levee 2) with a height of approximately 5 feet. As with the Reach 1 levee, a minimum 12-foot access (patrol) road would be provided on the top of the levee, as well as an unpaved embankment access road on the downstream (west side) of the levee for O&M purposes. Levee 2 is aligned in the direction of the prevailing wind to avoid interference with aeolian transport in this area. It is positioned in the mid-alluvial fan area just northeast of an existing electrical substation, to further protect the substation, protect adjacent development, and facilitate the diversion of water in a southeasterly direction. Reach 2 would capture large storm events from Reach 1 and direct flow towards Reach 3.

Reach 3 is comprised of an approximately 6,500-foot-long (1.2-mile) levee (Levee 3), a minimum 12-foot-wide access road on top of the levee, an unpaved embankment access road on the downstream (west side) of the levee, and an approximately 5,300-foot-long (1.0-mile) incised (cut) channel (Reach 3 Channel). Levee 3 would vary in height from about 5 feet to 14 feet, depending upon topography and ground slope. Levee 3 would initiate approximately 2,000 feet southwest of the downstream end of Levee 2, roughly 1,000 feet south of E. Ramon Road.

The transition of Reach 3 to a channel configuration is intended to minimize land use conflicts with athletic fields at Xavier College Preparatory High School and to minimize the disruption to aeolian sand transport patterns. This channel configuration curves around the athletic fields, whereas a levee would need to maintain a straighter alignment through the high school property. The channel configuration also minimizes disruptions to sand migration onto the Coachella Valley Preserve because, in comparison to a levee design, the channel would not create a vertical obstruction to sand migration (with the exception of a short length of Reach 3 channel where the embankment would be approximately 3-feet high).

Sand that blows into the channel or is deposited during storm events would be removed from the channel and placed on the active wind corridor for natural migration onto the Coachella Valley Preserve. The Reach 3 Channel would be lined with soil cement. The Reach 3 Channel would divert flows from Levee 3 towards the Classic Club Golf Course. The Classic Club Golf Course is equipped with an existing stormwater conveyance system that is sufficient to transport storm flows diverted by the proposed Project through the golf course.

Reach 4 is comprised of an approximately 10,300-foot-long (2.0-mile) incised trapezoidal channel (Reach 4 Channel). The Reach 4 Channel would convey stormwater flows from the southeast end of the Classic Club Golf Course and continue south then east, adjacent to the south of the existing alignment of Avenue 38. Riverside County Board of Supervisors approved the realignment of Avenue 38 previously as a County project (now part of the proposed Project), which would move Avenue 38 adjacent and south of the Reach 4 Channel. The Reach 4 Channel would terminate at Washington Street, with construction of a conveyance system to direct stormwater flows under Washington Street and into existing stormwater conveyance facilities in the Del Webb / Sun City development.

Soil Disposal Areas. Material excavated from the Project area that is not used for construction of the levees would be placed within two areas. Suitable blowsand material would be salvaged and placed at a blowsand augmentation area on the Coachella Valley Preserve, creating an approximately 8-foot high sand dune (assumes 100,000 cubic yards [CY]). Material from this location would be transported by wind within the Coachella Valley Preserve to replace sand lost through wind driven erosion. Approximately 726,000 CY of material from the Reach 4 Channel construction would be placed south of Avenue 38 within the existing windrows, resulting in an approximately 2-foot increase in the ground level across the approximately 250-acre site.

Construction. The proposed Project includes trenching and excavation to install the levees and channel facilities. Construction is anticipated to take approximately 27 months.

Operations and Maintenance. To ensure that sand migration through the existing wind corridor is not disrupted and that sand dune habitat continues to be replenished, O&M activities would include the removal of sand which collects along the Project levees and within the Project channels.

Previous Environmental Review

In 2000 an EIR/EIS was published for this Project, under the title Whitewater River Basin Flood Control Project, with the Planning Division of the USACE functioning as the NEPA Lead Agency and the CVWD functioning as the CEQA Lead Agency. A Preferred Alternative was selected and approved, though the action was never implemented due to funding restrictions. A subsequent analysis was initiated in 2011 to account for development which had occurred in the Project area after the 2000 EIR/EIS and Preferred Alternative approval, as well as other modifications and land use changes. Due to federal funding restrictions, the 2011 environmental document was never finalized.

Project Alternatives

Several alternatives to the Proposed Project (Alternative 1) will be considered by examining factors such as reliability, constructability, operation and maintenance, geotechnical feasibility, environmental considerations, and cost. Three (3) alternatives have been identified, including Removal of Reach 2 (Alternative 2), Modified Reach 3 (Alternative 3), and the No Action/Project (Alternative 4). The Draft EIR/EIS will include equivalent analysis of the alternatives considered. These alternatives will be further formulated and developed after the scoping process. Additional alternatives identified during scoping will also be considered for inclusion in the Draft EIR/EIS.

Potential Environmental Effects

The EIR/EIS will identify and discuss the probable environmental effects of the Project and identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant adverse effects. This analysis will be completed for all proposed alternatives in addition to the proposed Project. The following environmental issue areas may be addressed in EIR/EIS:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Sand Migration
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use and Recreation
- Noise
- Paleontological Resources
- Public Safety
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Topography, Geology, and Soils
- Transportation
- Water Resources
- Cumulative Effects

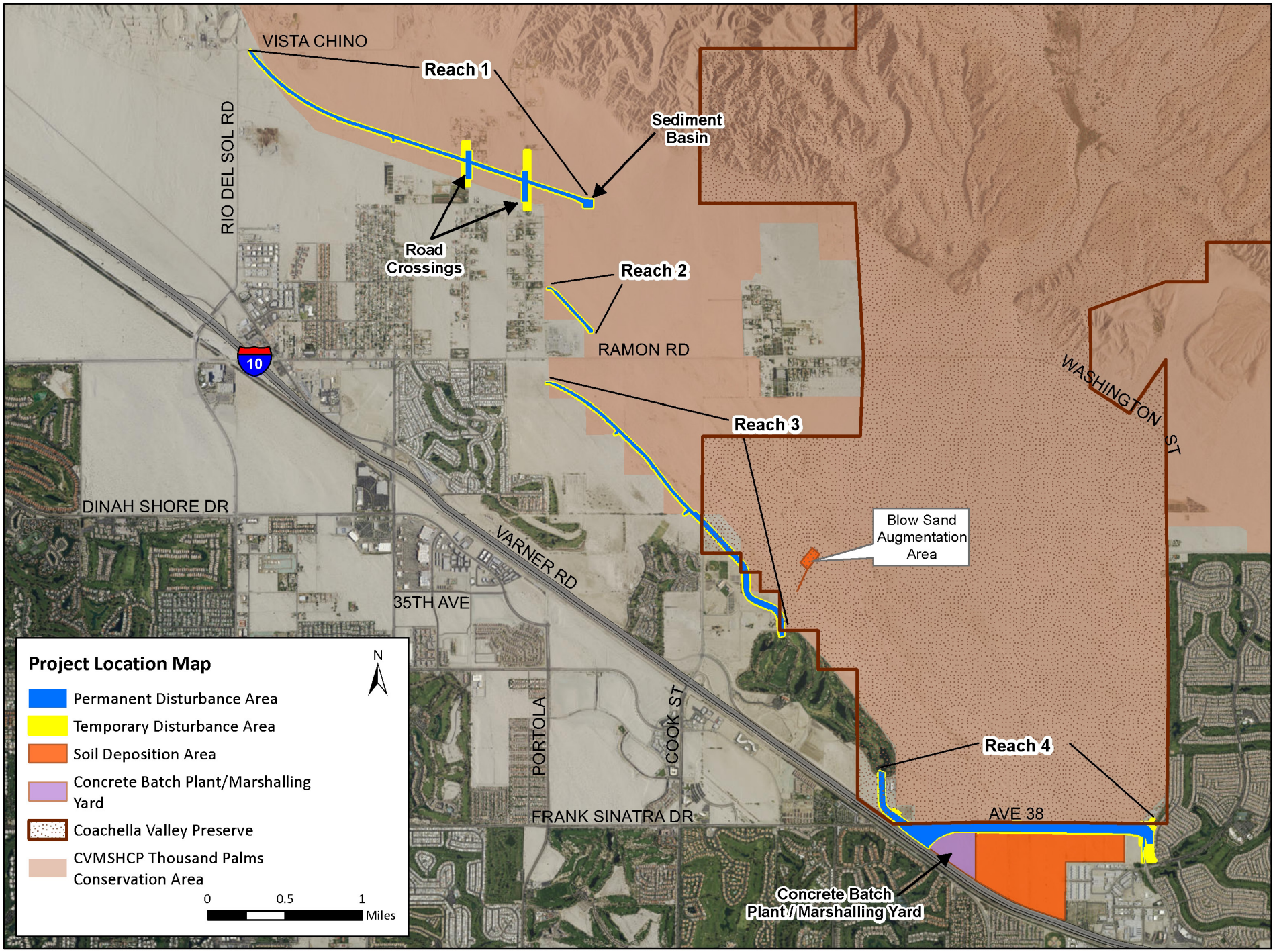
Public Scoping Meeting

The CVWD and USACE will conduct a public scoping meeting in order to solicit comments from the public and public agencies regarding potential environmental issues and topics to be addressed in the EIR/EIS, including suggestions for potential alternatives and mitigation measures. The public scoping meeting will be held on December 6, 2016, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the **Thousand Palms Community Center** located at 31189 Robert Road, Thousand Palms, CA 92276.

Contact Person

Due to the time limits mandated by State and federal laws, your comments must be submitted at the earliest possible date and no later than **December 19, 2016**. Please send comments to:

Luke Stowe, Environmental Supervisor
Coachella Valley Water District
P.O. Box 1058, Coachella, CA 92236
Email: LStowe@cvwd.org / Phone: (760) 398-2651


VISTA CHINO
Reach 1
Sediment Basin
RIO DEL SOL RD
Road Crossings
Reach 2
RAMON RD
10
Reach 3
WASHINGTON ST
DINAH SHORE DR
VARNER RD
Blow Sand Augmentation Area
35TH AVE
PORTOLA
COOK ST
Reach 4
FRANK SINATRA DR
AVE 38
Concrete Batch Plant / Marshalling Yard
Project Location Map
N
Permanent Disturbance Area
Temporary Disturbance Area
Soil Deposition Area
Concrete Batch Plant/Marshalling Yard
Coachella Valley Preserve
CVMSHCP Thousand Palms Conservation Area
0
0.5
1
Miles