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# NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

**DATE:** July 17, 2015

**TO:** State Clearinghouse  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 92512-3044

**FILED / POSTED**

County of Riverside  
Peter Aldana  
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

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-AND-

Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation and Public Scoping Meeting of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and will prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the project described below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project title, location, description and background, and probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. Because CVWD has determined that an EIR is required, an Initial Study is not attached. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than the close of the 30-day comment period. (State CEQA Guidelines §§15082 and 15375).

**PROJECT TITLE:** Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan

**PROJECT APPLICANT:** Coachella Valley Water District

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan (Project, Plan, ECV SMP, SMP) is generally located in the eastern portion of the Coachella Valley in unincorporated Riverside County, California, within the community areas of Mecca, North Shore, Thermal, Oasis, and Vista Santa Rosa, as well as in the City of Coachella, City of La Quinta, and northwest Imperial County, just south of the Riverside County line and east of the San Diego County line. See **Figure 1 – Vicinity Map** and **Figure 2 – Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan Area**. While no SMP Facilities are proposed to be located in the City of La Quinta, a portion of the ECV SMP Area is within that city. The ECV SMP encompasses a total of 207 square miles and is divided into two areas by the Coachella Valley

Stormwater Channel (CVSC).<sup>1</sup> The Oasis/Valley Floor area encompasses 104 square miles and is generally bounded by Avenue 52 to the north, Madison Street and the Santa Rosa Mountains to the west, CVSC and the Salton Sea to the east, and the Riverside County line to the south. The Mecca/North Shore area encompasses 103 square miles and is generally bounded by Avenue 52 to the north, CVSC to the west, the Coachella Canal to the east, and the northern area of the Salton Sea to the south. Collectively, these two areas are hereinafter referred to as the "Plan Area."

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The proposed Project is the administration, right-of-way acquisition (to the extent necessary) and construction of storm drains, channels, levees (collectively referred to as Facilities), and the operation and maintenance of Facilities identified in the ECV SMP. The Plan is a comprehensive conceptual stormwater master plan that identifies conceptual locations, alignments, and sizes for primary drainage Facilities to address the current and future drainage needs of the approximately 207-square mile Plan Area. The ECV SMP is intended to be used as a planning guide for locating and sizing regional stormwater facilities (SMP Facilities) that will be constructed by Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), City of Coachella, and/or developers over time as development takes place within the area. When implemented, the Plan will provide flood protection to the area during a 100-year flood event.

The ECV SMP was prepared to:

- 1) Identify solutions to existing flood hazards (riverine, alluvial fan and valley floor drainage) that include economically feasible stormwater capture and low impact development approaches;
- 2) Provide a guide for the long-term scheduling of the regional and/or valley floor stormwater facilities;
- 3) Provide a guide for locating and connecting local drainage facilities that will be constructed by developers and others within the Plan Area; and
- 4) Provide an estimate of costs to resolve regional and valley floor flood hazard issues within the Plan Area.

#### ***Administration of the SMP***

The SMP will be a guide for the alignment, type, size, and cost estimate of major proposed facilities (SMP Facilities or Facilities) within the Plan Area to address the current and future drainage needs of Eastern Coachella Valley.

The SMP will be relied upon by CVWD, Riverside County, and City of Coachella as these agencies review and approve development in the Plan Area. New development may be required to construct SMP Facilities or set aside right-of-way for future SMP Facilities. CVWD, Riverside County, and the City of Coachella may also use the SMP to identify Facilities and cost estimates for inclusion in capital improvement programs. Finally, CVWD, Riverside County, the City of Coachella, and other agencies can use the SMP for long-range planning of other public infrastructure projects such as roads or utility pipelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Within the plan area, the CVSC is an unlined, engineered extension of the Whitewater River, which serves agricultural irrigation return water and conveys treated wastewater and urban and stormwater runoff.

### ***Construction of the SMP Facilities***

The construction of the SMP facilities will be performed primarily by private developers as the region develops, with some construction possible by CVWD. The SMP proposes the construction of over 100 miles of storm drains and channels, approximately 99 acres of debris basins, 11.25 miles of training levees, and modifications to the existing CVSC as shown on **Figure 3 – Oasis/Valley Floor Area** and **Figure 4 – Mecca/North Shore Area**. The locations and types of Facilities depicted in the SMP can change as more detailed information becomes available during the design process. For example, the locations of underground utilities, new development patterns, right-of-way availability, hazardous materials sites, or the results of subsequent focused archaeological, biological, hazardous materials, or paleontological surveys may necessitate a shift in location or change in facility type. To add to that uncertainty, the construction of the SMP Facilities will be accomplished in discrete phases over a number of decades, which is always a challenge for long-term planning.

Despite this future environment of uncertainty and potential SMP Facility variations, the environmental review documentation still must identify the general types of construction activities anticipated and the associated impacts. Subsequent CEQA analysis beyond the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) will be prepared for this Project which would be required as the individual SMP Facilities are designed and proposed for construction, but those future construction projects could tier from the PEIR. The general types of construction activities include, but are not limited to:

- basin/channel excavation,
- channel/storm drain installation,
- levee construction, and
- asphalt replacement.

Construction will typically entail the use of heavy equipment such as backhoes, excavators, dozers, scrapers, water trucks, wheeled loaders, and dump trucks.

### **Open Channels**

The Project's proposed channels are either trapezoidal- or rectangular-shaped and may be either totally earthen, partially-lined with concrete paving on the sides and an earthen bottom, or fully-lined with concrete paving on the sides and bottom. For trapezoidal channels, sides slope upward from the bottom at a variable rate depending on the lining type. The Plan's proposed channels have a bottom width ranging from 6 to 425 feet and a depth ranging from 6 to 20 feet. The channels may also include a low berm feature from 1 to 3 feet above grade to account for the topography along the alignment and ensure adequate freeboard (i.e., distance between the water level and top of the facility). Along portions of a few alignments in the Mecca/North Shore area, the open channel will include an above-grade structure achieving heights greater than 5 feet. These lines include the following:

- Line A01, approximately 6 feet above grade where open channel is proposed
- Line A01-01, approximately 6 feet above grade
- Line D01, north from CVSC to Avenue 66, approximately 7 to 9 feet above grade
- Line D01, north from Avenue 66 to Avenue 64, approximately 4 to 6 feet above grade

- Line E01, north from the northern terminus of the proposed underground pipeline for the line to Avenue 68, approximately 6 feet above grade
- Line F01, from the southern starting point of the alignment north to Avenue 70, approximately 12 feet above grade
- Line F01, north from Avenue 70 to State Route 111, approximately 10 feet above grade.

The remainder of the Mecca/North Shore area system will consist of open channels with above grade heights between approximately 1 to 3 feet. Further, open channel rights-of-way must accommodate the channel footprint plus areas needed for channel maintenance including access roads and fences. Open channels are generally considered the most economically feasible means of transporting large flood flows for any appreciable distance and are used wherever appropriate. In addition to their role as flow conveyors, open channels provide an outlet for the underground facilities proposed in the Plan as well as local drainage facilities to be built by developers and others. All open channels proposed in the Plan are intended to carry the runoff from a 100-year flood event.

#### Underground Storm Drains

The underground storm drains proposed by the Plan, generally consist of reinforced concrete pipe (RCP), ranging from 60 inches to a maximum of 96 inches in diameter, and reinforced concrete boxes (RCB). An RCB is rectangular or square-shaped concrete "pipe." The RCB may be either precast, which means the RCB was cast somewhere other than the location at which it will be installed or cast-in-place, which means the concrete for the RCB was mixed and poured into a frame at a project site.

Manholes are located as necessary for maintenance access with a maximum spacing of 500 feet. Catch basins are not specifically located until final design. A catch basin is a curbside opening that collects rainwater and serves as a local entry point to the storm drain system.

Underground drainage facilities are only proposed in those locations within the Project where open channels are not feasible, either because of topographic constraints or existing development. Where possible, underground storm drains proposed in the Project are located in existing or future street rights-of-way.

#### Detention/Debris Basins

The Plan proposes three debris basins in the Oasis/Valley Floor area as part of the 68<sup>th</sup>, Kings Street, and Avenue 84 Street systems. The debris basins will capture sediment and reduce the volume transported downstream in addition to providing an opportunity for stormwater capture and recharge. The reduction of peak flows and capture of debris allows for smaller, less costly facilities downstream of the basins. The proposed debris basins are designed for the 100-year sediment inflow volume, plus 10% for a factor of safety. The basins are designed to direct discharge into the flood channel system. The debris basins will be earthen bottom and sides, and may be revetted.

#### Training Levees

The Plan proposes approximately 11.25 miles of training levees. A training levee is a partial levee system that does not tie off to high ground at one or both ends and functions as a raised, revetted berm to

direct the main flow of stormwater toward the detention basins, which then discharge to the inlets of conveyance channels. A training levee is revetted to prevent erosion during channel migration or avulsion on the fan. The levee is also designed to provide freeboard over the 100-year (base) flood. The location of the training levees along the western boundary of the Plan Area near the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains is limited by development constraints.

The proposed training levees may consist of above grade structural features achieving heights from approximately 6.4 feet to 13.5 feet with a 15-foot-wide top width to provide an access road. The training levees will be located in the Oasis/Valley Floor area as shown on **Figure 3**. Specifically, two training levees are associated with the proposed open channel that directly outlets into the Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel generally along Avenue 68, two training levees are associated with the proposed open channel that directly outlets into the Salton Sea generally along Kings Road, and two training levees are associated with the proposed open channel that outlets directly into the Salton Sea generally along Avenue 84. The following lists the greatest approximate height associated with each training levee:

- Avenue 68 (west-trending), approximately 12.6 feet
- Avenue 68 (south-trending), approximately 12.6 feet
- Kings Road (north-trending), approximately 12 feet
- Kings Road (south-trending), approximately 13.4 feet
- Avenue 84 (north-trending), approximately 6.5 feet
- Avenue 84 (south-trending), approximately 13.4 feet

It should be noted that these heights also include a minimum 4 feet of freeboard (i.e., distance between the water level and top of the facility).

#### CVSC Improvements

The Plan contemplates two alternatives with regard to proposed modifications to the existing CVSC. One alternative proposes constructing concrete-lined channel/levee banks extending from just north of 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue south to Airport Boulevard, where the channel transitions to a fully-lined concrete section downstream to the existing Thermal Drop Structure.<sup>2</sup> From the Thermal Drop Structure, the channel will have concrete-lined channel/levee banks extending to downstream of Lincoln Street. In addition to the channel improvements, a reduction in the height of the existing Thermal Drop Structure, new replacement bridges along Airport Boulevard, 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and 66<sup>th</sup> Avenue over CVSC, and widening two UPRR bridges over CVSC are proposed.

The second alternative proposes an earthen bottom CVSC with concrete-levee banks, relocation of the Thermal Drop Structure to upstream of the UPRR Bridges, and a new side-weir channel with earthen bottom and concrete-lined slopes. This alternative entails minimal disturbance to the existing CVSC

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<sup>2</sup> Drop structures are manmade structures which are intended to control the energy and velocity of flow from higher elevations to lower elevations. Drop structures also serve to oxygenate water and prevent erosion. It should be noted that drop structures are unlike dams as they do not impound water.

channel bed because storm flows during high volume events would be conveyed by the new side-weir channel.

### ***Facilities Operation and Maintenance***

Once an SMP Facility is constructed and the CVSC channel improved as proposed, maintenance is required in order to retain function and flood control capacity. It is expected that CVWD and/or a developer will operate and maintain all of the SMP Facilities. For a developer or private entity to operate and maintain any SMP Facility (or Facilities), a recorded regional stormwater facilities agreement will be required per CVWD Ordinance 1234.1.

CVWD periodically inspects its facilities. Maintenance of storm drains and concrete channels typically consists of keeping these facilities and their side drains clear of debris and sediment, as well as repairs to access roads and fences, and removing graffiti. On rare occasions, major repairs may be required following damaging storm events. Thus, major grading will not routinely occur while maintaining the underground storm drains and open concrete channels. To maintain the constructed Facilities, CVWD will occasionally use equipment similar to the types used to construct the proposed Facilities.

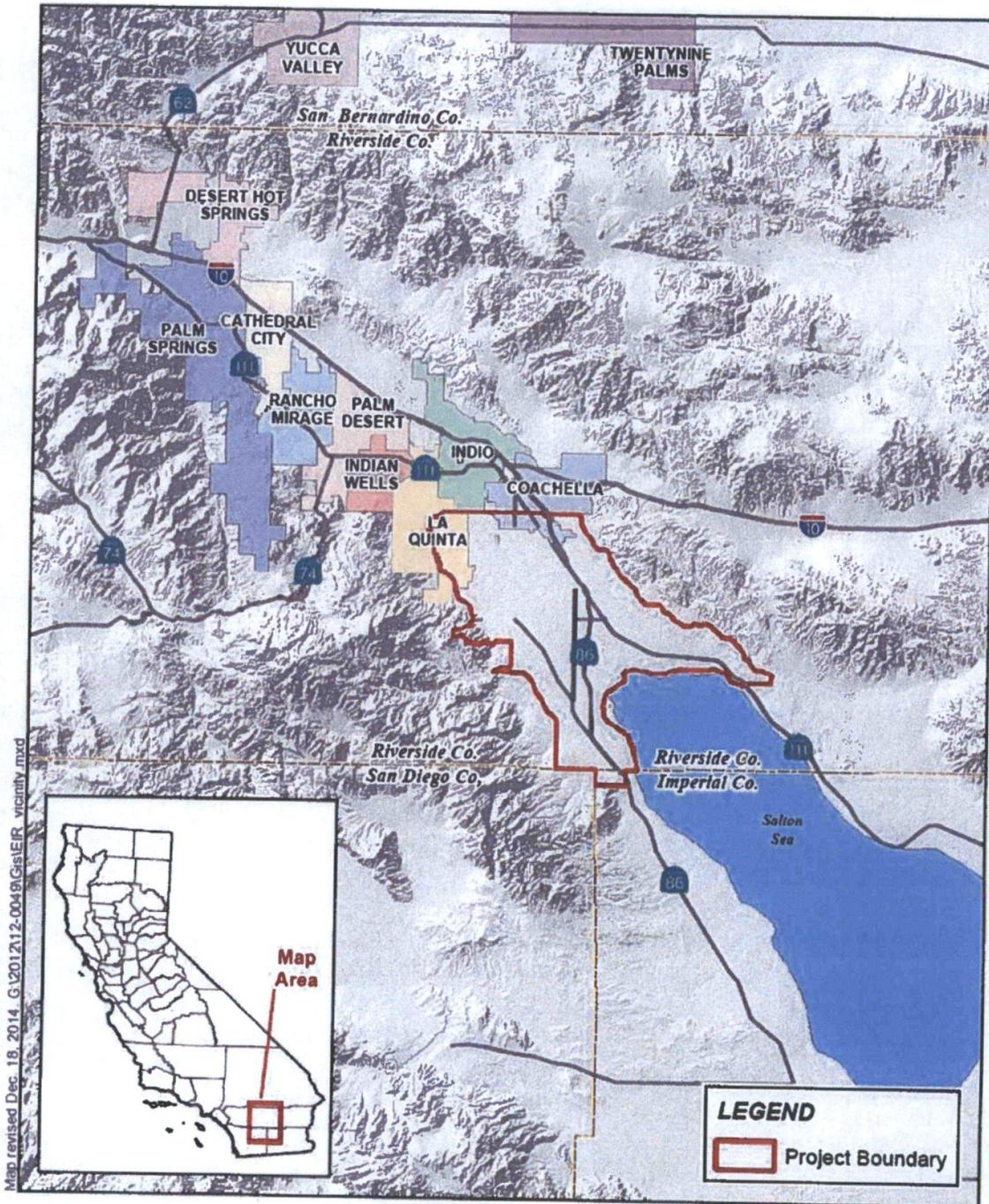
The routine maintenance of earthen channels and basins typically requires the following activities: the removal of deposition, repair of eroded slopes, and reduction of fire hazards by annually mowing, and application of herbicides as well as the maintenance activities described in the previous paragraph. Vegetation must be removed or mowed, as necessary, to maintain the designed hydraulic capacity. Any vegetation that may pose a fire hazard to adjacent structures must also be maintained. The design capacity of the facility and the frequency, duration, and velocity of runoff usually dictate the frequency of vegetation maintenance. Most Facilities require some annual vegetation control.

### ***Traffic Control Measures***

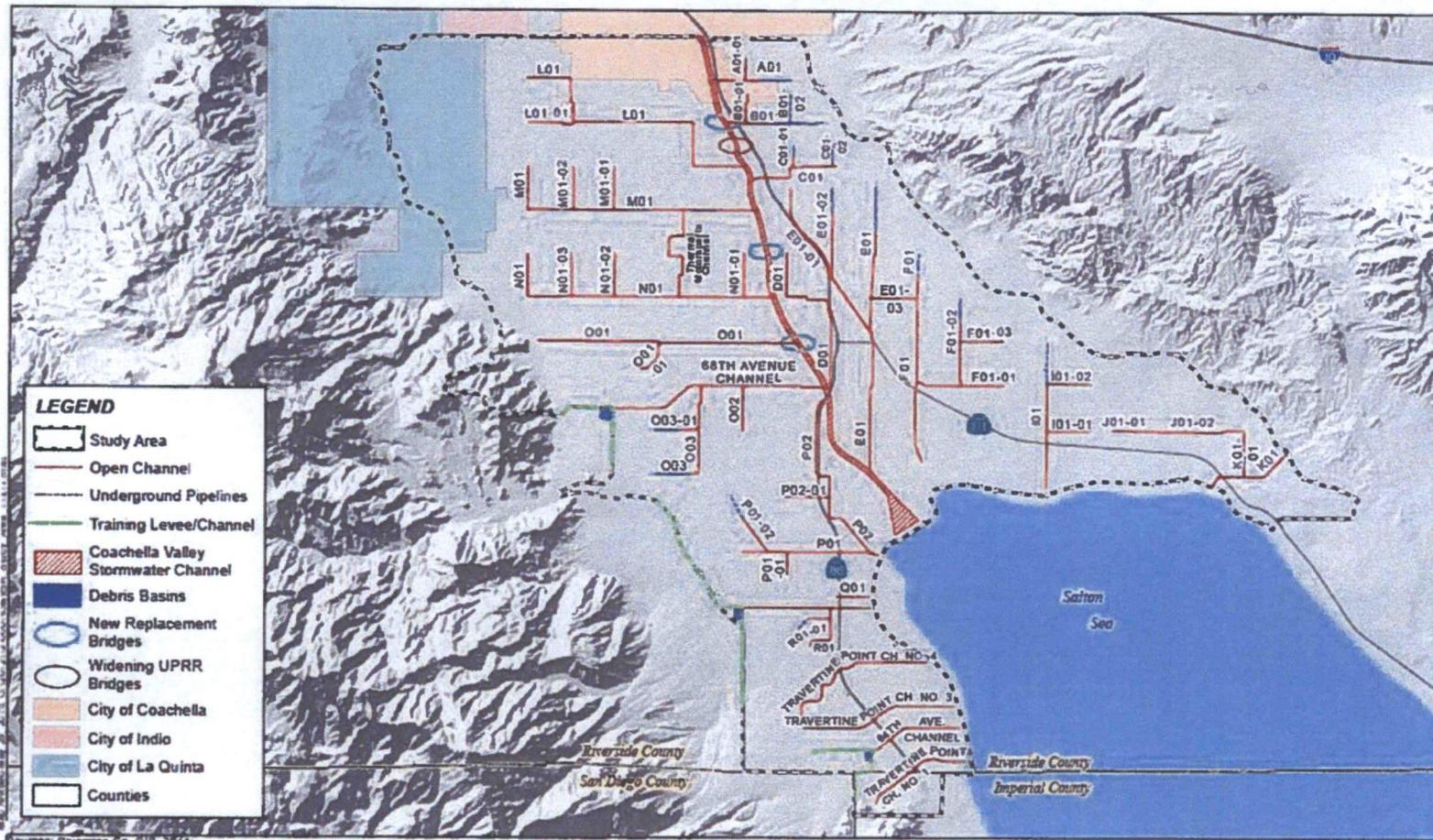
As a number of SMP Facilities will be within or adjacent to existing roadway rights-of-way, Traffic Control Plans will be prepared and implemented as a part of the design of the individual SMP Facilities when the construction of a Facility requires temporary closure of a travel lane or road segment. The Traffic Control Plan will require that access and circulation be maintained throughout construction activities or a detour provided around the construction site. The Traffic Control Plan will be prepared by the party constructing the Facility or Facilities (e.g., CVWD, Riverside County, City of Coachella, and/or private developer) and submitted to the Riverside County Fire Department and Riverside County Transportation Department or City of Coachella Public Works Department, as appropriate, for approval. The Traffic Control Plan will include the estimated day(s), time(s), and duration of any lane or road segment closure that are anticipated to be required on affected roadways for SMP Facility construction.

The Traffic Control Plan shall include measures such as, but not limited to, signage, flagmen, cones, advance community notice, or other acceptable measures to the satisfaction of the Riverside County Transportation Department or City of Coachella Public Works Department, as appropriate. The purpose of the measures are to safely guide motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, minimize traffic impacts and ensure the safe and even flow of traffic consistent with the affected jurisdiction's standards and requirements, in the event that SMP Facilities construction requires any lane or road segment closures.

Additionally, if the construction activity will affect access to transit lines, such as SunLine Transit Agency buses, the party constructing the Facility would be required to coordinate with the affected transit agency in advance to maintain service in the area.



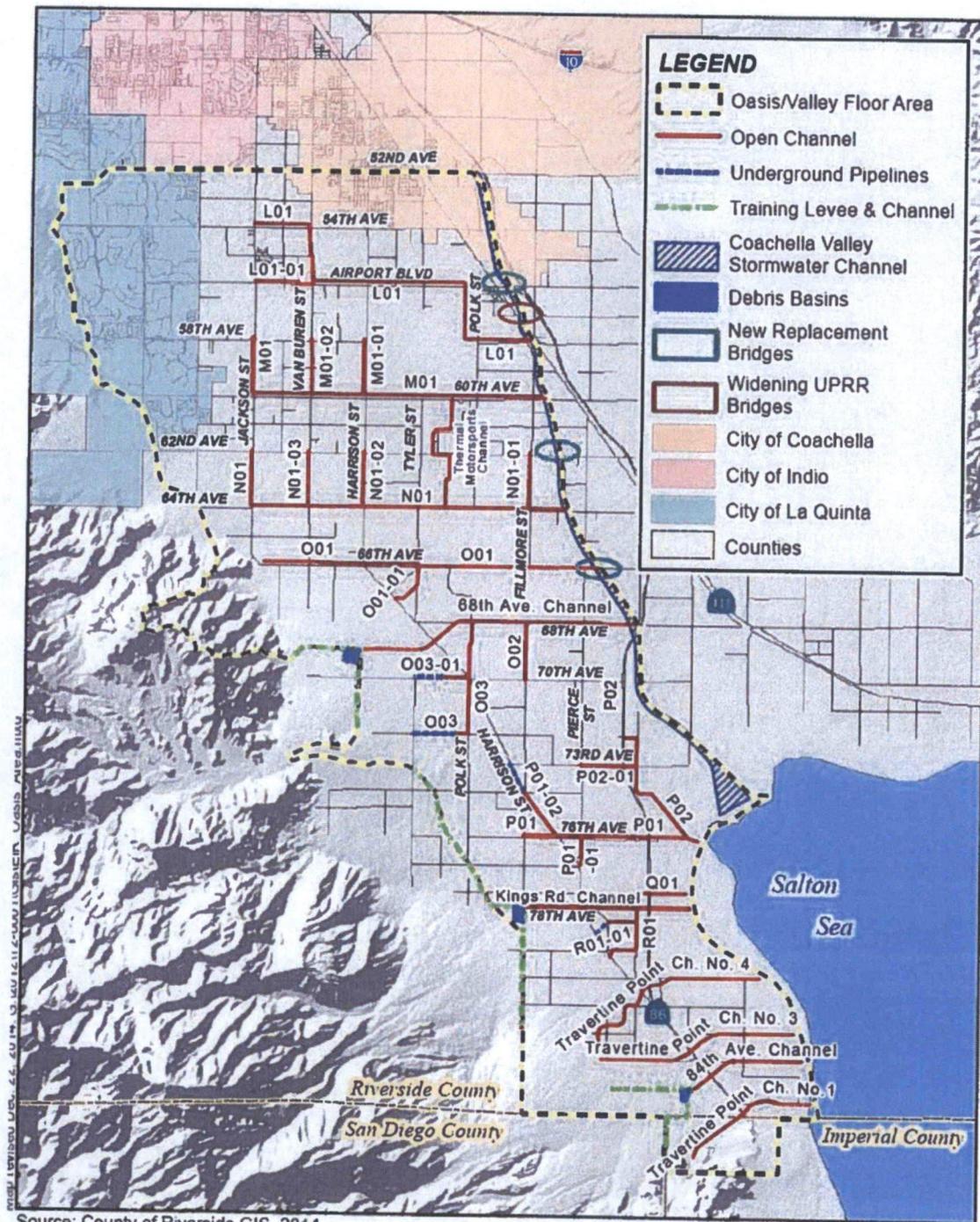
**Figure 1 - Vicinity Map**  
 Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan



**Figure 2 - Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan Area**  
 Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan



Albert A. WEH Associates

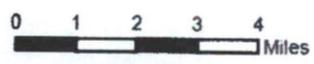


**Figure 3 - Oasis/Valley Floor Area**  
 Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan





**Figure 4 - Mecca/North Shore Area**  
 Eastern Coachella Valley Stormwater Master Plan



Albert A. **WEBB** Associates

**PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:** Based upon preliminary environmental assessment, the following resource topics may be addressed in the EIR:

- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Biological Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use and Planning

**PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD:** Scoping has been helpful to agencies in identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures and significant effects to be analyzed in depth in an EIR, as well as, eliminating from detailed study issues found not be significant.

CVWD will accept written comments regarding the scoping of the EIR between **July 17, 2015 and August 17, 2015**. A public scoping meeting will be held on **August 4, 2015 from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.**, at the Coachella Valley Water District's Forbes Board Room, 51-501 Tyler Street, Coachella, CA.

**RESPONSES AND COMMENTS:** Comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR are welcomed. Please send written comments to:

Luke Stowe  
Environmental Supervisor  
Coachella Valley Water District  
75-515 Hovley Lane East  
Palm Desert, California 92211  
Telephone: (760) 398-2661 ext.2545

Your comments may also be sent via email to: [lstowe@cvwd.org](mailto:lstowe@cvwd.org)

*Reference:* California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) §§ 15082(a), 15103, 15375.