

# COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

2023-2024

# STRATEGIC PLAN



ADOPTED 2023



**YourWater**  
is our promise



# ***Flowing Forward***

## **Coachella Valley Water District**

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## **Board of Directors**

John Powell Jr., president

Cástulo R. Estrada, vice-president

Anthony Bianco, Peter Nelson, John Aguilar

## **General Manager**

Jim Barrett



**Your Water**  
is our promise





# CONTENTS

CVWD Mission Statement .....	2
Message from the General Manager .....	3
Coachella Valley Water District at a Glance .....	4
Organizational Structure .....	5
Community Profile .....	6
Boundary Map .....	7
What is a Strategic Plan? .....	8
Issues of Concern.....	9
SWOT Analysis .....	10
Budgeting .....	11
Strategic Goals.....	12
2021 Strategic Initiative Accomplishments .....	13-21
2023 Strategic Initiative Expectations .....	22-29
CVWD Employee Creed .....	30

# OUR MISSION



To meet the water-related needs of the people through dedicated employees, providing high quality water at a reasonable cost.





# Message from the General Manager

The past two years have been challenging as California experienced one of the driest drought periods in its history, along with increasing tensions over the ongoing 20-year drought on the Colorado River. In the spring of 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide drought emergency executive order requiring all water agencies to adopt Level 2 of their Water Shortage Contingency Plans. The order also required agencies to meet a 15 percent monthly water savings compared to 2020. This posed challenges as Coachella Valley's tourism and part-time residential population dramatically decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic that year, significantly reducing water use. In addition, the District's State Water Project (SWP) allocation was minimal at only 5 percent in 2021 and 2022. Nevertheless, the District's steadfast water management strategies proved to keep our groundwater basin in balance to meet the needs of our customers while supporting the local economy.

In contrast, this past winter took a turn and brought abundant rain and snow to California, which is good news for our imported water supplies. This year's SWP allocation is 100 percent for the first time in 17 years, allowing us to store more water.

Strategic Planning efforts help to guide the District's board, leadership, and staff as we strive to meet the water-related needs of our community and future generations. We took a break in 2022 to allow time to complete projects from the previous planning effort and for budgetary planning to include funding for initiatives in the 2023-24 fiscal year budget.

The Strategic Planning process determines which organizational actions and decisions rise to higher levels of prioritization through focused and deliberative action. That action leads to successfully implementing projects and programs that benefit our customers and our organization. Development of the Strategic Plan was a collaborative and transparent process that included the Board of Directors and employees representing every department within the District. Under the guidance of a professional strategic planning firm, this group met for two day-long workshops open to the public.

During the workshops, 29 initiatives were proposed, evaluated, and discussed. Through a prioritization process, which assessed the feasibility and benefits, participants selected 14 strategic initiatives featured on pages 22-29.

This document reviews the 2020-21 plan's accomplishments on pages 12-21, and outlines this year's expectations. It is a plan for today and the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Barrett". The signature is stylized and written over a white background.

**Jim Barrett**  
General Manager

# COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT AT A GLANCE



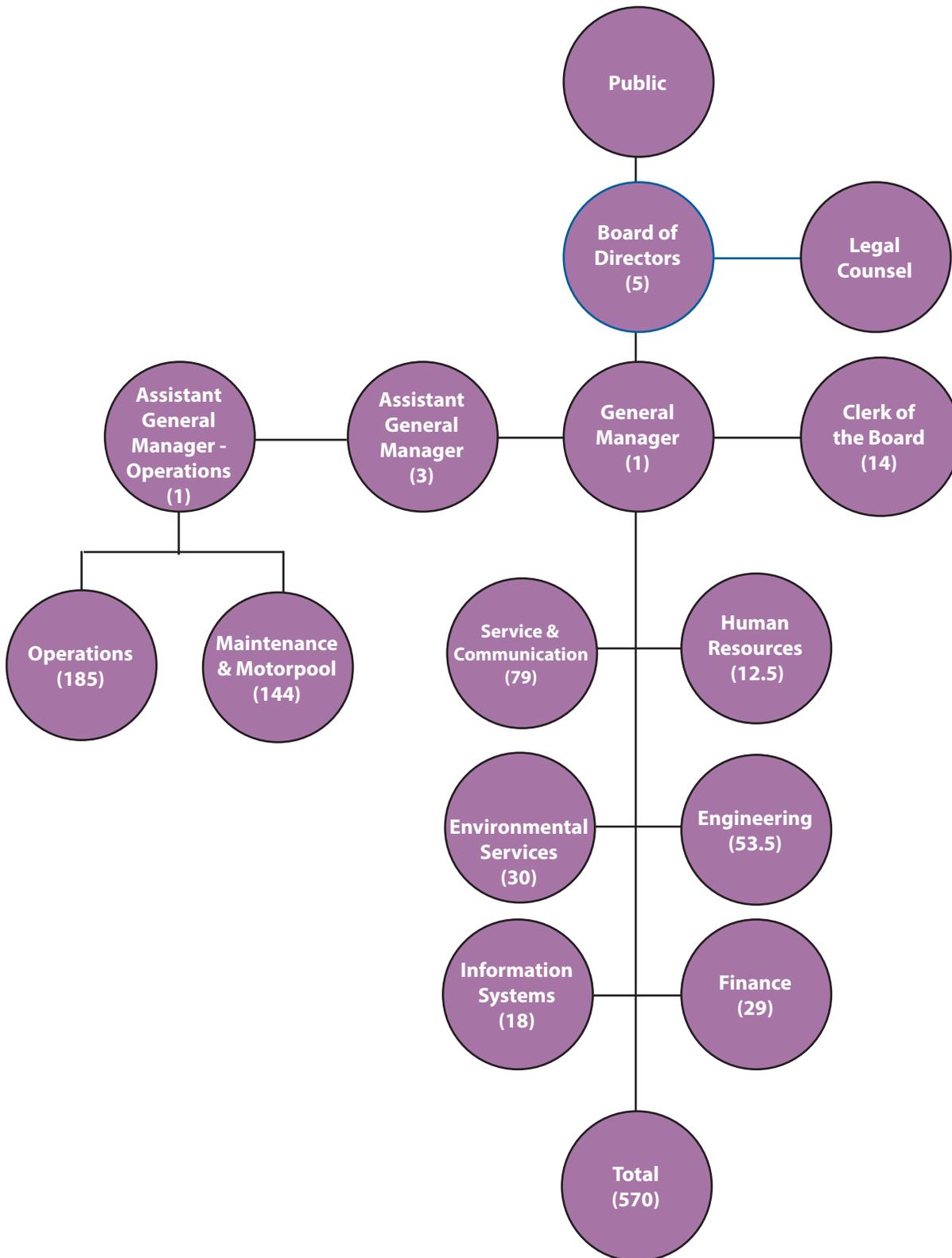
Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is a special district established in 1918 by the state legislature and governed by a five-member Board of Directors elected to four-year terms by District voters.

Today, CVWD has grown into a multi-faceted agency with nearly 570 employees working to provide a variety of water-related utility services to more than 270,000 people in the Coachella Valley.

The primary fields of service are:

- 1 Domestic/drinking water treatment and distribution** to approximately 113,000 homes and businesses. All of the drinking water supplied by CVWD comes from the groundwater basin.
- 2 Irrigation water importation and distribution.** The 123-mile Coachella Canal provides Colorado River water to local farmers and golf courses in the eastern Coachella Valley.
- 3 Wastewater collection and treatment.** The District owns and operates five wastewater reclamation plants that receive a combined average of 17 million gallons of wastewater per day.
- 4 Recycled/nonpotable water distribution.** Treated wastewater is distributed to golf courses and other customers for landscape irrigation.
- 5 Groundwater and imported water supply management.** CVWD replenishes the groundwater supply at four different facilities in the Coachella Valley. At two of the locations, the effort is collaborative with Desert Water Agency (DWA).
- 6 Regional stormwater and flood protection.** The District protects nearly 600 square miles of land and property from flooding through a system that includes 16 stormwater protection channels.

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Numbers reflect total positions budgeted for fiscal year 2023-24.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE



The Coachella Valley (Valley) has nine diverse cities: Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, La Quinta, Desert Hot Springs, Indio, and Coachella, as well as, portions of unincorporated Riverside County that have their own unique histories and personalities.

The Valley is an alluring destination for residents and tourists with year-round sunshine and many internationally known recreational sports, music events and attractions that provide a \$6.8 billion tourism industry for the local economy. Additionally, the Coachella Valley is home to an agricultural industry that employs approximately 12,000 people and produces nearly \$600 million in agricultural products each year.

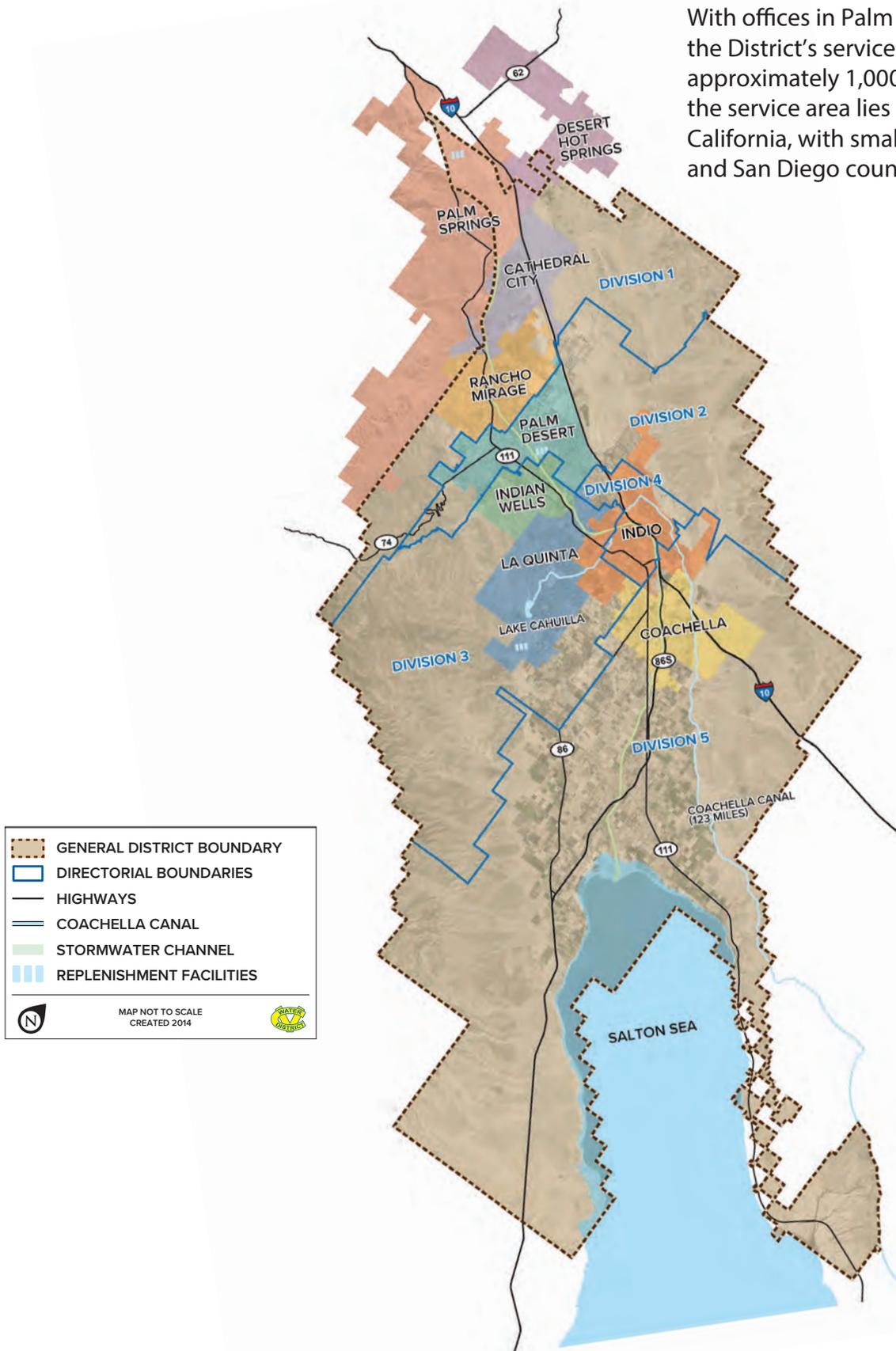
As part of the Colorado Desert, average daily highs range from 71 to 107 degrees and average nightly lows from 44 to 80 degrees. Most of the nearly 3.5 inches of annual rain occurs in December through February, with some rainfall also being received in August as monsoonal weather patterns move in from the south.

The Valley is approximately 45 miles in Riverside County, southeast from the San Bernardino Mountains to the northern shore of the Salton Sea. It is about 15 miles wide along most of its length and surrounded by scenic, rugged mountains. To the north is Mount San Gorgonio; on the north and the east, the Little San Bernardino Mountains; to the west, the San Jacinto Mountains; to the south, the Santa Rosa Mountains; and to the east, in the distance, the Chocolate Mountains.

The elevations on the Valley floor range from 1,600 feet at the north end of the Valley to 250 feet below sea level at the south end of the Valley. The southern segment of the San Andreas Fault crosses the Valley near Bombay Beach, on the Salton Sea, and runs along the south base of the San Bernardino Mountains. The fault is easily visible on the northern side of the Valley as a strip of greenery against an otherwise bare mountain. Because of this fault, the Valley has many hot springs. Fault lines cause hot water springs or geysers to rise from the ground. These natural water sources made habitation and development possible in the otherwise inhospitable desert of the Coachella Valley.

# BOUNDARY MAP

With offices in Palm Desert and Coachella, the District's service area covers approximately 1,000 square miles. Most of the service area lies in Riverside County, California, with small portions in Imperial and San Diego counties.



# WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?

The Strategic Plan is a tool that defines what is critical to the District's success and the initiatives necessary to guide the District toward achieving its goals. Strategic planning is intended to help decision makers identify initiatives, evaluate priorities, and then put action plans in place to guide an organization.

The strategic goals were identified and considered within the framework of Effective Utility Management (EUM), which was developed by the major water and wastewater organizations in the United States. Effective utility management helps water and wastewater utilities select priorities for improvement based on the unique needs of their communities. The framework addresses operations, infrastructure, customer satisfaction, community welfare, natural resource stewardship, and financial performance.



\*The 10 attributes of an effectively managed water utility, as developed by leading industry associations, reflects 2016 revisions.

# ISSUES OF CONCERN

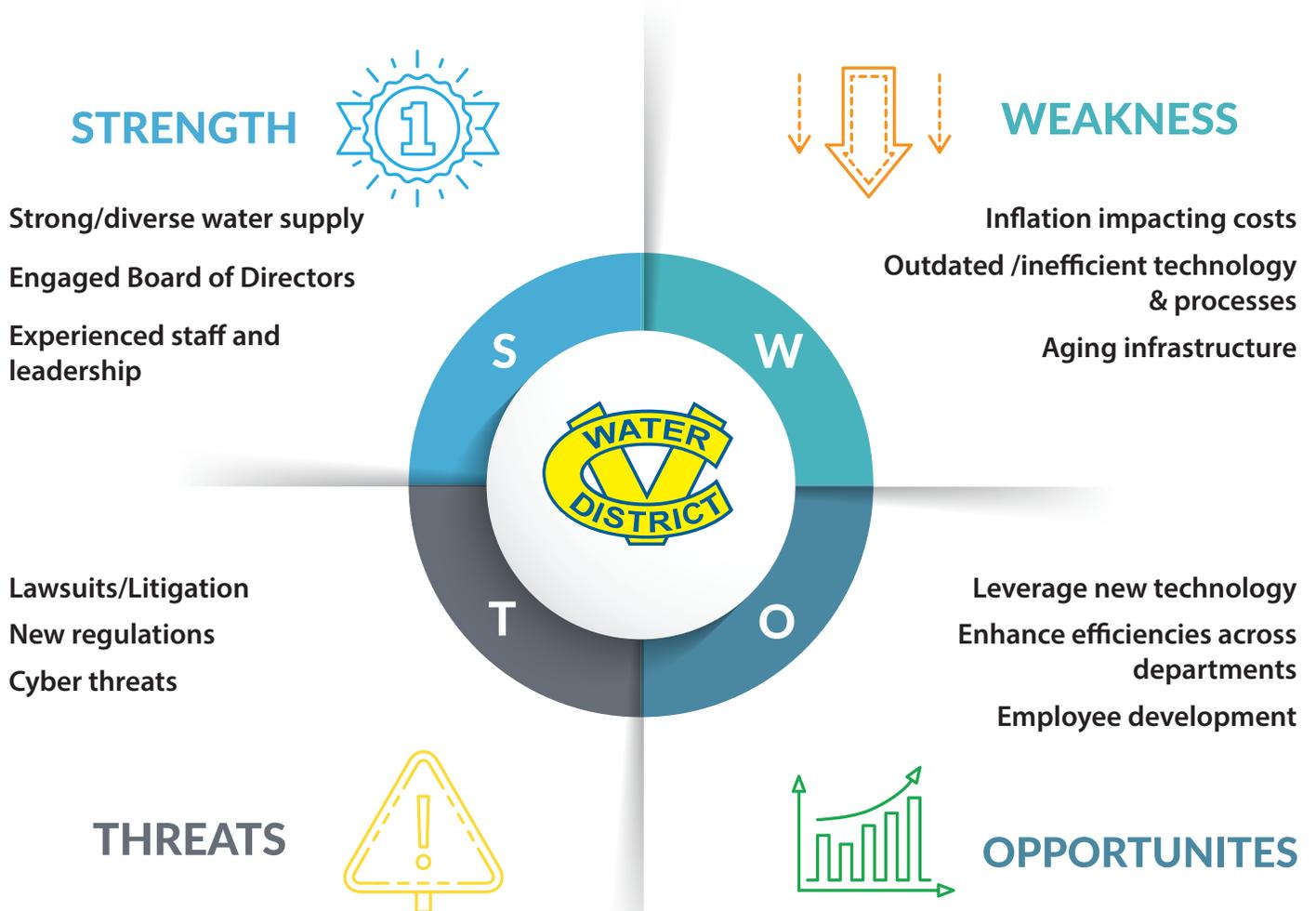


Current and emerging issues of concern are a key factor in developing the Strategic Goals. By identifying these issues and pairing them with the Effective Utility Management (EUM) attributes as a reference point, the District can better set priorities. Some of the issues at this time include:

- 1 Through the foresight of our predecessors in the Valley, CVWD is one of only two California water agencies that holds water rights to both the Colorado River and the State Water Project. However, droughts within California and the Colorado River basin are stark reminders of how vulnerable imported water supplies are to the forces of nature, and that these supplies need to be protected and optimally used. (Water Resource Sustainability).
- 2 Although the bulk of the District's domestic water system is relatively new, ongoing repairs and replacement projects are required. The Coachella Canal irrigation system is nearing 70 years old, with many of the 485 miles of underground irrigation lines in need of repair or replacement. The District is the main agency that provides stormwater protection for the Coachella Valley and several areas remain unprotected. (Infrastructure Strategy & Performance).
- 3 CVWD must address the operating and capital needs of the service area while maintaining reasonable rates for services. The District must carefully balance responding to rising costs with maintaining affordable rates. (Financial Stability).
- 4 As science continues to improve the ability to detect minute levels of constituents, water quality regulations are becoming more and more challenging to agencies. CVWD and others continue to advocate for sound science to analyze the potential health impacts of constituents as well as economic analysis of the treatment options. (Water Quality and Environmental Leadership).
- 5 Within CVWD's boundary, there are small water systems that are not connected to CVWD's domestic water supply. These systems struggle with water quality and reliability. CVWD formed the Disadvantaged Communities Infrastructure Task Force, whose mission is to secure access to safe affordable drinking water, wastewater and flood control services in historically disadvantaged Coachella Valley regions through strategic planning, funding procurement, needs assessment, and reporting – all in collaboration with community members and stakeholders. CVWD continues to work on top priority projects listed in the domestic water supply and sanitation master plans. (Community Sustainability and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance).
- 6 On November 27, 2017 the Supreme Court of the United States denied a request by CVWD and Desert Water Agency to review the legality in the ruling in favor of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians suit against the water districts. The suit claims senior reserved groundwater rights and seeks to permanently stop the water districts from withdrawing groundwater from the aquifer in the western Coachella Valley, and replenishing the aquifer without treating the water first. The second phase of this lawsuit, deciding whether the Tribe owns storage space within the groundwater basins, is still underway. (Water Resource Sustainability).
- 7 On March 24, 2023, Gov. Gavin Newsom eased emergency restrictions from the 2022 statewide drought emergency but kept the ban on non-functional turf in place. There is legislation (AB152) in process that will make the ban permanent. The Coachella Valley always meets the definition of drought and CVWD has a long history of effective groundwater management planning to ensure future water supplies. The 2022 Indio Subbasin Water Management Plan Update (also known as the 2022 Alternative Plan Update) details several strategies to reliably meet current and future water demands in a cost-effective and sustainable manner including increasing conservation, recycled and imported water for golf and farm irrigation and continued groundwater replenishment and source substitution. (Water Resource Sustainability and Community Sustainability).
- 8 CVWD's service area covers a wide demographic of customers, and as such, providing opportunities to obtain their input on various water-related issues is important to the continued success of the District. CVWD offers different venues to educate our customers and stakeholders and also to obtain their input, including Board meetings, tours, community events, and stakeholder meetings. CVWD staff looks for new ways provide information to the community, and to also receive their input. (Stakeholder Engagement).
- 9 Similar to other utilities, CVWD is confronting an aging workforce. About 105 people have retired from CVWD in the last five years and more employees are eligible to retire in the next five years. A continuing focus on succession planning, recruitment, and retention is critical to ensure an educated and skilled workforce is available to provide reliable water-related services to our customers. (Workforce Development).

# SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis was performed by staff and board members to analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats across the District. Many themes and topics were raised during the analysis but the top three from each section were chosen. The final results of the analysis helped to develop the District's initiatives for 2023-24.



# BUDGETING



Budget considerations are a critical component in the development of a Strategic Plan. In an effort to allow for greater budgetary planning the Strategic Planning process was paused in 2022 and resumed in October 2022, to allow departments to include funding for Strategic Initiatives in the upcoming 2023-24 fiscal year budget.

The 2022 Strategic Planning process was successful in generating 14 projects for the 2023-24 fiscal year and are presented on pages 22-29 of this document.

Pages 13-21 of this document show fiscal year 2020-21 strategic initiatives/projects and respective accomplishments. When a project was not completed during the fiscal year, a note indicates its carryover status.



# STRATEGIC GOALS



The District considered external issues and internal challenges before identifying and committing to the strategic goals below. These goals cover six areas of focus and are designed to move the District forward in executing its mission. The District revised its previous goals during the 2020 strategic planning workshops to better align with its mission, current issues and the changing environment. All EUM attributes remain the same.

## **Exceptional Customer Service and Stakeholder Engagement**

CVWD will provide exceptional customer service and collaborative stakeholder engagement.

## **Water Quality and Environmental Leadership**

CVWD will be good stewards of the environment while providing water services that meet or surpass all regulatory requirements.

## **Water Supply Optimization**

CVWD will optimize the use of existing water resources and programs, and invest in new water supplies as necessary to provide reliable water service.

## **Infrastructure Investment and Management**

CVWD will cost-effectively construct, maintain, and replace infrastructure required to provide reliable water services.

## **Operational Optimization**

CVWD will continuously improve its workforce, systems, facilities, and processes to effectively and innovatively meet the needs of our service area.

## **Financial Viability**

CVWD will manage its financial resources to maintain reasonable rates while reliably meeting the service delivery needs of our customers.

**GOAL 1: EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

**Initiative 1:** Disadvantaged communities-focused outreach to educate stakeholders, opinion leaders, media and policy makers.

**EUM:** Customer Satisfaction, Stakeholder Understanding and Community Sustainability.

**Status:** Complete



**GOAL 2: WATER QUALITY & ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP**

Initiative 2: Develop climate action plan.

EUMs: Financial Viability and Community Sustainability.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 3: Develop co-funded research to evaluate Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) attenuation through Recycled Water Irrigation. Obtain funding approval and assist Water Research Foundation (WRF) to complete consultant contracting process.

EUMs: Product Quality, Operational Optimization and Water Resource Sustainability.

Status: Did not move forward.

Initiative 4: Initiate energy optimization programs at Water Reclamation Plants.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Financial Viability.

Status: Complete.

**GOAL 3: WATER SUPPLY OPTIMIZATION**

Initiative 5: Improve agricultural open drain monitoring network infrastructure.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 6: Evaluate and design mid-canal storage.

EUMs: Operational Optimization, Infrastructure Strategy & Performance and Water Resource Sustainability.

Status: Incomplete. Meetings continue to work through comments on the Funding Agreement. Project will be presented to respective Boards once parties agree to terms.

Initiative 7: Conduct long-term feasibility study for Whitewater Groundwater Replenishment Master Plan.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Water Resource Sustainability.

Status: Incomplete. Postponed to Fiscal Year 2023 due to budget constraints.

**GOAL 3: WATER SUPPLY OPTIMIZATION**

Initiative 8: Conduct pre-construction activities for Phase II of the Oasis In-Lieu Recharge Project.

EUMs: Water Resource Sustainability and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 9: Expand nonpotable water (NPW) program.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Water Resource Sustainability

Status: Incomplete. About 90 percent of the design is scheduled to be complete in December 2023.

Accomplishments



**GOAL 4: INFRASTRUCTURE  
INVESTMENT & MANAGEMENT**

Initiative 10: Conduct portable telemetry upgrade study.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance

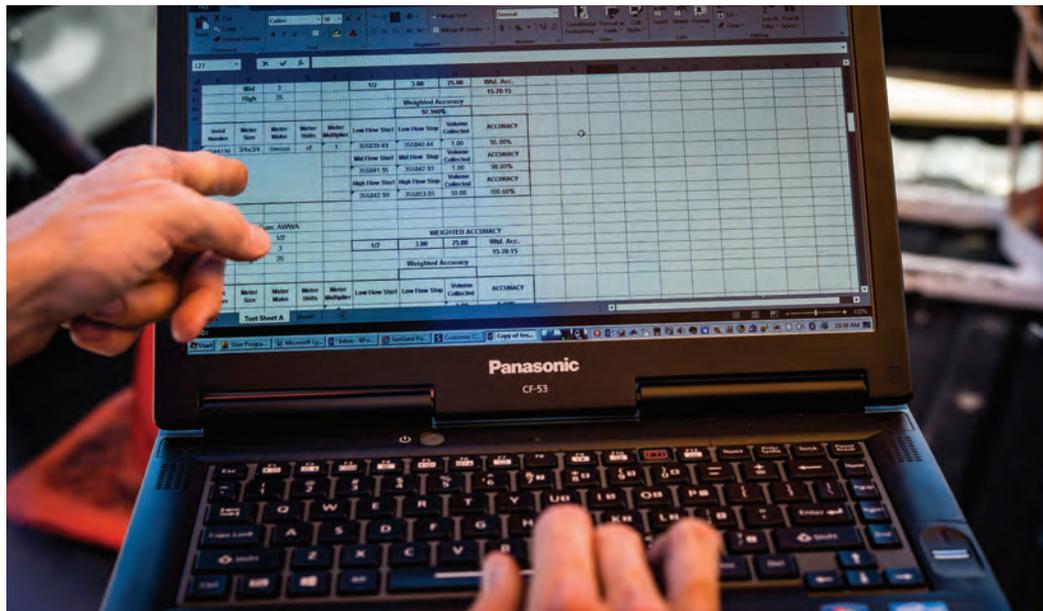
Status: Complete.

Initiative 11: Install emergency generators at domestic water well sites.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

Status: Complete.

Accomplishments



**GOAL 4: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & MANAGEMENT**

Initiative 12: Implement Phase I of surge tank protection project and eliminate program at domestic water booster station sites.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 13: Implement Risk and Resilience Assessment Recommendations, Phase 1.

EUMs: Operational Optimization, Infrastructure Strategy & Performance, and Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Complete.

Accomplishments



**GOAL 5: OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION**

Initiative 14: Implement a study to evaluate operational efficiency and to optimize staff productivity.

EUMs: Employee & Leadership Development and Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Staff is evaluating the American Water Works Association's benchmarking results to prepare the final report.

Initiative 15: Implement Computerized Maintenance Management System and develop training program.

EUMs: Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

Status: Complete.

Accomplishments



**GOAL 5: OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION**

Initiative 16: Participate in Partnership for Safe Water Distribution System.

EUMs: Operational Optimization, Infrastructure Strategy & Performance and Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 17: Establish Human Resources Development Program (HRDP).

EUMs: Employee & Leadership Development, Operational Optimization and Performance & Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Complete.

Initiative 18: Administer Comprehensive Class and Compensation Study.

EUMs: Employee & Leadership Development and Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Complete.

Accomplishments



**GOAL 6: FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

Initiative 19: Develop Request for Proposals for Enterprise Resource Planning and Utility Billing.

EUMs: Financial Viability and Enterprise Resiliency.

Status: Project is delayed due to competing resources and priorities.

*Accomplishments*



## GOAL 1: EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**Initiative 1:** Coordinate community outreach for CVWD career opportunities.

**Expectation:** Educate the community on careers and opportunities at the District.

**Estimated Cost:** \$25,000

**EUMs:** Customer Satisfaction, Stakeholder Understanding and Community Sustainability.

*Expectations*



## GOAL 2: WATER QUALITY & ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

**Initiative 2:** Develop mitigation credits for infrastructure projects.

**Expectation:** Create scalable/expandable wetland and streambed restoration projects to satisfy the permit requirements at Wastewater Reclamation Plant 10.

**Estimated Cost:** \$175,000

**EUMs:** Community Sustainability.

**Initiative 3:** Perform review of converting chlorine gas to UV disinfection at Wastewater Reclamation Plant 10 (WRP10).

**Expectation:** Conduct feasibility study to evaluate the costs and benefits of implementing ultraviolet disinfection at WRP 10.

**Estimated Cost:** \$100,000

**EUMs:** Financial Stability and Operational Optimization.

**Initiative 4:** Rehabilitate domestic water wells with elevated nitrate levels.

**Expectation:** Analyze rehabilitating wells with high nitrate levels by modifying well screens to block the shallow screens as an alternative to redrilling wells.

**Estimated Cost:** \$450,000

**EUMs:** Product Quality, Operational Optimization and Financial Viability.

*Expectations*

**GOAL 2: WATER QUALITY & ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP**

**Initiative 5:** Analyze issues associated with implementing a zero emission fleet.

**Expectation:** Analyze the challenges related to acquiring fleet to meet the state’s zero emission requirement by 2030 including charging or hydrogen refueling stations.

**Estimated Cost:** \$150,000

**EUMs:** Operational Resiliency, Operational Optimization and Financial Viability.

*Expectations*



**GOAL 3: WATER SUPPLY OPTIMIZATION**

**Initiative 6:** Expand conservation program incentives.

**Expectation:** Increase the use of smart-irrigation controllers by using new technology alternatives including Flume monitors and Rachio Smart Sprinkler Controller.

**Estimated Cost:** \$30,000

**EUMs:** Water Resource Sustainability.

**Initiative 7:** Analyze the Groundwater Replenishment Reuse Project.

**Expectation:** Conduct feasibility study to use a blend of recycled and canal water for replenishment at Wastewater Reclamation Plants 7 and 10.

**Estimated Cost:** \$250,000

**EUMs:** Operational Optimization, Infrastructure Stability and Water Resource Sustainability.

*Expectations*



**GOAL 4: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & MANAGEMENT**

**Initiative 8:** Analyze the economics of operating a CVWD meter testing and calibration facility.

**Expectation:** Conduct a feasibility study on constructing and operating a testing and calibration facility for domestic irrigation and RAC meters.

**Estimated Cost:** \$150,000

**EUMs:** Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

**Initiative 9:** Perform a pipe condition assessment pilot study.

**Expectation:** Verify pipeline integrity to complement asset management data allowing CVWD to develop a pipeline replacement program based on priority.

**Estimated Cost:** \$75,000

**EUMs:** Operational Optimization and Infrastructure Strategy & Performance.

*Expectations*



**GOAL 4: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & MANAGEMENT**

**Initiative 10:** Construct a model of the Coachella Canal to enhance training and operations.

**Expectation:** Provide a training tool for staff working with the canal system as the model would represent sections of the canal.

**Estimated Cost:** \$300,000

**EUM:** Operational Optimization.

**Initiative 11:** Perform security vulnerability assessment on critical infrastructure sites.

**Expectation:** Hire a consultant to evaluate security at critical infrastructure sites to build on the Stantec report that evaluated CVWD campuses.

**Estimated Cost:** \$200,000

**EUM:** Enterprise Resiliency.

Expectations



**GOAL 5: OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION**

**Initiative 12:** Develop a comprehensive instrumentation implementation program.

**Expectation:** Create a long-term plan to ensure a successful transition into the new SCADA system, including developing prioritization, information transfer requirements, and training and staffing needs.

**Estimated Cost:** \$250,000.

**EUMs:** Operational Optimization.

**Initiative 13:** Develop a comprehensive supervisor training program.

**Expectation:** Develop a standard operating procedures and process for training, cross training, mentoring and apprenticeships.

**Estimated Cost:** \$100,000

**EUMs:** Employee and Leadership Development.



**GOAL 6: FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

**Initiative 14:** Develop and Implement a comprehensive plan to ensure financial adequacy.

**Expectation:** Create a comprehensive multi-year plan to fund the District's priority capital projects and maintain operational service level through leveraging grants, non-rate income, loans, bonds, and reserves in a fiscally prudent manner to reduce the degree of rate increases otherwise necessary.

**Estimated Cost:** \$500,000

**EUMs:** Financial Viability and Enterprise Resiliency.



# CVWD Employee Creed

*I am the Coachella Valley Water District. I will conduct myself with the highest degree of Integrity, Humility, Respect, Competence, Commitment, Honor, and Professionalism.*

*I will at all times conscientiously carry out my duties and foster diligence in those I work with. I will strive to be proficient, supportive, and committed to the welfare of our customers and my co-workers. I will uphold the policies of the District and honor its mission. I understand that respect and open communication are essential in my daily duties.*

*This is my Creed. I am CVWD!*



**YourWater**  
is our promise