

# CADIZ VALLEY

## Water Conservation, Recovery, and Storage Project



Santa Margarita  
Water District

### The Project

Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) is a project participant in the proposed Cadiz Valley Groundwater Conservation, Recovery, and Imported Water Storage Project (Project). The Project is designed to actively manage the groundwater basin underlying a portion of the Cadiz and Fenner Valleys located in the eastern Mojave Desert portion of San Bernardino County, California. The purpose of the Project is to capture water that would otherwise evaporate from the local dry lakes, and convey it to SMWD and other water providers as a new reliable water supply.

The proposed Project would be implemented in two phases:

#### Conservation and Recovery Component – Phase I

In this first phase, a system would be constructed to capture and conserve the aquifer's average annual recharge that would otherwise evaporate from the Bristol and Cadiz Dry Lakes. The project would construct extraction wells on the Cadiz property and a 43-mile underground water conveyance pipeline within an active railroad right-of-way that intersects with the Colorado River Aqueduct, making water delivery to the Southern California region possible. If the region experiences wet weather, SMWD has the option to decrease or forego its water delivery for that year and carry it over to another year when it may be needed. This carry-over water would be stored in the Cadiz Aquifer.

#### Imported Water Storage Component – Phase II

A second phase of the Project contemplates storage of imported water from the Colorado River in the Cadiz aquifer system. The storage capacity of the aquifer system is estimated to be one million acre feet. In wet years, surplus water from the Colorado River could be conveyed to recharge basins on Cadiz-owned land and would percolate into the underground aquifer for storage. The water would be available for use in dry years, helping improve the region's water supply reliability.

### About SMWD

Santa Margarita Water District was founded in 1964 and currently provides water and wastewater treatment services to more than 155,000 residents and businesses in South Orange County. As the second-largest water district in Orange County, SMWD's service area encompasses approximately 62,000 acres of land.

South Orange County does not have an underground aquifer; therefore, SMWD must rely upon water purchased from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which delivers water to the region from Northern California via the State Water Project and from the Colorado River. SMWD relies upon other water sources, such as groundwater reuse and water recycling programs, to augment its water supply and meet demands.

The proposed Cadiz Valley Project would diversify SMWD's water portfolio and help drought-proof the District to ensure its water demands are met regardless of the state's water supply.



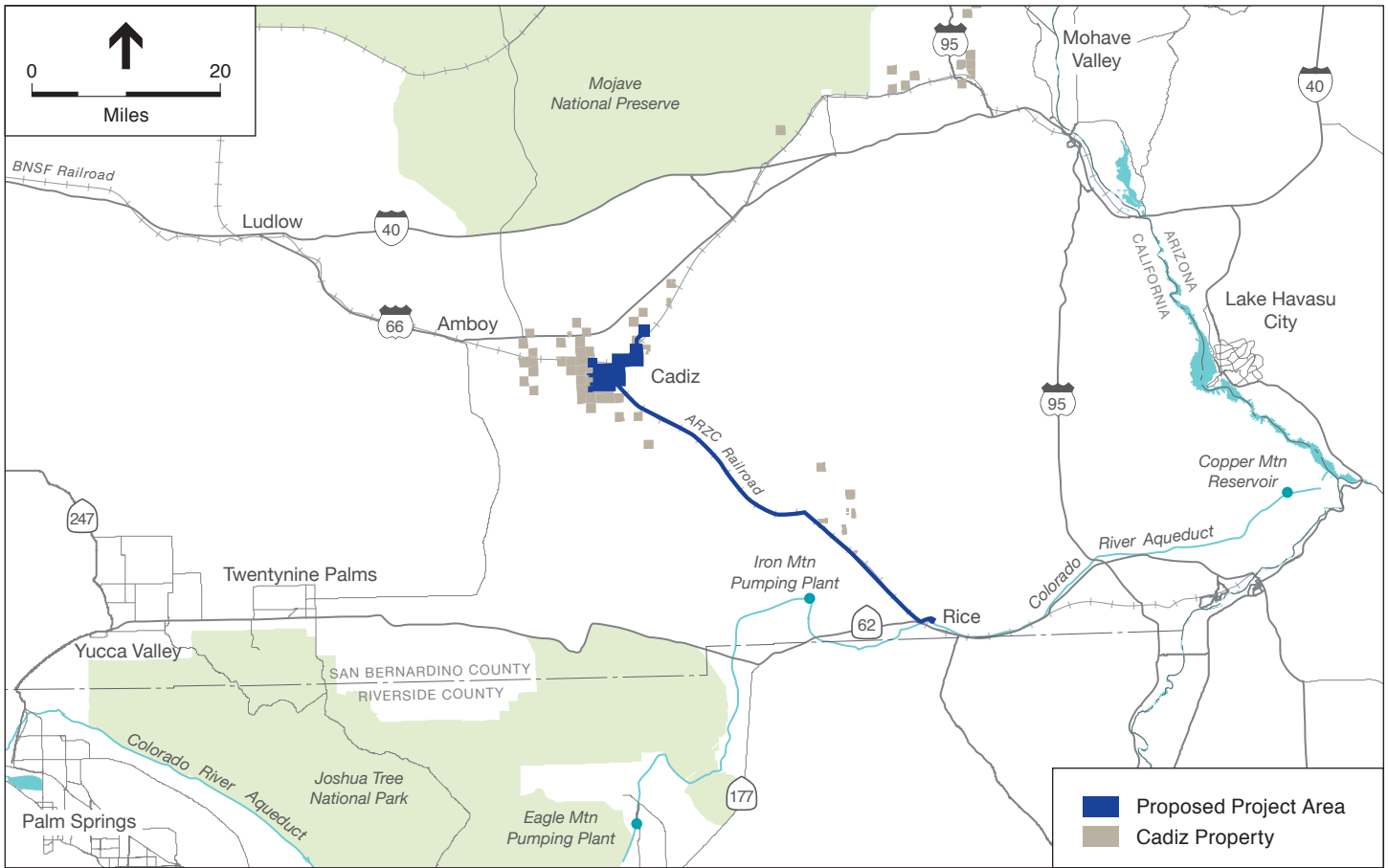
### California Environmental Quality Act

SMWD is the Lead Agency for the Project's California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process. On December 5, 2011, SMWD released a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that evaluates the Project's potential adverse environmental impacts to the desert environment and aquifer system. The DEIR includes mitigation measures needed to minimize any potentially significant impacts. SMWD will conduct a public review of the DEIR through February 13, 2012. As part of this public review, SMWD will hold a community workshop on January 11 (6171 Sunburst Street, Joshua Tree, CA) and two public comment workshops on January 24 (26111 Antonio Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA) and February 1 (6171 Sunburst Street, Joshua Tree, CA).

*Please send written comments, including a return address and contact name, to Tom Barnes at the following contact information:*

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## How the Project Works: Conservation & Storage

The Project area is located at the confluence of the Fenner Valley and Orange Blossom Watersheds, spans an area of nearly 1,300 square miles, and is underlain by an aquifer system composed of saturated alluvial materials, limestone-carbonates, and granitic rocks. Rain and melted snow falling within these large watersheds percolates into the soil becoming groundwater and then travels from the mountainous upper end through the Fenner Gap and into the lower aquifer systems underlying the dry lakes. Ultimately, the water ends up at the Cadiz and Bristol Dry Lakes where it converges with highly saline water and is lost to the atmosphere in the form of evaporation.

Each year, the proposed Project would intercept this water before it reaches the dry lakes and conserve it for use in Southern California. The Project would manage the aquifer system to limit withdrawals to long-term, safe-yield management levels, thus protecting and preserving the health of the aquifer.

The storage phase of the Project would take advantage of the aquifer system's capacity to store more than one million acre-feet of groundwater. In wet years, surplus water would be piped in from the Colorado River Aqueduct to spreading basins where it would percolate into the aquifer system. For conveyance of water to and from the aquifer system, a 43-mile long pipeline to the Aqueduct would be buried beneath railroad tracks along a right-of-way on pre-disturbed, private land.

## SMWD's Role as the Lead Agency

SMWD is acting as the Lead Agency for CEQA compliance since it is the first public agency that will have a discretionary action on the Project. According to CEQA, when a project is to be carried out by more than one public agency, the public agency with the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving a project or the first public agency to make a discretionary decision to proceed with a proposed project should act as the "Lead Agency" (*CEQA Guidelines* §15051(a) and §15051(b)).

Visit [www.smwd.com](http://www.smwd.com) for current Project information about the CEQA process.