Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvement Project

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment/ Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-CA-D060-2016-0011-EA

Coachella Valley Water District
75-515 Hovley Lane East
Palm Desert, California 92211

U. S. Bureau of Land Management
South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, California 92262

December 2015

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I. Project Information

Project Title:	Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project
Lead Agencies:	Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) 75-515 Hovley Lane East Palm Desert, CA 92211 Project Number: DW1309 U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) South Coast Field Office 1201 Bird Center Drive Palm Springs, CA 92262 Serial Number: CACA-54634 DOI-BLM-CA-060-2015-025
Applicant:	Coachella Valley Water District
Contact:	Luke Stowe, Environmental Supervisor, CVWD lstowe@cvwd.org (760) 398-2651, ext. 2545 Brandon G. Anderson, Realty Specialist, BLM bganderson@blm.gov (760) 833-7117
Project Description:	CVWD proposes construction and operation of a domestic water reservoir facility involving the placements of three, 6.5-million-gallon reservoirs and associated pipeline alignment to service existing and future customers within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone area.
Project Location:	Reservoir Site**:** Northeast intersection of Rio Del Sol Road and Vista Chino, within the unincorporated community of Thousand Palms, Riverside County, CA; Section 6, T.4.S., R.6.E., SBB&M. Pipeline Alignment: Rio Del Sol Road, Varner Road, crossing Interstate 10 and Union Pacific Railroad, along Ramon Road and Bob Hope Drive to Dinah Shore Drive, within the unincorporated community of Thousand Palms and the City of Rancho Mirage, Riverside County, CA; Sections 12, 13 & 24, T.4.S, R.5.E and Section 30, T.4.S, R.6.E., SBB&M.
General Plan Designations:	Reservoir Site: Light Industrial Pipeline Alignment: Light Industrial; Areas Subject to Indian Jurisdiction; Commercial; Commercial Tourist

Other Agency Approvals: BLM right-of-way; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ESA review; California Department of Fish and Wildlife CESA review; California Department of Transportation right-of-way; City of Rancho Mirage right-of-way; Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way; and Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians right-of-way.

Environment Analysis

The *Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project* Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment/Findings of No Significant Impact (IS/EA and Proposed Project) has been prepared by the CVWD and BLM as a joint California Environmental Quality Act/National Environmental Policy Act (CEQA/NEPA) document.

This IS/EA was prepared in accordance with the State CEQA Public Resource Code §§21000-211893, CEQA Guidelines §§15000-15387, and the BLM's NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (January 2008). This IS/EA is on-file with CVWD and the BLM.

California Environmental Quality Act

The Proposed Project (Project action) meets the definition of a "project" as defined by State CEQA Guidelines §15378; and therefore, evaluation of the potential environmental impacts and mitigation is required in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. This Initial Study has been prepared to analyze the Proposed Project to determine any potential significant impacts upon the environment that would result from construction and implementation of the project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15063, this Initial Study is a preliminary analysis prepared by the State Lead Agency, the Coachella Valley Water District, in consultation with other jurisdictional agencies, to determine whether a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report is required for the proposed project. The purpose of this Initial Study is to inform the decision-makers, affected agencies, and the public of potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed Project.

Additionally, because the Project involves improvements on federal lands, the Project is subject to environmental assessment pursuant to NEPA (State CEQA Guidelines §§15220-15228).

National Environmental Policy Act

The proposed reservoir site is located on federal lands (BLM) and the proposed pipeline alignment crosses Agua Caliente Desert Cahuilla Indians tribal land; and therefore, the Project must satisfy the requirements of NEPA.

Public Review Period

When a joint CEQA/NEPA document has been prepared, CEQA allows for a combined comment period (State CEQA Guideline §15225(a)). The IS/EA will be available for a 30-day public review period. CVWD will circulate the document along with the Notice of Intent to Adopt a MND prior to Project consideration by the Board of Directors. The BLM will post the IS/EA to the BLM NEPA registry website for a 30-day public comment period.

II. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

CVWD proposes construction of the Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project (Project). The Mission Hills Pressure Zone (MHPZ) currently includes approximately 3,300 customers and is supplied by three domestic water wells and two pressure-reducing stations, which transfer water from the Date Palm Pressure Zone to the MHPZ. Currently, the MHPZ does not have any dedicated water storage facilities and relies on water storage from the Date Palm Pressure Zone. The current MHPZ expansion Project includes incorporating potential development on portions of sections 13, 19, 24, and 500 proposed CVWD customers within section 30, as well as adding the 3,300 existing CVWD customers to this pressure zone. The initial phase of this Project involves constructing one 6.5-million-gallon domestic water storage reservoir to serve CVWD's existing 3,300 customers and two development projects on sections 19 and 24. The subsequent phases of the Project include two additional 6.5-million-gallon domestic water reservoirs that will be constructed as customers and demands increase within the MHPZ.

The purpose of the Federal action is to respond to a request for a right-of-way (ROW) grant under 43 CFR 2800 to construct a water storage facility on public lands administered by the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The need for action is established by the BLM's responsibility under Section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), which authorizes the BLM to issue ROW grants on public lands for water storage and distribution facilities.

III. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues

CVWD began coordination with the BLM and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to determine a Project scope including location of reservoirs and associated pipelines. A minimum 10-acre site of available land located at the 500-foot elevation in the Thousand Palms area is required for the reservoir Project. A BLM parcel and two privately owned parcels were chosen as potential project sites. The BLM sent letters to ROW holders potentially impacted by the proposed Project. The BLM received one response letter expressing concerns with the access road. Other issues include potential for impacts to sensitive wildlife species regarding the two 5-acre private parcels.

IV. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

Alternative 1- Proposed Action

CVWD proposes construction of the Project that includes a potable water reservoir facility that includes three 6.5-million-gallon reservoirs located on a 10-acre site (lot 11) on a portion of Section 6, Township 4 South, Range 6 East, SBB&M (APN 648-030-016). The proposed reservoir site is located at the northeast corner of Rio Del Sol Road and Vista Chino Drive in the community of Thousand Palms, unincorporated Riverside County. The proposed action would require a ROW grant under Title V of the FLPMA. Please see **Exhibit 1: Project Vicinity Map**, and **Exhibit 2: Project Location and Right-of-Way Map**.

The Project would ultimately consist of three 6.5-million-gallon domestic water reservoirs, a retention basin, and a graded access road. The initial phase of this Project is the construction of one 6.5-million-gallon reservoir. See **Table 1** below for a summary of the facilities and disturbance acreage based on the ultimate construction of three 6.5-million-gallon domestic water reservoirs. Underground electrical conduits are proposed as a component of the reservoir construction to provide power for site telemetry and two LED security lights.

Table 1: Proposed Action – Summary of Facilities

Facility	Dimensions	Temporary Disturbance Acreage	Permanent Disturbance Acreage
Three 6.5-million-gallon water reservoirs	186' diameter by 43' height	7.74 acres	7.74 acres
Retention Basin	170' by 40'	0.15 acres	0.15 acres
Access Road	20' by 240'	0.11 acres	0.11 acres

The proposed Project would use three existing wells on private lands to provide the water source. CVWD is proposing to install a new 36-inch diameter pipeline from the reservoir site south along Rio Del Sol Road to Varner Road, west to a private easement, south across Interstate 10 (I-10) and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), along a small section of Ramon Road to Bob Hope Drive, then south to an existing 18-inch diameter pipeline just south of Dinah Shore Drive. The pipeline will be placed within the rights-of-way of all roadways and easements listed above. Where the pipeline passes under I-10 and the UPRR tracks, pipeline installation will be accomplished using the "jack and bore" method (bore hole for pipeline is drilled beneath the cross-section of highway then pipe is jacked into place). Immediately south of I-10, the pipeline will also be jack and bored beneath an approximate 100-foot-wide strip of tribal land that is part of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians reservation. The total pipeline length will be approximately 4.2 linear miles and temporarily disturb approximately 6.54 acres of private lands along the pipeline alignments, based on an average width of 15 feet caused by construction vehicles, equipment, soil storage piles, and trenches along the pipeline alignments.

During construction, all equipment will be staged within the ROW boundary; no additional, temporary ROW would be required. The total work force required to construct the reservoir and reservoir site improvements include, on average, six workers and four vehicles to be on site during working hours. The construction of the MHPZ reservoir will consist of the following operations:

- **Stage 1: Rough grading -** Site will be surveyed and staked for finished elevations. Existing contours will be altered to match those on the plans. All disturbed soil will remain on site and any excess soil will be spread on site.

- **Stage 2: Underground facilities and Reservoir foundation** – Drainage pipe, vaults, domestic water pipe and electrical conduits will be installed. Additionally, the reservoir foundation pad will be over-excavated and underdrains installed. The access road and reservoir concrete ring wall will be placed at this time.

- **Stage 3: Final grading** – Excavation of the retention basin will take place and final grading of the 20-foot wide access road. Stabilization of the surrounding disturbed soils will be accomplished during this stage (by spraying on a soil stabilizer). All soil will remain on site. Blasting is not anticipated during this project.

- **Stage 4: Steel tank erection** –The proposed reservoir will be constructed per plans. This work includes welding, grinding, sand blasting and painting/coating.

- **Stage 5: Finish work and testing** – This stage consists of pulling conductors and finishing the electrical work. Concrete curb and final grading of access road will be performed (road will remain unpaved). New reservoir will be disinfected and bacteriological test will be taken prior to placing it in service. All commissioning tests will take place.

The proposed action would phase the construction of the reservoirs into three phases to meet the expected future growth in water demand. Construction of each phase is estimated to take a total of 9 months. Complete build out of the facility is expected to occur between 5-10 years. See **Exhibits 3**, **4**, and **5** for details on the phases of the proposed action.

Alternative 2: Berm

Alternative 2 is identical to the proposed action except this alternative proposes an earthen berm to partially conceal the domestic water reservoirs. See **Exhibits 6**, **7**, and **8** for details on the proposed phases in Alternative 2. **Table 2** summarizes the facilities and disturbance calculations for Alternative 2.

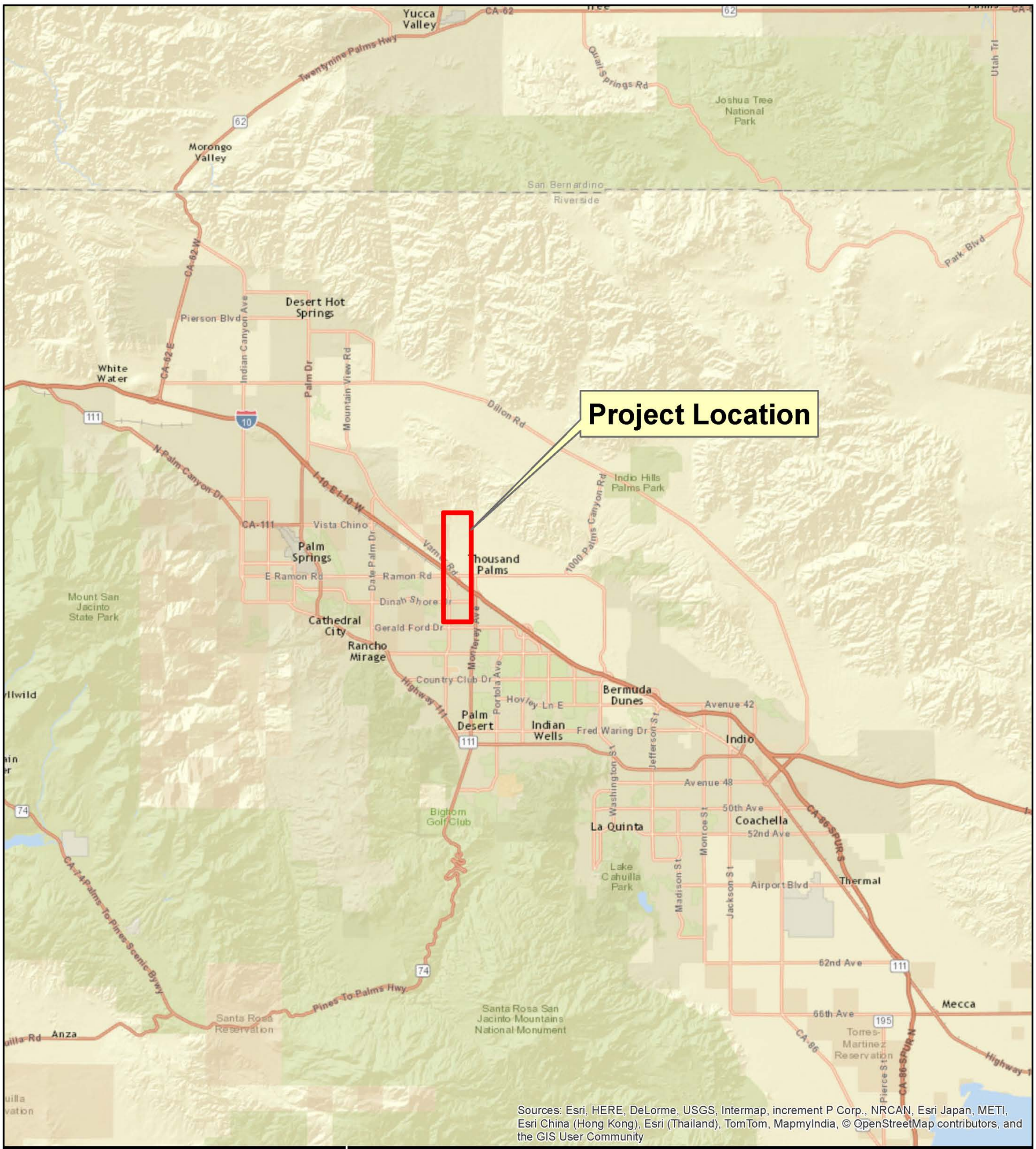
Table 2: Alternative 2 – Summary of Facilities

Facility	Dimensions	Temporary Disturbance Acreage	Permanent Disturbance Acreage
Three 6.5-million-gallon water reservoir	186’ diameter by 43’ height	7.2 acres	7.2 acres
Retention Basin	170’ by 40’	.0.15 acres	0.15 acres
Access Road	20’ by 240’	0.11 acres	0.11 acres
Earthen Berm	360’ by 90’	0.74 acres	0.74 acres

Alternative 3- No Action Alternative

This alternative would use existing domestic water facilities within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone (MHPZ) that includes three supply wells and two pressure-reducing stations to transfer water from an adjacent pressure zone, the Date Palm Pressure Zone (DPPZ). With the No Action Alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The MHPZ would not have dedicated water storage and would rely on storage from the DPPZ. The DPPZ has limited storage that can be provided to the MHPZ and would not be able to support the additional proposed urban development.

Exhibit 1 Vicinity Map
Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project



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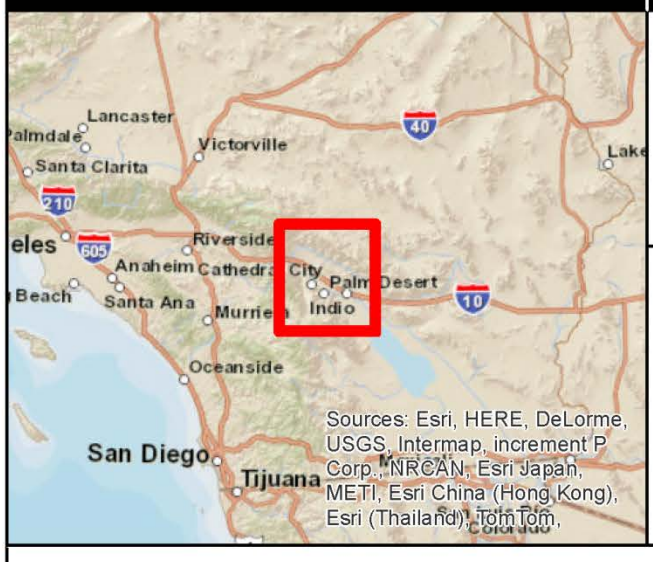

Legend

Coachella Valley Water District

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This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. Users of this information should review or consult the primary data and information sources to ascertain the usability of the information.

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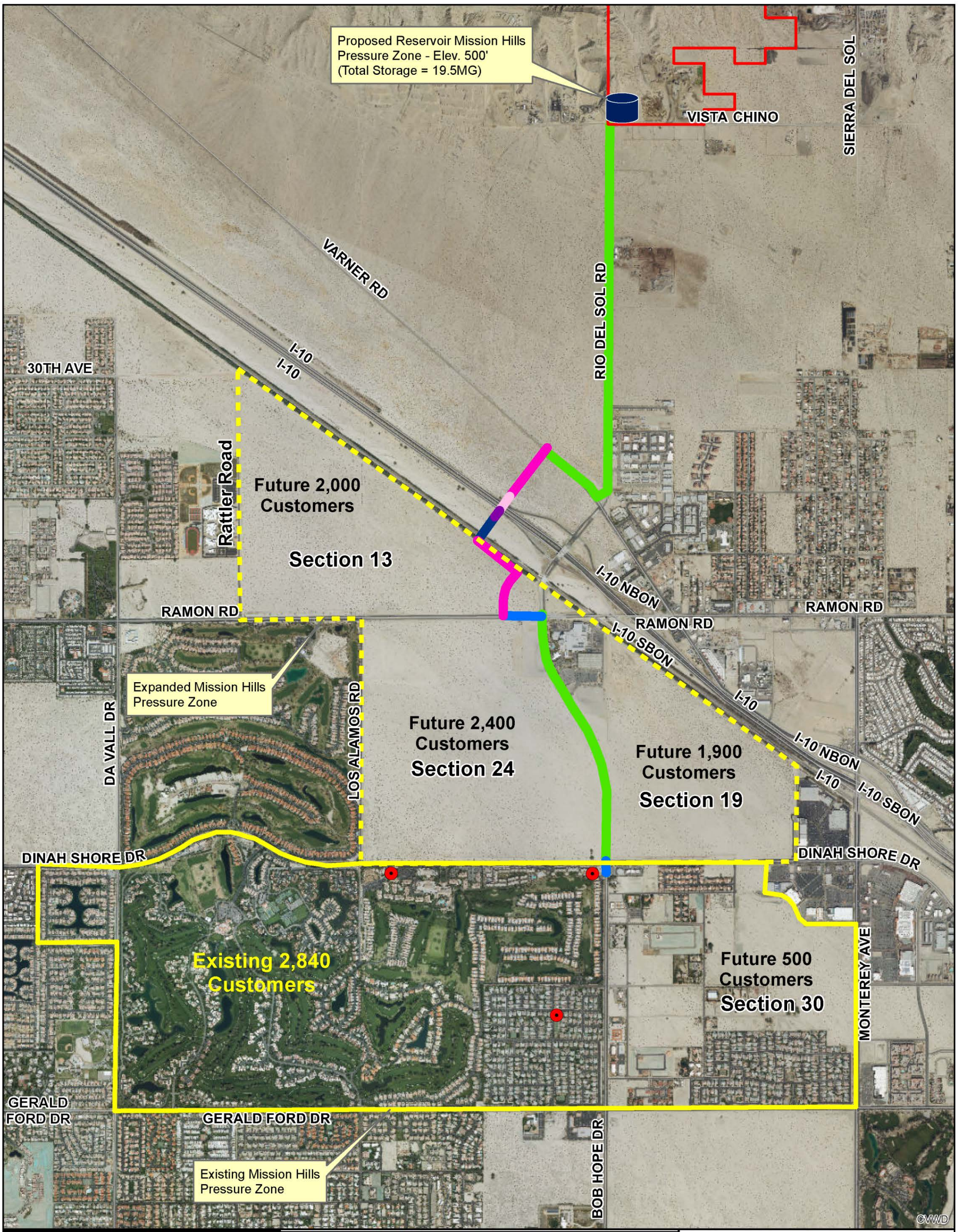
File Location: J:\ENGCAD\GIS\Projects\Sky Mountain Zone Pipeline\Mxd
Date Updated: Wednesday, July 23, 2014 @ 9:45:02 AM
Updated By: MM0232
Department: CVWD Engineering - GIS/CAD

Exhibit 2 Project Location and Right-of-Way
Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project



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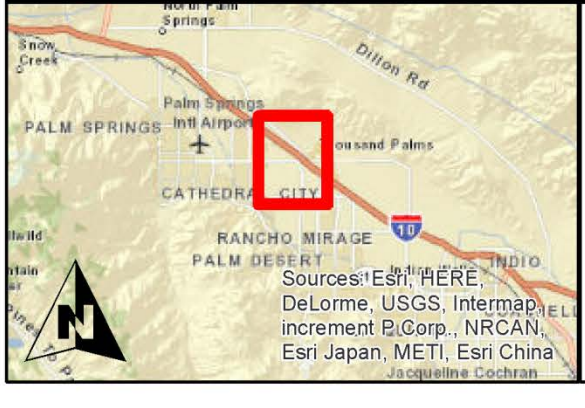

Legend

- BLM Owned
- Mission Hills Pressure Zone Well
- County of Riverside ROW
- City of Rancho Mirage ROW
- Private Easement
- Agua Caliente Easement
- Union Pacific Railroad ROW
- CalTrans ROW

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Date Updated: Friday, October 23, 2015 @ 4:51:02 PM
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Department: CVWD Engineering - GIS/CAD

Exhibit 3
Proposed Action Alternative 1 Reservoir Site - Phase I

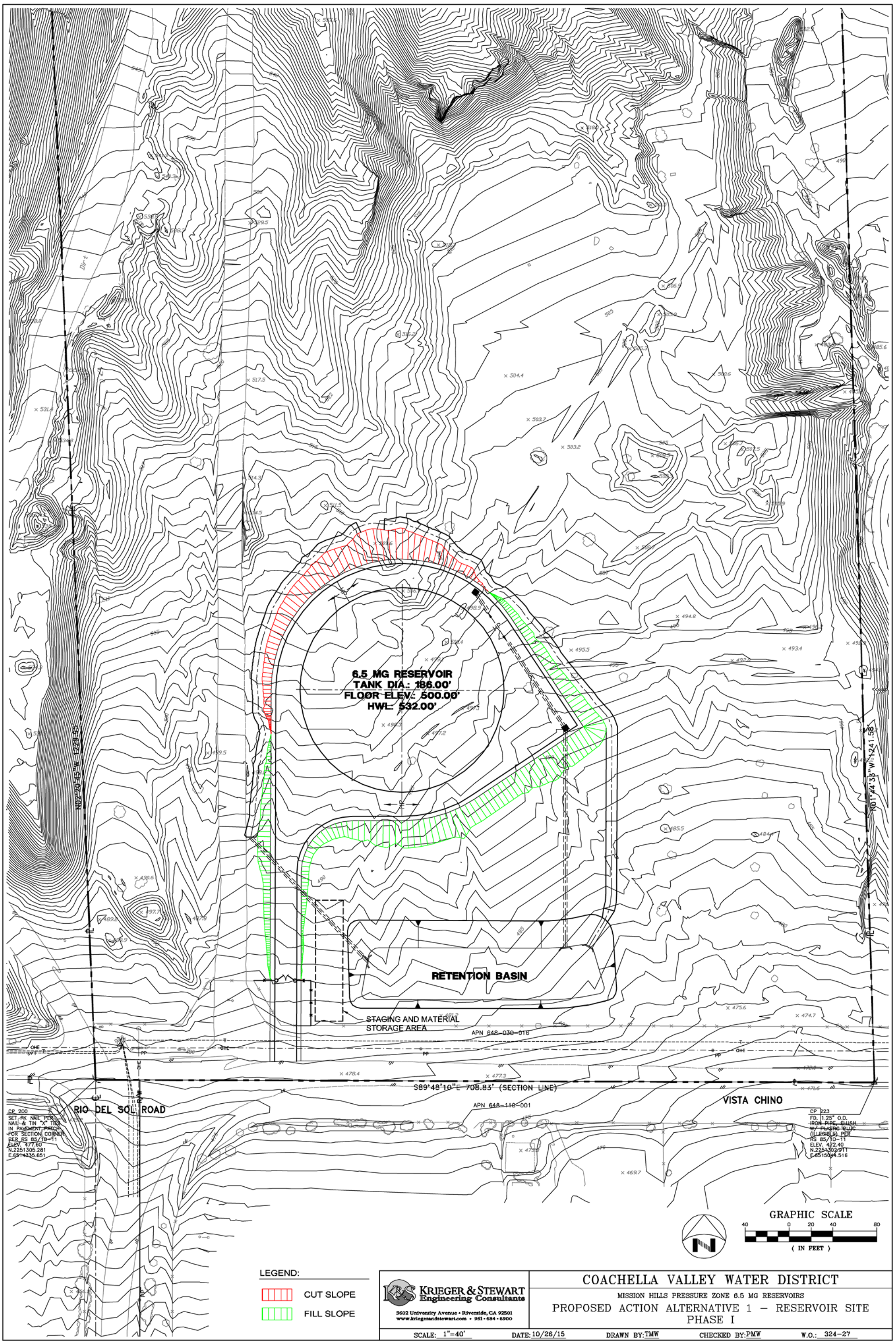


Exhibit 4
Proposed Action Alternative 1 Reservoir Site - Phase II

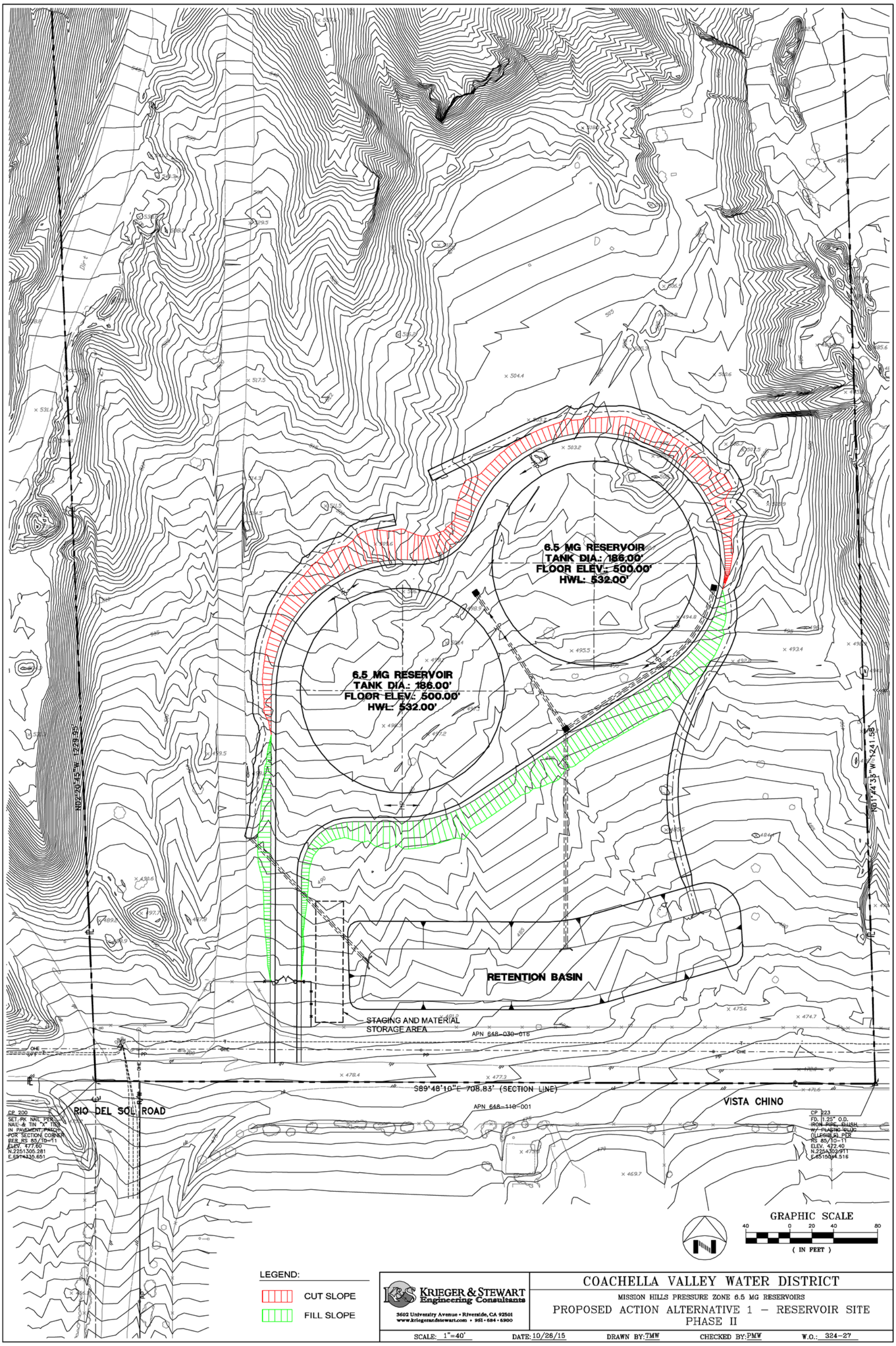


Exhibit 5
Proposed Action Alternative 1 Reservoir Site - Phase III

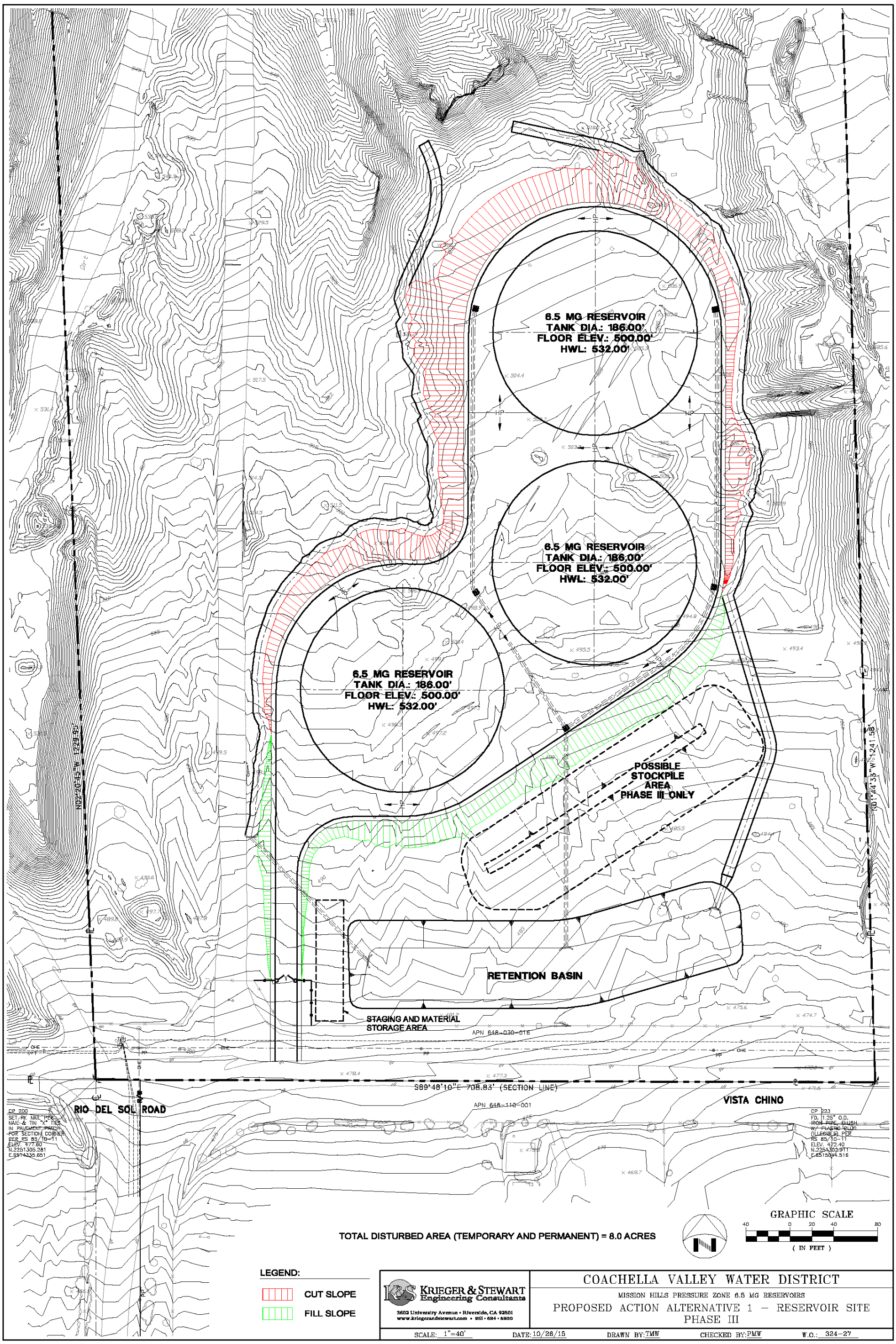


Exhibit 6
Alternative 2 Reservoir Site- Phase I

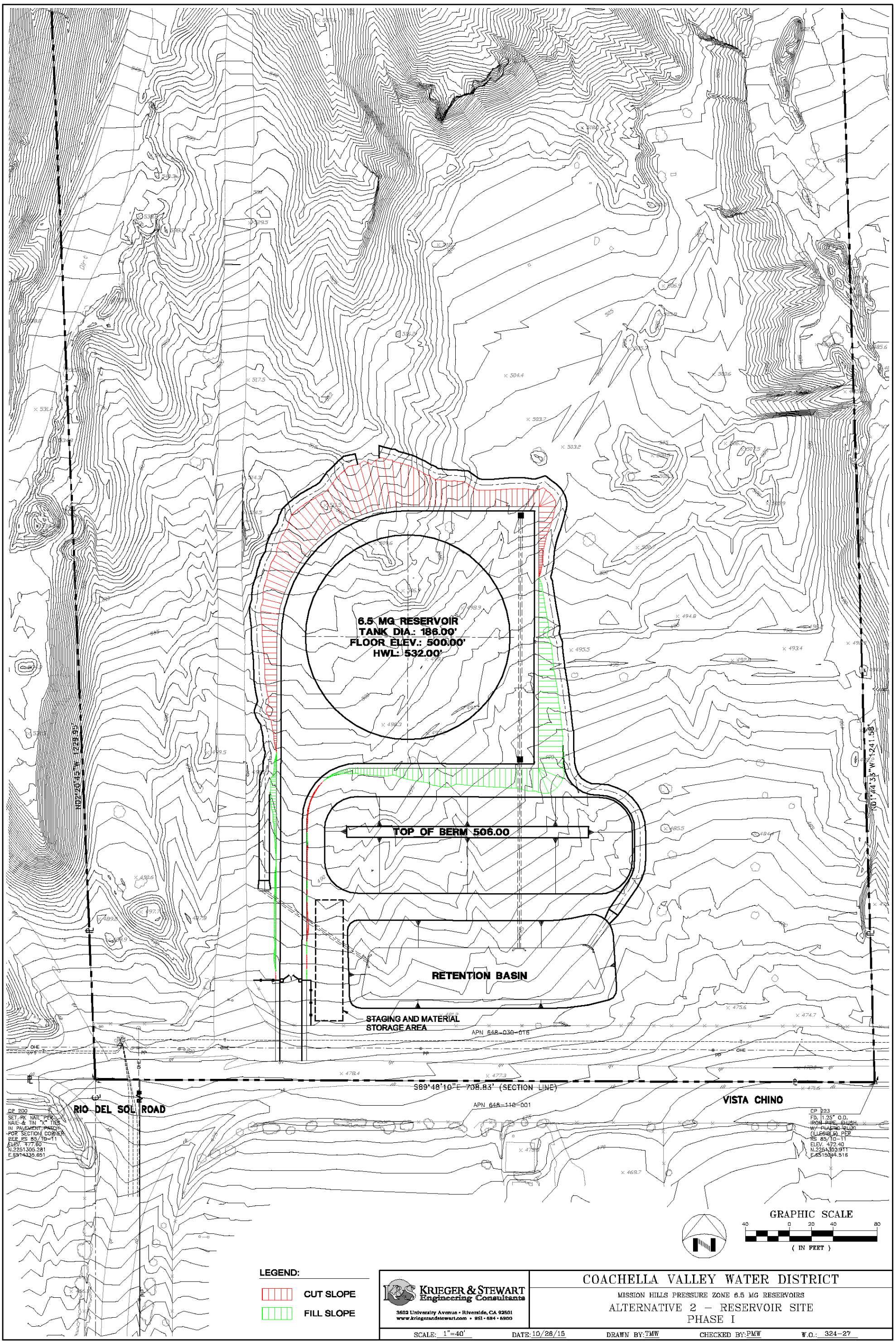


Exhibit 7
Alternative 2 Reservoir Site- Phase II

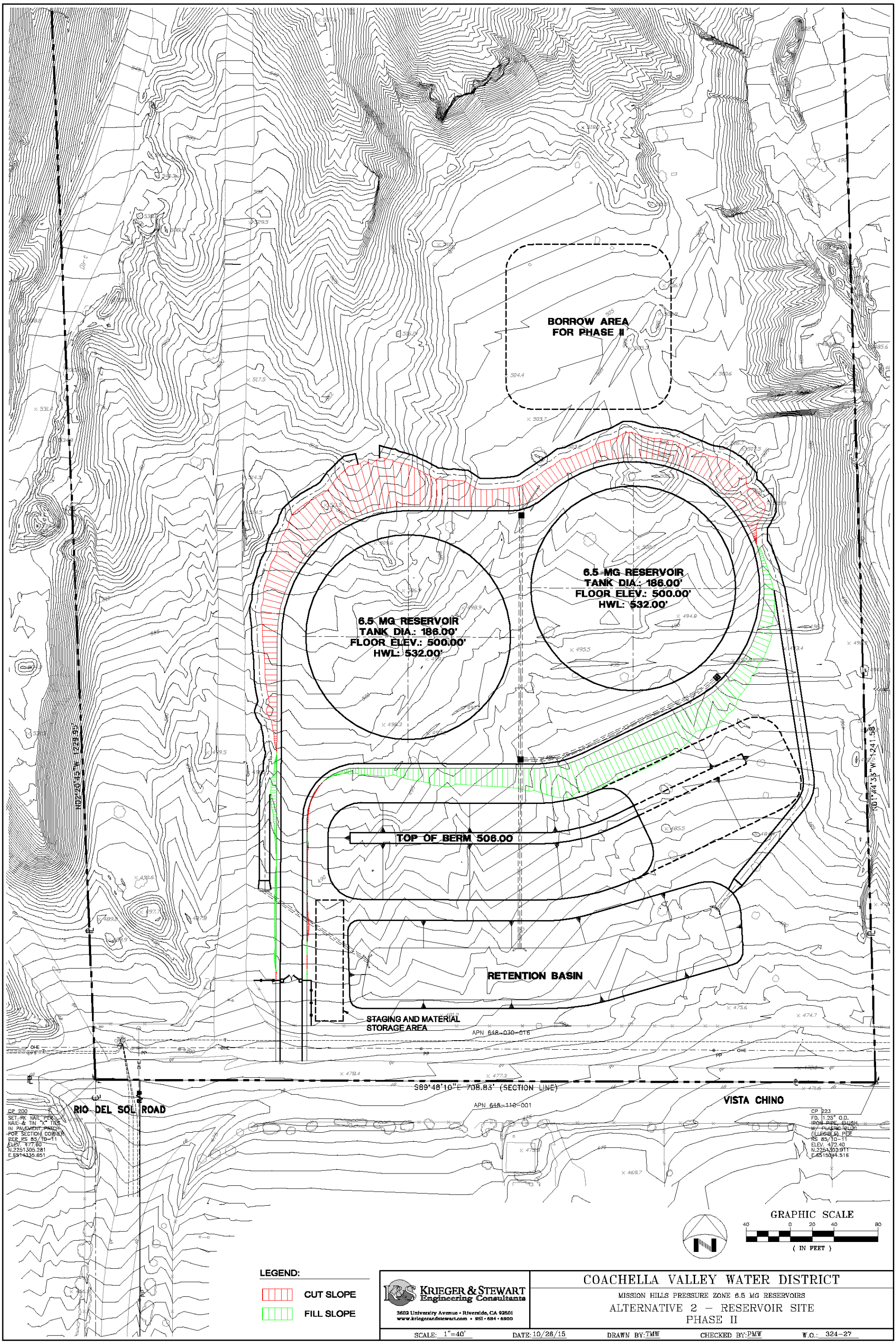


Exhibit 8
Alternative 2 Reservoir Site- Phase III

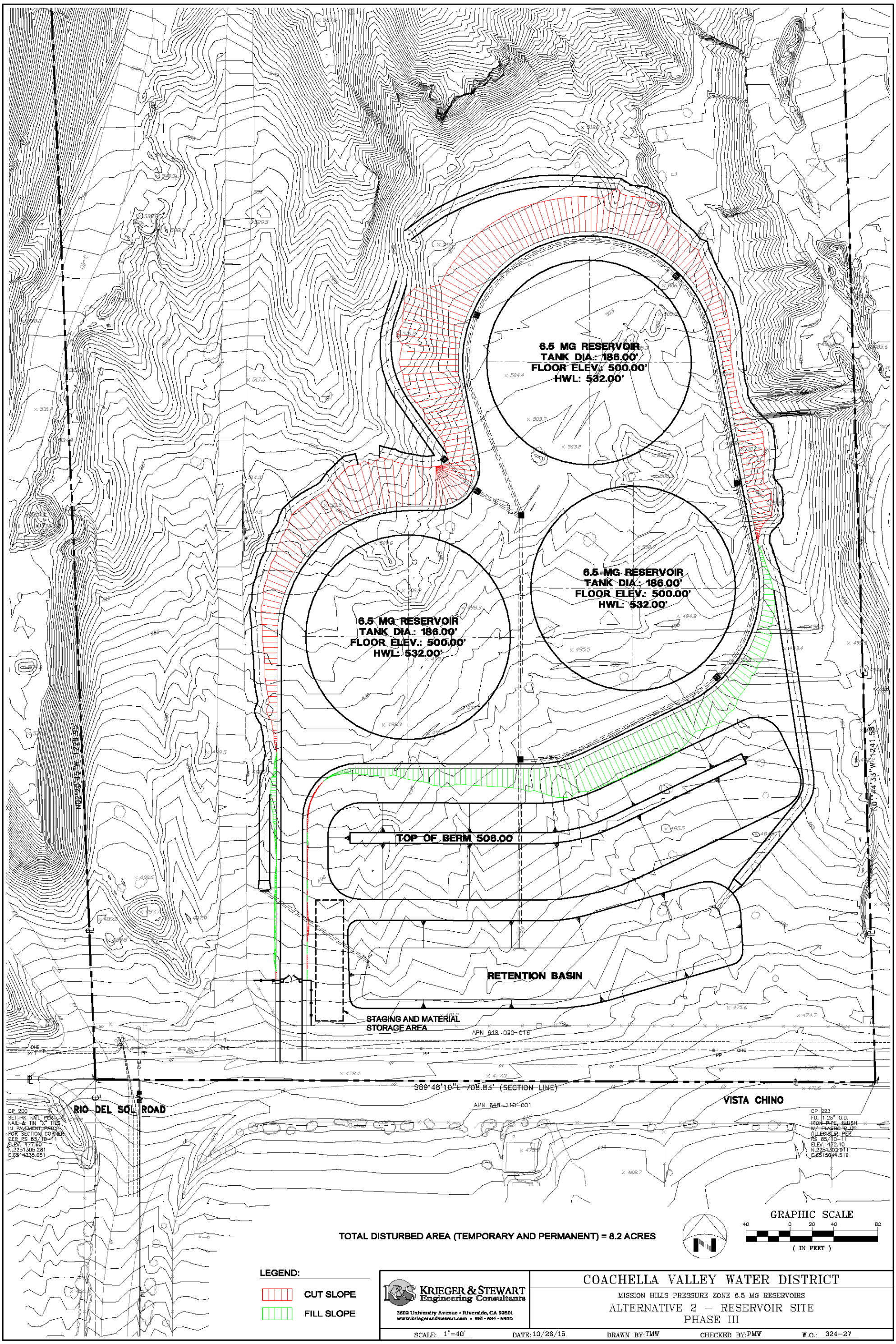
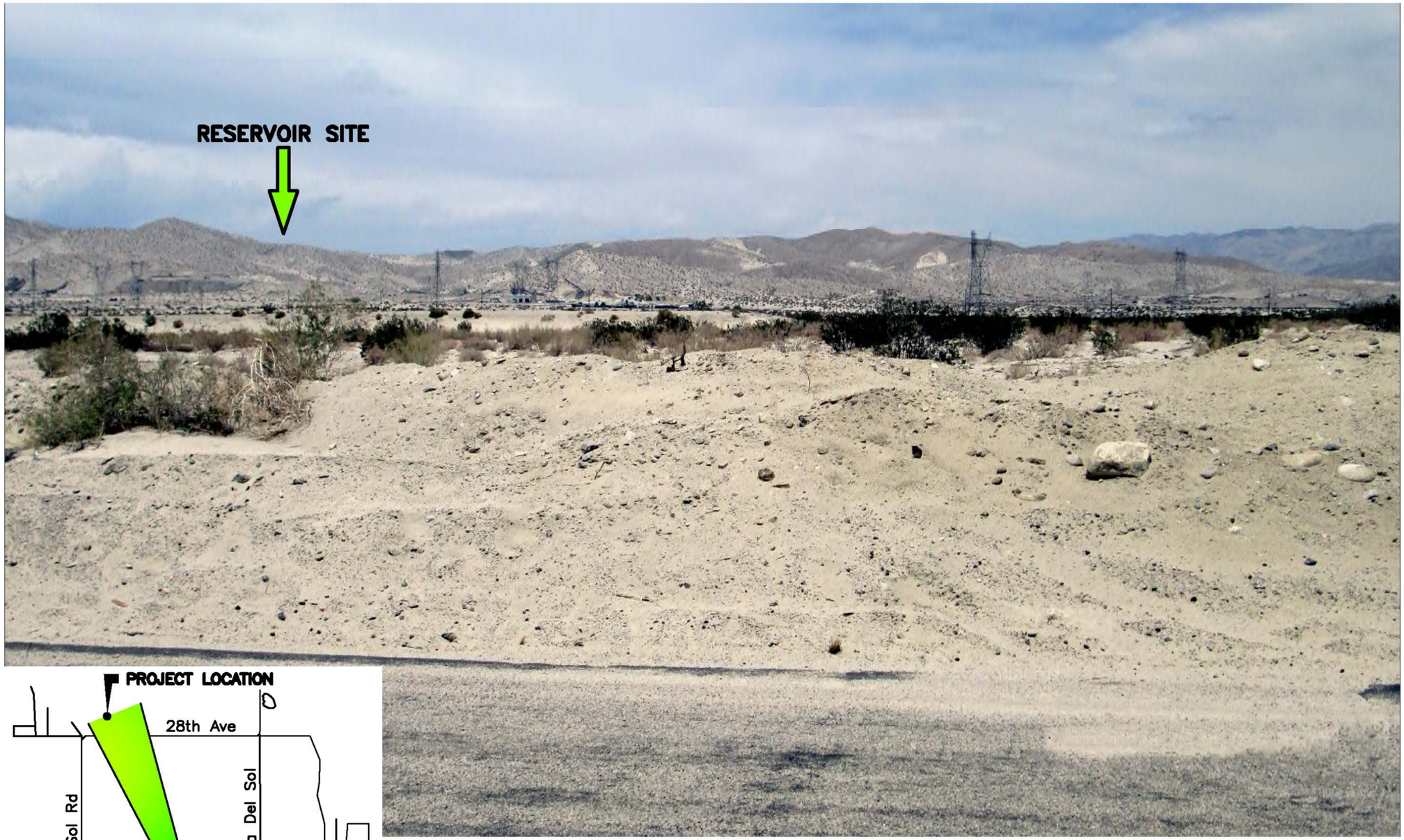
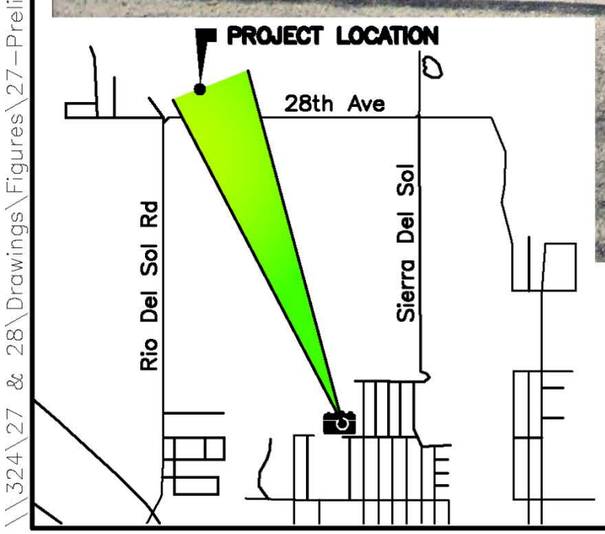


Exhibit 9
Reservoir Site Existing Condition





KRIEGER & STEWART
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COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

MISSION HILLS PRESSURE ZONE 6.5 MG RESERVOIRS

RESERVOIR SITE
EXISTING CONDITION

SCALE: N.T.S. DATE: 10/26/15 DRAWN BY: MRN CHECKED BY: PMW W.O.: 324-27

\\324\27 & 28\Drawings\Figures\27-Preliminary Reservoir\CV-324-27r1.dwg

Exhibit 10
Reservoir Site Rendering With Berm

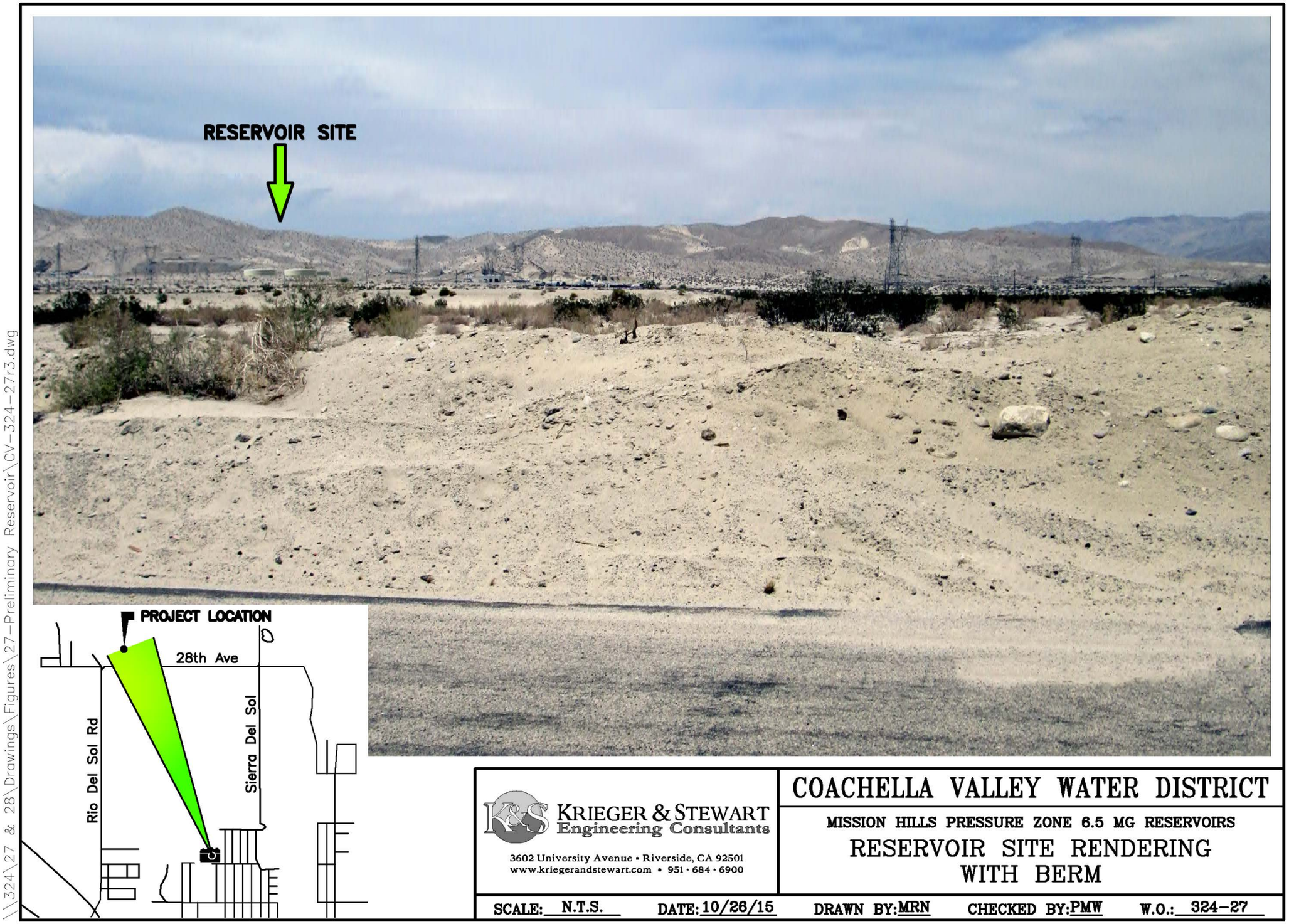
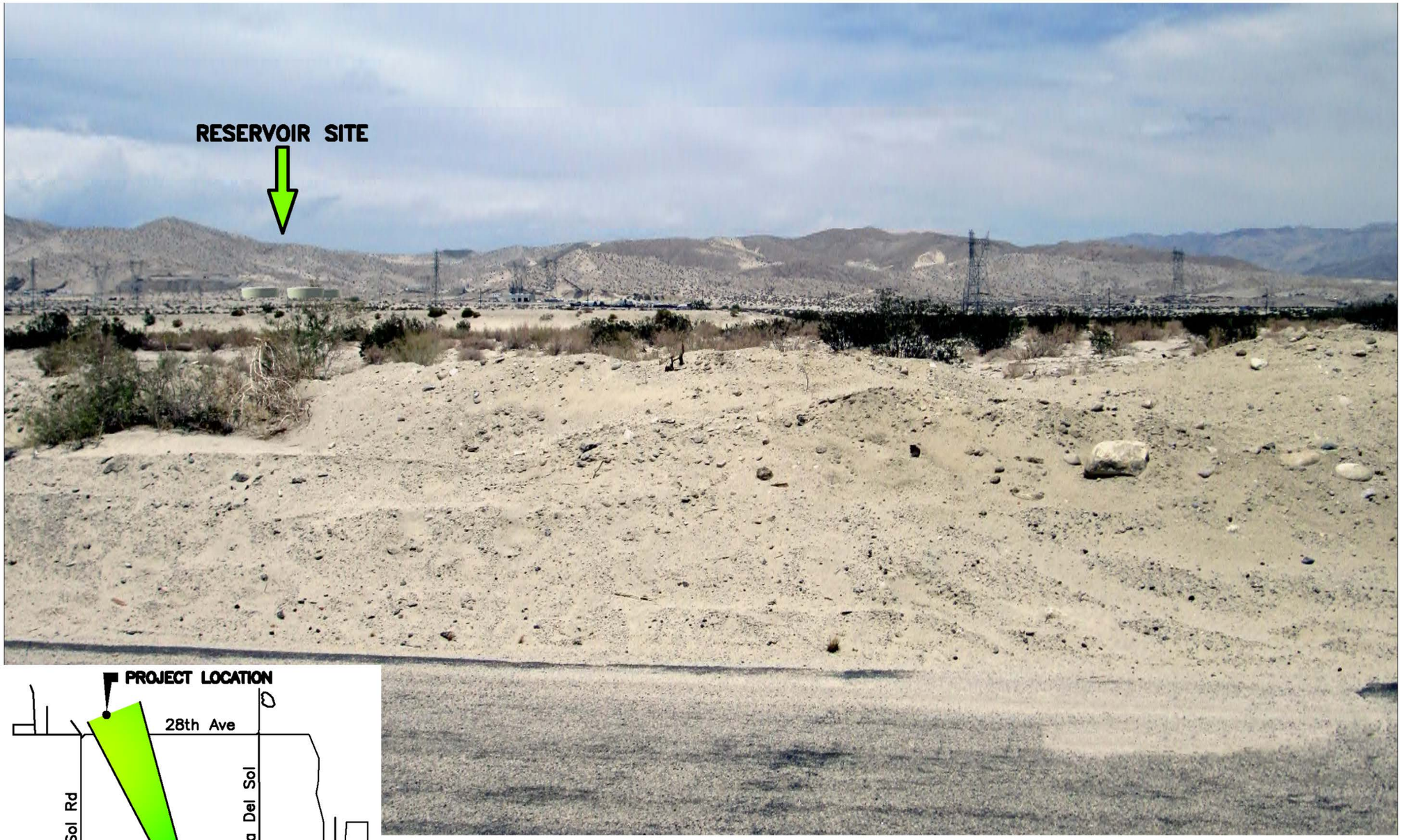
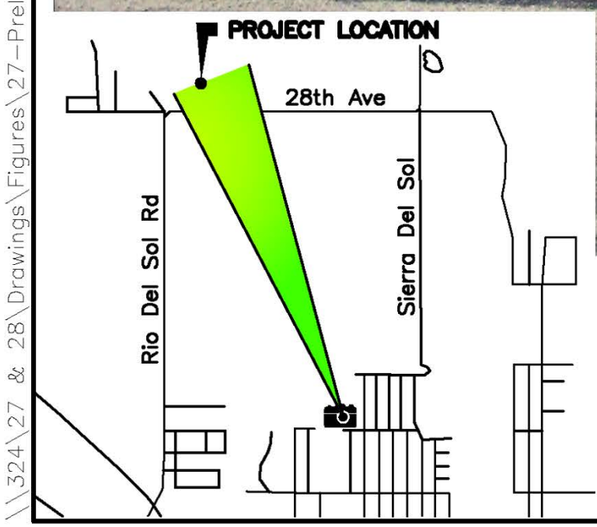


Exhibit 11
Reservoir Site Rendering Without Berm





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COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

MISSION HILLS PRESSURE ZONE 6.5 MG RESERVOIRS

RESERVOIR SITE RENDERING WITHOUT BERM

SCALE: N.T.S. DATE: 10/26/15 DRAWN BY: MRN CHECKED BY: PMW W.O.: 324-27

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V. Alternative Site Considered But Eliminated From Further Analysis

An Alternative 10-acre site consisting of two adjoining, privately-owned 5-acre parcels (APN 648-030-003 & APN 648-030-004) with approximately 2.3 miles of associated pipeline alignment was also considered for the proposed reservoir project. The two parcels are located approximately 650 feet north of Vista Chino Road and about ¼ mile northeast of the proposed project site. Both of the parcels are located within the Thousand Palms Conservation Area, as designated under the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). CVWD's proposed Sky Mountain Reservoir Project is located immediately east of these two 5-acre parcels. Therefore, the Alternative Site would utilize the same pipeline alignment as proposed for the Sky Mountain Reservoir Project; however, the pipeline would need to be extended an additional 3,800 feet more than the Proposed Action. In addition, the property owner of one of the 5-acre parcels was not willing to sell the property based on its appraised value.

Biological field surveys were conducted at the 10-acre Alternative Site in April-May 2014. Based on the results of field surveys, Circle Mountain Biological Consultants (CMBC) concluded that the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (CVFTL) is not likely to be present on the Alternative Site or along the pipeline alignments north of I-10, a low likelihood of occurrence along the pipeline alignments south of I-10. However, potential impacts to the CVFTL include the permanent loss of 10 acres of habitat at the Alternative Site and temporary disturbance to habitat along the pipeline alignments as well as potential adverse modification of designated Critical Habitat located directly adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Alternative Site.

Given the severe drought conditions, it was not possible for CMBC to determine whether the endangered Coachella Valley milk-vetch occurs within the Alternative Site. Since the proposed Alternative Site and portions of the associated pipeline alignments are located immediately adjacent to federally-designated Critical Habitat for milk-vetch, it is reasonable to expect that the plant does occur in the Alternate Site vicinity.

CMBC found evidence of burrowing owl about 200 feet north of the Alternative Site and about one-half mile west of the proposed pipeline alignment, west of Rio Del Sol Road. Burrowing owls may pass through the area and forage, but are not expected to be residents.

Based on field surveys and habitat assessment, CMBC concluded that the following special status species may occur, and if so, could be adversely affected by development at the Alternative Site: Prairie falcon and loggerhead shrike (both observed during field surveys); chaparral sand Verbena; flat-seeded spurge; slender cottonheads; Coachella Valley giant sand treader cricket; Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket; flat-tailed horned lizard; LeConte's Thrasher; and Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel.

Potential impacts to special status species with potential to occur within the Alternative Site area include the permanent loss of 10 acres of habitat, temporary disturbance of foraging habitat along the pipeline alignments, as well as, the loss of an unknown number of individual plants and animals.

CMBC strongly recommends that CVWD consider selecting the proposed Mission Hills Reservoir Site on BLM lands in preference to the Alternative Site since the BLM site and associated pipeline alignments are not adjacent to Critical Habitat for CVFTL or milk-vetch, as the Alternative Site is. The proposed pipeline alignments associated with the BLM site avoid impacting about 1.7 miles of undeveloped habitat compared to the Alternative Site. For these reasons, expected impacts to biological resources are likely to be considerably less severe at the BLM site as opposed to the Alternative Site.

In close coordination with George Kline (BLM Archaeologist), Applied Earthworks, Inc. (AE) conducted cultural resources surveys at the Alternative Site on December 18, 2013, April 10, 2014, and June 16, 2014. One resource, a historic site consisting of concrete footings and some associated refuse, was discovered, documented, and evaluated. AE recommended the site ineligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources. BLM concurred with AE's cultural resources findings and recommendation of avoiding the historic site on the proposed Alternative Site.

The Alternative Site option was analyzed and dropped from consideration for this Project based on the following:

- Additional time required, a potentially unwilling seller of one of the private parcels, and the purchase price of acquiring the two 5-acre parcels makes the Alternative Site economically infeasible;

- Alternative Site would require a Joint Project Review with the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission and likely require costly mitigation measures associated with impacts on listed species and critical habitat at the site which would contribute to making the Alternative Site economically infeasible; and

- Alternative Site would require a re-design of the reservoir Project (including additional geotechnical investigations) and additional easements resulting in substantial added costs that could make the Alternative Site economically infeasible.

In addition to the private land Alternative Site, an alternative (as part of the Proposed Action) that would relocate the existing access road on the BLM parcel to the east was considered, but determined technically infeasible. The eastern portion of the BLM parcel has a major wash, which has eroded the soils making the construction of the road impossible. Therefore, that alternative is eliminated from further analysis.

VI. Affected Environment

This section describes the resources and uses within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone Project area. The information in this section serves as baseline data for analyzing the alternatives.

General Settings

The subject area is situated west of the Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard Area of Environmental Concern and generally characterized as Sonoran woody succulent scrub. The reservoir site has relatively heavy levels of past disturbance. Quarries are located on adjacent properties to the east of the site and a major transmission line crosses the northern part of the pipeline alignment in a northwest-southeast direction.

Elevations range from about 148 meters (486 feet) at the reservoir site, down to 93 meters (305 feet) at Rio Del Sol Road. Terrain is gently sloping. Soils are stabilized sand and rock at the reservoir site and down to Varner Road.

The biological assessment surveys prepared for the Project concluded the Project footprint contains open desert areas, asphalt road surfaces, and roadway rights-of-way in the arid desert environment of the Coachella Valley. The Project vicinity has been previously disturbed by mining activities, roadway construction, commercial, industrial, and residential development which has fragmented existing habitat. The Project footprint includes the reservoir site (BLM land), and associated pipeline alignment (County, City and Tribal lands).

CVWD is a "Permittee" participant in the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP), a comprehensive regional plan that addresses the conservation needs of a variety of wildlife species in the Coachella Valley region. The project footprint is located within the CVMSHCP planning area, but not within a designated Conservation Area.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

From the Project area, the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains are visible approximately 8-10 miles south, the Mecca Hills about 28 miles to the southeast, San Bernardino Mountains about 26 miles northwest, and the Little San Bernardino Mountains about 8 miles north. These features constitute scenic vistas for much of the western Coachella Valley.

Street level views in the Project area include mostly desert land with sandy soils and low-lying native vegetation. Material mining sites are located on the adjacent lands to the east and west of the proposed reservoir site, creating an industrial atmosphere. The proposed pipeline will be constructed within the rights-of-way along the Rio Del Sol Road-Varner Road-Ramon Road-Bob Hope Drive alignment; the view shed along the pipeline portion of the Project includes roadways, open desert areas, utility poles, a freeway, railroad tracks, and scattered commercial buildings.

Air Quality

The proposed Project is located near in the unincorporated community of Thousand Palms in Riverside County, California. Riverside County is subject to the provisions of the *2012* South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Air Quality Management Plan, which describes SCAQMD's plan to achieve Federal and State air quality standards set forth in Federal and State Clean Air Acts.

The Project site is located in the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and is subject to the rules and regulations imposed by the SCAQMD, including Rule 403-1, which governs fugitive dust emissions from Project construction within the Coachella Valley. The two primary pollutants of concern in the Coachella Valley, including the Project vicinity, are ozone (03) and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5).

Ozone (O_3) is formed when by-products of combustion react in the presence of ultraviolet sunlight. This process occurs in the atmosphere where oxides of nitrogen combine with reactive organic gases, such as hydrocarbons, in the presence of sunlight. Ozone is a pungent, colorless, toxic gas, and a common component of photochemical smog. Although also produced within the Coachella Valley, most ozone pollutants affecting the Valley are transported by coastal air mass from the Los Angeles and Riverside/San Bernardino air basins, thereby contributing to occasionally high local ozone concentrations.

The Coachella Valley has a history of exceeding regulatory ozone standards, although the number of days and months the Federal one-hour standard is exceeded has dropped steadily over the past decade.

The Palm Springs monitoring station exceeds the 1-hour and 8-hour federal and state ozone standards more frequently than the Indio site. This exceedance is attributable to the Palm Springs station's location closer to the San Gorgonio Pass, where ozone is transported into the SSAB from air basins to the west.

Particulate Matter PM10 consists of fine suspended particles of 2.5 to 10 microns in diameter, and mainly sourced from smoke, dirt and dust from factories, farming, and roads, as well as, mold, spores, and pollen. PM10 particles can travel up to 30 miles in the air. The elderly, children and adults with pre-existing respiratory or cardiovascular disease are most susceptible to the effects of Particulate Matter. Elevated PM10 levels are also associated with an increase in mortality rates, respiratory infections, asthma attacks and hospital admissions. The SSAB is designated as a non-attainment area for PM10 under federal standards in PM10, which means the area does not meet the national ambient air quality standard for this pollutant. However, the Coachella Valley became eligible for re-designation as "attainment" for PM10 in 2010 due to the annual average concentrations meeting the revoked federal standard. At a public meeting on February 25, 2010, the California Air Resources Board approved the Coachella Valley PM10 Re-designation Request and Maintenance Plan. The South Coast Air Quality Management District requested re-designation of the Coachella Valley from “serious non-attainment” to “attainment” for the PM10 National Ambient Air Quality Standard. However, the US Environmental Protection Agency has not re-designated the PM10 classification for the Coachella Valley, as PM10 levels continue to exceed federal standards.

The SCAQMD, in conjunction with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), Riverside County and local jurisdictions, prepared the "2003 Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan," which includes PM10 control program enhancements and requests an extension of the region's PM10 attainment date. The Coachella Valley is subject to the 2003 State Implementation Plan (SIP) and local dust control regulations and guidelines.

Particulate Matter PM2.5 consists of fine suspended particles up to 2.5 microns in diameter, and sourced mainly from automobile emissions, smoke, and smelting and processing of metals. PM2.5 particles can remain in the air for weeks and travel many hundreds of miles. The SSAB is classified as attainment/unclassifiable for PM2.5.

The Coachella Valley is defined as "attainment/unclassified" for PM2.5, based on the state and federal PM2.5 standards, and does not require an implementation plan to demonstrate attainment. A State Implementation Plan that addresses how Southern California will meet federal standards for finer particulate matter (PM2.5) was adopted in 2007.

Biological Resources

Surveys conducted by Circle Mountain Biological Consultants, Inc. in April 2014 concluded the Project footprint does not contain any riparian habitat, wetlands, vernal pools, marshes, or coastal habitats. The biological surveys are included as an Appendix to the IS/EA.

The proposed reservoir site is located adjacent to the Thousand Palms Conservation Area within the CVMSHP. This area serves as core habitat for Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (CVFTL), flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL, a CESA candidate species), Coachella Valley milkvetch (CVM), as well as, several other sand community species covered by the CVMSHCP/NCCP, such as Coachella Valley giant sand treader cricket (*Macrobaenetes valgum*), LeContes Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), and Round-tailed ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus).* However, the Project will not conflict with the CVMSHCP or its implementation.

In addition, the Project footprint does not contain any federally-designated Critical Habitat. The reservoir site and associated pipeline alignments are not adjacent to Critical Habitat for CVFTL or CVM.

Flora

The plant community present on the reservoir site is best described as Sonoran woody succulent scrub, based on the vegetation map produced for the CVMSHCP/NCCP, and site conditions observed during field surveys. This community consists of relatively sparse shrubs, including creosote bush (Larrea tridentata), white rhatany (Krameria grayii), two species of indigo bush (Psorothamnus emoryi, P. schottii), brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), and burrobush (Ambrosia dumosa) among others. Very few annual plants were detected during field surveys conducted in April 2014, likely due to the extreme drought the region is experiencing. The few annuals detected were primarily weedy and/or non-native species, such as Russian thistle (Salsola tragus) and Saharan mustard (Brassica tournefortii). A few native annuals were detectable, including dicoria (Dicoria canescens) and desert Spanish needles (Palafoxia linearis).

During site reconnaissance visits in September 2015, USFWS staff determined there was no sign of recent annual plant production on the reservoir site. Additional findings concluded that the perennial bushes are poorly leafed out, if at all. Creosote bushes were the only plants exhibiting live foliage.

On the south side of I-10, the Union Pacific Railroad is protected from blowing sand by rows of a salt cedar species (*Tamarix aphylla*) located along both sides of the tracks; some sand dune formation occurs on the north side of the railroad tracks.

Fauna

Wildlife surveys were performed during early morning/late afternoon when foraging behavior or other wildlife movement would most likely occur onsite. During the field surveys, three reptiles, 20 birds, and seven mammal species were identified within the Project footprint or passing through adjacent habitat. Reptiles observed onsite included desert iguana *(Dipsosaurus dorsalis)*, which were numerous, and common side-blotched lizard *(Uta stansburiana)*; both species are highly adaptable to human disturbance in the desert environment and often utilize trash and other debris as artificial cover. Birds observed onsite and in adjacent habitat included a mix of common desert and open area species, such as Say's phoebe *(Sayornis saya)*, mourning dove *(Zenaida macroura)*, killdeer *(Charadrius vociferus)*, verdin *(Auriparus flavipes)*, lark sparrow *(Chondestes grammacus)*, lesser nighthawk *(Chordeiles acutipennis)*, and blue-gray gnatcatcher *(Polioptila caerula)*; as well as raptors such as red-tailed hawk *(Buteo jamaicensis)* and American kestrel *(F. sparverius)*.Bird species tolerant of or benefitted by human habitation, such as common raven *(Corvus corax)*, northern mockingbird *(Mimus polyglottos)*, rock dove (pigeon) *(Columba livia)*, and house finch *(Carpodacus mexicanus)* were also observed.

Mammals found in the vicinity are relatively common desert species, including black-tailed hare *(Lepus californicus)*, Audubon cottontail *(Sylvilagus audubonii)*, California ground squirrel *(Otospermophilus beecheyi)*, antelope ground squirrel *(Ammospermophilus leucurus)*, kangaroo rat *(Dipodomys* sp.), desert wood rat *(Neotoma lepida)*, and coyote *(Canis latrans)*. An old cottontail latrine was found onsite as well as a set of tracks that led offsite to the east. Due to the lack of annual plants observed during the field surveys, the trophic structure onsite is very low which significantly limits the supportive resources for small mammals and reptiles; this was supported by the observation of low heteromyid evidence and a lack of Harvester ant (*Pogonomyrmex ssp*) mounds.

Special Status Species in the Project Vicinity

Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch

CVM is listed as a federal and state endangered species under the CNDDB (2015) and is also a covered species under the CVMSHCP. Modeled habitat for CVM occurs approximately 1000

feet west and north of the reservoir site, as well as several hundred feet to the southeast, but is not found within the immediate footprint of the reservoir site.

Silver Cholla

Silver cholla (*Cylindropuntia echinocarpa*) was the only plant species observed in the Project area that is protected under the California Native Plant Protection Act; however, it is not a federal or state listed species. Silver Cholla is ranked by the California Native Plant Society species as 1B.2 - Critically Imperiled. Apparently a sporadic hybrid between *Cylindropuntia ramosissima* and *C. echinocarpa*; needs further study (CNPS, Rare Plant Program. 2015. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (online edition, v8-02). California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, CA. Website http://www.rareplants.cnps.org [accessed 13 November 2015]).

Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard

No evidence of Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (CVFTL) was found during any of the focused surveys conducted by Circle Mountain Biological Consultants. Two other species of lizard were detected: desert iguana *(Dipsosaurus dorsalis)* and common side-blotched lizard *(Uta stansburiana)*. The CVFTL is not expected to be present on the reservoir site or along the pipeline alignment north of 1-10 due to a lack of suitable habitat. On the south side of I-10, the pipeline alignment passes through areas of deeper and more extensive loose sand, with small dunes forming adjacent to the windbreak of athel tamarisk along both sides of the railroad. Dr. Cameron Barrows was consulted regarding the potential presence of CVFTL in this area, and determined that there was a low likelihood that the species would occur. The closest records for this species from the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) (CDFW 2014) are a 1975 record approximately 0.1 mile west of the reservoir site and a 1957 record approximately 0.1 mile northwest of the pipeline alignment just north of I-10.

Coachella Valley Flat Tailed Horned Lizard

No evidence of Flat-tail Horned Lizard (FTHL) was found during any of the surveys conducted by Circle Mountain Biological Consultants. Two other species of lizard were detected: desert iguana *(Dipsosaurus dorsalis)* and common side-blotched lizard *(Uta stansburiana)*. Mr. Jack Crayon (CDFW Biologist), a regional expert on FTHL, was consulted regarding the potential presence of FTHL in this area, and determined that there was a low likelihood that the species would occur due to low trophic value, lack of suitable habitat and high elevation.

Burrowing Owl

A single burrow with indication of burrowing owl use, and a burrowing owl pellet not associated with a burrow were found about ½ mile west of the proposed pipeline alignment, west of Rio Del Sol Road. The species may pass through the area and may forage within the Project area, but it is not expected to be resident.

Cultural Resources

Applied EarthWorks, Inc. (AE) was retained to conduct a cultural resources investigation of the Project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) in accordance with Section 106 and CEQA. AE conducted an archaeological literature and records search at the Eastern Information Center (EIC), housed at the University of California, Riverside, on September 30, 2013 for the proposed Project. The results of the search indicated that no fewer than 56 cultural resources investigations have been conducted previously within a one-mile radius of the Project APE; 25 of these studies specifically involved a portion of, or were immediately adjacent to, the Project APE. The archaeological records search also indicated that 30 cultural resources have been recorded within a one-mile radius of the Project APE, four of which were located within the Project APE.

AE requested a *Sacred Lands File* search of the Project area from the Native American Historical Commission (NAHC) located in Sacramento, California on October 1, 2013. The *Sacred Lands File* search did not indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources within the Project APE. The NAHC provided a list of Native American individuals and/or organizations to be contacted to solicit any comments or concerns regarding the proposed Project. Results of the NAHC *Sacred Lands File* search and Native American contact list were turned over to the BLM for the purposes of Project scoping.

An intensive archaeological pedestrian survey of the proposed reservoir site and pipeline alignment was performed by AE on December 18, 2013. In addition, AE performed a reconnaissance-level historic-period built-environment survey on June 16, 2014. Four previously-documented cultural resources (Southern Pacific Railroad [CA-RN-6381H]; Varner Road [33-008408]; Devers-Hinds 220 kV transmission line [33-008411]; and a historic-period refuse deposit [CA-RN-6450HD were visited during the field survey to examine their current condition and their location relative to the Project APE. The archaeological and built environment surveys identified one historical refuse site (CA-RIV-II728) and two historic road alignments (Rio Del Sol Road [33-023935] and Avenue 28Nista Chino [33-023934]).

One of the four previously-documented cultural resources, historic-period refuse deposit (CA-RIV-6450H), is no longer extant, and therefore, it requires no further consideration. Two of the four previously documented cultural resources, the Southern Pacific Railroad (CA-RIV-6381H) and the Devers-Hinds 220 kV transmission line (33-008411), are outside of the vertical limits of the Project APE and require no further consideration. The remaining previously-documented cultural resource, Varner Road/former U.S. Highway *60170/99* (33-008408) was evaluated by AE for inclusion in the *National Register of Historic Places* (NRHP) and the *California Register of Historical Resources* (CRHR) and appears to be eligible as a historic property/historical

resource under NHPA and CEQA. No federally-listed sites on the National Register of Historic Places or sites eligible for listing are in the Project APE or in the near vicinity of the Project site.

AE evaluated all three of the newly-identified cultural resources (historical refuse scatter [CA-RIV-II728], Rio Del Sol Road [33-023935] and Avenue *28Nista* Chino [33-023934]) for inclusion in the NRHP and CRHR; none of the resources qualified as a historic property/historical resource under NHPA and CEQA.

Geology, Soil, and Mineral Resources

The Project site is situated on alluvial fan deposits at the base of the Indio Hills and Edom Hill. The sediments at the reservoir site and along the pipe alignment consist of fine to coarse grained sands with interbedded silts, gravel, and cobbles of aeolian (wind-blown), and alluvial (water-laid) origin. Based upon the Geologic Map of California, Santa Ana Sheet, 1992, the crossing site is mapped as having Quaternary Alluvial (Qal) and Sand Dune deposits (Qs). The hills adjacent to the reservoir site are identified as Qco, Pleistocene non-marine conglomerate (sand covered) (Earth Systems, 2014). The soils on-site and in the vicinity consist of primarily of Carsitas-Myoma-Carrizo soil association and are characterized by nearly level to moderately steep, somewhat excessively drained or excessively drained sands.

The Project site lies within the Coachella Valley, which is part of the Colorado Desert geomorphic province. The Salton Trough, a significant feature within the Colorado Desert geomorphic province, is a large northwest-trending structural depression that extends approximately 180 miles from the San Gorgonio Pass to the Gulf of California. The Coachella Valley forms the northerly part of the Salton Trough and contains a thick sequence of Miocene to Holocene sedimentary deposits. Much of this depression in the Salton Sea area is below sea level. The Coachella Valley is surrounded by the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast, foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains to the northwest, and the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains along the southwest areas.

The two nearest mapped faults are the South Branch of the San Andreas fault and the Banning fault, which are approximately 0.75 miles northeast and 2.8 miles north of the site, respectively. The site does not lie within a currently delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Well-delineated fault lines cross through this region; however, no active faults are mapped in the immediate vicinity of the site. Therefore, active fault rupture is unlikely to occur at the Project site. While fault rupture would most likely occur along previously established fault traces, future fault rupture could occur at other locations (Earth Systems, 2014).

Eroding of the hills and mountains surrounding the Coachella Valley has filled the valley with significant amounts of sand and gravel, known collectively as aggregate. Aggregate is a vital

component required in the manufacture of asphalt, concrete, road base, stucco, plaster, and other similar construction materials.

According to the California Geological Survey (CSG), the area around the Project site including the areas east of Cabazon, south of Morongo Valley and Joshua Tree National Park, west of the Mecca Hills and north of the community of Mecca, contained significant aggregate mineral deposits and this area is heavily mined for aggregate (CGS 2007).

The CGS has classified the regional significance of mineral resources in accordance with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) into Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs). The area of and around the Project site were classified as lying within MRZ-3; "Areas containing known or inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance". The 40-acre site situated immediately adjacent the Project site to the west is zone as MRZ-2: "Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present for base materials".

E.L Yeager Construction Company is currently mining for sand and gravel in the Thousand Palms mine near the Project area (CGS, 2007). According to the Riverside County (2008), the Mesa Blanca Mine, San Jones Mine, and the Vista Mine are permitted for sand, gravel, and decorative stone extraction approximately two miles from the Project area.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The Project site is located in the Colorado River Basin Region (Region 7) watershed, as designated by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB). CRWQCB and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)implements and enforces federal and state regulations throughout the region to assure that water quality standards are met. Water quality is also monitored by CVWD through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit process and various monitoring including those performed to satisfy SWRCB's Division of Drinking Water. These requirements help provide safe drinking water and assure that runoff leaving the site during and after construction is not polluted and contains minimal levels of silt or other native materials.

The principal water sources for the Project area and the Coachella Valley are natural surface water flows, groundwater and imported Colorado River water. Potable water is pumped from groundwater sub-basins or diverted from local streams, imported water supplies are used for groundwater recharge, irrigation and other non-potable purposes. Additional information on imported water supplies and the location of the groundwater recharge facilities is provided in the Coachella Valley Water Management Plan, which can be found of CVWD's website (www.cvwd.org).

The purpose of the proposed domestic water reservoir(s) are to provide storage to meet current and future domestic water and fire protection demands within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone (MHPZ). The MHPZ serves 2,840 existing domestic water customers in portions of Cathedral City, Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage. Currently, the MHPZ does not have its own dedicated gravity storage. The MHPZ relies on storage from an adjacent pressure zone (Date Palm Pressure Zone), which is limited in its storage capacity.

Three (3) existing domestic water wells exist within the MHPZ and are located as follows:

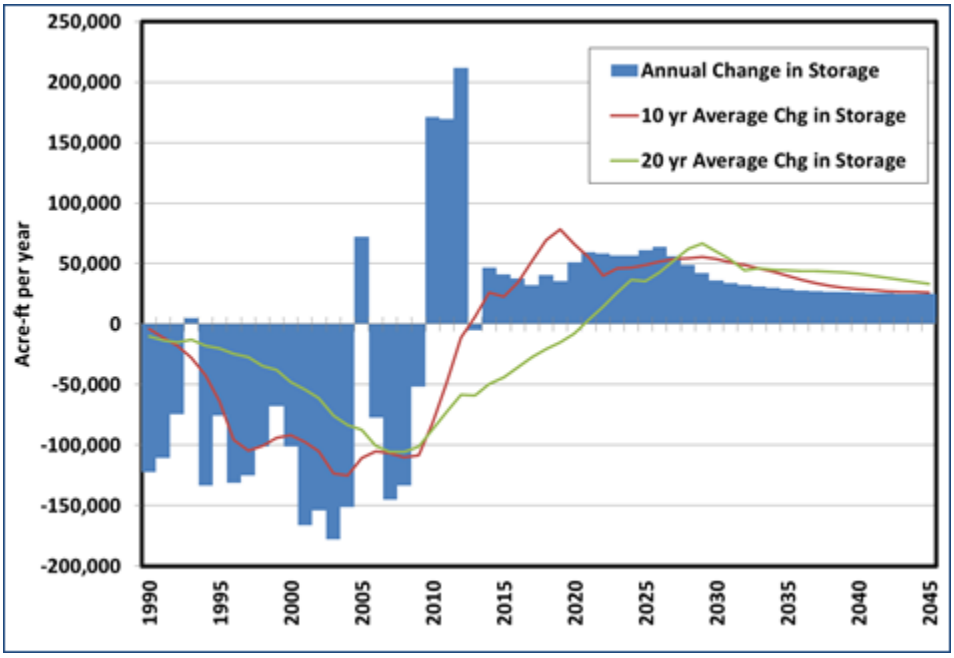
- *Well 4507-2*: Located at 71-300 Dinah Shore Drive approximately 1 mile west of Bob Hope Drive within the Westin Mission Hills Resort in the city of Rancho Mirage.
- *Well 4509*: Located at 30 Victoria Falls Drive within the Victory Falls community in the city of Rancho Mirage.
- *Well 4510*: Located at 71-777 Dinah Shore Drive on the corner of Dinah Shore Drive and Bob Hope Drive in the city of Rancho Mirage.

CVWD is also constructing a 36-inch diameter transmission main beginning at the intersection of Bob Hope Drive/Dinah Shore Drive and extending it to the proposed reservoir site. The domestic water wells currently located in the MHPZ will pump into the transmission main and be the source of water for the proposed reservoirs(s). No domestic water wells will be drilled on the proposed reservoir site (BLM property).

The Whitewater River sub-basin underlies the Project area and has the largest storage capacity of all Coachella Valley groundwater basins. The Whitewater River sub-basin's area is estimated at 406 square miles, the total estimated volume of groundwater is 28.8 million acre-feet (DWR estimate from 1964), the primary users are municipal and domestic water customers, the trends in groundwater storage over time is described in **Exhibit 12** below. Additional information about the Whitewater River sub-basin can be found in Section 4 of the Coachella Valley Water Management Plan located on CVWD's website (www.cvwd.org).

According to CVWD's Urban Water Management Plan (2011), the quality of local groundwater and treated and untreated Colorado River water is characterized as "good" and meets state and federal drinking water quality standards. These standards are projected to be met over the long-term. Colorado River water quality data is discussed in Section 5 of the Coachella Valley Water Management Plan. CVWD's 2015 Domestic Water Quality data is summarized in the 2014-2015 Annual Review located on CVWD's website (www.cvwd.org).

Exhibit 12: Whitewater River Sub-basin Groundwater Storage



The Project site is located in Zone AO on Flood Insurance Rate Map No. 06065Cl585G prepared by FEMA in 2008. Zone AO corresponds to areas of 1-percent annual risk of shallow flooding (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain) where average depths are between 1 and 3 feet. The reservoir site might encroach into the special flood hazard area (Zone AO, depth 2 feet). But the encroachment is minimal which can easily be mitigated to comply with California Drainage Law. The major portion of the pipeline to the reservoir along Rio Del Sol is in a special flood hazard area (FEMA Flood Zone AO, depth 1 foot). This won't be an issue since the pipeline will be buried (as long as the finished surface after installation is similar to the existing site condition). The source of potential shallow flooding at the Project site is the alluvial fan system located upstream of the site.

Noise

The proposed reservoir site is located on a vacant desert parcel surrounded by existing mining operations and light industrial. The proposed pipeline alignment along Rio del Sol Road between Watt Court and Varner Road would be located immediately adjacent to a large commercial/light industrial business park. The southern terminus of the proposed pipeline at Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive will be adjacent to residential units in the Mission Hills Country Club.

Socioeconomic/Environmental Justice

The reservoir portion of the Project will occur on vacant, desert land owned by BLM and surrounded by existing mining operations and light industrial within an unincorporated area of Thousand Palms. The community of Thousand Palms is characterized by mobile home

subdivisions, single-family residential neighborhoods, and rural residential development. Median income within Thousand Palms is $42,641 and 14.4% of the population is below the poverty level, while Riverside County has a median income of $56,529 and 16.2% of the population is below the federal poverty level (US Census 2010). There is a single family subdivision community and Commercial Office Development located approximately 1.5 miles from the Project site.

The pipeline portion of the Project will occur within local street rights-of-way, underneath 1-10 and the UPRR tracks. The pipeline will also cross an approximate 100-foot-wide swath of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians' tribal land located immediately south of 1-10. This small piece of tribal land has not been developed and has no residential units/commercial buildings onsite.

Recreation

Riverside County offers diverse recreational opportunities, including parklands, nature centers, bikeways, and open space. Additionally, there are thousands of acres of National Park and National Monument lands, U.S. Forest Service wilderness lands, and other recreational sites in the Coachella Valley region. The Coachella Valley Preserve (CVP) is located approximately two miles east of the Project area. The CVP has a 25-mile network of hiking trails for pedestrian and equestrian use.

The Coachella Valley Plan Amendment to the CDCA designates the roads located on the parcel as open routes and the parcel as an off-highway vehicle limited use area. A limited use area allow OHV use on existing routes, however, the subject parcel has evidence of prohibited cross-country travel.

Lands and Realty

There are existing ROW's located immediately adjacent to the Project area, which include access roads and a concrete asphalt processing plant. **Table 3** summarizes the adjacent ROW lands.

Table 3: Adjacent Right-of-Way Summary

Serial Number	Holder	Description
CACA 19091	California Portland Cement Company	50' Road
CACA 21584	California Portland Cement Company	50' Road
CACA 27340	Bureau of Land Management	100' Road
CACA29529	Yeager EL Construction Company	20' Road
CACA 35280	Ted Dumas	30' Road
CACA 20228	California Portland Cement Company	Cement and Asphalt Processing Plant

VII. Environmental Effects

This section discusses the potential environmental effects on resources due to implementation of the Proposed Action or an Alternative. The analysis in this section evaluates each of the resource topics with respect to Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, Alternative 2 – Berm and Dirt Road, and Alternative 3 – No Action. The environmental assessment provided below discusses both direct and indirect effects; whereas, direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place, and indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.

Where necessary, mitigation measures are provided, along with the discussion of any residual impact. Lastly, this section describes how the Proposed Action or Alternative may contribute to impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and which are considered "cumulative impacts". Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. The cumulative project list includes: CVWD's Mountain Sky Reservoir No. 4605 and Pipeline Project [immediately east and south; planned for construction in 2016/2017] along with existing land uses (such as aggregate mining activities and light industrial within the vicinity).

The methodology used in the preparation for the assessment of environmental consequences includes review of technical studies and planning documents, Google Earth imagery and site reconnaissance. Referenced materials are documented in Section VIII References.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

Based on the Visual Resource Contrast analysis prepared for the proposed action, the Project at full build-out will result in minimal long-term visual impacts. The contrast rating system is a systematic process used by BLM to analyze potential visual impacts related to the proposed action (please see Appendix A containing Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet and visual rendering exhibits). The Project site has been assigned a Visual Resources Management (VRM) Class 4 rating, which allows a significant amount of change at the Project site. The Project site is located between two existing mining/quarry operations which create an industrial atmosphere. The visual contrast analysis was based on the viewshed from the nearest residential development located at the intersection of Del Norte Way and Roseview Lane located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the Project site. The proposed domestic water reservoir Project will create less of a visual impact than the existing surrounding industrial activities.

Construction of the proposed action will result in ground surface disturbances along the ROWs at Vista Chino, Rio Del Sol Road, Varner Road, Ramon Road and Bob Hope Drive. Construction

activities will include excavation, utility trenching and installation, grading, paving, and related activities. Short-term visual impacts will include the presence of construction equipment and personnel, the movement of construction vehicles on area roadways and staging areas, safety barriers, and material stockpiling. These visual resource impacts will be temporary in nature during the construction period [anticipated for 9 months for each of the 5 phases over the duration of 5-10 years to complete build-out].

All proposed pipelines will be buried and shielded from view. The proposed reservoir site will include above-ground infrastructure and will be enclosed with a chain-link fence (for safety measures). Access to the reservoir site would be provided via dirt road for operational and maintenance activities. As proposed, the Project will not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and visual impacts will be less than significant.

The site does not contain unique scenic resources, such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings. None of the local streets, roads, highways are designated as state scenic routes. No adverse impacts to scenic resources will occur.

There is some potential for new sources of light and/or glare at the proposed reservoir site due to security lighting in the evening. However, all proposed lighting will be shielded and/or directed away from adjacent properties to protect nighttime views onto the site. Additionally, the reservoirs would be painted a tan color with a matte finish that is identified on BLM's Standard Environmental Color Chart to blend with the mountainous backdrop and any fences and railing, poles, above ground pipes and culverts, and reverse sides of signs and guardrails would be painted or coated in low reflectivity paint or material. With adherence to mitigation listed below, the Project will not have a significant effect related to light and/or glare at the site.

Alternative 2 – Reservoir Berm

This alternative proposes to construct a 12' to 15' high berm on the south side of the reservoirs to reduce their visibility in consideration of post-construction views onto the site. Based on the Visual Resource Contrast analysis and site renderings prepared for the project, an earthen berm does not appear to significantly screen the reservoir(s); therefore, this alternative does not provide any aesthetic benefit by constructing a berm.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The aesthetic views onto the proposed site would remain as-is. There would be no visual impacts from the construction of the reservoirs, installation of pipeline, and staging areas. However, in absence of the Proposed Action, CVWD would be not able to meet its requirements of having

adequate water storage capacity to meet the needs of current and future domestic water demands, and fire protection demands within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone area.

Mitigation Measures:

1. Reservoir Exterior Coating

The Contractor shall paint the water reservoir tank(s) visible to the public such that: a) the color minimizes visual contrast by blending with the characteristic landscape colors, b) the color/finish does not create excessive glare, and c) the color/finish is consistent with local policies and ordinances. The Contractor shall consider the use of special galvanizing treatments to insure that structures are sufficiently dulled and non-reflective. The Contractor shall comply with CVWD's standardized exterior painting practices for water reservoir tanks, utilizing a suitable color selection to blend with the surrounding natural environment. The finish coat shall be similar to, or equal with products such as Devoe Bar-Ox Devthane 379H urethane coating, Sherwin Williams Urethane Highsolids Polyurethane 100, or Tnemec UVX Series 750 urethane coating.

2. Lighting Plan Minimum Requirements

Documenting how lighting will be designed and installed to minimize night-sky impacts and impacts on nocturnal wildlife during construction and operations. The lighting plan should specify the following:

- Number of lights and lumen output of each—Minimum number of lights and the lowest luminosity consistent with safe and secure operation of the facility;
- Alternatives to lighting—Retro-reflective or luminescent markers in lieu of permanent lighting where feasible;
- Fixture design—Lights of the proper design, shielded to eliminate uplight, placed and directed to eliminate light spill and trespass to offsite locations;
- Lamp color temperature—Lights of the proper color to minimize night-sky impacts;
- Standard operating procedures—Minimization of unnecessary lighting use through alternatives to permanent lighting, such as restricting lighting usage to certain time periods;
- Any activities that may be restricted to avoid night-sky impacts; and
- A process for promptly addressing and mitigating complaints about potential lighting impacts.

Use Best Management Practices to help ensure that projects minimize night-sky impacts through proper lighting design and usage. Best Management Practices for Reducing Visual Impacts of Renewable Energy Facilities on BLM-Administered Lands.
http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/energy/renewable/links.html

Lighting	Siting and Design	Construction	Operations
Prepare a Lighting Plan	x		
Use Full Cutoff Luminaires	x		
Direct Lights Properly to Eliminate Light Spill and Trespass	x	x	
Use Amber instead of Bluish-White Lighting	x		
Minimize Lighting Usage during Construction and Operations		x	x
Use Vehicle-Mounted Lights or Portable Light Towers for Nighttime Maintenance Activities			x

Residual Impact: With adherence to the aesthetic mitigation measures, no direct or indirect effects would occur.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed Project is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on visual resources when evaluated cumulatively with other projects in the vicinity. There will be temporary visual impacts during construction activities, and once the reservoirs, pipeline, and access road are constructed there will be no permanent change from the existing conditions. The pipeline will be buried underground and the absence of post-development activity will allow disturbed areas along the pipeline route to return to pre-construction conditions. The visibility of three 6.5-million-gallon domestic water reservoirs will not be cumulatively significant when compared to the surrounding topography and surrounding quarry land uses.

Air Quality

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

The proposed Project is consistent with the goals and policies of the Riverside County General Plan Land Use Element for utilities. Additionally, the proposed Project does not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the SCAQMD Air Quality Management Plan. Therefore, the proposed Project will not significantly impact air quality management planning.

Short-term emissions of pollutants [direct impacts] will occur during site preparation/grading, trenching for pipelines, construction of the reservoir, and roadway re-paving during the Project construction period. Sources of construction-related emissions include the operation of construction equipment, exporting soils, off-gassing from asphalt, as well as vehicles transporting workers to and from the Project site. It should be noted that not all equipment will be used every day, and various construction activities generate different quantities of emissions.

Construction-related activities for the Project are projected to remain below established daily thresholds for all criteria pollutants. Construction PM10 and PM2.5 fugitive dust emissions are minimized through adherence to SCAQMD Rule 403, which requires the application of a dust control plan and dust suppression techniques during all phases of construction. As such, Project construction is not anticipated to violate State or Federal air quality standards or contribute to existing air quality violations within the air basin.

The Federal Air Conformity Rule de minimus thresholds limit construction and operational emissions to 10 tons per year with respect to any criteria pollutant identified in the Federal Clean Air Act (including PM10 and Ozone). If the 10-tons-per-year limit were exceeded, the Project proponent would be required to identify any mitigation measures to reduce impacts to air quality. The construction-related and operational criteria pollutant emissions for the proposed Project are anticipated to be well below SCAQMD and federal thresholds. In addition, minimization measures are set forth below to further reduce impacts to air quality. Therefore, the proposed Project will not exceed the Federal Air Conformity Rule de minimus threshold of 10 tons per year.

Air quality minimization measures have been incorporated into Project design and are intended to reduce emissions of potentially harmful pollutants. These measures will be included in Project grading/excavation/dust control plans during the construction period. CVWD engineering staff would be responsible to approve air quality plans prior to any earthwork activities. CVWD staff or its contractor would be required to monitor such earthwork activities on a daily basis.

1. Construction equipment, delivery trucks, worker vehicles, and haul trucks will limit idling time, where feasible.
2. Contractor shall ensure that all construction equipment is properly serviced and maintained in good operating conditions.
3. Diesel-powered construction equipment shall utilize aqueous diesel fuels, and be equipped with diesel oxidation catalysts.
4. A fugitive dust plan shall be prepared for the proposed Project and include, but not be limited to the following best management practices:

    - Chemically treat soil where activity will cease for at least four consecutive days;
    - All construction grading operations/excavation shall cease when winds exceed 25 miles per hour;
    - Apply water at site and on equipment each morning and evening and during all earth-moving operations;
    - Operate street-sweepers on paved roads adjacent to site;
    - Establish and strictly enforce limits of grading for each phase of development;

- Wash off trucks as they leave the Project site as necessary to control fugitive dust emissions;
- Cover all transported loads of soils, wet materials prior to transport, provide adequate freeboard (space from the top of the material to the top of the truck) to reduce PM10 and deposition of particulate matter during transportation; and
- Use track-out reduction measures, such as gravel pads, at Project access points to minimize dust and mud deposits on roads affected by construction traffic.

5. Construction equipment and materials shall be sited as far away from residential and park uses as practicable.
6. Existing power sources should be utilized, where feasible, via temporary power poles to avoid on-site power generation.
7. Imported fill and paving materials, as well as any exported material, shall be adequately watered prior to transport, covered during transport, and watered prior to unloading.
8. SCAQMD Rule 403 shall be adhered to, ensuring the cleanup of construction-related dirt on approach routes to and from the site.
9. All grading activities shall be suspended during first and second stage ozone episodes or when winds exceed 25 miles per hour.
10. The contractor shall notify the CVWD of the start and end of grading and construction activities in conformance and within the time frames established in the 2003 PM10 State Implementation Plan.
11. Construction staging and management plans shall be reviewed and conditioned to require the application of all reasonably available methods and technologies to assure the minimal emissions of pollutants from the development.

The nearest sensitive receptors to the proposed Project are commercial units located within a business park along Rio del Sol Road (pipeline alignment) between Watt Court and Varner Road, and residential units located within the Mission Hills Country Club located at the southern terminus of the proposed pipeline at Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive. Due to the nature of the Project and location in relation to sensitive receptors, the project will not be expected to expose sensitive receptors to a significant amount of pollutants.

The proposed Project has the potential to result in direct, short-term odor impacts associated with vehicle exhaust and asphalt paving. In addition, any such odors will be quickly dispersed below detectable thresholds as distance from the construction site increases. The pipeline will be located underground and will not expose the surrounding area to near- or long-term odors. Therefore, impacts from objectionable odors are expected to be less than significant.

Once constructed, the water reservoir facility would not be expected to have an effect on air quality.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant impacts to air quality. However, in comparison to the proposed action, this alternative would potentially increase air quality effects from the additional earthwork required to construct the berm.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The existing air quality emissions would not be changed by the proposed project.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed Project will have limited and short-term impacts on local and regional air quality, will not directly contribute to on-going emissions of pollutants, and is, therefore, not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on local or regional air quality when combined with projects in the vicinity.

As noted under section VI. Affected Environment, the Coachella Valley is in a non-attainment area for PM10 under federal standards. The *Coachella Valley's 2003 PM10 State Implementation Plan* adopted stricter measures than were previously imposed for control of dust during site grading and development phases. These measures are integrated into the grading and construction management plans for the proposed project.

In the operational phase, the proposed pipeline and reservoirs will generate negligible emissions and will not adversely contribute to cumulative effects.

Biological Resources

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

<u>Flora</u>

The Project may have a direct impact on Silver Cholla if disturbed during construction activities. This plant species is protected under the California Native Plant Protection Act; and therefore, the plant requires protection in place or salvaging for replanting. The requirements of such protection are described below in the Mitigation Measures section. Implementation of the mitigation is intended to reduce or offset potential impacts to the silver cholla.

Fauna

Some Project-related construction activities could result in direct impacts to migratory birds. All native birds are protected while nesting by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). To comply with the MBTA, site disturbances that occur between January 1 and September 1, and have the potential to impact nesting birds require a biologist to conduct nesting bird surveys. The requirements of such surveys are described below in the Mitigation Measures section.

Special Status Species in the Project Vicinity

Based on the April, 2014 field surveys and habitat assessment, the following special status species may occur along the Project limits: prairie falcon and loggerhead shrike, chaparral sand verbena, flat-seeded spurge, slender cotton heads, Coachella Valley giant sand treader cricket, Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket, flat-tailed horned lizard, LeConte's Thrasher, western yellow bat (where there are palm trees), and potentially Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel.

Although no direct impacts to special status species are anticipated with Project implementation, the Project has identified biological mitigation intended to prevent indirect impacts to CVFTL, CVM, FTHL, and other special status species. Due to the project proximity to the Thousand Palms Conservation Area of the CVMSHP/NCCP, the project is conditioned to adhere to the CVMSHP/NCCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines as described in Section 4.5 of the CVMSHP/NCCP.

Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch

Although the CVMV is not present on BLM lands in the project area at this time, an El Nino weather pattern is predicted for late 2015 and early 2016 and may bring increased rainfall to the Coachella Valley. In the event of increased rainfall, it is possible that CVMV could appear within the project area and be impacted.

The biological assessments prepared for the proposed action determined that CVM could occur along the Project limits even though none were observed during field surveys. The Project may have a direct effect on CVM if disturbed during construction activities; and therefore mitigation to offset or reduce potential direct impacts is recommended.

Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard

The biological assessments prepared for the proposed action determined that CVFTL could occur along the Project limits even though none were observed during field surveys. Circle Mountain Biological Consultants (CMBC) concluded that CVFTL is not likely to be present on the reservoir site or along the pipeline alignments north of I-10, and there is a low likelihood of occurrence along the pipeline alignments south of I-10. This assessment was confirmed by the USFWS and CDFW during site reconnaissance in September 2015.

Further, USFWS staff determined that the lack of any sign of the two sensitive lizards (CVFTL and FTHL [CESA candidate species]) is completely congruent with the lack of some necessary habitat components, and the very low quality of the existing habitat components. It is not expected that either species is present at the site, or likely to take up residence from the surrounding habitat.

Prairie falcon/Loggerhead shrike

Prairie falcon and Loggerhead shrike may occur in the project vicinity as transients but there are no trees or other structures on the project site that would support roosting or nesting activities. There are some trees and palms found outside of the pipeline alignment in adjacent open space that may provide suitable nesting and roosting resources but no impacts are expected for any birds that utilize these features since they are outside of the area of potential effect. No impacts are expected for these species on the project site due to the lack of supportive habitat, low foraging value and historical disturbance from mining, OHV, dumping, and recreational shooting activities on and around the project site.

Chaparral sand verbena

Sand verbena is typically found in sandy soils in coastal dune, chaparral and desert dune habitats. Although sandy soils are present on the project site, the high level of disturbance from OHV activities, recreational shooting, and dumping have negatively impacted habitat value for this species onsite and regional drought conditions.

Flat-seeded spurge

This annual herb is found in active desert sand dunes and sandy soils in Sonoran desert scrub habitat. The blooming period is typically from February through September however the low habitat value and severe drought conditions will limit the ability of this species to persist in areas of low habitat quality.

Slender cotton heads

This annual herb, known from dune habitats is considered rare by the CNPS (2014), with a rare plant ranking of List 2B.2. The nearest reported occurrence was in 1942 from a location approximately 3.9 miles southwest of the project area. It was not detected during CMBC's surveys and likely would not have been detectable in the spring of 2014, due to drought conditions. None of the plant species mentioned above were observed during surveys completed in the spring and early summer of 2014. The region is currently in the midst of a severe drought which will limit the ability of these species to persist in areas of low suitable habitat.

Coachella Valley giant sand treader cricket/Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket

These invertebrates are limited in range to a small segment of the sand and dune areas of the Coachella Valley, in the vicinity of Palm Springs, known particularly from large, undulating dunes piled up at the north base of Mount San Jacinto. High moisture requirements and low

habitat suitability on the project site likely preclude these species from occurring onsite or in the project vicinity and no evidence of their presence was found during general and focused wildlife surveys by Circle Mountain Biological biologists. The only potential habitat for the species in the project area is south of I-10 along the pipeline alignments, in areas of loose sand and dunes.

Flat-tailed horned lizard

Flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL) is known from relictual populations in the Coachella Valley. The nearest recorded observation for FTHL was 3.74 miles to the southwest of the project site according to a California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB 2015) record made in 1993. Mr. Jack Crayon, a CDFW regional expert on the species, visited the Mission Hills project site and determined that the site was too high in elevation and the limited trophic structure that existed would not support this species.

LeConte's Thrasher

There is no roosting or nesting resources onsite that would support nesting activities by this species. In addition, the high level of disturbance and low trophic value would preclude this species from utilizing this site although it could pass through the area as it forages. It was last reported from the project vicinity in 1921 approximately 0.3 mile west of the section of pipeline alignment north of Ramon Road.

Western yellow bat (where there are palm trees)

No palm trees are present on the project site or along the pipeline alignment. This bat was reported 5.2 miles south of the project area. It could roost in the landscape palms planted at the recycling facility south of the project site along Rio Del Sol Road; however it is not expected that project activities will impact any bats that may be present in this location.

Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel

Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel is a California Species of Special Concern and is considered sensitive by the BLM. The species is restricted to the Coachella Valley, in areas of desert succulent scrub, desert wash, desert scrub, alkali scrub, and levees. The species prefers open, flat, grassy areas in fine-textured, sandy soil. Population densities are correlated with winter rainfall. The species was reported in 1954 from a location approximately 1.0 mile east of the project area. CMBC did not find evidence of the Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel during surveys, and no colonial burrow sites were detected. Densities of this species are likely to be very low due to prolonged drought conditions. Given the lack of evidence for the species, the likelihood of occurrence for the species is considered low.

Alternative 2 – Berm

This alternative proposes to construct a 12' to 15' high berm on the south side of the reservoirs to reduce their visibility of post-construction views onto the site. It is reasonable to assume, under this alternative, there would be no additional biological resource impacts for the proposed project.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The aesthetic views onto the proposed site would remain as-is. There would be no biological resource impacts from the construction of the reservoirs, installation of pipeline, and staging areas. However, in absence of the Proposed Action, CVWD would be not able to meet its requirements of having adequate water storage capacity to meet the needs of current and future domestic water demands, and fire protection demands within the Mission Hills Pressure Zone area; this would be considered a negative impact of the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation Measures: The following measures are intended as mitigation to offset or reduce the potential impacts to the CVFTL; CVM; burrowing owl; and other special status species with potential to occur in the vicinity. The CVWD Project Engineer, CVWD Environmental Specialist and /or Biological Monitor, and CVWD Inspector shall ensure implementation of all biological mitigation measures.

1. A biological monitor approved by the USFWS will conduct pre-construction surveys for CVM, between January and May, during the plant's growing and flowering season. GPS coordinates of special status plant locations will be recorded with high precision (to within 1 meter), stored in an electronic database, and submitted to the USFWS and the CNDDB within one year of the survey. Plants will be marked conspicuously with pin flags and avoided during construction to the greatest extent possible.

   If milk-vetch plants are found and cannot be avoided, the biological monitor approved by the USFWS, will collect milk-vetch seeds from within the project impact area. Seed collection will occur when the seed is past "soft dough" and prior to being naturally dispersed. The biological monitor will collect the top 10 centimeters (4 inches) of soil surrounding the identified plants and placed in plastic bags. The biological monitor will distribute this seed and soil immediately following collection to locations pre-determined by the USFWS and BLM.

   If milk-vetch plants are found and cannot be avoided, but the seed are not yet at the stage of maturity to be collected, CVWD shall halt all construction in the vicinity and contact the BLM and USFWS. CVWD would not be able to begin construction activities within the vicinity until the BLM Authorized Officer issued a notice to proceed.

2. To minimize habitat loss regarding CVFTL, CVM and other special status species, construction grading/activities should be limited to the smallest possible area along the Project limits; CVWD and the contractor should clearly delineate the boundaries of the Project and all construction activities should be limited to within the delineated areas.

3. Prior to start of construction or initiation of any ground-disturbing activities, a qualified biologist should present a sensitive species education program to all employees/contractors involved in any construction activities; the program should follow the CVFTL and CVM program already approved by the USFWS.

4. To prevent habitat degradation and spread of invasive plants following pipeline and reservoir construction, non-native, exotic weeds should be removed by hand from the reservoir site and pipeline alignments each spring until native vegetation has been re-established.

5. To prevent attracting opportunistic predators, such as ravens, coyotes, and feral dogs, CVWD and contractor shall implement a trash abatement program before and during the Project construction period.

6. To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, any vegetation removal, grading, or other site disturbance occurring between January 1 and September 1 and having the potential to impact nesting birds shall require a qualified biologist to conduct at least one nesting bird survey prior to construction. All vegetation and suitable nesting habitat (including open ground) on the Project site, whether or not it will be removed or disturbed, shall be surveyed for nesting birds. If active nests of any native bird are found on site, they will be avoided until after the young have fledged.

7. To minimize effects on silver cholla, and other special status plants that may occur along the Project alignment during excavation activities, all reasonably retrievable topsoil suitable for reclamation (top 6 inches to 1 foot) containing the seed bank shall be salvaged and stored for re-distribution following construction activities; topsoil shall be stored in such a way as to preserve its integrity and protect it from loss due to wind erosion.

8. The Project footprint shall be surveyed for burrowing owl within 30 days prior to and 24-hours prior to initiation of ground disturbance/construction activities to verify non-presence of the species along the Project limits.

9. The Contractor shall adhere to the CVMSHP/NCCP Land Adjacency Guidelines along the BLM ROW.

Drainage
The Project shall incorporate plans to ensure that the quantity and quality of runoff discharged to the adjacent Conservation Area is not altered in an adverse way when compared with existing conditions. Stormwater systems shall be designed to prevent the release of toxins, chemicals, petroleum products, exotic plant materials or other elements that might degrade or harm biological resources or ecosystem processes within the adjacent Conservation Area. The Project includes an on-site retention basin to minimize runoff discharge.

Lighting
Lighting shall be shielded and directed toward the developed area. Landscape shielding or other appropriate methods shall be incorporated in project designs to minimize the effects of lighting adjacent to or within the adjacent Conservation Area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual. Please refer to the Aesthetics section for mitigation measure related to lighting.

Invasives
Invasive, non-native plant species shall not be incorporated in the landscape plan or land uses adjacent to or within the Conservation Area. Landscape treatments within or adjacent to the Conservation Area shall incorporate native plant materials to the maximum extent feasible; recommended native species and non-recommended plant lists are provided in Tables 4-112 and 4-113, respectively. This list may be amended from time to time through a Minor Amendment with Wildlife Agency Concurrence.

Residual Impact: Residual effects include the permanent loss of 10 acres of Sonoran woody scrub, and a reduction in habitat quality along the pipeline alignments following pipeline construction. Implementation of the surveys will assure that potential impacts to nesting birds are reduced to less than significant levels.

Cumulative Impacts: CVWD is currently in the process of obtaining permits for another reservoir and associated pipeline Project (Sky Mountain Reservoir 4605, adjacent east and south). That Project will result in habitat loss and degradation on the within the same scale as the Mission Hills Project (10 acre reservoir site and approximately 14,000' feet of pipeline alignment). The effects from both projects are similar and together may add to the incremental loss and reduction of quality of habitats for special status species in the region.

Cultural Resources

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The cultural resources report concluded that construction of the proposed Project is not expected to result in any direct impacts on cultural resources. No cemeteries or human remains are known to occur on the Project site or the immediate vicinity. The majority of the sediments within the Project area of potential effect (APE) are highly disturbed. In addition, because the proposed action will not have adverse effects on cultural resources, including federally-listed sites and

sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office is not warranted.

The pipeline associated with the reservoir will cross an approximate 100-foot swath of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (Agua Caliente) tribal land located south of Interstate 10. CVWD has initiated consultation with Agua Caliente and is currently working to secure a 56-foot easement across the tribal land swath for the proposed pipelines associated with this Project and the Sky Mountain Reservoir 4605 Project (located to the east). Both pipelines are planned to be constructed simultaneously and approximately 17 feet apart using the "jack-and-bore" method for placement of the pipelines underneath the UPRR tracks, tribal land, and I-10 without any above-ground disturbance required.

As with any development Project requiring earthwork, the potential exists for unknown archaeological/cultural resource materials be encountered during Project construction activities. If this were to occur indirect impacts would occur, and all construction work must be halted in the vicinity of the discovery until a qualified archaeologist can visit the site of discovery and assess the significance of the archaeological/cultural resource. In addition, should human remains be uncovered during Project construction on federal lands, the following protocol must be followed:

- The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), as implemented by 43 CFR Sections 10.4–10.6, presents the procedures for the treatment of human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony located on federal land. As the lead federal agency on the Project, BLM should be notified immediately. BLM will be responsible for government-to-government consultation with affected Native American Tribes concerning all potential NAGPRA issues. If human remains are encountered during Project construction in a location other than a dedicated cemetery on non-federal lands, the steps and procedures specified in Health and Safety Code §7050.5, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(d), and PRC §5097.98 must be implemented.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

This alternative involves additional earth-moving activities to construct a berm on the southern end of the reservoirs. In comparison to the proposed action, this alternative could affect unknown cultural resource from the additional ground disturbance required to construct the berm. However, if unknown resources are encountered, Alternative 2 would also be required to halt work in the immediate area until a qualified archaeologist can visit the site of discovery.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility including pipeline would not be constructed. No earth-moving activities would be required, and no potential impact to cultural resources would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The Project would not directly impact cultural resources, and therefore, is not expected to have a significant effect on cultural resources when combined with other proposed projects in the vicinity.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

There are a number of fault lines in the vicinity of the Project site that have the ability to cause ground-shaking. The two nearest mapped faults are the South Branch of the San Andreas and the Banning Fault, which are approximately 0.75 miles northeast and 2.8 miles north of the site, respectively.

As noted above in Section VI. Affected Environment, the Project may be subjected to strong ground-shaking and could sustain damage, including a break in the pipelines, in the event of a major earthquake. Direct impacts to the proposed reservoirs could include collapse and failure if the reservoir was not appropriately engineered and constructed. In addition, seismic shaking at the site could potentially induce seiching within the reservoirs. As such, the Project is required to meet state, county and local standards for construction including the Uniform Building Code (UBC) for seismic zones.

The proposed Project is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Hazard Study Zone and the possibility for a surface rupture is considered low to none. Due to the distance inland, the site has a nonexistent potential for tsunamis. The potential for liquefaction in the Project area and vicinity is considered low [due to the depth of groundwater beneath the site exceeding 100 feet]. Due to the relatively flat site with gentle sloping, there is low to moderate potential for seismically induced landslides. The potential for seismically induced ground subsidence is considered to be low at the site.

The Project site may have sand and gravel resources on-site, and is located in the vicinity of active aggregate mining activities. However, the relatively small 10-acre site (reservoir site and pipeline alignment) would not be expected to yield a substantial amount of mineral resources. In addition, approximately 40% of the Project site lands are located on BLM and tribal lands. The proposed pipeline will not directly affect mineral sites or cause a result in the loss of availability

of a locally-important mineral resources recovery site delineated on any local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

No septic systems or alternative wastewater disposal systems are planned, and no adverse impacts will occur.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant impacts to geology, soils, and mineral resources. Construction of the domestic water reservoir Project would be in accordance with the UBC, which would ensure that impacts from a seismic event are reduced to a minimum.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. This alternative would result in no impacts to geology, soils, and mineral sources.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: Development of the Project will provide a reliable water source for existing and planned development in the area to be served by these facilities. Development in California is required to be designed and constructed in compliance with state, county and local building codes (including the UBC) with the intent to protect significant damage during seismic events; and therefore, the Project would not contribute to a cumulative impact to geology and soils.

The Project would not directly or indirectly interfere with the extraction of aggregate materials. When evaluated with other projects in the area, the proposed Project would have a less than significant cumulative effect on mineral resources.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The construction phase of the Project will require the application of water to facilitate soil compaction and to minimize fugitive dust emissions. This will be done using best management practices (BMPs) to assure that groundwater is not contaminated. CVWD and its contractor will assure that operational BMPs for the Project satisfy local, state, and federal standards through regulatory project design features.

In addition, CVWD requires the preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in conformance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) prior to construction. The SWPPP must include best management practices to assure that storm

flows leaving the site during and after construction are not polluted and do not contain silt or other materials. These standard requirements assure that the Project's potential direct and indirect impact to water quality from runoff will be less than significant.

The Project involves construction of water infrastructure (reservoir(s) and the water pipeline required to convey the water to the pressure zone area) that will serve the existing Mission Hills Pressure Zone. The Project does not include residential development but rather is intended to provide water supply to existing and future [planned] domestic users. The Project facilitates the supply of domestic water to the MHPZ area. This is a direct effect of the Project.

The MHPZ currently includes approximately 3,300 customers and is supplied by three domestic water wells and two pressure-reducing stations, which transfer water from the Date Palm Pressure Zone to the MHPZ. Currently, the MHPZ does not have any dedicated water storage facilities and relies on water storage from the Date Palm Pressure Zone.

Initial water fill of the reservoir(s) will come from three existing CVWD wells located on CVWD property. The process to fill one 6.5 million gallon reservoir will take approximately 2-3 days using one of the three existing 2,000 gpm wells. Most domestic water delivered in the Coachella Valley is extracted from subsurface water aquifers, which are replenished by natural groundwater recharge and supplemented with imported supplies of Colorado River water, including exchange water associated with State Water Project water contracts. The amount of supplemental water needed to replenish the aquifer for existing and future demands has been analyzed and incorporated as part of the CVWMP. The CVWMP takes into consideration many variables, including but not limited to, groundwater recharge, increasing surface water supplies, and water conservation programs in order to ensure current and future water demands can be met. As such, the process of extracting subsurface water to fill the reservoir(s) would not have an adverse direct effect. The Project would not violate any water quality standards as the nature of the project is to store potable water in storage tank(s) for domestic use. The Project would not interfere with groundwater replenishment activities.

No streams or rivers are located along the Project limits. Existing drainage patterns in the Project area are generally to the south/southeast. During construction of the proposed Project, existing drainage patterns may be temporarily altered to a limited extent by excavation/trenching activities at the reservoir site and along the roadway rights-of-way.

Areas north of Interstate-10 lies within a designated FEMA 100-year flood plain with the potential for moderate to high flooding. Several drainage washes were observed across the site. The site is also situated in an area where sheet flooding, flash flooding, and erosion are likely to occur. Therefore, the Project reservoir site and associated pipeline may be directly affected by offsite stormwater runoff. The Project area south of Interstate-10 does not lie within a designated FEMA 100- year flood plain. In general flooding, erosion, and debris flow should be mitigated by proper drainage design including collecting and disposal (conveyance) of water to approved

points of discharge. Appropriate project design, construction, and maintenance will be necessary to mitigate the site flooding hazards.

The pipeline will be buried and is not expected to be impacted by the floodwaters that may cross it. The alignment would not alter the existing flow patterns or contribute to additional runoff.

The Project will not significantly contribute to storm water runoff or have a significant adverse effect on local or regional flood control capabilities or regional groundwater quality or quantity.

The Project does not propose the widening or expansion of roadways or other impervious surfaces. Impacts associated with flood control and regional ground water quality will be less than significant.

The Project site is not subject to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. No adverse impacts are anticipated.

Final project design will include hydrology and water quality minimization measures involving flood management review and preparation of a CVWD-approved drainage analysis. These plans will be consistent with local and regional hydrology and water quality requirements.

CVWD conducts groundwater level monitoring at wells located throughout the CVWD boundaries on a trimester basis (every four months) annually and includes groundwater level data for the source wells related to the proposed Mission Hills Pressure Zone reservoir project. CVWD will continue to monitor the groundwater levels at these source wells before, during, and after project construction of the reservoirs project. Groundwater levels in the vicinity of the source wells are not expected to change as a result of the completion and operation of the proposed reservoirs project.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

This alternative proposes to construct a berm at the southern end of the reservoirs to provide a visual “softening” of the water reservoirs. No change to the pipeline alignment is proposed under this alternative. Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant impacts to hydrology and water quality.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed and no impacts to hydrology or water quality would occur.

Mitigation Measures:

No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The Project will not create a cumulatively significant impact to storm water runoff or have a significant adverse impact on local or regional groundwater or flood control capabilities when combined with other projects in the vicinity. The Project will not violate water quality standards or discharge requirements. The project will not generate a significant long-term demand for water, but rather provide close to 20-million-gallons of capacity for domestic water storage. The process of extracting subsurface water to fill the reservoir(s) would not have an adverse direct effect on CVWD's groundwater replenishment facilities. The amount of water required to replenish the aquifer is analyzed as a whole for the Coachella Valley as part of the CVWMP.

Noise

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

Construction activities associated with the proposed Project are required to adhere to city and county noise regulations. Temporary increases in noise along the Project limits during the construction period will be minimized with implementation of the noise BMPs state below. These temporary and intermittent noise increases will not be significant and will subside upon completion of Project construction.

Any post-construction noise at the reservoir site will be negligible; therefore, no exterior noise abatement measures will be necessary. Subsurface pipes and infrastructure will generate no detectable noise.

During the construction phase, the Project will create limited ground-borne vibrations resulting from trenching and excavation and the use of heavy equipment. However, these impacts will be temporary and intermittent and will end once construction is complete.

The Project will not permanently increase ambient noise levels in the Project vicinity. Post-construction noise from both the subsurface and above-ground improvements will be negligible and ambient noise levels will be the same as those prior to Project construction.

As described above, there will be short-term noise increases during the construction period with the movement and use of heavy vehicles and equipment. However, impacts are expected to be less than significant. The Project area is largely vacant land with some surrounding light industrial and commercial development. The nearest residential units are located 1.5 miles to the south. Construction activities will be limited to daylight hours when ambient noise levels are higher and construction noise is less perceptible. Construction equipment and vehicles will be required to use mufflers and other devices that minimize noise impacts. Minimization measures are provided below.

The Project site is not located within an airport land use plan or within two miles of any public or private airport, and therefore, will not expose people working or residing in the Project area to excessive noise levels.

The following best management practices are integrated into the Project design and are intended to minimize the temporary, construction-related noise impacts. CVWD Engineering and the construction contractor will prepare a noise plan to include the following BMPs:

I. All internal combustion equipment operating at Project site shall be fitted with properly operating mufflers and air intake silencers consistent with manufacturers' standards.
II. All stationary construction equipment (e.g. generators and compressors) shall be located as far away from existing homes and other sensitive receptors as possible.
III. Equipment staging shall be located in areas that create the greatest distance practicable between construction-related noise sources and sensitive receptors.
IV. Haul truck deliveries and exports shall be limited to the same hours specified for the operation of construction equipment and shall utilize routes that limit exposure to sensitive receptors.
V. Construction activities shall be limited to the least sensitive times of the day, Monday through Friday, and generally between 7AM and 5PM, excepting emergencies and other special circumstances.
VI. Stockpiling and vehicle staging areas shall be located as far as practicable from homes and other noise sensitive receptors during construction activities.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant noise impacts. However, in comparison to the proposed action, this alternative would potentially increase the duration of short-term noise effects from the additional earthwork required to construct the berm.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. No noise effects would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed Project will have short-term, localized noise impacts from the construction equipment, and is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on noise and acoustics in the area when combined with projects in the vicinity.

Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The proposed action involves the installation of three 6.5-million-gallon reservoirs with associated pipeline intended to improve existing domestic water infrastructure to serve CVWD customers. The reservoirs will be located on vacant, disturbed land owned by BLM and is surrounded by existing mining operations and light industrial land uses. The siting of the pipeline alignment will be within local street rights-of-way, underneath I-10 and the UPRR tracks. South of I-10, the pipeline will cross an approximate 100-foot-wide swath of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal land. This portion of tribal land is currently undeveloped. There are limited residential land uses within the Project alignment. Residential units are located south of the proposed reservoir tanks (approximately1.5 miles in distance) and adjacent to the southern terminus of the pipeline alignment. The proposed Project will not result in direct or indirect effects to environmental justice or socio-economic effects.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant impacts related to socio-economic effects or environmental justice issues.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The existing land would remain undeveloped and no effects related to socioeconomics or environmental justice would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed Project will not directly or indirectly contribute to socio-economic or environmental justice effects. As a result, the Project would not contribute to cumulative effects associated with socioeconomic and environmental justice when combined with projects in the vicinity.

Recreation

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The Project proposes a new domestic water reservoir and associated water pipeline at a site that does not involve or affect new or existing recreational facilities. The proposed Project is not growth-inducing; the improvements will satisfy current domestic water service demands and are consistent with approved local planning. The proposed Project will not increase population and, therefore, will not increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities, result in the

deterioration of such facilities, or require the construction of new facilities. The Project will not directly affect recreational opportunities.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

This alternative includes the addition of placing a berm near the reservoir sites to shield the site from residential units to the south. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would not affect recreational facilities or opportunities.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The existing recreational opportunities would remain as-is.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed action is an infrastructure Project intended to serve the potable water storage needs of CVWD customers. When combined with other projects in the vicinity, the domestic water reservoir Project would not create a cumulative effect on recreational facilities.

Lands and Realty

Alternative 1 – Proposed Project

The Project site is located in Thousand Palms, an unincorporated area of Riverside County. Land use and owners along the Project alignment include BLM conservation land, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal land, and County of Riverside designated lands for light industrial, residential, and commercial uses (privately-owned land).

The reservoir is proposed on an undeveloped 10-acre parcel of BLM land; the proposed pipelines are within the rights-of-way of various local roadways. The proposed Project will not divide an established community. The project would not interfere or conflict with the existing road users.

The proposed Project is consistent with the goals, policies, and programs of the County of Riverside's Western Coachella Valley Area Plan. The Project does not violate the provisions or regulations of the County's zoning ordinance. The Project is consistent with surrounding existing and planned land uses. Once construction is complete, the street rights-of-way will be returned to their pre-construction conditions. No direct impacts to land use are anticipated.

The Project site is located within the boundaries of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP), but is not located within a designated CVMSHCP Conservation Area. The Project will pay the CVMSHCP impact fee of $5,730 per acre. These

impact fees will be used to acquire conservation lands within designated Conservation Areas and offset impacts where development is permitted. The Project will not conflict with the CVMSHCP or its implementation.

As part of the environmental review process for this project, CVWD is in communication with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribe. Development of the proposed Project will benefit existing and future tribal land development by providing domestic water storage and use to tribal lands.

Alternative 2 –Berm and Dirt Road

Under this alternative, a berm would be constructed along the south side of the reservoirs to partially shield views of the Project site. Similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative would not result in significant land use impacts.

Alternative 3 – No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the domestic water reservoir facility would not be constructed. The existing land uses would remain as-is and no impacts to land use would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation identified.

Residual Impact: None.

Cumulative Impacts: When combined with other projects in the surrounding area, the proposed Project will not contribute to land use compatibility impacts; and therefore, the Project is not expected to have a significant adverse cumulative effect on land use and planning.

VIII. References

Applied EarthWorks Incorporated. *Class III Cultural Resources Survey for the Mission Hills Reservoir Project, Near Thousand Palms, Riverside County, California*. July 2014

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Circle Mountain Biological Consultants, Incorporated. *Biological Evaluation/Biological Assessment for the Proposed 10-acre± Mission Hills Reservoir Site (a portion of APN 648-030-016) and Associated Pipeline Alignments near the Unincorporated Community of Thousand Palms in Riverside County, California.* April 2014, revised August 2015

Circle Mountain Biological Consultants, Incorporated. *Results of Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard Surveys in Support of the Proposed Mission Hills Reservoir Site, Alternative Mission Hills Reservoir Site, and Associated Pipeline Alignments near the Unincorporated Community of Thousand Palms in Riverside County, California.* June 2014

Circle Mountain Biological Consultants, Incorporated. *Habitat Evaluation for Special Status Species and a General Biological Resource Assessment on the Proposed 10-acre± Mission Hills Alternative Reservoir Site (APNs 648-030-003 &-004) and Associated Pipeline Alignments near the Unincorporated Community of Thousand Palms in Riverside County, California.* April 2014

County of Riverside, 2008. *Riverside County Planning Department*. Available online at http://www.rctlma.org/planning/content/geninfo/surface_mine.list.aspx.

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Krieger & Stewart, Incorporated. *Aesthetic Renderings.* May 18, 2015

MWH Global. (2014). *Draft Technical Memorandum No. 2 Ambient Water Quality (Reference 10505158)*

Terra Nova Planning and Research Incorporated. *Sky Mountain Reservoir No 4605 and Pipeline Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment*. December 2008

United States Census Bureau: *State and County Quick Facts*. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Non-employer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Last Revised: Thursday, 28-May-2015 16:37:24 EDT

IX. Consultation, Coordination, and List of Preparers

The BLM seeks comments from and works closely with other regulatory agencies that administer laws, regulations, and standards that may be applicable to the Proposed Action. The following tribes, agencies, and organizations were consulted during preparation of this EA:

Yeager E.L Construction Company
California Portland Cement Company
Ted Dumas
City of Rancho Mirage
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Felicia Sirchia)
California Department Fish and Wildlife (Jack Crayon, Michael Flores, Charles Land)

Section 106 Consultation

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the BLM is charged with managing public lands in a manner that will "protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values". Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as implemented at 36 CFR Part 800, requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The Revised State Protocol Agreement (2014) between the California State Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California and Nevada State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) defines the roles and relationships between the SHPOs' offices and the BLM under the National Programmatic Agreement. The State protocol is intended to insure that the California BLM operates "efficiently and effectively in accordance with the intent and requirements of the NHPA." The protocol streamlines the 106 process by not requiring case by case consultation with the SHPO on most individual undertaking.

Native American Consultation

The BLM sent letters July 2, 2015, requesting consultation on the Proposed Action to the following tribes:
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians
Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians
Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians
Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Ramona Band of Cahuilla
Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians
Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

On July 30, 2015, The Morongo Band of Mission Indians responded stating they have minimal cultural affiliation to the proposed project area. The Morongo Band of Mission Indians deferred consultation to Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla and Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians. On October 28, 2015, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requested a consultation meeting with the BLM. The BLM is currently consulting with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

Consultation

The BLM informally consulted with Felicia Sirchia, Palm Springs USFWS, regarding the potential for CVMV to occur on Federal lands within the proposed project area. BLM, CVWD, CDFW and USFWS (Ms. Sirchia) visited the Mission Hills proposed project area on BLM lands September 24, 2015. CVMV was not detected during biological surveys conducted April 2014 and does not occur in the proposed project area at this time. Increased rainfall due to an El Nino weather pattern is predicted for the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. CVMV could unexpectedly respond to rainfall and emerge in the project area. Ms. Sirchia has developed conservation measures for CVMV in the event the milk-vetch appears in the project area. The BLM has requested concurrence from the USFWS on a "may affect, but not likely to adversely affect" decision for the Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch.

The CVWD initiated discussion with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) regarding potential impacts to the CVFTL and FTHL. CDFW, Environmental Scientist, Jack Crayon visited the proposed project area on BLM land September 30, 2015. Mr. Crayon determined that neither CVFTL nor FTHL occur on the proposed project site or in the surrounding areas; and, there is not suitable habitat to support the lizards.

PREPARED BY:

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Luke Stowe, Coachella Valley Water District
Elizabeth Meyerhoff, Coachella Valley Water District

Reviewed By:

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BLM Environmental Coordinator Date

X. Freedom of Information Act Considerations

Public comments submitted for this environmental assessment, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM's Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

XI. Finding Of No Significant Impact

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NAME of PROJECT: Mission Hills Pressure Zone Infrastructure Improvements Project

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

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Field Manager Date
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

DRAFT