



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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SENT VIA E-MAIL AND USPS:

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**Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Proposed
San Jacinto Valley Water Banking - Enhanced Recharge and Recovery Program
(SCH No.: 2015071002)**

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the Lead Agency and should be incorporated into the Final EIR.

SCAQMD Staff's Summary of Project Description

The Lead Agency proposes to construct recharge and treatment facilities, extraction and monitoring wells, transmission and water collector pipelines, and a groundwater water bank with storage capacity of up to 90,000 acre feet on approximately 85 acres (Proposed Project). Construction of the Proposed Project is expected to be completed in four phases, with the first phase commencing in the fall of 2018 over 36 months¹. The second phase would commence in May 2025 lasting approximately 36 months, and construction of the third phase is anticipated to commence in January 2030 lasting approximately 36 months. The final phase will commence in January 2040 lasting approximately 36 months².

SCAQMD Staff's Comments

Overlapping Construction and Operational Activities

When specific development is reasonably foreseeable as a result of the goals, policies, guidelines, and elements in the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency should identify any potential adverse air quality impacts and sources of air pollution that could occur using its best efforts to find out and a good-faith effort at full disclosure in a CEQA document. Based on a review of the construction schedule, SCAQMD staff found that the Proposed Project would be implemented in four phases beginning in 2018 and ending in 2043. This may cause construction activities to overlap with new operational activities (e.g., overlapping construction activities in the second phase with operation of the first phase). In the event that an overlapping construction and operation scenario is reasonably foreseeable at the time a CEQA document is prepared, the Lead Agency should analyze a scenario where construction activities overlap with operational activities.

To analyze a worst-case impact scenario that is reasonably foreseeable at the time the Draft EIR is prepared, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency identify the overlapping years, combine construction emissions (including any emissions from demolition, if applicable) with operational emissions, and compare the combined emissions to SCAQMD's air quality CEQA *operational* thresholds of significance to determine the level of significance in the Final EIR. In the event that the Lead Agency,

¹ Draft EIR. Page 3.3-25.

² *Ibid.*

after revising the Air Quality analysis, finds that the Proposed Project's air quality impacts would be significant, mitigation measures will be required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4.

Mitigation Measures – Performance Standards-Based Technology Review

The Lead Agency proposes to use Tier 4 rated engines for all off-road construction equipment and 2012 or newer engines for all hauling fleets during construction. SCAQMD staff supports these mitigation measures that are capable of reducing NOx emissions. On March 3, 2017, the SCAQMD's Governing Board adopted the 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP)³, which was later approved by the California Air Resources Board on March 23, 2017. Built upon the progress in implementing the 2007 and 2012 AQMPs, the 2016 AQMP provides a regional perspective on air quality and the challenges facing the South Coast Air Basin. The most significant air quality challenge in the Basin is to achieve an additional 45 percent reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in 2023 and an additional 55 percent NOx reduction beyond 2031 levels for ozone attainment. Achieving NOx emissions reductions in a timely manner is critical to attaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone before the 2023 and 2031 deadlines. SCAQMD is committed to attain the ozone NAAQS as expeditiously as practicable. The Proposed Project plays an important role in contributing to NOx emissions. Therefore, to ensure that the lowest emission technologies will be used throughout the project development spanning over 25 years, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency incorporate the following mitigation measure in the Final EIR.

Because the Proposed Project would be developed over a period of 25 years beginning in 2018 and ending in 2043, the Lead Agency should take this opportunity to deploy strategies that will foster and facilitate the deployment of the lowest emission technologies possible. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency develop and implement a program-level, performance standards-based technology review that is generally appropriate for a long-range development project such as the Proposed Project. The deployment should include those technologies that are "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time" (California Public Resources Code Section 21061.1), such as zero and near-zero emission technologies that are expected to be available in the life of the Proposed Project. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency conduct the technology review, develop performance standards for the review or other comparable strategies or tools to assess the availability of equipment and fleets with newer engine standards and model years, and implement the best available emissions control devices. Since technology is being developed and deployed at a rapid pace, the technology review should occur every two years. Alternatively, the Lead Agency should develop appropriate timeline (or schedule) for the technology review that supports the NOx emissions reductions goals and timeline in the 2016 AQMP.

SCAQMD Permits

In the event that operation of any construction equipment requires a permit from SCAQMD, SCAQMD should be identified as a Responsible Agency for the Proposed Project in the Final EIR. Any assumptions used in the air quality analysis in the Final EIR will be the basis for permit conditions and limits. For more information on permits, please visit SCAQMD webpage at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/permits>. Questions on permits can be directed to SCAQMD's Engineering and Permitting staff at (909) 396-3385.

Conclusion

Pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21092.5(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(b), SCAQMD staff requests that the Lead Agency provide SCAQMD staff with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the certification of the Final EIR. In addition, issues raised in

³ South Coast Air Quality Management District. March 3, 2017. *2016 Air Quality Management Plan*. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/library/clean-air-plans/air-quality-mgt-plan>.

the comments should be addressed in detail giving reasons why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted. There should be good faith, reasoned analysis in response. Conclusory statements unsupported by factual information will not suffice (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(c)). Conclusory statements do not facilitate the purpose and goal of CEQA on public disclosure and are not meaningful or useful to decision makers and to the public who are interested in the Proposed Project.

SCAQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address these issues and any other questions that may arise. Please contact me at lsun@aqmd.gov if you have any questions regarding the enclosed comments.

Sincerely,



Lijin Sun, J.D.

Program Supervisor, CEQA IGR

Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

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