

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) prepared a Draft Regional Water Facilities Master Plan (Master Plan) in 2003 to evaluate the ability to provide a safe and reliable water supply to its member agencies. The Master Plan recommends additional facilities and improvements to existing facilities in order to effectively meet the Water Authority's mission through 2030.

The Master Plan encompasses a region-wide planning effort, incorporating three interrelated components: water demands, water supplies, and facilities. Facility planning began with estimating future water demands, proceeded to the identification of water supplies and their reliability, and then defined facilities needed to treat and transport the supplies to the points of demand. This planning process was iterative in nature and computer simulations were employed to model facility alternatives that supplement the Water Authority's current system. The planning process resulted in the identification of ten projects to expand internal system capacity, eight projects to supplement treated water aqueducts, two projects for new conveyance and supply, and one project to provide additional seasonal/carryover storage capacity. The Mission Trails Flow Regulatory Structure (FRS) II, Pipeline Tunnel, and Vent Demolition Project (proposed project) is one of the ten projects proposed to expand internal system capacity.

The proposed project was evaluated at the program level in the Final Program Environmental Impact Report for the Regional Water Facilities Master Plan, which was certified by the Water Authority's Board of Directors on November 20, 2003 and is available for review at the Water Authority's headquarters at 4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123, and on the Water Authority website. The Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) evaluated three region-wide alternatives for conveying water supplies to meet customer demands. The new facilities and modifications that would be needed to treat and transport water supplies were analyzed at a general level, with the intent that project-specific environmental documentation would be prepared for each of the proposed components. The proposed project is necessary at this time to allow for increased transmission capacity to downstream water treatment plants and to provide additional operating flexibility. The tunnel portion of the proposed project must be below the hydraulic grade line and is needed to lower the hydraulic grade line to provide increased flow through Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). The proposed FRS would provide flow control for a maximum of 18 million gallons (mg).

1.1.1 Existing Water Supply System

The Water Authority purchases water from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and delivers it to 23 member agencies through five large-diameter pipelines. Water in these pipelines flows by gravity from north to south. The pipelines are in two north-south easement corridors, or easements, called the First and Second Aqueducts. Three water pipelines currently cross MTRP within the Second Aqueduct easement, which is 130 feet wide.

Pipelines 3 and 4 carry untreated (“raw”) water and Pipeline 4B carries treated water. The untreated water in Pipeline 3 is delivered to Lower Otay Lake. Pipeline 4 conveys water to the City of San Diego’s Alvarado Water Treatment Plant. Figure 1-1 provides a schematic of the Water Authority’s aqueduct system in the project area.

Treated water flowing in Pipeline 4B-II is obtained from MWD’s Lake Skinner Water Treatment Plant in Riverside County and delivered to southern San Diego County member agencies for direct delivery to their customers. In MTRP, Pipeline 4B-II is connected to an existing 18-mg, buried Flow Regulatory Structure (FRS I), or covered water tank, which is used to regulate the flow of treated water to the south. This facility was built in the mid-1990s adjacent to the west side of the Second Aqueduct easement, approximately 800 feet southeast of Corte Playa Catalina. There is an aboveground, fenced control building located on top of the covered water tank.

Vent structures, which consist of vertical shafts connecting the buried pipelines to the open air, are located at major high points along the alignment and function as hydraulic control points. Other smaller facilities, such as blow-off valves, are also on existing pipelines to drain the pipes for maintenance. One major vent, called Miramar Hill, is located near Interstate 15 (I-15) and Mercy Road and sets the “maximum” hydraulic condition to the south. As the three pipelines in the Second Aqueduct easement traverse the west Fortuna Ridge, they cross a series of five hills and valleys. A vent is located on each of the two untreated water pipelines on each hill. The vents are large cylinders that extend above ground at various heights. The vents are called the Elliot Vents, and each pair is identified as #1 through #5, from north to south (Figure 1-2). Elliot Vent #5 is the tallest pair of structures; these highly visible light blue cylinders are prominently located on a hill due east of the Clairemont Mesa Boulevard park entrance. Between Elliot Vents #4 and #5 there is a buried vault called a “flow balancing structure” which allows the Water Authority to transfer flow from Pipeline 4 to Pipeline 3. The proposed project would affect a portion of Pipelines 3 and 4 in MTRP and the vents and smaller structures on these pipelines.

1.2 PURPOSE AND USE OF THE EIR

This project-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the Water Authority, acting in its capacity as Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as amended, and the State CEQA Guidelines. This document evaluates the environmental impacts identified as potentially significant by community members, agencies, the Water Authority, and its consultants. The EIR process and the information it generates will be used for the following purposes:

- To give government officials and the community the opportunity to have input into the decision-making process;
- To provide agencies with information necessary to determine if they have jurisdiction over some aspect of the project, and, if so, to identify project permitting requirements;
- To assist the community in understanding the expected project-related environmental effects and how decision makers plan to respond to and mitigate these effects; and

- To develop mitigation measures that reduce or eliminate the potential for environmental, public health, and safety impacts.

1.3 SCOPING PROCESS

The Water Authority circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project on April 15, 2005. The 30-day public review period for the NOP ended May 15, 2005.

An Open House and Scoping Meeting was held at the Water Authority office at 4677 Overland Avenue on April 19, 2005 from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The purpose of the public meeting was to provide the public and governmental agencies with information on the proposed project and the CEQA process, and to give attendees an opportunity to identify environmental issues and alternatives that should be considered in the Draft EIR.

One person spoke at the Scoping Meeting and expressed concern that Renovo Way and Seda Drive not be used by the Water Authority for construction access as had previously been agreed during the FRS I project (a copy of the meeting transcript is included in Appendix A).

Scoping Comment Forms were also available for those attendees interested in providing written comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR. Attendees were invited to mail their comments to the Water Authority no later than May 4, 2005, or leave them with Water Authority staff following the meeting to ensure that their concerns could be addressed in the Draft EIR. Two comment forms were left with Water Authority staff following the scoping meeting.

Fourteen letters or e-mail messages were received during the NOP public scoping process from public agencies and private citizens. Comment letters, e-mails, and comment forms received are included in Appendix A. The input received from the CEQA scoping process assisted the Water Authority in identifying the range of actions, alternatives, issues, and potential effects associated with the proposed project. All issues raised in the Scoping Meeting were reviewed by the Water Authority and the environmental team to determine the appropriate consideration and level of analysis.

1.4 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EIR is divided into eleven sections starting with an Executive Summary and proceeding through Section 1.0 Introduction (this section), Section 2.0 Project Description, Section 3.0 Environmental Analysis, Section 4.0 Cumulative Impacts, Section 5.0 Growth Inducing Effects, Section 6.0 Other Mandatory Considerations, Section 7.0 Alternatives, Section 8.0 Organizations and Persons Consulted, Section 9.0 List of Preparers, and Section 10.0 References. Tables are found throughout the text of each section while figures are included at the end of each section or subsection. The Notice of Preparation (Appendix A), Traffic Technical Report (Appendix B), Air Quality Technical Report (Appendix C), Noise and Vibration Technical Report (Appendix D), Biology Technical Report (Appendix E), and Cultural Resources Technical Report (Appendix F) are bound in a separate volume.

1.5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

This EIR provides project-level analysis of a capital improvement project identified in the Master Plan, which was the subject of a PEIR (SCH #2003021052) prepared by the Water Authority. The Final PEIR identified a number of potential environmental effects and provided a series of potential mitigation measures to be implemented during the project-level environmental review, construction, and operation of individual capital improvement projects. Therefore, this EIR hereby incorporates by reference the Master Plan PEIR per CEQA Guidelines §15150. All relevant sections of the PEIR have been referenced, repeated, or summarized in this EIR. The Master Plan PEIR is available for review on the Water Authority's website (<http://www.sdcwa.org>) or at the Water Authority offices at 4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego, California 92123.

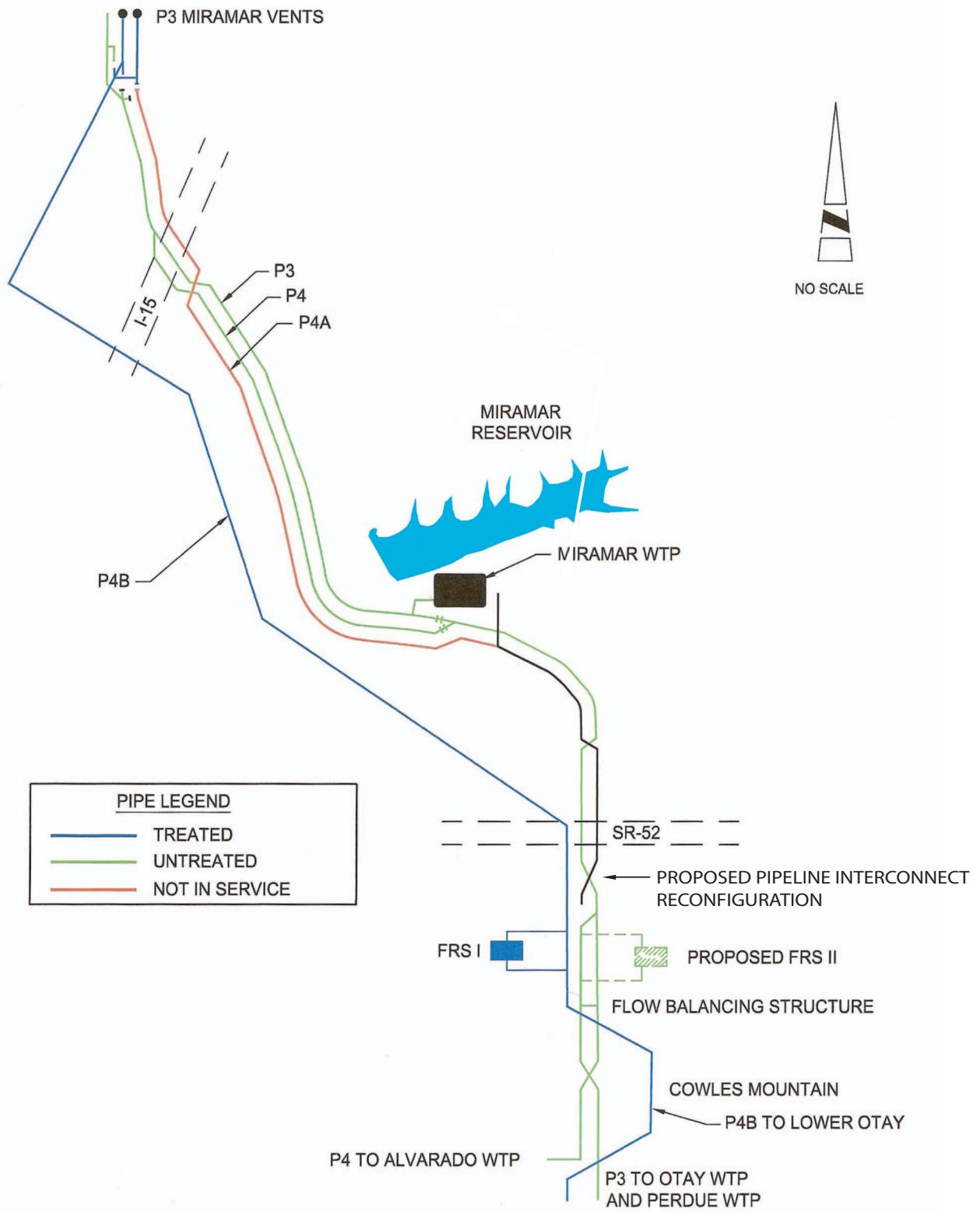
The proposed project is very similar to portions of the Pipeline 4B I and 4B II projects, and to the FRS I project proposed by the Water Authority in 1991 – 1993 and constructed in 1995. Therefore, the Final EIR for the Water Authority Pipeline 4B Phase II (SCH #90011102); Addendum to the Final EIR for the Water Authority Pipeline 4B, Phase II Flow Regulatory Structure (SCH #90011102); and Draft Supplemental EIR Flow Regulatory Structure for Pipeline 4B, Phase II (SCH #93021011) are hereby incorporated by reference. The relevant and appropriate sections of these previous environmental documents have been referenced, repeated, or summarized in this EIR. In general, these reports were used to document baseline conditions for issues such as geology, paleontology, cultural resources, and pre-Cedar Fire biological resources.

1.6 AVAILABILITY OF THE EIR

The Draft EIR will be subject to a 45-day public review period. Interested individuals, organizations, and agencies can provide written comments on the document during this review period. During the public review period, the Draft EIR will be circulated for review by trustee and responsible agencies. Responsible agencies are those agencies, other than the Lead Agency, that have discretionary approval over the proposed project. Trustee agencies are those agencies that have jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the proposed project which are held in trust for the people of the State of California. Publication of this Draft EIR marks the beginning of the 45-day public review period. Written comments will be received by the Water Authority at the following address:

Mr. Mark Tegio
Water Resources Specialist
San Diego County Water Authority
4677 Overland Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123-1233
Telephone: (858) 522-6753
Facsimile: (858) 268-7881

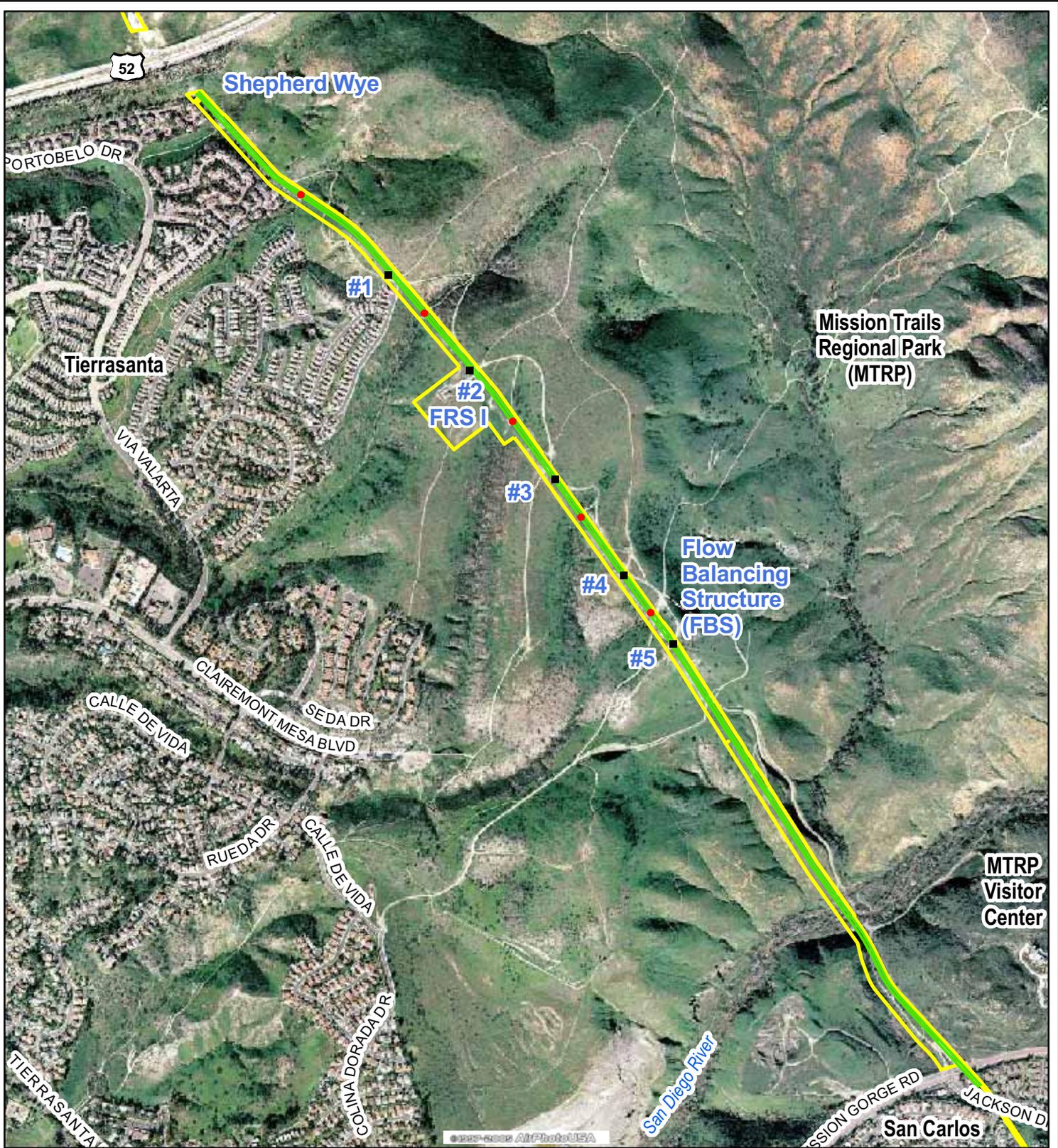
Copies of the Draft EIR will be made available to the public at the Water Authority's office and on the Water Authority's website (www.sdcwa.org) and public libraries in the project area.



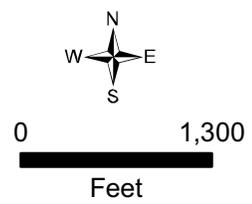
Mission Trails Flow Regulatory Structure II, Pipeline Tunnel, and Vent Demolition Project

Map Notes

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- Legend**
- SDCWA Right-of-Way
 - Pipelines 3 and 4
 - Elliott Vents
 - Blow Off



Mission Trails Flow Regulatory Structure II, Pipeline Tunnel, and Vent Demolition Project

Map Notes
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