

SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) identifies and evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the water supply improvement project (WSIP or Proposed Project) by the Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWWVD or District).

1.1 PURPOSE AND USE OF THE EIR

This EIR was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §§ 21000-21177) and the Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA (California Administrative Code §§ 15000 *et seq.*).

CEQA requires that the potential environmental impacts of a project be identified and that mitigation measures be recommended that may reduce significant impacts. CEQA requires that the Lead Agency, in this case the IWWVD, consider the information contained in the EIR, prior to taking any discretionary action on a project.

This EIR is intended to provide information to the IWWVD, other public agencies, and the general public regarding the potential significant direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project. The EIR process also requires investigation and development of feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant adverse environmental effects of the Proposed Project to levels below significance. CEQA requires a Lead Agency neither approve nor implement a project unless significant environmental impacts have been reduced (§15091), or, if a Lead Agency approves the project even though significant impacts identified in the EIR cannot be fully mitigated, the Lead Agency must state in writing the reasons for its action by adopting Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

This EIR may also be used by other public agencies to issue approvals related to the WSIP. A list of the anticipated agency approvals required to implement the Proposed Project is provided in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1
Anticipated Agency Approvals and Reviews**

Agency	Permit or Approval
Indian Wells Valley Water District	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Certification of the Environmental Impact Report◆ Approval or Denial of the Water Supply Improvement Project
California Department of Public Health	◆ Amendment to existing water supply permit
California Department of Fish and Game	◆ Fish and Game Code Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit
US Fish and Wildlife Service	◆ Concurrence with "No Effect" Determination

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1.2 SUMMARY OF SCOPING/AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

CEQA requires the EIR to identify areas of controversy or public interest. Prior to the preparation of this EIR, an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP) were prepared for the project (Appendix A). The Initial Study and NOP were distributed via Federal Express™ for review and comment to a mailing list of eighteen federal, state, and local agencies; the State Clearinghouse; and other interested parties for a 30-day scoping period from July 6, 2011 to August 4, 2011. The NOP was also transmitted via email to the District's in-house email list of 66 addresses and published in the following newspapers:

- ◆ *The Daily Independent*, legal advertisement, July 6, 2011
- ◆ *The Daily Independent*, display advertisement, July 9, 2011
- ◆ *News Review*, display advertisement, July 13, 2011

The NOP and Initial Study were also posted on the IWWWD's website, including notification of the scoping meeting and instructions on how to submit comments. The NOP was posted with the Kern County Clerk on July 6, 2011. Additionally, an open-house format scoping meeting was held on July 13, 2011, 5 pm, at the IWWWD Board Room.

Sixty-eight letters were received from the agencies and individuals listed in Table 1-2. Some individuals submitted multiple comment letters. These letters are provided in Appendix A. The issues identified in the letters received during the scoping period are summarized in Table 1-3.

**Table 1-2
List of Scoping Letters**

Date Received	Name	Agency/Affiliation
7/1/2011	Thomas DeMay	Well owner
7/1/2011	Stuart Fields	Not stated
7/8/2011	Dave Singleton	Native American Heritage Commission
7/12/2011	C. Lyle Fisher and Sylvia Fisher	Well owner
7/13/2011	Diana Watkins	Well owner
7/13/2011	Carl Hinners	148 th E. Water Co.
7/13/2011	Charles Hattendorf	Well owner
7/13/2011	Donna Thomas	Well owner
7/13/2011	TJ and Margaret Porter	Well owner
7/13/2011	Penelope LePome	Not stated
7/13/2011	Kinge Okauchi	Well owner
7/13/2011	Richard LaShure	Donna Sue Water Co.
7/13/2011	Harold Manos	Not stated
7/13/2011	Glenda Downing	Not stated
7/13/2011	Joe Dauplaise	Well owner
7/13/2011	Kevin Connors	Not stated
7/15/2011	Annette and Thomas DeMay	Well owner
7/15/2011	Lyle and Sylvia Fisher	Well owner

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Date Received	Name	Agency/Affiliation
7/18/2011	Dorothy Nicholson	Well owner
7/19/2011	Brianna Bergen	California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region
7/19/2011	Jean D. York	Well owner
7/19/2011	Hubert Drake	Well owner
7/19/2011	Edwin R. York	Well owner
7/20/2011	John and Susan Hammon	Not stated
7/20/2011	Jack Tipton	Well owner
7/21/2011	Jean D. York	Well owner
7/21/2011	Edwin R. York	Well owner
7/25/2011	Kathryn Krapil LaShure	Well owner
7/25/2011	David and Cynthia Freeman	Not stated
7/27/2011	Eric Bosley	Owens Peak South Water Co. customer
7/27/2011	Dick and Nancy Karner-Lewis	Well owner
7/27/2011	Toby Tice and Myra Tice	Well Owner
7/28/2011	Mark Decker	Not stated
7/28/2011	Alan and Joan Woodman	Not stated
7/29/2011	David Kimble and Lucille Nielson	Not stated
8/1/2011	Stuart Fields	Not stated
8/1/2011	Board of Directors	Inyokern Community Services District
8/1/2011	Daniel E. Smith	South Owens Peak Water Co.
8/2/2011	Jim Bradley	Not stated
8/2/2011	Pamala Bradley	Not Stated
8/2/2011	Randy Crane	Not stated
8/2/2011	Max and Eleanor Hovaten	Not stated
8/2/2011	Penelope LePome	Not stated
8/2/2011	Robert Steele	148E Water Co.
8/3/2011	Patricia L. Davis	Amberglow Ranch
8/3/2011	Julie Ann Pennix	Donna Sue Water Co.
8/3/2011	Don J. McKernan	Not stated
8/3/2011	Susan Moore and Peter Woodman	Well owners
8/3/2011	No signature	Owens Peak South Water Co.
8/3/2011	Dennis and Karen Sizemore	Well owner
8/3/2011	Patricia Sorensen	Well owner
8/3/2011	Toni Welsh	Not stated
8/4/2011	Mike Martyn	148E Water Co
8/4/2011	Patricia Boyd	Well owner
8/4/2011	Eugene and Verna Curry	Not stated
8/4/2011	Don Decker	Not stated
8/4/2011	Judie Decker	Not stated
8/4/2011	Annette and Thomas DeMay	Well owner
8/4/2011	Randle Dewees	Owens Peak North Co.

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Date Received	Name	Agency/Affiliation
8/4/2011	Donna Thomas	Eastern Kern County Resource Conservation District
8/4/2011	West Katzenstein	Not stated
8/4/2011	James and Teresa Lloyd	Well owner
8/4/2011	Sophia Anne Merk	Not stated
8/4/2011	Paul Popolizio	Well owner
8/4/2011	Don and Arlene Sillings	Well owner
8/4/2011	Scott C. Warden	Law Offices of Scott C. Warden representing the Owens Peak South WaterCompany well cooperative
8/4/2011	Paul and Julie von Schlemmer	Well owner
8/10/2011	Diana L Rodriguez	Well owner

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**Table 1-3
Summary of Issues Identified During Scoping Period**

Issue	Number of Letters Identifying Issue	Location of Issue Discussion in EIR	Additional Information
AESTHETICS			
The land owners adjacent and near to the new wells 35 and 36 would lose a scenic vista.	2	Section 2.0	There are no designated scenic vistas near Well 35. Well 36 is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
The construction of the pipeline to well 36 in the dirt road would be a potentially significant impact. Mitigation should be to pave the dirt road.	1	Section 2.0	Well 36 and its associated pipeline in Victor Street is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
AGRICULTURE			
Additional water consumed by the Project means less water for agricultural uses.	2	Section 3.8	The availability of water for all uses, including agriculture, is discussed in Section 3.8. A separate Agriculture section is not required.
AIR QUALITY			
Dust may contain <i>coccidioidomycosis</i> (valley fever) spores.	1	Section 3.2 and Appendix B	Dust generation from the Proposed Project has been modeled and described in Section 3.2 and Appendix B.
The cumulative effect of vehicle dust generated during construction and regular maintenance/monitoring of the well and chlorination system needs to be addressed. There are no paved roads in the area.	1	Section 3.2 and Appendix B	Dust generation from the Proposed Project has been modeled and described in Section 3.2 and Appendix B.
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES			
The Proposed Project should discuss impacts to the desert tortoise, Mohave ground squirrel, and burrowing owl. Mohave ground squirrel connectivity and vegetation should be addressed. A ground survey of the construction sites needs to be conducted.	3	Section 3.3	A ground survey for biological resources at the areas of construction was conducted. The results are summarized the Section 3.3 and Appendix C.

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CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES			
Native American cultural resources have not been identified within one-half mile of project facilities. However, Native American groups should be contacted to see if the project would affect resources not listed in the Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File.	1	Section 3.4 and Appendix E	Native American groups were contacted as part of the EIR process. No Native American Resources were identified.
The Cultural Resources report should detail the studies that show whether there are burial grounds that may be affected. There may be burial sites near the proposed Well 36 site.	1	Section 3.4 and Appendix E	No burial grounds were identified during the records search, Native American consultation, or the field survey. Well 36 is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
Significant archaeological findings were made during surveys for the solar facility immediately to the south of the WSIP sites. An archaeologist with experience in early man (Mojave culture) must reexamine these locations very carefully.	1	Section 3.4	All areas of proposed ground disturbance were surveyed by qualified archaeologists.
GEOLOGY AND SOILS			
Soil subsidence and liquefaction due to cumulative and long-term drawdowns and declining water levels could occur due to the density of production wells causing drawdown cones.	5	Section 3.7; Appendix A	The soils and groundwater aquifer characteristics of the basin would not create the conditions for subsidence and/or liquefaction.
A severe earthquake could damage well casing and rupture transmission lines causing the project to be worthless in the event of an earthquake.	1	Appendix A	The District has had similar wells in operation for decades that have survived several earthquakes. The Proposed Project would be constructed to standard well construction measures to withstand earthquake to the extent possible. However, the purpose of the Proposed Project is not to ensure water supply in the event of a catastrophic earthquake.
HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY			
The groundwater basin is in overdraft. Declining water levels may be accelerated as a result of the Proposed Project, affecting private and cooperative system wells located in surrounding areas. Detailed mitigation measures should be provided if these impacts are identified. The EIR should present a model of	50	Section 3.8	Impacts from declining water levels and mitigation measures to reduce these impacts are discussed in Section 3.8.

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seasonal and overall drawdowns in the areas of the Proposed Project wells.			
Impact of increased pumping on the aquifer cannot be mitigated.	4	Section 3.8	Mitigation measures for project related impacts to groundwater levels are provided in Section 3.8.
Increased pumping from the Proposed Project could cause groundwater with elevated Total Dissolved Solids and/or arsenic to migrate toward the pumping well locations. This may affect private and cooperative system wells located in surrounding areas. Detailed mitigation measures should be provided if these impacts are identified.	18	Section 3.8 and Section 5.1	A significant, unavoidable cumulative impact to water quality has been identified in Section 5.1. Project related impacts are less than significant (Section 3.8).
The groundwater model must integrate, analyze, and properly incorporate the significant body of literature (http://iwvgroundwater.org/technical_documents.html) studying the Indian Wells Valley groundwater. New information should be used.	2	Section 3.8 and Appendix	Section 3.8 and Appendix G discuss the groundwater model.
The Layne Christensen model used during the scoping period is based on a groundwater flow model prepared by Brown and Caldwell that is known to be inaccurate in the very area of greatest interest – the southwest area of the Indian Wells Valley.	1	Section 3.8 and Appendix G	The groundwater model has been revised to reflect the impacts of the new Proposed Project. The model is discussed in Section 3.8 and Appendix G.
The Brown and Caldwell basin wide model for the aquifer should be used to predict impacts of the Proposed Project.	1	Section 3.8 and Appendix G	The groundwater model has been revised to reflect the impacts of the new Proposed Project. The model is discussed in Section 3.8 and Appendix G.
The Layne Christensen model used during the scoping period does not incorporate data from the AB303 studies and the model only validates the Proposed Project.	1	Section 3.8 and Appendix G	The groundwater model has been revised to reflect the impacts of the new Proposed Project. The model is discussed in Section 3.8 and Appendix G.
The Initial Study has insufficient scientific data to support the project hydrologically.	1	Section 3.8	The purpose of the Initial Study was to assist in soliciting comments on the scope of the EIR, including references that should be considered, not to provide a complete hydrology analysis.

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If arsenic treatment is needed in the Proposed Project wells, the products used for treatment and waste products may cause hazardous materials impacts.	2	Section 3.7 and Section 3.8	The potential for a spill of the chlorine stored on the site is discussed in Section 3.7. At this time, arsenic treatment in the new well is not anticipated.
The potential drainage and flooding effects upon and from the Little Dixie Wash and Highway 395 in storm events should be addressed. Proposed Well 36 appears to be in a floodplain.	4	Section 2.0	Proposed Well 36 is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
The Proposed Project should be part of an overall water plan.	4	Section 2.0	The IWWWD's Water General Plan (1997), Urban Water Management Plan (2011) and other planning documents are used by the District as a basis for water system planning for its customers. The IWWWD is not authorized to prepare or enforce water management for all water users in the basin.
The Proposed Project should comply with all applicable water quality standards, prohibitions, and provisions of the <i>Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region</i> .	1	Section 3.8	The Proposed Project complies with the Plan.
The Proposed Project may require permits from the Regional Water Quality Control Board.	1	Sections 3.5	The Proposed Project will require compliance with the General Stormwater Permit for Conservation Activities.
Distribution connections in strategic spots should be part of the project to allow connection to IWWWD for those whose wells may be affected by the project.	1	Section 3.8	Distribution connections are not part of the Proposed Project. Connection to the IWWWD is an option for Mitigation Measure 3.8-1.
Impacts to water quality from the construction of a discharge pond and the disposal of disinfection and well development water must be evaluated in the EIR.	1	Section 3.8	Impacts to water quality from well development would be less than significant.
The EIR should include a comprehensive map of all wells in the Valley, and especially ones within 5 miles of the Proposed Project sites.	1	Section 3.8-1	Figure 3.8-1 shows locations of known wells in the Proposed Project area.

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The Layne Christensen model only shows the impacts of the project itself. The EIR should also discuss if the Proposed Project would create "cumulatively considerable" impacts to groundwater.	10	Section 5.0	Project-specific impacts are discussed in Section 3.8. Cumulative impacts have been analyzed in Section 5.1.
LAND USE AND PLANNING			
The Proposed Project may not be consistent with Kern County Land Use Planning.	2	Appendix A	As described in the Initial Study, General Plan designations and zoning restrictions are not applicable to water facilities, per Section 53091 of the California Government Code. The Proposed Project would not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation.
A zoning permit from Kern County is required to allow for the construction of an industrial water production plant in a residential area.	1	Appendix A	As described in the Initial Study, General Plan designations and zoning restrictions are not applicable to water facilities, per Section 53091 of the California Government Code. The Proposed Project would not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation.
There may be a conflict with the BLM conservation plans.	1	Not Applicable	BLM land use and conservation plans do not apply to lands that are not managed by the BLM.
NOISE AND VIBRATION			
Noise from drill rigs will affect residences near Well 36.	2	Section 2.0 and Section 3.9	Well 36 is no longer part of the Proposed Project. Noise impacts from construction and operation of Well 35 and re-equipping and operation of Wells 18 and 34 are described in Section 3.9.
TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION			
The pipeline construction along Victor Street will interfere with access to residences and mailboxes.	1	Section 2.0	Well 36 and the associated pipeline in Victor Street are no longer part of the Proposed Project.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION, ALTERNATIVES, AND CEQA PROCESS			
The location of project features is difficult to identify on a USGS Quadrangle Base Map.	6	Section 2.0, Figure 2-2	The USGS map was used to show the topography in the area. A different base map has been provided to better identify cartographic features of the area.
Increases in demand due to new positions at NAWS China Lake resulting from the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) has not occurred and is not expected to occur in the future. Additional pumping based on BRAC demand is not required.	23	Section 2.0	In the original Project description provided for scoping purposes, the demand numbers from the BRAC estimates were used to show a worst-case scenario. The description of the Proposed Project in the EIR has been revised to reflect the most current demand estimates. The project is phased so that additional pumping would be triggered by actual increases in demand, not by projections. This demand could be caused by increases in employment at NAWS China Lake or by general growth in the service area.
The IWWWD should not guarantee water availability to any major new users until a watershed-wide solution has been put into place.	1	Section 5.0	The Proposed Project does not guarantee water availability to any one user. The potential for the Proposed Project to induce growth is discussed in Section 5.0.
Recent demand has decreased due to public conservation efforts, arsenic treatment, the economy, and other reasons. There is no need for the Proposed Project.	12	Section 2.0	The reserve capacity needed by the IWWWD in the first phase has been calculated on the basis of the actual maximum day demand over the past 7 years. It would not be good planning practice to calculate a reserve based on the lowest demand year. The project is phased so that additional pumping would be triggered by actual increases in demand, not by projections. This demand could be caused by increases in employment at NAWS China Lake or by general growth in the service area.

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The Proposed Project does not recognize the existing interties with the Navy and Searles Valley Minerals.	5	Section 4.0	The reliance on only the existing interties is reflected and analyzed in the No Project Alternative.
Maps showing all of the District's wells, private and cooperative wells, and a topographic map need to be provided.	1	Section 3.8	Figure 3.8-1 shows all known wells in the Proposed Project area.
Alternatives to provide water should be examined, including blending of lower quality water with higher quality water, adding storage capacity, importing water, and additional conservation.	21	Section 4.0	The IWWWD has examined alternatives to additional pumping capacity.
The No Project Alternative should be analyzed in the EIR.	1	Section 4.0	The No Project Alternative is analyzed in Section 4.0.
The IWWWD demand should be based on the number of IWWWD customers, not the total population within their boundary (which can include private well owners).	1	Section 2.0	The demand numbers are based on the number of current customers and an annual growth rate provided by Kern COG of approximately 1% per year.
An Alternative should be examined for a redundancy of less than 10 percent.	1	Section 4.0	A lower redundancy alternative would not meet project objectives because it would not ensure water supply to the District's customers during maximum pumping days if there is a planned or unplanned equipment failure. The No Project Alternative addresses the alternative of status quo, with no redundancy (No Project Alternative).
In assessing this project, it must be assumed that the full capacity of all wells and well upgrades would be employed.	1	Section 2.0	The pumping rates described in Section 2.0 are the maximum of what is proposed by the IWWWD. The IWWWD does not have the storage capacity nor the demand to use the water that would be pumped at full capacity of all the wells. The purpose of the Proposed Project is to provide redundant standby capacity in the event of maintenance or other equipment loss, not to run all of the wells at full capacity.

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How deep would the proposed new wells be?	1	Section 2.0	The well would be 16 to 20 inches in diameter with an anticipated depth of 900 to 1,400 feet below ground surface.
The EIR cannot provide relevant impact understanding for a project that would be implemented in 2015 or 2020.	3	Section 2.0	CEQA allows that the drafting of an EIR necessarily involves some degree of forecasting (CEQA Guidelines Section 15144). The EIR has estimated the impacts for Phase 1 and Phase 2 using technical surveys and modeling prepared specifically for the EIR and other accepted scientific sources. Additionally, the EIR mitigations provide for future monitoring to determine the actual impacts of the Proposed Project over time. Phase 3 (2020) is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
There is no justification for removing Well 17 from service.	2	Section 2.0	Well 17 is no longer proposed to be removed from service.
There is no resolution passed by the Board of Directors to authorize increases in pumping levels.	1	Section 1.0	The increase in pumping is part of the Proposed Project. The decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project will be made after the review of several factors, including the environmental impacts presented in this EIR.
The public scoping meeting was not a public hearing.	1	Not Applicable	CEQA does not require a specific format for a scoping meeting. A formal public hearing was not required.
Project-related documents should be posted on the IWWWD website.	1	Not Applicable	Scoping materials were posted on the IWWWD website. The Draft EIR and Technical Appendices have been posted on the IWWWD website.

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The facility for the scoping meeting on July 13, 2011 was insufficient to hold the number of people who attended.	6	Not Applicable	IWVWD did not turn away any person who wanted to sign the sign-in sheet or provide comments at the scoping meeting. A formal public hearing during the Scoping period is not required by CEQA, and other opportunities to comment on the scope of the EIR were provided. The number of people who attended the meeting was larger than anticipated. Future meetings will be held in larger facilities.
A Mitigated Negative Declaration should not be prepared for the Proposed Project.	1	Not Applicable	This EIR has been prepared for the Proposed Project.
The process for determining when wells 35 and 36 would be constructed and how the wells would be operated is not reflected in the Initial Study.	2	Section 2.0	The trigger for construction of Well 35 (Phase 2) and how the wells will be operated is described in Section 2.0. Well 36 is no longer part of the Proposed Project.
Table 2-1 in the Initial Study does not reflect the additional capacity with the Proposed Project improvements.	1	Section 2.0	Table 2-1 reflects the capacity requirements if the Proposed Project was not implemented.
Is the IWVWD currently supplying water to households outside the City of Ridgecrest limits? If so, how many and in what areas?	1	Section 2.0	Section 2.0 describes the IWVWD service area
The Inyokern Community Services District Board of Directors requested that the IWVWD send a representative to address the Inyokern Municipal Advisory Committee on the Proposed Project.	1	Not Applicable	This letter was received at the end of the scoping period, which did not provide sufficient time for noticing and holding a second scoping meeting. After the scoping meeting, the Proposed Project was significantly revised in response to other scoping comments. A meeting to solicit comments on the Draft EIR will be held in both Inyokern and Ridgecrest, and the Inyokern CSD has been invited to these meetings.

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The Initial Study cannot be used to screen out any impact area from analysis in the EIR.	2	Not Applicable	According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, the Initial Study can be used to assist in the preparation of an EIR by focusing the EIR on the effects determined to be significant and identifying the effects determined not to be significant.
The timeline for the completion of the EIR is insufficient to allow for a complete analysis.	1	Not Applicable	As a result of the comments received during the Scoping period, the project has been revised and the schedule has, therefore, been delayed. The EIR schedule allows for site and project-specific environmental analysis.
The EIR must provide a public comment period, review comments, and provide a written response to the comments it received.	1	Not Applicable	This Draft EIR is available for a 45-day comment period as required by CEQA. Written responses to comments received during the comment period will be provided in the Final EIR.
CEQA requires agencies to undertake a good faith analysis and not simply generate documentation in support of a predetermined approval of a project.	1	Not Applicable	The Draft EIR represents a good faith analysis and review of the project supported by technical documentation.
Mitigation measures must be implemented to reduce impacts to a less than significant level or make a specific finding that the damage cannot be mitigated but that the benefit from the project outweighs the damage that it will cause.	1	Not Applicable	Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce significant impacts to a less than significant level. Only one impact, a cumulative impact to water quality, remains significant and will require a Statement of Overriding Considerations.
NON-CEQA-RELATED ISSUES			
The IWWWD cannot afford to construct the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project and EIR is a waste of public money. It would be better to invest public money on projects that enhance the water supply.	5	Not Applicable	Cost-effectiveness is one of the project objectives used to select the Proposed Project and alternatives. The IWWWD will use many factors, including the analysis of environmental impacts in this EIR, the cost of the projects, etc., when making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project. Projects that would enhance the water supply would also be subject to CEQA.

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Requested a copy of the sign-in sheets from the Scoping Meeting.	1	Not Applicable	An official Public Records Act request should be made to the IWWWD to view or obtain copies of the sign-in sheets from the Public Scoping meeting.
If the water quantity and/or quality is affected in surrounding private or cooperative system wells then property values would decline.	4	Not Applicable	Section 3.8 discusses the effect of the Proposed Project on water quantity/quality in surrounding wells. Discussion of economic impact is not required by CEQA unless those impacts are tied to a physical environmental impact. Change in property values is not a physical environmental impact. However, the IWWWD will use many factors, including the analysis of environmental impacts in this EIR, the potential for economic impacts, the cost of the projects, etc., when making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project.
IWWWD may make money from the project, while private well owners may incur costs.	3	Not Applicable	Discussion of economic impact is not required by CEQA unless those impacts are tied to a physical environmental impact. Change in property values is not a physical environmental impact.
Is there any validity to the rumor that IWWWD is planning to take control of all private wells in the area.	1	Not Applicable	Incorporating private wells into the IWWWD is not part of this project and is not part of the IWWWD Water General Plan
It is important that communication continues to occur in a timely manner, transparency is maintained, and sanity prevails, and may we all consume wisely.	1	Not Applicable	CEQA requires that public notice be provided at many stages in the EIR process.
Private well owners and cooperative system well owners have water rights that supersede the IWWWD.	18	Not Applicable	The comments regarding water rights are not environmental issues covered by CEQA and therefore no response is required. Notwithstanding this, the priority and/or water rights of the various pumpers in the basin have not been established/adjudicated.

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The Cooperative Groundwater Management group should include more members of the public.	1	Not Applicable	The Proposed Project does not include changes to the Cooperative Groundwater Management Group.
The Project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because it may affect Navy wells.	1	Not Applicable	The Proposed Project is not subject to NEPA. NEPA is required when there is a Major Federal Action, which is defined as projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by federal agencies; new or revised agency rules, regulations, plans, policies, or procedures; and legislative proposals. This project is not obtaining financing from a federal agency and does not require approval by a federal agency.

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After review of the scoping comments, the IWWWD made the following changes to the WSIP:

- ◆ Production demand estimates have been recalculated based on new information from the Navy and growth estimates from the Kern Council of Governments (COG) as projected in the Urban Water Management Plan (IWWWD 2011);
- ◆ Phase 3 has been eliminated, because alternative water sources may become available after 2015. Well 36, which would have been located on the southeast corner of Las Flores Avenue and N. Victor Street, is no longer proposed as part of this project. Future water supply projects would require separate evaluation under CEQA;
- ◆ Well 17 would not be removed from service during the planning period (prior to 2015).

The WSIP was revised as described above, resulting in the Proposed Project analyzed in this EIR. New groundwater modeling was conducted by Layne Hydro, the successor firm to Layne Christensen, in August 2011 to reflect the new Proposed Project (Appendix G). The new Proposed Project is described in more detail in Section 2.0.

1.3 EIR ORGANIZATION

This section (Section 1.0) of the EIR provides an introduction to the Proposed Project, the purpose of the EIR, a description of the organization of the EIR, the intended uses of the EIR, areas of controversy, and a description of the public review process. Section 2.0 provides a description of the Proposed Project. Section 3.0 provides the environmental analysis of the project. This includes the description of existing conditions, the analysis of environmental impacts, and a discussion of mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate any significant environmental impacts. Section 4.0 discusses the alternatives and potential environmental impacts of implementing alternatives to the Proposed Project. Section 5.0 addresses long-term effects of the Proposed Project, including cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible and/or unavoidable impacts. A list of agencies and persons consulted is provided in Section 6.0 and references used to prepare the EIR are provided in Section 7.0. The list of document preparers and list of acronyms and abbreviations are presented in Sections 8.0 and 9.0, respectively. The NOP, Initial Study, and responses received during the scoping period are presented in Appendix A. Technical reports prepared for the Proposed Project are also provided in the appendices.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE EIR

Under CEQA, the analysis in an EIR may be focused on issues determined in the Initial Study to be potentially significant, whereas issues found to have no impact or a less than significant impact do not require further evaluation. Prior to the preparation of this EIR, an Initial Study was prepared to help determine the scope of the EIR. Although the Proposed Project has changed since the preparation of the EIR, the recommendations regarding the EIR scope contained in the Initial Study remain valid. The identification of environmental resources with potentially significant impacts, less than significant impacts, or no impacts would not change with the new Proposed Project.

The Initial Study determined that the following environmental factors would either have potentially significant impacts, or required additional study before making the determination of impact significance:

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- ◆ Air Quality;
- ◆ Biological Resources;
- ◆ Cultural Resources;
- ◆ Geology and Soils;
- ◆ Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- ◆ Hazards/Hazardous Materials;
- ◆ Hydrology/Water Quality;
- ◆ Noise;
- ◆ Population and Housing; and
- ◆ Utilities and Service Systems.

The potentially significant impact identified in the Population and Housing category is related to growth-inducing impacts, which are required to be examined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d). The analysis of growth-inducing impacts occurs in Section 5.0 of this EIR. The analysis of all other impact categories occurs in Section 3.0 of this EIR. It should be noted that the potentially significant impact identified in the Utilities and Service Systems category is related to the potential impact on groundwater resources. This issue is discussed in Section 3.7, Hydrology and Water Quality, and a separate Utilities and Service Systems section is not provided in this EIR.

The Initial Study determined that the following issues did not warrant further analysis in the EIR:

- ◆ Aesthetics;
- ◆ Agricultural Resources;
- ◆ Land Use and Planning;
- ◆ Mineral Resources;
- ◆ Public Services;
- ◆ Recreation; and
- ◆ Transportation and Circulation.

1.5 AVAILABILITY OF THE EIR/PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

The Draft EIR is being distributed for comment to the same public agencies and interested groups and individuals as the Initial Study and NOP. The Notice of Availability (NOA) is being transmitted via email or US Mail to the same distribution list as the NOP; in addition, those individuals who provided an email or US Mail address during the scoping period have been provided an NOA. The Draft EIR is also available for review at the following locations:

Indian Wells Valley Water District
500 West Ridgecrest Boulevard
Ridgecrest, California 93555

Kern County Library
1131 E. Las Flores Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

and on the IWWVD website at:
www.iwwvd.com.

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A period of 45 calendar days has been established for public review of the Draft EIR. Agencies, organizations, and individuals are invited to comment on the information presented in the Draft EIR during this period. Specifically, comments are requested on the scope and adequacy of the environmental analysis presented herein. All comments on the Draft EIR should be sent to the following IWWWD contact:

Tom Mulvihill, General Manager
Indian Wells Valley Water District
PO Box 1329
Ridgecrest, CA 93556-1329

Following the 45-day public review period, the IWWWD will prepare responses to all comments and will compile these comments and responses into a Final EIR. The IWWWD's Board of Directors will consider the information in the Draft and Final EIR during project review and when making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project. The Final EIR will need to be certified as complete by the Board prior to making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project.

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