

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 14, 2013

To: The Advisory Committee Members



From: Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

Subject: **Agenda Item XII: Discussion and possible action regarding Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for Santa Ana Canyon - Below Prado Inland Empire Brine Line Protection Project.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Advisory Committee discuss and consider recommending that the Governing Board send a letter in support of the California State Parks letter, dated August 5, 2013, regarding the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) Initial Study (IS) and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for Santa Ana Canyon - Below Prado Inland Empire Brine Line Protection Project.

Background: According to the IS (pp. 7-8), the Inland Empire Brine Line (Brine Line) conveys primarily highly saline, non-domestic wastewater from industrial discharges and municipal desalter facilities within the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino. Modifications from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Santa Ana River Mainstem Project, which raised the crest of Prado Dam 28 feet and constructed new outlet works, combined with future spillway improvements and planned changes in operational procedures, will result in increased discharges to the Santa Ana River of up to 30,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). These increased flows would result in lateral erosion and scour, which could undermine and damage the Brine Line and adversely impact water quality in the watershed. The overall objective of the proposed Santa Ana Canyon - Below Prado Inland Empire Brine Line Protection Project is to reduce the risk of damage to the Brine Line during operation of the Santa Ana River Mainstem Project.

The project consists of the installation of approximately 2,500 linear feet (LF) of AZ28-700 sheet pile, having a width of approximately two feet and an average toe depth of 55 feet (15 feet below the scour depth), with tiebacks spaced approximately every 10 feet (IS, p. 8). The purpose of the sheet piling in Aliso Canyon watercourse is to prevent head-ward erosion from propagating up the Aliso Canyon streambed and undermining the Brine Line (IS, p. 24).

The project site is located within the boundaries of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and Public/Quasi-Public Conserved Lands (IS, pp. 25-28). The IS addresses the obligations of the District in the MSHCP and the Implementing Agreement.

The Inland Empire District of the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) commented on the MND for this proposed project on August 5, 2013, citing multiple areas that the study should address. In relation to biological resources, State Parks considers the project area a part of a wildlife corridor area that supports a wide variety of animal life whose activities occur during periods of darkness, daylight, and/or both. It was recommended that written approval be required in advance of any work occurring during hours of darkness. Although the MND anticipates a less than significant impact on plant and wildlife, State Parks commented that any temporary loss of habitat is viewed as a significant impact, and that at a minimum, site restoration with local native plants will be required and should include a five year monitoring period.

It is recommended that the Advisory Committee discuss and consider recommending that the Governing Board send a letter in support of the State Parks letter dated August 5, 2013. Although comments were due on August 8, 2013, District staff has indicated they will try to address late comments.