

**GRANT APPLICATION**

**WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources  
Projects for FY 20&3  
NOFO R23AS00089**

**Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and  
Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a  
Component of the Santa Ana River  
Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program**



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### List of Acronyms

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AF	Acre-feet
AFY	Acre-feet per year
Alliance	Upper Santa River Sustainable Resources Alliance
BO	Biological Opinion
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDP	Census Designated Place
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
Conservation District	San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EVWD	Eastern Municipal Water District
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
HVWA	Hidden Valley Wildlife Area
IRWM Plan	Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
JPA	Joint Powers Authority
MHI	Median Household Income
MWD	Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
MWDOC	Metropolitan Water District of Orange County
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOD	Notice of Determination
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
OWOW	One Water One Watershed
RCA	Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority
RCFC&WCD	Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

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RCRCD	Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
RivCO	Riverside County Parks and Open Space District
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
SARCCUP	Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program
SAWPA	Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
SSC	California species of special concern
SWP	State Water Project
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
US	United States
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USBR	US Bureau of Reclamation
USEPA	US Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Valley District	San Bernardino Valley Water Municipal Water District
Western	Western Municipal Water District
WRC MSHCP	Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

## Section 1: Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria

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### 1.1 Executive Summary

<b>Date:</b>	March 28, 2023
<b>Applicant Name:</b>	San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District)
<b>Applicant City, County, State:</b>	San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California
<b>Applicant Category:</b>	Category A
<b>Project Title:</b>	Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

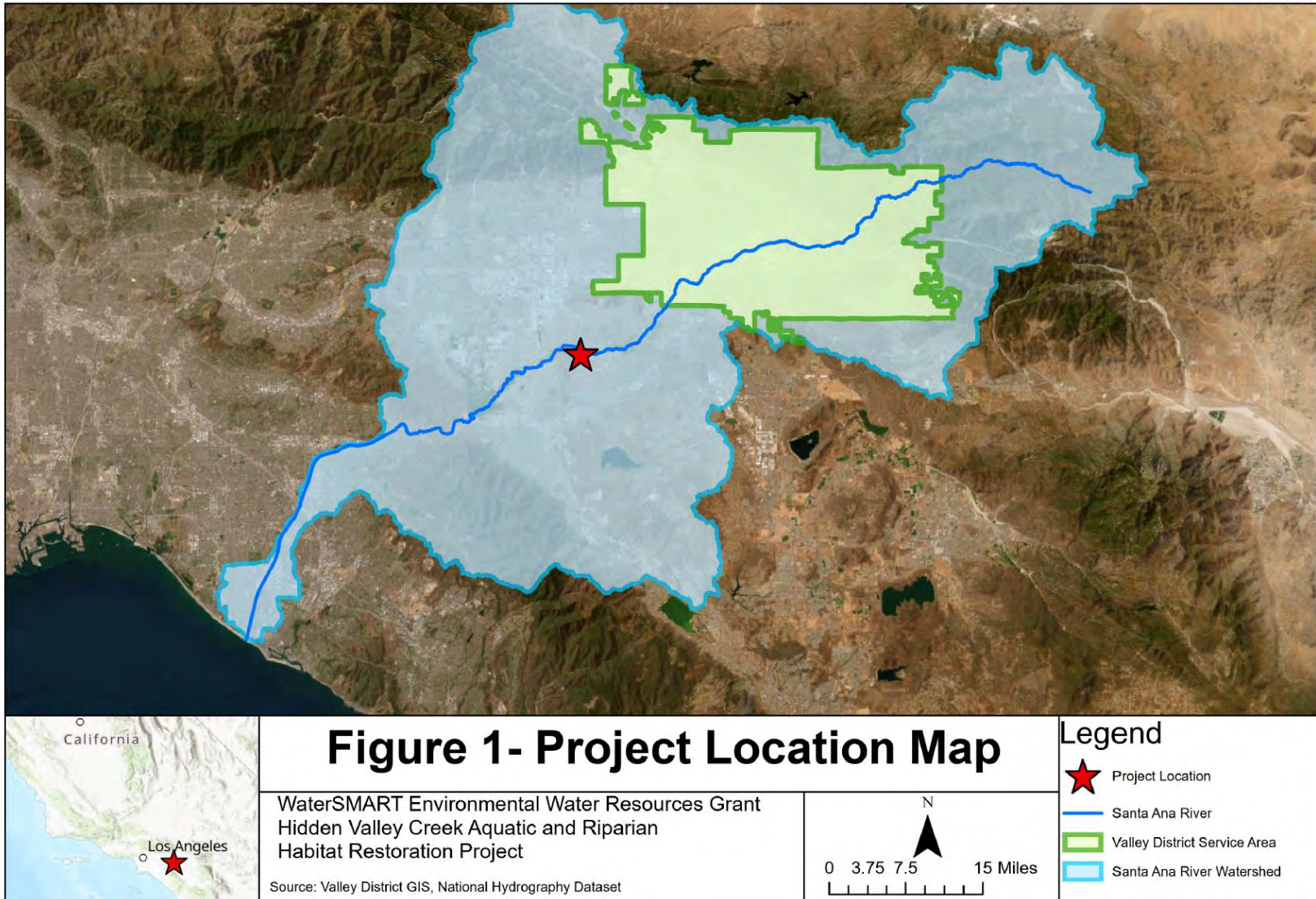
San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) is a water district (Category A applicant) working on behalf of 11 cooperating agencies that are working to implement the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project (Project) will be one of the first habitat restoration projects to be implemented in the framework of the multi-agency, watershed-wide cooperative venture. The Project will take place within the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed, in an approximate 112 acre area that surrounds Hidden Valley Creek, a tributary of the Santa Ana River, located south and west of the Santa Ana River, to the north vacant land proposed as a future residential development (Sierra Hills), and to the east of a now dry wetland complex called Hidden Valley Wetlands (see Figure 1 below). The project consists of the creation, restoration, and enhancement of approximately 21.7 acres of aquatic and riparian habitat for the benefit of the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker (USFWS, 2021) and other listed and sensitive species native to the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed. Work will include the restoration of portions of existing, and construction of new channel totaling approximately 4,200 linear feet (0.8 acres), establishment of new floodplain habitat within an approximate 25-foot buffer on each side of the stream course (1.2 acres), non-native plant removal, and site revegetation over approximately 19.7 acres adjacent to the channel and new floodplain habitat. The project is ready to proceed once funding is secured. Valley District completed environmental analysis and review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in November 2019. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review was completed associated with the Section 404 of the Clean Water Act permitting (December 27, 2021). Final design plans and habitat improvement plans were completed in February 2022. All necessary permits have been applied for and issued. The project is anticipated to begin construction in November 2023 and be complete by May 2025.

The proposed effort is not focused on a Federal Facility nor involved on federal land.

## 1.2 Project Location

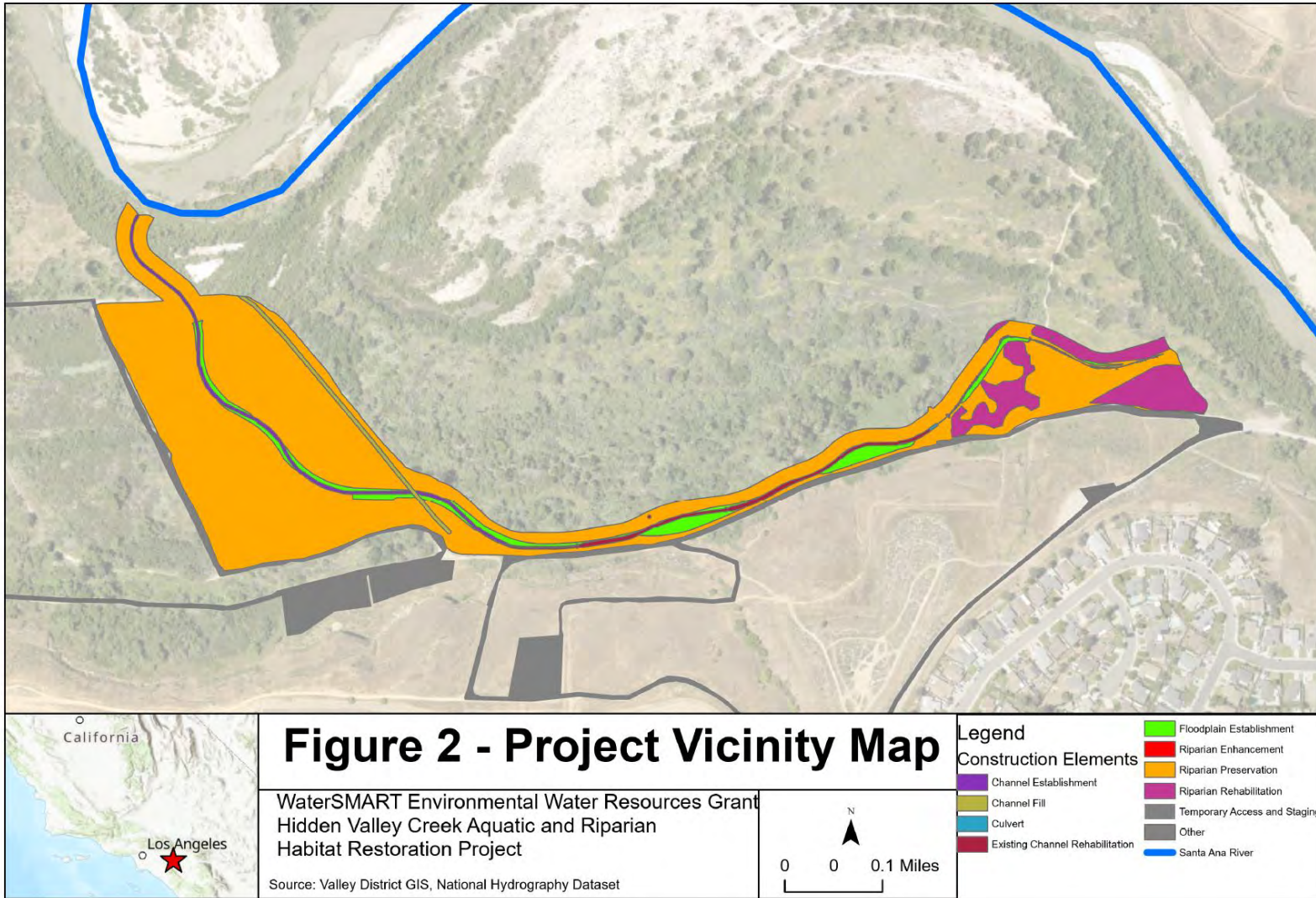
The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is a component of the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). The Project will take place within the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed, along a portion of the southern floodplain of the Santa Ana River, approximately 0.75 miles downstream of the Van Buren Boulevard Bridge and the City of Riverside's Regional Water Quality Control Plant within the cities of Jurupa Valley, and unincorporated Riverside County, California. The project's latitude is 33.963106° N and the project's longitude is -117.477023° W at its eastern end and 33.963627° N and longitude -117.497976° W at its western end. The project area encompasses a total area of approximately 112 acres surrounding Hidden Valley Creek, a tributary of the Santa Ana River on land owned by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and managed by the Riverside County Parks and Open Space District (RivCo). The project area is bounded to the north and east by the Santa Ana River, to the south by a steep hillslope and vacant land proposed as a future residential development (Sierra Hills), and to the west by a dry wetland complex called Hidden Valley Wetlands. Figure 1 provides a detail of the project location and vicinity. Figure 2 provides more detail on the location of Project actions.

Figure 1 - Project Location and Vicinity Map





**Figure 2 – Project Vicinity Map**



## 1.3 Technical Project Description

### 1.3.1 Applicant Category

Valley District is seeking funding from Category A.

### 1.3.2 Applicant Eligibility

Valley District is a water district within the state of California and therefore is an eligible applicant under Category A.

### 1.3.3 Technical Description

The Project is an important habitat restoration component to be implemented as part of the broader SARCCUP. SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for development of additional dry-year yield, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for the benefit of native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole. SARCCUP embodies an innovative approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Eight years in the making, the HCP covers over 850,000 acres of the upper Santa Ana River watershed in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties and provides coverage for 85 new water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre-feet (AF) of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies, known as the Upper Santa Ana River Sustainable Resources Alliance (Alliance), which includes Valley District and other regional partners.

The HCP will ultimately provide the amount of mitigation that is deemed appropriate to offset the environmental impacts associated with water capture projects. In an effort to speed up the HCP development and approval process, the Alliance decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principle called "advanced mitigation". The Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The purpose of the Project is to increase the abundance of Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*; listed as Federally Threatened), increase the quantity and distribution of habitat suitable for Santa Ana sucker and act as a "pilot" project for the many restoration efforts to come. The Project will also assure the partners, CDFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), that the HCP's conservation strategies are biologically sound, can be implemented, and demonstrate measurable species benefits.

- All activities, benefits, and cost described within this application focus only on the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

#### 1.3.4 Scope of Work

##### **1.3.4.1 Completed Tasks**

##### **Site Characterization and Site Selection**

Valley District, on behalf of the HCP, evaluated preliminary restoration designs for multiple tributaries in the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed. Sites were chosen through preliminary work performed by staff with the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD), who were directly familiar with the site's existing conditions and enhancement opportunities, and discussions amongst the RCRCD, Valley District, CDFW, and the USFWS. The Hidden Valley Creek site was selected because it had key attributes that made it a strong candidate for enhancement and for the potential to provide new Santa Ana sucker habitat, including large tracts of undeveloped land and tributaries with direct connections to the mainstem Santa Ana River. The Hidden Valley Creek site will provide opportunities for Santa Ana sucker migration from the mainstem river into new creek habitat where there is refugia and hydrology independent of mainstem river flows. An outcome of the site selection process was an initial description of site characteristics as well as preliminary designs and cost estimates for features that would restore, enhance, and/or establish Santa Ana sucker habitat. This is documented in the Site Characteristics and Preliminary Design of Santa Ana River Tributary Restoration Projects (ICF 2015).

##### **Documentation of Existing Site Conditions/Opportunities and Constraints Analysis**

The Opportunities and Constraints for Tributary Restoration Sites Report (ICF, 2018), documented the baseline conditions at four proposed project sites (including Hidden Valley Creek) and identified opportunities and constraints for restoring, enhancing and/or establishing ecological features that would benefit threatened/endangered species (in addition to Santa Ana sucker), as well as other aquatic resources. The identification of restoration opportunities utilized a top-down approach beginning with a high-level evaluation of ecological conditions to identify restoration opportunities within the existing land use constraints. Historical ecology and current site conditions were considered when identifying opportunities.

##### **Environmental Compliance**

The potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts were evaluated in the Upper Santa Ana River Tributaries Restoration Project and Mitigation Reserve Program EIR. The Final EIR was certified and adopted by the Valley District Board of Directors on November 19, 2019. A Notice of

Determination (NOD) was filed with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, County of Riverside on November 22, 2019.

It is understood that all projects being considered for award funding require compliance with NEPA before any ground-disturbing activity may begin. NEPA review was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) during Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting.

### **Permitting**

Restoration of Hidden Valley Creek will require multiple permits. Applications for all needed permits have been completed. More information on the permits required is listed in Section 4.1 of this application.

### **Final Design and Habitat Improvement Plans**

The restoration design for Hidden Valley Creek was completed in February 2022.

### **Prequalification of Bidders**

In September 2021, Valley District released a Prequalification Package to prequalify bidders for construction of the Hidden Valley Creek Project.

#### **1.3.4.2 Project Tasks**

##### **Task 1: Project Management, Administration and Reporting**

Valley District staff will provide project management to ensure successful project implementation. Activities will include administrative project oversight, securing contracts, managing consultants, and conducting progress meetings to ensure appropriate progress and completion are within budget and on schedule. Upon receipt of the grant award and for the duration of the grant agreement, grant administration will also be performed including activities to execute the grant agreement, ensure compliance with grant requirements, prepare, and submit regular invoice and performance report materials, and regular coordination with the grant manager, as necessary. A grant administration consultant will be considered for this task.

##### **Task 2: Construction**

###### **Construction Contracting and Bidding**

As described above Valley District has performed a pre-qualification of bidders for the Project. Upon completion of that process, and once funding is secured, Valley District will conduct a competitive bidding process among the pre-qualified contractors, in accordance with standard procedures and Public Contract Code. The selected contractor will perform construction according to final design plans and specifications.

## **Site Preparation**

Site preparation will consist of establishing site access, mobilizing equipment to the site and preparing staging areas that will be cleared and grubbed as needed to support construction equipment and materials. This will be followed by a tree survey and non-native plant removal, clearing, and grubbing, and hazardous soil removal (where needed). Work will also include implementing a traffic control plan, preparing, and implementing the provisions of Erosion Control and Dust Control Plans. Construction equipment will be brought to the restoration site via existing access roads. Large construction equipment will be used during the construction phase. To the extent practicable, temporary impact areas will be situated within disturbed areas such as access/maintenance roads and nearby trails. Staging areas, access routes, and other temporarily disturbed areas located within sensitive vegetation areas will be decompacted, revegetated, and restored to preconstruction or superior habitat condition as specified in the approved site plans and related construction documents (ICF 2020c).

## **Earthwork**

Earthwork will include removal of vegetation and topsoil to a depth of up to 3 feet and stockpiled onsite for use in revegetation efforts. Equipment will be used to grade the area to elevations appropriate for the desired habitat types. When feasible, the material will be re-used as fill for successful revegetation on upland portions of the project site.

## **Channel Creation**

Portions of an existing canal will be restored starting near the former canal headworks at the eastern end of the site, and a new channel will be constructed, extending to the Santa Ana River confluence near the western end of the site. The total length of enhanced and created channel will be 4,200 linear feet.

The riparian corridor surrounding the restored floodplain channel will be enhanced by removing nonnative plants along the length of the proposed channel (ICF 2020). The existing ground elevations within the restoration site will be altered to establish the proposed habitat function and distribution.

The enhanced or newly constructed channel will create conditions necessary for native fish to persist, such as diversity in flow depths and velocities, cover provided by vegetation on overhanging banks, and open canopy with appropriate substrate to promote algal growth and sucker feeding. Where appropriate, a deep layer of sediment composed of a sorted mixture of sediment (e.g., cobble, gravel, sand) will be constructed, thereby limiting channel flow loss and maintaining flow depths and velocities in the new channel. The new channels will include sections constructed with pool and riffle morphology to create the topographic and hydraulic diversity necessary to sustain stream complexity. Many habitat features included in the stream design have been developed based on reference reaches currently occupied

by Santa Ana sucker with similar influencing variables such as channel morphology, gradient, water supply, and riparian cover. In addition, an existing culvert will be replaced to better accommodate flows in the new channel.

### **Creation of Habitat Structures**

Several different types of in-channel structures will be constructed to create habitat for Santa Ana sucker and other native fish. Habitat structure construction will include both wood and rock materials. A key objective of the structures is to provide cover and diversify flow depths, flow velocities, and substrate texture to create different habitat types for all fish life stages.

### **Vegetation Restoration**

Topsoil excavated from the restoration sites above the wetted channel will be placed as the last component of final grading, and either hydroseeding or planting would occur to facilitate vegetation recovery as appropriate. Areas proposed for vegetated habitat post-restoration will be planted using a variety of strategies specific to the habitat type (e.g., soils may be amended to facilitate success before or after topsoil placement). Temporary irrigation may also be provided in some areas to support vegetation establishment.

### **Prepare Site for In Perpetuity Management**

Following construction, fencing (and potentially other barriers) may be installed at strategic locations to protect the restoration site and prevent unauthorized access to the restored area. Signage describing the project purpose and benefits will be added at the interface of the project site. The site will also be regularly patrolled by Park Rangers (Valley District employs two Park Ranger positions to patrol the site and one half-time Park Operation position to assist with land management).

After construction, there will be a 5-year plant establishment period. During this interim management period, Valley District will perform adaptive management of stream features and monitor plant health and replace plantings as needed. After the 5-year plant establishment period, the site will be evaluated with the expectation that the site will be maintained in its approved state for the 50-year term of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, at a minimum. The health of the Santa Ana sucker and the quality of the restored habitat will be a factor in the future permitting of water projects planned under the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. Maintaining the site and ensuring long-term conservation value is a requirement of the HCP and associated permitting.

The associated tasks after what is described above is not a part of the requested grant project but is described herein to illustrate how the project will have long-term benefits.

### **Water Management Improvements**

The Hidden Valley Creek site does not have a perennial source of water. In a separate project outside of the scope of this project, tertiary-treated water will be supplied to the creek. This water will provide a drought-proof, in-perpetuity supply, and would be conveyed to the site via new pipelines from the City of Riverside's Water Quality Control Plant that is located upstream and east of the project site. Until the pipeline project is constructed and functional, an existing groundwater well will supply water to the channel.

**In summary, construction/restoration will result in:**

- Enhancement of 21.7 acres of native riparian areas and aquatic habitat;
- Creation of 1.2 acres of new floodplain bench where the channel is incised and where banks are tall, steep, and unstable;
- 4,200 linear feet of constructed and enhanced existing channel (0.8 acres) with a morphology that would support hydrogeomorphic processes to improve habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker;
- Installation of fish habitat structures including deflector boulders, v-angel weirs, scattered boulders, rootwad groins, and undercut bank refuge structures to create localized flow obstructions to promote sediment sorting to improve habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker;
- Replacement of an existing failed culvert that conveys Hidden Valley Creek under an access road in the Hidden Valley Wildlife Area (HVWA) with a pre-cast concrete box culvert to accommodate both low and flood flows in the rehabilitated channel;
- 19.7 acres of non-native riparian plant treatment and native riparian planting;
- 4.82 acres of additional suitable nesting and foraging habitat for riparian bird species including the least Bell's vireo (state and federally threatened); and
- Maintenance and monitoring of the created and enhanced habitat areas.

The restored sections of creek will, when combined, create a wetted tributary with habitat suitable for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker.

## 1.4 Performance Measures

Performance measures that will be used to quantify actual benefits upon completion of the project are described in Section 1.5.5 of this application.

## 1.5 Evaluation Criteria

### 1.5.1 Evaluation Criterion A – Project Benefits

#### **Subcriterion No.1a-Project Benefits**

##### **General Project Benefits**

- *Please explain how the project will benefit ecological values that have a nexus to water resources or water resources management, including benefits to plant and animal species, fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and ecosystems that are supported by rivers, streams, and other water sources, or that are directly influenced by water resources management.*
  - *In your response, please identify the specific ecological values benefitted and how those ecological values depend on, or are influenced by, water resources or water resources management.*

The project will create an additional 4,200 feet of stream channel supporting suitable habitat for the Santa Ana sucker, a fish listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Additional benefits to state and federally listed and sensitive wildlife species will be realized through the creation and native planting of new floodplain habitat, and the rehabilitation of approximately 19.7 acres of riparian habitat (achieved via removal and management of nonnative plant species and planting with native riparian plant species). The 19.7 acres of riparian habitat restoration and enhancement will provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for riparian bird species including the least Bell's vireo (state and federally endangered). The benefits of the Project have been quantified based on current site mapping, including evaluation of suitable habitat by qualified biologists compared to the conditions that will exist post-construction. The benefits have been reviewed and confirmed in coordination with the USFWS and CDFW during consultation for the Upper Santa Ana River HCP and associated permitting.

- *Explain whether the project will increase water supply reliability for ecological values by improving the timing or quantity of water available; improving water quality and temperature; or improving stream or riparian conditions for the benefit of plant and animal species, fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and ecosystems, or through similar approaches.*

The project will increase water supply reliability for the Santa Ana Sucker by converting 0.29 acre of stream course to in-stream habitat features. In addition, an existing groundwater well is expected to supply water to the channel. This is expected to result in a net benefit in the function of sucker critical habitat due to the increase in sheltering and foraging medium within the wetted channel.



- *Will the project improve watershed health in a river basin that is adversely impacted by a Reclamation water project?*

No, the project is located in the Santa Ana River watershed, which is not adversely impacted by a Reclamation Water Project. However, the project, as part of the HCP, will improve watershed health in the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed by restoring crucial aquatic and riparian habitat for federally threatened and endangered species.

- *Is the project for the purpose of meeting existing environmental mitigation or compliance obligations under Federal or State law?*

The project is a component of SARCCUP, an objective of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. The HCP is a regional, comprehensive program that provides a framework to protect, enhance, and restore habitat for Covered Species listed under the Endangered Species Act, while streamlining permitting for anticipated water resource management projects. The HCP will ultimately provide the amount of mitigation that is deemed appropriate to offset the environmental impacts associated with water capture projects. In an effort to speed up the HCP development and approval process, the Alliance decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principle called “advanced mitigation”. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy.

- *If the project will benefit aquatic or riparian ecosystems within the watershed (e.g., by reducing flood risk, reducing bank erosion, increasing biodiversity, or preserving native species), please explain the extent of those benefits (i.e., magnitude and geographic extent). Please estimate expected project benefits to ecosystems and provide documentation and support for this estimate, including a detailed explanation of how the estimate was determined.*

The project will benefit the Santa Ana Sucker, a federally threatened aquatic species. In the 1970s the Santa Ana Sucker was considered a common fish, but since that time the species has lost almost 95% of its historic habitat. The Santa Ana Sucker is native to the Los Angeles and Santa Ana River basins in southern California. Today the species is restricted to three geographically separate populations in three different stream systems: the lower and middle Santa Ana River; east, west, and north forks of the San Gabriel River; and the lower Big Tujunga Creek. The Santa Ana Sucker was listed as a threatened species by the USFWS in 2014. Within the *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Final Rule to Designate Critical Habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker (Catostomus santaanae)* (USFWS, 2005), the USFWS determined that the conservation of the Santa Ana sucker was dependent on the conservation and management of habitat, including the following necessary habitat elements:

1. A functioning hydrological system that experiences peaks and ebbs in the water volume reflecting seasonal variation in precipitation throughout the year;

2. A mosaic of loose sand, gravel, cobble, and boulder substrates in a series of riffles, runs, pools, and shallow sandy stream margins;
3. Water depths greater than 3 cm and bottom water velocities greater than 0.03 meters per second;
4. Non-turbid water or only seasonally turbid water;
5. Water temperatures less than 30 degrees C (86 degrees F); and
6. Stream habitat that includes algae, aquatic emergent vegetation, macroinvertebrates, and riparian vegetation.

Santa Ana suckers live in the shallow portions of flashy rivers and streams where currents range from swift in the canyons to sluggish in the bottomlands. During times of deluge and flooding, the fish seek refuge in backwater eddies and other less turbulent areas. Once flooding recedes, they move back into the mainstem of these mostly quiet rivers. Preferred substrates are generally coarse and consist of gravel, rubble, and boulders with growths of algae. The Santa Ana sucker feeds almost entirely on algae, eating only a very small amount of insect larvae and detritus.

As currently configured, Hidden Valley Creek is not hydrologically connected to the Santa Ana River, and the channel lacks the requisite geometry, substrate, and shading needed to facilitate cool water temperatures and in-stream habitat conditions preferred by the species. The proposed project will create a continuous wetted tributary of 4,200 linear feet, hydrologically connected to the Santa Ana River, that includes the requisite habitat elements necessary to support the species, thereby increasing the quantity, and quality, of habitat suitable for the species within the Santa Ana River.

The specific actions proposed in this Project to benefit the Santa Ana sucker may also benefit other native aquatic, semi-aquatic, and riparian species, including the Arroyo Chub, Southwestern Pond Turtle, Two-Striped Garter Snake, and South Coast Garter Snake

- *If the project will benefit specific species and habitats, please describe the species and/or type of habitat that will benefit and the status of the species or habitat (e.g., native species, game species, federally threatened or endangered, state listed, or designated critical habitat). Please describe the extent (i.e., magnitude and geographic extent) to which the project will benefit the species or habitat, including an estimate of expected project benefits and documentation and support for the estimate.*

The project will also benefit the Least Bell's Vireo, a federally-endangered avian species. The Least Bell's Vireo is a songbird that nests and forages almost exclusively in riparian woodland habitats in California and northern Baja California (Garrett and Dunn, 1981). Historically, the vireo occupied as far east as the Owens Valley and Tehama County in Northern California. In 1994, the USFWS designated 10 areas including the Santa Ana River Watershed, for critical habitat, which

supports approximately 49% of the vireo's population in the United States. Vireos meet their survival and reproductive needs within riparian zones. Vireos live in a variety of riparian habitats, including cottonwood-willow woodlands/forests, oak woodlands, and mulefute scrub. Vireos prefer dense shrub cover in riparian areas, which are often infested with invasive plants such as giant reed (*Arundo donax*). The draft recovery plan for the Vireo identifies the following conservation needs:

- Maintain stable or increasing vireo populations;
- Protect and manage riparian and adjacent upland habitats within the historic range of the Vireo;
- Control non-native plant species; and
- Conduct habitat restoration.

Currently, critical habitat within the project area is functioning at a low ecological level due to the presence of non-native vegetation. With construction of the stream channel and restoration activities, riparian vegetation is expected to return with a higher quality of riparian habitat through the removal of invasive plants like giant reed, resulting in a net benefit to vireo habitat during project maintenance and management activities. As found in the USFWS Biological Opinion for Hidden Valley Creek, it is expected that with the new construction along the bank will create 210,000 square feet or 4.82 acres of high functioning habitat for Vireos (USFWS, 2021).

In addition, the project could benefit and improve habitat for other special-status species that inhabit or potentially could inhabit the project area including the burrowing owl, coastal California gnatcatcher, Santa Ana River woollystar, and western yellow-billed cuckoo.

- *If the proposed project will benefit federally listed threatened or endangered species, address the following:*
  - *Is the species subject to a recovery plan or conservation plan under the ESA?*

The Santa Ana sucker is listed as a threatened species under the ESA. In 2014, the USFWS released a draft recovery plan for the species, however, the recovery plan has not been finalized. The species is a Covered Species under the Upper Santa Ana River HCP.

- *What is the relationship of the species to water supply?*

The sucker relies on a steady flow of water supply. Hydrological changes to surface flows can impact the Santa Ana sucker when the flow of water is reduced or limited in downstream habitats, whereby water levels or water quality are not tolerated by the species. In addition, diminished in-stream flows make them less capable of carrying coarse sediments required for spawning habitat to downstream areas

occupied by this fish. Because Santa Ana suckers depend on the presence of gravel and cobble substrate, changes in the flow of water and sediment deposition that results in increases in fine sand and silt can create a habitat that is not suitable for reproductive and feeding processes.

In addition to creating and expanding aquatic habitat by enhancing the creek channel, the project will as a later phase outside of the scope of this grant application, include water supply augmentation. It will include the construction of pipeline from the City of Riverside's Water Quality Treatment Plant to provide a permanent drought-proof water supply to benefit the Santa Ana sucker and other species.

- *What is the extent of the proposed project that would reduce the likelihood of listing or would otherwise improve the status of species?*

The Santa Ana sucker has been listed as a threatened species since 2000. This species has faced vulnerability to extinction due to habitat loss, degradation, and hydrological modifications. According to the Biological Opinion issued by the USFWS, sucker recruitment and survival is expected to increase as a result of the project (USFWS, 2021).

- *Is the species adversely affected by a Reclamation project?*

The species is not adversely affected by a Reclamation project.

- *Will the project address drought conditions or drought-related impacts on water supplies, habitat, species, or the ecosystem as a whole? If yes, describe past and current drought conditions and impacts and forecasted drought conditions and anticipated impacts. How will this project help build resilience to drought?*

The Climate Change Analysis for the Santa Ana River Watershed, prepared as part of the Santa Ana Watershed Basin Study (USBR, 2018), highlights potential implications of climate change, including prolonged drought conditions, for the Santa Ana River Watershed, which is where Hidden Valley Creek is located. The Basin Study concluded that under projected future climate conditions, warmer temperatures will likely cause a decrease in riparian habitat. Drought in the portion of the Santa Ana Watershed benefited by the project means decreased wetted stream area, which leads to isolated and fragmented habitat for the Santa Ana sucker. The project will create new stream channel and floodplain habitat beyond that which currently exists, as well as hydrologic connection between Hidden Valley Creek and the Santa Ana River. The newly created stream habitat will provide important refuge for native fish species (including Santa Ana sucker and arroyo chub, a California species of special concern [SSC]) during periods of drought. With the connection between Hidden Valley Creek and the Santa Ana River, drought is less likely to lead to isolated and fragmented habitat. The created aquatic habitat will also benefit semi-aquatic species, such as the southwestern pond turtle and south coast garter snake (both SSC), and the enhancement of riparian habitat will benefit state and federally listed and SSC riparian bird species including the least Bell's vireo.

- *If the project will result in long-term improvements to water quality (e.g., decrease sediment or nutrient pollution, improve water temperature, or mitigate impacts from floods or droughts) please explain the extent of those benefits (i.e., magnitude and geographic extent). Please estimate expected project benefits to water quality and provide documentation and support for the estimate, including a detailed explanation of how the estimate was determined.*

The project is expected to support the recovery of the Santa Ana sucker by improving water quality over the long term. Suckers are doing poorly within the Santa Ana River due to many factors including decreasing river gradient, loss of gravel/cobble beds, decreased baseflows, increased water temperatures, loss of connectivity, and shortening of the wetted length of the river. The construction of an additional 0.8 acres of wetted channel is expected to provide increased habitat, and the addition of boulders, riffle sections, and variable substrate is expected to enhance water quality and microhabitat features for the species. Hidden Valley Creek will be created to provide connectivity with Hidden Valley Wetlands and the Santa Ana River. Areas of floodplain would be created along sections of Hidden Valley Creek to increase floodplain connectivity. Long-term management of the Project site will include in-perpetuity habitat management, management of trash and debris, and protection of the site against unauthorized access to ensure the long-term conservation value of Hidden Valley Creek for the benefit of native species, in particular the Santa Ana sucker.

- *Are there project benefits not addressed in the preceding questions? If so, what are these benefits?*

As described above one of the benefits of the Project is to prove the value of coordinating water resources and environmental protection. The Project is the result of extensive regional planning and has broad benefits in addition to the water supply and habitat creation described above. The Project will result in the following direct benefits:

- **Reduced risk of wildfire.** The Project will reduce the risk of wildfire through the reduction of hazardous fuels, such as non-native trees and dead trees. The non-native species and dry brush alter fuel bed characteristics and increase the susceptibility of wildfire in the Santa Ana River floodplain. Removing the non-native vegetation helps decrease the risk of wildfire.
- **Carbon sequestration (detailed below).** Restoration of riparian and stream areas will facilitate the sequestration of carbon. Revegetation of riparian plant species and woody plant species will sequester carbon and nitrogen in the soil and woody biomass. As plants mature carbon sequestration also improves.
- **Improve the ability to meet Western Riverside County Multiple Species HCP (WRC MSHCP) objectives.** The WRC MSHCP was developed over 20 years ago and encompasses an area of approximately 1.26 million acres. The

Upper Santa Ana River HCP overlaps with a portion of the Planning Area of the WRC MSHCP. All of the Covered Species of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP are Covered Species under the WRC MSHCP, consequently, habitat improvement projects implemented under the Upper Santa Ana River HCP will benefit the WRC MSHCP. Furthermore, work done for the Project on existing conditions and the habitat conditions needed for Santa Ana sucker and other species, will improve the science in the WRC MSHCP. In addition, the preservation of species by the Project will help achieve the conservation goals of both the Upper Santa Ana River HCP and WRC MSHCP, specifically goals for:

- Wetland habitat
- Riparian habitat
- Non-native plant management
- Santa Ana sucker
- Arroyo chub
- Least Bell's vireo
- Southwestern willow flycatcher
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo
- Western pond turtle

<b>Restoration Opportunities</b>	<b>Santa Ana Sucker</b>	<b>Arroyo Chub</b>	<b>Western Pond Turtle</b>	<b>Two-Striped Garter Snake</b>	<b>Least Bell's Vireo</b>	<b>Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</b>	<b>Yellow-Breasted Chat</b>	<b>Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo</b>
Benefits to Santa Ana sucker and Associated Resources	X	X	X	X				
Rehabilitate Existing Channel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish New Floodplain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reconfigure Channel near Confluence with Santa Ana River	X	X	X	X				
Construct Rock and Woody Debris Structures	X	X	X	X				

Source: Upper Santa Ana River Tributaries Restoration and Mitigation Reserve Program Final Environmental Impact Report, updated by Valley District Biological Resources Department, 2021.

## **Water Conservation and Efficiency Project Benefits**

*If the proposed project includes a water conservation and efficiency project component, address the following questions in addition to addressing the general questions above. Proposals containing a well-supported description and quantification of benefits will receive more points.*

The project is not a water efficiency project.

## **Water Management and Infrastructure Improvements Benefits**

- *Are there project benefits not addressed in the preceding questions? If so, what are these benefits? If the project will make more water available, or make water available at a more advantageous time or location, how much additional water will be made available? Describe the amount of estimated water (in acre-feet-per-year) expected to be made available directly from the project. Include a specific quantifiable water contribution estimate and describe the support/documentation for this estimate, including a detailed explanation of how the estimate was determined.*

In a later phase of the project, a pipeline will be constructed to convey tertiary-treated water from the City of Riverside's Water Quality Treatment Plant to Hidden Valley Creek, thereby providing a permanent and drought-proof water supply. The new water conveyance system will be sized to provide variable flow rates so that higher flows can be discharged to flush fine sediment accumulations off of gravel substrate, thereby maintaining suitable aquatic habitat conditions for Santa Ana sucker.

## **Restoration Project Benefits**

- *Invasive Species – Vegetation: For projects that include removal of invasive vegetation, will the project include revegetation with native species at the removal site? If not, explain why revegetation is not necessary for the specific ecosystem in which the project is located. In addition, describe how removal of invasive vegetation will benefit water resources or water resource management. Provide references and citations.*

Yes. The project will remove non-native plant species such as giant reed and will include revegetation with native species at the removal sites as described in Task 2. Invasive vegetation is harmful to native aquatic and riparian species, as it rapidly invades and colonizes streambeds while outcompeting native vegetation. Invasive vegetation often outcompetes native species for water, thereby, reducing water available for aquatic habitat (Cal-IPC, 2023).

- *Invasive Species – Other Taxa: For projects that include removal of non-vegetation invasive species, explain what measures will be used to prevent reintroduction and why. In addition, describe how removal of invasive species*

*will benefit water resources or water resource management. Provide references and citations.*

In compliance with the ESA and *USFWS Biological Opinion* issued in May 2021, Valley District is required to prepare a Restoration Plan for the Hidden Valley Creek site. The plan will be prepared by a qualified restoration ecologist and include a description of existing conditions, disturbances, site preparation, revegetation methods, maintenance and monitoring criteria, performance standards, and adaptive management practices, including measures used to prevent reintroduction of non-native species. Such practices will include periodic monitoring of plant health and non-native species removal for a period of up to 5-years after the project is completed. Removal of non-native species will benefit water resources management by maintaining the appropriate hydrologic function and streamflow for aquatic and riparian species.

- *Forest Fuels Management Activities: For projects that include fuels management activities to reduce the risk of severe wildland fire, describe the current conditions of the forest, the likelihood of a severe wildland fire, and risks to water quality, water supply infrastructure, aquatic and riparian ecosystem health, and watershed health.*

The Project will reduce the risk of wildfire through the reduction of hazardous fuels, such as non-native trees and dead trees. The non-native species and dry brush alter fuel bed characteristics and increase the susceptibility of wildfire in the Santa Ana River floodplain. Removing the non-native vegetation helps decrease the risk of wildfire.

- *Post-Wildland Fire Sediment Removal: For projects that include post-wildland fire sediment removal, address the following:*

Not Applicable. The project does not include post-wildland fire sediment removal.

### **Subcriterion No.A2 – Multiple Benefits**

*Explain how and to what extent the project will benefit multiple water uses. Address the following:*

- *If the project will benefit multiple water uses (e.g., benefits to ecological values AND benefits to other water uses, including municipal; agricultural; Tribal; commercial, recreational, subsistence, or Tribal ceremonial fishing; and river-based recreation), explain how and to what extent the project will benefit multiple water uses.*

As described earlier, the Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader SARCCUP. The Project is being done ahead of implementation of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP which covers over 850,000 acres of the upper Santa Ana River Watershed in Riverside and San



Bernardino Counties and provides coverage for 85 new water capture projects that would add 87,000 AF of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies. The 11 cooperating agencies include:

- City of Rialto
- City of Riverside Public Utilities
- East Valley Water District
- Inland Empire Utilities Agency
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- Orange County Water District
- San Bernardino Municipal Water District
- San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
- San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District
- West Valley Water District
- Western Municipal Water District

The project will benefit multiple water uses from these agencies by meeting the mitigation requirements for permitting future water supply projects in the watershed.

- *If the project will provide multiple restoration benefits (e.g., benefits to ecological values or watershed health; fish and wildlife habitat; protection against invasive species; enhancement to commercial, recreational, subsistence, or Tribal ceremonial fishing; enhancement of river-based recreation), explain how.*

The project will benefit recreational users of the Santa Ana River, including patrons of the Hidden Valley Wildlife Area and the Santa Ana Bike Trail by creating a more natural environment that can be experienced within an otherwise heavily urbanized area. The Project will create scenic views of a wetted and shaded stream channel, views of native plants, provide the opportunity to not only learn about native species but to also see the native birds, fish, and turtles in their habitats. The 4,200 feet of created and improved stream channel will provide the sounds and quiet movements of nature as well as a visual break from the adjacent urban noise and stressors.

The Project also reduces fire risk, a benefit to the adjacent homes and businesses, and provides a benefit to downstream water quality (from reduced ash and sedimentation). Removal of nonnative plant species within the project site will reduce fuel loads and fire risk, benefiting not only adjacent residences but also native plants and wildlife.

- *Will the project reduce water conflicts within the watershed? If so, explain how.*

The Upper Santa Ana River HCP is an effort by the 11 agencies to avoid water conflicts and to combine efforts to benefit water supply and ecologic values.

#### 1.5.2 Evaluation Criterion B – Collaborative Planning

- **Strategy or Plan:** *Is your proposed project supported by a specific strategy or planning document? If so, identify the strategy or planning document by name and address the following questions:*

Yes. The project is supported by the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

- *When was the plan or strategy prepared and for what purpose?*

The Upper Santa Ana River HCP is a regional, species conservation plan that provides a habitat conservation and restoration framework to improve environmental conditions for plant and wildlife species in the Santa Ana River watershed. Development of the plan began in 2014, in response to legal and environmental issues that prevented local water agencies from taking additional water from the Santa Ana River based on the additional water rights that agencies obtained from the State Water Resources Control Board in 2009. The USFWS concluded that continued water management activities affecting the Upper Santa Ana River and its tributaries by regional water resource agencies would result in the “incidental take” of a listed wildlife species. Therefore, to make use of the additional water rights, the water agencies proposed the development of an HCP as part of the application for an incidental take permit. The agencies came together to develop a comprehensive water resource management and environmental protection plan to minimize and mitigate habitat loss for 20 species (9 of which are threatened or endangered, and 11 are unlisted) (Covered Species) in the Santa Ana River Watershed. The HCP provides analysis to inform decisions for regulatory agencies to issue incidental take permits through the Federal Endangered Species Act for species that may be affected by projects in a specified permit area. The HCP includes conservation strategies to be implemented within a habitat preserve system to offset adverse effects on the Covered Species and their habitats. The HCP identifies the best ways to avoid, minimize, and offset the impacts of current and proposed water conservation and groundwater recharge projects along the Santa Ana River and its tributaries to protect threatened and endangered species. The HCP identifies multiple habitat restoration and conservation projects to protect the Covered Species and planning and permitting guidance to implement long-term local water supply resilience for the region.

- *What types of issues are addressed in the plan? For example, does the plan address water quantity issues, water quality issues, and/or issues related to ecosystem health or the health of species and habitat within the watershed?*

The HCP addresses multiple challenges in the Upper Santa River Watershed, including the ongoing modification of the Santa Ana River hydrogeomorphology,

reduction of river flows due to water conservation and climate change impacts, alteration of natural habitats, and the long-term effects of these changes on the functional ecology of the watershed, and the native species of the Santa Ana River. The HCP addresses water quantity, water quality, and issues related to ecosystem health of species and habitat within the watershed. Development of the HCP was initiated to help resolve some of these issues through regional collaboration and the identification of projects and actions to offset impacts to species and habitat. The Plan proposes measures to improve regional water supply reliability, and the partner agencies have committed to conserving, monitoring, and managing species and their habitats in perpetuity.

- *Is one of the purposes of the strategy or plan to increase the reliability of water supply for ecological values?*

Yes. The purpose of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP is to provide a framework to protect, enhance, and restore habitat for Covered Species while streamlining permitting for Covered Activities. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP would achieve conservation goals and objectives of the Endangered Species Act while managing water resource needs for the region. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP identifies Covered Activities that include public infrastructure projects to increase regional water supply reliability. The Permittee Agencies implementing the Covered Activities, have made long-term commitments to conserve, monitor, and manage Covered Species and their habitats. The HCP includes restoration activities and the provision of long-term water supply to restoration sites to safeguard against decreasing mainstem river flows due to regional water conservation efforts, climate change, and drought conditions.

**Strategy or Plan Development:** *Was the strategy or plan developed through a collaborative process?*

- *Was the strategy or plan developed as part of a collaborative process by:*
  - *A watershed group, as defined in Section 6001 of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act?*
  - Or
  - *A water user and one or more stakeholders with diverse interests (i.e., stakeholders representing different water use sectors such as agriculture, municipal, tribal, recreational, or environmental)?*

The Project was developed as part of a collaborative process between multiple water users and stakeholders with diverse interests in serving municipal, agricultural, tribal, recreational, and environmental water use sectors. The proposed project was developed as part of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, a regional comprehensive program that provides a framework to protect, enhance, and restore habitat for Covered Species in the Upper Santa River Watershed in compliance with the ESA. The HCP streamlines planning and permitting for anticipated water resource management projects to serve the needs of the public.

The HCP and its projects were developed by 11 water agencies in the Santa Ana River Watershed. The HCP is supported by Federal, State, and Local agencies, and various local stakeholder groups.

- *Describe who was involved in preparing the plan and whether the plan was prepared with input from stakeholders with diverse interests (e.g., water, land, or forest management interests; and agricultural, municipal, tribal, environmental, recreation users)? Describe the process used for interested stakeholders to provide input during the development of the strategy or the plan.*

The HCP has been developed through a highly collaborative and transparent process involving Federal, State, and local agencies and stakeholder groups. Eleven water agencies that serve diverse interests, including agricultural, municipal, tribal, environmental, and recreation uses within the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are Permittees to the HCP. Since 2014, the Permittees, regulatory agencies, and interested stakeholder groups and members of the public have met on a regular basis to share knowledge and expertise and inform development of the HCP. HCP contributors included biological resources, water resources, and engineering staff from each of the permittee agencies, as well as consultants with diverse expertise in conservation planning, fisheries biology, wildlife biology, botany, habitat restoration, aquatic resources permitting, geographic information systems, technical editing and publications production, public communications and outreach, graphic design, and program administration. The HCP received additional technical assistance from the USFWS, CDFW, United States Geological Survey Western Ecological Research Center and Water Science Center, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, the USACE, and the United States Forest Service.

These agencies formed several Advisory Committees to provide input. The Biological Technical Advisory Committee and the Hydrologic Technical Advisory Committee helped inform the foundation of the Plan. The Biological Technical Advisory Committee identified the Covered Species for the Plan, provided input on conceptual species models, identified threats and stressors to the species, and developed conservation targets to meet biological goals and objectives. The Hydrologic Technical Advisory Committee provided input for hydrological modeling for the Upper Santa Ana River and its tributary system to estimate the effects of flows on habitats.

In addition, members of the public and other interested agencies helped inform the plan. The HCP implemented a robust public outreach and public participation program. Information and access to the HCP development process was provided through the HCP website ([www.uppersarhcp.com](http://www.uppersarhcp.com)). Stakeholders and interested members of the public were invited to participate in public meetings and participate in the Technical Advisory and Stakeholder Committee, provide public comment on draft documents, or to discuss the Upper Santa Ana River HCP.

- *If the plan was prepared by an entity other than the applicant, explain why it is applicable to the proposed project. Describe whether and how the applicant was involved in the development of the strategy or plan.*

The HCP was prepared by the applicant, Valley District, who is the Lead Program Agency for the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, along with 10 other water agencies, all Permittees to the HCP, with the assistance of a wide range of consultants. The 11 water agencies have developed a Joint Powers Authority the Upper Santa Ana River Sustainable Resources Alliance, that will be responsible for implementation of the HCP.

- *For Tribal strategies or plans that were developed collaboratively with multiple Tribal interests, but did not include collaboration with external entities, provide an explanation as to why collaboration with entities external to the Tribe were not involved in the development of the strategy or plan.*

Not applicable.

- ***Strategy or Plan Support for the Project. Describe how the plan or strategy provides support for your proposed project.***

- *Does the proposed project implement a goal or need identified in the plan?*

Yes. The proposed project meets the following goals identified in the plan:

1. Conserve Covered Species and their habitats to contribute to the recovery of listed species or those that may become listed under the ESA;
2. Sustain the ecological processes necessary to maintain the functionality of the natural communities and habitats upon which the Covered Species depend;
3. Maintain and improve habitat connectivity in the HCP Preserve System and to adjacent protected habitat areas to facilitate movement and genetic exchange between populations of Covered Species; and
4. Actively manage lands within the HCP Preserve System to maintain or improve conditions for the benefit of Covered Species.

The Project is designed to mitigate impacts to Covered Species and jurisdictional aquatic resources identified by the Upper Santa Ana River HCP by implementing restoration activities in the Hidden Valley Creek Project Area. The project will modify and augment surface flows with the construction of a well-defined channel to be called Hidden Valley Creek, to support the Santa Ana sucker, a Covered Species of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. By implementing these restoration activities, Valley District aims to contribute to the recovery of the Santa Ana sucker and restore the ecological processes necessary to improve and maintain its habitat conditions and connectivity.

- *Describe how the proposed project is prioritized in the referenced plan or strategy.*

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is a primary component of the SARCCUP Tributaries Restoration Project.

The Upper Santa Ana River HCP covers six types of Covered Activities, including habitat enhancement, management, and monitoring that support the restoration and maintenance of habitat values in the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP prioritizes new restoration projects, including Tributary Stream Restoration projects, which includes SARCCUP and the Project. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP considers and prioritizes habitat restoration activities in Hidden Valley Creek as a component of the Conservation Strategy that would result in beneficial effects for Covered Species under the HCP, in particular the federally threatened Santa Ana Sucker.

### 1.5.3 Evaluation Criterion C – Stakeholder Support for Proposed Project

- *Describe the level of stakeholder support for the proposed project. Are letters of support from stakeholders provided? Are any stakeholders providing support the project through cost-share contributions, or through other types of contributions to the project?*

The project is supported by and a congruent part of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP has the support of several regional water resources agencies in the Santa Ana River Watershed, with partnership from the USFWS, CDFW, and several other government agencies and stakeholder organizations. Valley District has received support letters from the state, federal, local, and institutional agencies. Letters of support are provided in Appendix A.

- *Explain whether the project is supported by a diverse set of stakeholders (appropriate given the types of interested stakeholders within the project area and the scale, type, and complexity of the proposed project). For example, is the project supported by entities representing agricultural, municipal, tribal, environmental, or recreation uses?*

The project is supported by a diverse range of stakeholders, many of whom have actively participated in the development of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. As a project identified in the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, the Hidden Valley Creek Project was developed with input from multiple stakeholder agencies representing diverse interests that worked together to find habitat management solutions in the Santa Ana River Watershed. Projects included in the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, including the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Restoration Project, were carefully planned, and selected by the stakeholders of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP, and Committee members, who have extensive knowledge of the Watershed's hydrology, ecology, and biology.

- *Is the project supported by entities responsible for the management of land, water, fish and wildlife, recreation, or forestry within the project area? Is the project consistent with the policies of those agencies?*

Yes. The project is supported by entities responsible for the management of land, water, fish and wildlife, recreation, and forestry within the project area. Supporting agencies include the CDFW, USFWS, US Forest Service, United States Geological Survey, and the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (the implementing entity for the WRC MSHCP), as well as the 11 water resources agencies, all of whom are Permittees to the HCP. The project is consistent with the policies of those agencies.

- *Is there opposition to the proposed project? If so, describe the opposition and explain how it will be addressed. Opposition will not necessarily result in fewer points.*

Valley District is not aware of any opposition to the Project.

#### 1.5.4 Evaluation Criterion D – Readiness to Proceed

- *Describe the implementation plan for the proposed project. Please include an estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates. This may include, but is not limited to, design, environmental and cultural resources compliance, permitting and construction/installation.*

The implementation plan for the Project is shown in the schedule below.

**Table 1. Implementation Plan/Project Schedule**

<b>Task/Activity Name</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>
<b>Completed Tasks</b>		
Site Characterization and Site Selection		
Documentation of Existing Site Conditions/Opportunities and Constraints Analysis		
Environmental Compliance		Complete
Permitting		
Final Design and Habitat Improvement Plans		
Prequalification of Bidders		
<b>Outstanding Tasks</b>		
Grant Award Notification (Assumed Date)	December 2023	December 2023
<b>Task 1. Project Management, Administration and Reporting</b>	<b>October 2023</b>	<b>May 2025</b>
<b>Task 2. Construction</b>	<b>October 2023</b>	<b>February 2025</b>
Construction Contracting and Bidding	October 2023	November 2023
Site Preparation*	November 2023	January 2024
Earthwork	February 2024	August 2024
Channel Restoration	May 2024	September 2024
Creation of Habitat Structures	June 2024	August 2024
Vegetation Restoration	August 2024	November 2024
Prepare Site for In-Perpetuity Management	December 2024	February 2025
Water Management Improvements		Future Phase

\*To avoid bird nesting season, ground disturbing construction would not start any earlier than October 2023. This schedule is dependent on nesting patterns.

- *Proposals with a budget and budget narrative that provide a reasonable explanation of project costs will be prioritized under this criterion.*

A budget and budget narrative are provided in Section 2.3.

- *Describe any permits and agency approvals that will be required along with the process and timeframe for obtaining such permits or approvals.*

The proposed project will require several permits. Applications for all permits have been submitted to the relevant agencies and all permits have been acquired. More information is included in Section 4.1.



- Clean Water Act Section 401
- Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement
- Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation
- Clean Water Act Section 404
- FEMA No-Rise Certification
- *Identify and describe any engineering or design work performed specifically in support of the proposed project. If additional design is required, describe the planned process and timeline for completing the design. Priority will be given to projects that are further along in the design process and ready for implementation.*

As shown in the schedule above, final design and habitat improvement plans have been completed for the project.

- *Does the applicant have access to the land or water source where the project is located? Has the applicant obtained any easements that are required for the project? If so, provide documentation. If the applicant does not yet have permission to access the project location, describe the process and timeframe for obtaining such permission.*

The CDFW owns a majority of the project site and is a responsible agency with permit authority identified within the SARCCUP and the Upper Santa Ana River HCP.

- *Identify whether the applicant has contacted the local Reclamation office to discuss the potential environmental and cultural resource compliance requirements for the project and the associated costs. Has a line item been included in the budget for costs associated with compliance? If a contractor will need to complete some of the compliance activities, separate line items should be included in the budget for Reclamation's costs and the contractors' costs. Describe any new policies or administrative actions required to implement the project.*

No new policies or administrative actions will be needed to implement the project. NEPA was completed by USACE as part of the Section 404 permitting process. The USACE's consultation with the USFWS has been completed. There are no line items in the budget for costs associated with compliance.

- *Is the project completely or partially located on Federal land or at a Federal facility? If so, explain whether the agency supports the project and has granted access to the Federal land or facility, whether the agency will contribute toward the project, and why the Federal agency is not completing the project. Note: Other sources of Federal funding cannot be included within the scope of the project proposed for Reclamation funding under this NOFO. Other Federal agencies can contribute toward the completion of environmental and cultural resource compliance, provide access to land, and*

*provide project oversight as necessary; however, any costs associated with these activities should not be included within the project budget.*

The project is not located on Federal land or at a Federal facility. Valley District has received permits from the USFWS and USACE. Costs associated with these activities are not included within the project budget.

#### 1.5.5 Evaluation Criterion E – Performance Measures

- *Describe the performance measures that will be used to quantitatively or qualitatively define actual project benefits upon completion of the project. Include support for why the specific performance measures were chosen.*

Performance measures are shown in Table 2 below. These performance measures were chosen based on anticipated Conservation Measures required by permitting agencies and monitoring that will be performed by Valley District after construction of the project for adaptive management and performance monitoring.

- *All applicants are required to include information about plans to monitor improved streamflows, aquatic habitat, or other expected project benefits. Please describe the plan to monitor the benefits over a five-year period once the project has been completed. Provide detail on the steps to be taken to carry out the plan.*

The project benefits will be measured using the quantifiable performance measures shown in Table 2 below. The measures in Table 2 were selected as they closely align with the six habitat elements needed by Santa Ana sucker as defined in the *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Final Rule To Designate Critical Habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker (Catostomus santaanae)* (USFWS 2005).

Pre-construction surveys of existing habitat conditions along Hidden Valley Creek have already been completed. Following construction, verification and documentation of improved habitat will be performed by biological field personnel using a handheld global position satellite device.

As described earlier, the health of the Santa Ana sucker and the quality of the restored habitat will be a factor in the future permitting of water projects planned under the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. The term of the Upper Santa Ana River HCP is 50 years. There are actual consequences and actual repercussions for not ensuring the Project has long-term benefits.

**Table 2. Benefits and Related Performance Measures**

<b>Benefit Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Method of Performance Measurement</b>
Habitat Improved	Linear feet creek channel suitable Santa Ana sucker	Evaluation of linear feet of channel with flow velocity and substrate materials of suitable quality for Santa Ana Sucker, accessible to Santa Ana sucker before and post-construction
Habitat Improved	Riparian habitat created	Based on vegetation mapping, riparian habitat in square feet will be estimated before and post-construction.

1.5.6 Evaluation Criterion F – Presidential and DOI Priorities

**Subcriterion No.E1 – Climate Change**

- *How will the project build long-term resilience to drought? How many years will the project continue to provide benefits? Please estimate the extent to which the project will build resilience to drought and provide support for your estimate.*

The Project will help meet the requirements for an incidental take permit to implement the groundwater recharge projects necessary to provide water for storage and to meet long-term increased water demands during drought. The implementation of the broader SARCCUP projects will increase local water supply reliability and reduce the need for imported water that is increasingly unreliable due to climate change and drought impacts. The project will allow the region to provide capacity to store during wet years and the extraction facilities to draw groundwater during dry years. The five regional agencies participating in SARCCUP including the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC), Orange County Water District (OCWD), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District), Western Municipal Water District (Western), and the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) have collaborated with the local water retailers by planning water supply projects that are mutually beneficial to the retailers and wholesalers. Furthermore, SARCCUP will conjunctively manage these local water supplies such that the aggregate yield and water supply reliability generated is greater than the independent management of these resources. By way of a five-way agreement between the five agencies, the conjunctive use program will take advantage of economies of scale, watershed-wide groundwater storage opportunities and regional transmission and distribution systems to establish a dry-year yield supply.

- *In addition to drought resiliency measures, does the proposed project include other natural hazard risk reductions for hazards such as wildfires or floods?*

The Project could reduce the risk of natural hazards such as wildfires or floods through several mechanisms. The Project could reduce the risk of wildfire through the reduction of hazardous fuels, such as non-native trees and dead trees. The non-native species and dry brush could alter fuel bed characteristics and increase the susceptibility of wildfire in the Santa Ana River floodplain. Removing the non-native vegetation could help decrease the risk of wildfire. In addition, by reconfiguring the channel topography in the Hidden Valley Creek drainage area, streamflow will be improved in the Santa Ana River, which may reduce the risk of flooding.

- *Will the proposed project establish and use a renewable energy source?*

The Project will not establish or use a renewable energy source.

- *Will the proposed project reduce greenhouse gas emissions by sequestering carbon in soil, grasses, trees, and other vegetation?*

Restoration of riparian and stream areas facilitates the sequestration of carbon. Through planting and revegetation of riparian plant species, woody plant species have the potential to sequester carbon and nitrogen in the soil and woody biomass. As plants mature over time, they may provide more sequestration potential, leading to a potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

- *Does the proposed project include green or sustainable infrastructure to improve community climate resilience such as reducing the urban heat island effect, lowering building energy demands, or reducing the energy needed to manage water? Does this infrastructure complement other green solutions being implemented throughout the region or watershed?*

The Project uses natural mechanisms to restore degraded habitat in Hidden Valley Creek. Revegetation and restoration of riparian areas will provide shading and thermal control for the creek, benefiting habitat conditions for the threatened Santa Ana sucker, the primary focal species to benefit from this Project.

- *Does the proposed project seek to reduce or mitigate climate pollutions such as air or water pollution?*

The Project will help mitigate air and water pollution. With the removal of non-native vegetation, the project will help native species recover in areas where nonnative invasive vegetation has established. Restoration to riparian species has the potential to result in the sequestration of carbon and nitrogen in woody riparian biomass over time. The sequestration of carbon in revegetated areas will improve air quality by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A component of the project will include trash removal throughout the project area that would otherwise create water quality issues for plant and animal species found downstream in the river, and ultimately the

Pacific Ocean. Therefore, the Project will improve water quality for plant and animal species throughout the Santa Ana River Watershed.

- *Does the proposed project have a conservation or management component that will promote healthy lands and soils or serve to protect water supplies and its associated uses?*

Restoration of riparian habitat results in less erosion and protection of riverbanks. The project will provide critical riparian habitat restoration and improvement of existing channels to sustain flows in the Santa Ana River for aquatic and riparian species.

- *Does the proposed project contribute to climate change resiliency in other ways not described above?*

The Climate Change Analysis for the Santa Ana River Watershed (USBR, 2018), prepared as part of the Santa Ana Watershed Basin Study, highlights potential implications of climate change, including prolonged drought conditions, for the Santa Ana River Watershed, which is where Hidden Valley Creek is located. The Basin Study concluded that under projected future climate conditions, warmer temperatures will likely cause a decrease in riparian habitat. The Project is a strategy to mitigate the impacts of climate change on species.

The overall Project, as a component of SARCCUP and the Upper Santa Ana River HCP is considered an adaptation to ongoing drought and climate change by protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat in the Hidden Valley Creek stretch of the Santa Ana River floodplain. The Project provides ecosystem restoration for mitigation of habitat loss for threatened and endangered species. The Upper Santa Ana River HCP conservation strategy protects and enhances native plant and wildlife populations through habitat restoration and management, and through the maintenance of habitat connectivity in the region. Protection of habitat connectivity, especially along ecological gradients such as elevational gradients and along natural hydrologic features, provides the opportunity for species to shift their range and area of occupied habitat in response to climate change. The project will provide adaptive management over the next 50 years (San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, 2021) to enhance connectivity where existing barriers to species, such as the Santa Ana sucker, currently exist, resulting in additional protection and an increase in aquatic and riparian habitat for species that would otherwise experience declining stream flows. In addition, SARCCUP would diversify water supplies, reduce reliance on imported water from Northern California, and increase opportunities for regional water transfers; all of which help to address the impacts of climate change on local water supplies.

### ***Subcriterion No.E2 – Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities***

- *Will the proposed project serve or benefit a disadvantaged or historically underserved community? Benefits can include, but are not limited to, public health and safety through water quality improvements, new water supplies, or economic growth opportunities.*

The project provides benefits to neighboring disadvantaged communities. The project improves and modifies surface flow and enhances the existing channel to create suitable habitat for the Santa Ana sucker. In addition, the project aims to establish a native riparian buffer and floodplain, which could help reduce the risk of floods to neighboring disadvantaged communities and protect water quality. The SARCCUP project helps water infrastructure systems adapt to climate change by addressing the future uncertainty of water supply through increasing local groundwater supplies for drought protection. The project reduces flood risk associated with climate change due to anticipated changes in rain patterns and intensity by providing additional stormwater diversion and storage.

- *Describe, in detail, how the community is disadvantaged based on a combination of variables that may include the following: (low income, high unemployment, racial segregation, linguistic isolation, high housing cost burden, distressed neighborhoods, high transportation costs, disproportionate environmental stressor burden, limited water and sanitation access and affordability, impacts from climate change, high energy costs, jobs loss, access to healthcare, etc.)*

The community within the project area has disadvantaged communities. The highly urbanized community is located in an area that has a pollution burden of 96 percent, according to CalEnviroScreen 4.0 screening tool (USEPA, 2023). The area includes distressed neighborhoods that are geographically isolated due to industrial warehouses and major railyards. The area is disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and shows a high rate of exposures including particulate matter, pollution to drinking water, environmental stressors from nearby cleanup sites and hazardous waste. Table 3 lists the percentile of burden that make the area disadvantaged. In addition, a map showing the economically disadvantaged communities near the project area based on State definition of disadvantaged communities is included in Appendix B.

**Table 3. Project Area Disadvantaged Community Variables**

Category	Percentile	Category	Percentile
<b>Overall Percentiles</b>		<b>Environmental Stressors</b>	
*CalEnviroScreen 4.0	84	*Cleanup Sites	74
*Pollution Burden	96	Groundwater Threats	53
Population Characteristics	60	*Hazardous Waste	94
<b>Exposures</b>		Impaired Waters	33
*Ozone	91	Solid Waste	13
*Particulate Matter 2.5	94	<b>Sensitive Populations</b>	
Diesel Particulate Matter	20	Asthma	42
Toxic Releases	68	Low Birth Weight	63
*Traffic	78	Cardiovascular Disease	55
*Pesticides	72	<b>Socioeconomic Factors</b>	
*Drinking Water	99	*Education	72
Lead from Housing	56	Linguistic Isolation	67
<b>Race</b>		*Poverty	70
*Hispanic	67	Unemployment	28
White	8.7	Housing Burden	59
AA	5	<b>Age</b>	
Asian	5.7	Adult	76
Other	3.6	Children	10
		Elderly	14

Note: \* High CalEnviro Screen score < 70%

- *If the proposed project is providing benefits to an underserved community, provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the community meets the underserved definition in E.O. 13985, which includes populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.*

The area that will receive the benefit from the project, qualifies as a disadvantaged community as defined by E.O. 13985, as reflected in the statement above. In addition, the project area has economically disadvantaged areas that meet the California disadvantaged community criteria (defined as a community with an annual median household income [MHI] that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income for the state). According to the US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (2017-2021) the median California MHI is \$84,097 and \$70,287 for San Bernardino County. Specific urban areas including cities and Census Designated Places (CDP) within San Bernardino County served by Valley District include:

City/Urban Area	MHI	City/Urban Area	MHI
*City of San Bernardino	\$55,372	City of Redlands	\$87,1785
*City of Colton	\$60,874	City of Rialto	\$69,934
*City of Loma Linda	\$63,272	City of Yucaipa	\$75,456
City of Highland	\$69,225	*Mentone (CDP)	\$65,949
City of Grand Terrace	\$76,791	City of Bloomington	\$68,628

*Note: \* Disadvantaged Community (<80% of CA MHI)*

As documented in the data above, many of Valley District’s retail agencies have a MHI under the state MHI and meet the definition of a disadvantaged community by City, as well as per census tract. Severely disadvantaged communities are characterized as 60% of the state MHI and disadvantaged communities are 80% of the state MHI. Therefore, the population that will benefit from the water supply and water quality benefits of the Project, as well as the population in the immediate vicinity of the Project, qualify as a disadvantaged community. See Appendix B.

**Subcriterion No.E3- Tribal Benefits**

- *Does the proposed project directly serve and/or benefit a Tribe? Will the project improve water management for an Indian Tribe?*

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (Yuhaaviatam) reservation and Soboba Indian Reservation are located within the Santa Ana River Watershed. The San Manuel Tribe does not operate their own water system but does receive groundwater through the East Valley Water District, a retail water agency within Valley District’s service area that is a member agency of SAWPA and an implementing agency of the SARCCUP program. East Valley Water District is also a Permittee to the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. The San Manuel tribe benefits from the creation of new water supplies as a retail customer of East Valley Water District.

- *Does the proposed project support Reclamation’s Tribal trust responsibilities or a Reclamation activity with a Tribe?*

The proposed project does not directly support Reclamation’s Tribal trust responsibilities.

- *Does the proposed project support Tribal resilience to climate change and drought impacts or provide other Tribal benefits such as improved public health and safety through water quality improvements, new water supplies, or economic growth opportunities?*

The proposed project does not directly support Tribal Resilience to climate change and drought impacts but does provide enhanced aquatic and riparian habitat in the Santa Ana River Watershed, of which two Tribes are currently located.



## Section 2: Project Budget

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### 2.1 Funding Plan and Letters of Commitment

- *Describe how the non-Federal share of project costs will be obtained. Please identify the sources of the non-Federal cost share contribution for the project.*

Valley District is requesting the maximum grant request of \$3,000,000 for Construction/Implementation. Valley District has general reserve funds available to provide a local match or non-federal cost share of \$1,343,500 as shown in Table 4. Valley District will provide over 30% of non-federal cost share and will not receive any third-party funding sources as shown in Table 5. Valley District is eligible for a minimum non-federal cost share of 25% by demonstrating the following:

- The project was developed as part of a collaborative process (Section 1.5.2)
- The majority of project benefits advance one or more components of an established strategy or plan to increase the reliability of a water supply for consumptive and non-consumptive ecological values (Section 1.5.1)
- The project improves stream and riparian conditions for the benefit of plant and animal species, fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and ecosystems (Section 1.5.1)

Combined, the federal share and non-federal share contributions will cover the total estimated project costs of \$4,343,500.

- *Identify whether the budget proposal includes any project costs that have been or may be incurred prior to award.*

The budget proposal includes minimal project costs that may be incurred prior to award. The budget proposal in this application is to cover construction, which will occur after November 1, 2023 and of which project costs for site preparation, anticipated to be approximately \$350,000, may be incurred prior to award between November 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023 as indicated in Section 2.3. All other construction costs will be incurred after award as listed in Table 1.

### 2.2 Budget Proposal

The Project Budget consists of costs associated with construction and fall within various budget categories, including supplies and materials, contractual/construction, among others. The budget proposal is provided in Table 6, which reflects all budget categories listed in the NOFO. The budget items included in the table are described in detail below.

**Table 4. Summary of Non-Federal and Federal Funding Sources**

<b>FUNDING SOURCES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Non-Federal Entities	
1. San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District	\$1,343,500
<b>Non-Federal Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,343,500</b>
<b>REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>

**Table 5. Total Project Cost Table**

<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Costs to be reimbursed with the requested Federal funding	\$3,000,000
Costs to be paid by the applicant	\$1,343,500
Value of third-party contributions	\$0
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$4,343,500</b>

The budget proposal consists of costs associated with implementation of the proposed Project which fall under the Contractual/Implementation and Other categories. The budget proposal is provided in Table 6 and is described in more detail in the following Budget Narrative.

**Table 6. Budget Proposal**

Budget Item Description	Computation		Quantity Type	Total Cost
	\$/Unit	Quantity		
<b>Salaries and Wages (a)</b>				
Not Applicable				
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>				
Not Applicable	-	-	-	
<b>Travel</b>				
Not Applicable	-	-	-	
<b>Equipment</b>				
Not Applicable	-	-		
<b>Supplies and Materials</b>				
Not Applicable	-	-		
<b>Contractual/Implementation</b>				
Construction – Site Preparation, Earthwork, Channel Creation, Creation of Habitat Structures, Vegetation Restoration (Task 2)	Engineers Estimate at 100 Percent Design			\$3,341,154
Contingency – 30%	Engineers Estimate at 100 Percent Design Contingency Costs (15%) + CA Construction Cost Index Inflationary Costs (15%)			\$1,002,346
<b>Other – Environmental and Regulatory Compliance</b>				
Not Applicable	N/A			N/A
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b>				<b>\$4,343,500</b>
<b>Indirect Costs</b>				
Not Applicable				
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS</b>				<b>\$4,343,500</b>

2.3 Budget Narrative

*Salaries, Wages, and Fringe Benefits*

Valley District will be involved in construction contracting and bidding. With this exception project implementation will primarily be conducted by specialized contractors whose costs are further detailed below. Valley District will not seek reimbursement for Task 1, which includes staff time spent on the Project, such as construction contracting, project management activities, as these are considered to

fall under normal staff activity. Fringe benefits are not included in the overall project budget.

### *Travel*

Valley District anticipates visiting the project site periodically during construction but travel to Valley District facilities is a part of normal staff activity and no reimbursement or match for staff travel is being sought. It is not known at this time whether consultant costs for travel will be required. If so, they would be included under contractual costs.

### *Equipment*

The purchase of related equipment needs will be included in the construction contract and related costs are accounted for under the contractual cost estimate.

### *Materials, and Supplies*

No materials or supplies are anticipated to be purchased for this Project.

### *Contractual*

Contractual/Construction work to be performed for Task 2 includes construction management during construction, tree removal, site preparation, earthwork, grading, channel and floodplain construction and rehabilitation, erosion control, terracing, culvert replacement, construction of habitat structures, planting, and irrigation. This work includes 30% contingency, which includes a 15% initial contingency from November 2021 and an additional 15% to reflect inflationary costs from November 2021 to present (California Department of General Services, 2023). It is anticipated that approximately \$350,000 may be incurred between November 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023, which is prior to award. Valley District requests for these costs to be considered by Reclamation. All other project costs will be incurred after award (December 31, 2023). All procurements with an anticipated aggregate value that exceeds the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (currently \$10,000) will use a competitive procurement method. All estimates are considered fair and reasonable.

### *Third-Party In-Kind Contributions*

There are no third-party in-kind contributions.

### *Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Costs*

CEQA and NEPA costs were previously incurred and are not included in project costs.

### *Other Expenses*

No other expenses are anticipated that are not captured under the above categories.

### *Indirect Costs*

No indirect costs are included in the proposed budget.

## Section 3: Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

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To allow Reclamation to assess the probable environmental and cultural resources impacts and costs associated with each application, responses (in black) to the following questions (in blue) are provided.

- Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? Please briefly describe all earth-disturbing work and any work that will affect the air, water, or animal habitat in the project area. Please also explain the impacts of such work on the surrounding environment and any steps that could be taken to minimize the impacts.*

The proposed project will impact the surrounding environment. The potential environmental impacts were evaluated in detail in the Upper Santa Ana River Tributaries Restoration Project and Mitigation Reserve Program EIR (San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, 2019). In summary the project will include channel and floodplain excavation, and placement of gravel and woody material. Approximately 4,200 linear feet of constructed and enhanced Hidden Valley Creek channel will be affected. Approximately 1.2 acres of new floodplain bench will be created. Nonnative plant species management and native riparian planting will occur within 21.7 acres surrounding the stream creation/enhancement areas.

Based on the analysis in the EIR, the project will not have significant air quality impacts, would not conflict with, or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan, or violate any air quality standards, expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentration, or generate objectionable odors.

The project is not anticipated to have a significant impact to water resources. The project would not lead to depletion of groundwater or interfere with groundwater recharge would not result in substantial alteration of existing drainage patterns that would result in flooding or erosion, nor conflict with or hinder implementation of a water quality control plan or groundwater management plan.

The ultimate intent of the project is to benefit habitat; however, the project could temporarily impact biological resources during construction, and mitigation measures have been developed to avoid or minimize potential impacts. During construction, the project could directly or through habitat modification affect species identified as candidate, sensitive, or special status. To avoid direct impacts on species during construction preconstruction clearance surveys will be conducted, Prior to construction each day, biological construction monitors will sweep survey areas scheduled for construction to confirm special-status species are not present. Any species found will be captured and relocated to a location pre-approved by the

CDFW and/or the USFWS. Vegetation clearing will be completed prior to bird nesting season to the extent possible. In addition, preconstruction nesting bird surveys will be performed within 300 feet of the limits of disturbance by a biologist no more than 3 days prior to initiation of construction activities. If active nests are confirmed, a conservation buffer shall be established around the nest. Prior to construction, biologists will take steps to discourage nesting in the project site (moving equipment and materials daily, covering material with tarps and securing open pipes). Preconstruction surveys within 500 feet of the limits of disturbance will be conducted within 7 days prior to ground disturbing activities between March 15 and August 31 with the intent of establishing buffers from any nests of the Least Bell's Vireo and between February 1 and August 31 with the intent of establishing buffers for any burrowing owl nests.

Preconstruction surveys will also be performed for aquatic species. Prior to construction biologists shall conduct a preliminary survey of the affected water body and surrounding suitable habitat and if any special-status species are present, the species will be captured and relocated per a capture and relocation plan.

Following construction, the project will restore riparian habitat and natural communities following a site-specific restoration plan.

Besides air, water, and biological impacts, the following impacts were also examined:

- Soils and Geology, less than significant impacts with implementation of mitigation measures;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions, less than significant;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials, less than significant;
- Noise, less than significant impacts with implementation of mitigation measures;
- Population and Housing, less than significant;
- Tribal and Cultural Resources, less than significant impacts with implementation of mitigation measures; and
- Utilities and Service Systems, less than significant.
- *Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?*

The following sensitive species are anticipated in the project area:

- Santa Ana sucker. Federally listed as Threatened, suitable habitat exists adjacent to the Project area.
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*). Federally listed as Endangered, suitable habitat exists in the project area and the species has been confirmed at the Project site.
- Santa Ana River woolly-star (*Eriastrum densifolium ssp sanctorum*). Federally listed as Endangered, suitable habitat exists in the project area and the species has been confirmed adjacent to the Project site.

These sensitive species could be affected during project construction, but as described above mitigation measures will be implemented to limit and avoid impacts to these sensitive species. Ultimately the Project will benefit sensitive species.

- *Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as "Waters of the United States?" If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.*

Mapping indicates that there are over 97 acres of wetland habitat that qualifies as "Waters of the United States" in the project area. It is anticipated that here will be temporary impacts to 19.39 acres. A temporary impact occurs when an existing wetland temporarily loses function. The Project is expected to have permanent impacts, such as grading of 0.45 on non-wetland and 0.22 acres of wetland waters to create a defined channel that supports the morphology that meets Santa ana sucker habitat requirements. The Project includes the installation of substrate such as gravel or cobble in the channel to support the necessary hydrology, substrate, and microhabitat for the Santa Ana sucker, which may result in the wetland areas becoming non-wetlands. However, these wetlands would be relocated on site through the creation of new floodplain benches by excavating the high ground adjacent to the low-flow channel, the creation of new channel lengths, and a greater distribution of hydrology through the site. With project implementation, the resulting wetland waters would be more hydrologically connected through riverine flows and flooding, would be surrounded by more natural topography, would support native emergent vegetation, and would be adjacent to native riparian vegetation, providing a net increase in aquatic resource functions and services at the site.

- *When was the water delivery system constructed?*

The project does not involve modifications to an existing water delivery system.

- *Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.*

No modifications to an existing irrigation system are proposed.

- *Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.*

Not applicable, no modifications to an existing irrigation district are proposed. In addition, review performed for CEQA found no features listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

- *Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?*

Seven previously recorded archaeological sites are located within the Project area and would be affected by ground disturbance associated with the project. Mitigation measures have been adopted that will avoid these resources and property preserve these resources if avoidance is not possible.

- *Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?*

The project will not have a high or disproportionately high or adverse effect on an established low-income or minority population. The project in general will benefit the environment surrounding the City of Jurupa Valley which has a significant minority population and a population with a poverty level of 11.6%. However, homelessness and homeless people living in the public rights of way, parks, and in natural open space is a concern in the City of Jurupa Valley, including the Hidden Valley Wildlife Area (and consequently the Hidden Valley Creek site). Should homeless persons be found occupying the project site will be directed to public assistance programs following protocols developed by the City of Jurupa Valley and County of San Bernardino prior to commencement of project activities.

- *Will the proposed project limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands?*

As part of CEQA review of the Project, outreach was performed to local Native American Tribes. No tribal cultural resources were identified through this consultation.

- *Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?*

The project is not anticipated to contribute to the introduction or continued existence or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species.



## Section 4: Other

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### 4.1 Required Permits and Approvals

Valley District certified the Final EIR for the Upper Santa Ana River Tributaries Restoration Project and Mitigation Reserve Program in November 2019. The Army Corps of Engineers has completed NEPA review as part of its Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting. As part of design and CEQA and NEPA compliance activities Valley District identified the permits needed to implement the project.

Applications for all needed permits have been completed and the following permits have been received:

- Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification – the project has received this from the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board on February 19, 2021 (and re-verified on May 3, 2022).
- Clean Water Act Section 404 Certification – the project has received this from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on December 27, 2021 (and a re-verified on May 19, 2022).
- Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement – the project has received this permit from the CDFW on July 12, 2021.
- FEMA Floodplain No-Rise Certification received in 2022.
- Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation – A Biological Opinion (BO) has been issued for the Hidden Valley Creek Project (FWS-WRIV-21B0107-21F0423, issued May 5, 2021). The BO provides the necessary incidental take authorizations for the Project. The BO states that the Project may affect the federally endangered Least Bell's Vireo and federally threatened Santa Ana sucker but concluded that the project was “not likely to result in jeopardy” for either species.

### 4.2 Letters of Support and Partnership

Letters of support from the following agencies are included in Appendix A:

- California Coastal Conservancy
- Inland Empire Utilities Agency
- Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District
- San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Western Municipal Water District
- Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority

#### 4.3 Official Resolution

A resolution from Valley District’s Board of Directors to support the submittal of this grant application, commit to the financial and legal obligations, and negotiate and execute the grant or cooperative agreement, is provided in Appendix C.

#### 4.4 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

There are no actual or potential conflicts of interests at the time of submission.

#### 4.5 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

Valley District is required to submit a Single Audit Report for fiscal year 2022-2023 in accordance with 2 CFR 200 subpart F. Valley District’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) is 95-6005196.

#### 4.6 Overlap or Duplication of Effort

Valley District attests that there is no overlap between the proposed project and any other active or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel. The proposal submitted for consideration under this program is not duplicative of a proposal or project that has been or will be submitted for funding consideration to another potential federal grant funding source. If at any time the project is awarded funds for any federal or non-federal source, Valley District will notify the NOFO point of contact or the Program Coordinator immediately.

#### 4.7 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management Registration

Valley District is registered in the System for Award Management as evidenced by the screenshot provided below. Valley District’s Unique Entity ID is MCFHQJTK3WH8.



R23AS00089 - PKG00279373  
 WaterSMART Environmental Water  
 Resources Projects for Fiscal Year (FY)  
 2023  
 Department of the Interior  
 Bureau of Reclamation

Application Filing Name: Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project [\[Edit Name\]](#)  
 Workspace ID: WS01056201      Workspace Status: In Progress  
 AOR Status: Workspace has AOR      Last Submitted Date: ---  
 Workspace Owner: Marina Magana      SAM Expiration Date: Feb 18, 2024

Opening Date: Jan 24, 2023  
 Closing Date: Mar 28, 2023  
 UEI: MCFHQJTK3WH8

Valley District will maintain an active SAM and ASAP registration during any period in which Valley District has an active Federal award or application under consideration by a Federal entity.

#### 4.8 Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

Valley District has submitted a Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, form SF-LLL.

#### 4.9 Project Abstract Summary

Valley District has submitted OMB Form 4040-0019 Project Abstract Summary.

## Section 5: References

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Initiation of 5-Year Status Reviews of 76 Species in California and Nevada. May 2021.

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**APPENDIX A**

Letters of Support

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Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Team  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

March 14, 2023

**Subject:** Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of California State Coastal Conservancy, we would like to express our strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding. The project aligns with our agencies own goals of supporting water supply, water quality, flood control, natural resources protection and restoration, and recreation within the Santa Ana River watershed.

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for development of additional dry-year yield, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for sustainable native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole.

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report. More than eight years in the making, the HCP proposes conservation for 20 species, 9 of which are listed, and new or expanded water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre feet of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies.

Valley District and its partners decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principal called “advanced mitigation” to minimize effects to covered species. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The purpose of the project is to increase the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, and act as a “pilot” project for the many restoration efforts to come, and to assure the partners, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, that the conservation strategies are not only implementable, but also provide direct and measurable species benefits. Implementation of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project will represent a major milestone in moving toward balancing municipal supply and wildlife conservation needs within the upper Santa Ana River Watershed.

The goals of the project are consistent with and complimentary to the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan developed and adopted by the California State Coastal Conservancy in 2018.

We strongly urge your thoughtful consideration of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

*Greg Gauthier*

Greg Gauthier  
Deputy Regional Manager  
South Coast Region  
State Coastal Conservancy





6075 Kimball Avenue • Chino, CA 91708  
P.O. Box 9020 • Chino Hills, CA 91709  
TEL (909) 993-1600 • FAX (909) 993-1985  
[www.ieua.org](http://www.ieua.org)

March 15, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Team  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

**Subject:** Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Inland Empire Utilities Agency, we would like to express our strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding.

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for development of additional dry-year supplies, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for sustainable native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole.

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report. More than eight years in the making, the HCP proposes conservation for 20 species, 9 of which are listed, and new or expanded water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre feet of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies.

*Water Smart - Thinking in Terms of Tomorrow*

**Marco Tule**  
President

**Steven J. Elie**  
Vice President

**Jasmin A. Hall**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Michael Camacho**  
Director

**Paul Hofer**  
Director

**Shivaji Deshmukh**  
General Manager

Re: Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

Valley District and its partners decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principal called “advanced mitigation” to minimize effects to covered species. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The purpose of the project is to increase the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, and act as a “pilot” project for the many restoration efforts to come, and to assure the partners, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, that the conservation strategies are not only implementable, but also provide direct and measurable species benefits. Implementation of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project will represent a major milestone in moving toward balancing municipal supply and wildlife conservation needs within the upper Santa Ana River Watershed.

We strongly urge your thoughtful consideration of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,  
INLAND EMPIRE UTILITIES AGENCY



Shivaji Deshmukh, P.E.  
General Manager



# Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District

Kyla Brown, Parks Director / General Manager

March 15, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Team  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

Subject: Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Riverside County Regional Park & Open-Space District, we would like to express our strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding.

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for development of additional dry-year yield, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for sustainable native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole.

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report. More than eight years in the making, the HCP proposes conservation for 20 species, 9 of which are listed, and new or expanded water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre feet of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies.

Valley District and its partners decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principal called "advanced mitigation" to minimize effects to covered species. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The purpose



of the project is to increase the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, and act as a “pilot” project for the many restoration efforts to come, and to assure the partners, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, that the conservation strategies are not only implementable, but also provide direct and measurable species benefits. Implementation of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project will represent a major milestone in moving toward balancing municipal supply and wildlife conservation needs within the upper Santa Ana River Watershed.

By implementing the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project we also further improve the quality and quantity of a well-balanced system of park related places of outstanding scenic, recreational, and historic importance protected in perpetuity, which aligns perfectly with Riverside County Regional Park & Open-Space District’s core mission.

We strongly urge your thoughtful consideration of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyla Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kyla Brown  
General Manager/Parks Director  
Riverside County Regional Park & Open-Space District



**San Bernardino Valley  
Water Conservation District**

Helping Nature Store Our Water

March 15, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Team  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

**Subject: Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program**

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (Water Conservation District), we would like to express our strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding.

As an agency focused on groundwater recharge, we are excited to see the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program, move forward. And as a Participating Entity in Valley District's draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan, and the Permittee for the Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan, the Water Conservation District strongly supports projects that restore and expand the values of natural habitats within our region.

With these demonstrated benefits to both water reliability and habitat within the region, we strongly urge your thoughtful consideration of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

Betsy Miller  
General Manager

1630 W. Redlands Blvd, Suite A  
Redlands, CA 92373  
Phone: 909.793.2503  
Fax: 909.793.0188  
www.sbvwc.org Email: info@sbvwcd.org

**BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS**

Division 1:  
Richard Corneille

Division 2:  
David E. Raley

Division 3:  
Robert Stewart

Division 4:  
John Longville

Division 5:  
Melody McDonald

**GENERAL  
MANAGER**

Betsy Miller



## United States Department of the Interior

### U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250  
Carlsbad, California 92008



In Reply Refer To:  
2023-0055558-HCP-TA-RV

March 21, 2023  
*Sent Electronically*

#### Memorandum

To: Bureau of Reclamation, Financial Assistance Operations  
Denver, Colorado  
Attention: Notice of Funding Opportunity Coordinator (NOFO No. R23AS00089)

From: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
Carlsbad, California

Subject: Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), I am writing to express our support for WaterSMART grant funding for projects that seek to improve and restore degraded riparian areas for the benefit of endangered and threatened species, such as San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District's (Valley District) project entitled the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, which is a component of the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program. The Service has been working in partnership with Valley District to restore habitat quality in and along the Santa Ana River to improve the watershed's water supply and to aid in the recovery of the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*).

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide, collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for the development of additional dry-year yield, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for sustainable native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole.

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report. More than 8 years in the making, the HCP proposes conservation for 20 species—9 of which are Federally listed—and new or expanded

water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre-feet of water, on average, to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies.

Valley District and its partners decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principal called “advanced mitigation,” to minimize effects to covered species. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The primary purpose of the project is to increase the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, and act as a “pilot” project for stream restoration and rehabilitation efforts needed to stabilize Santa Ana sucker distribution in the mainstem Santa Ana River and support its recovery within the watershed. We expect this project will provide direct and measurable species benefits. Restoration projects like the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project contribute to efforts needed to balance municipal supply and wildlife conservation needs within the upper Santa Ana River Watershed. In addition to aiding in the recovery of the Santa Ana sucker, the project is also expected to provide habitat for the federally endangered least Bell’s vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and the federally threatened yellow-billed cuckoo [western distinct population segment (DPS) (*Coccyzus americanus*)]. Additionally, the project will also provide habitat for other species listed in the HCP; arroyo chub (*Gila orcutti*), southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata pallida*), south coast garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis* ssp.), and yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*).

The Service supports efforts to restore native habitats along the Santa Ana River for the benefit of the Santa Ana River watershed and the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, such as Valley District’s Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Craig D. Miller  
General Manager

Mike Gardner  
Division 1

Gracie Torres  
Division 2

Brenda Dennstedt  
Division 3

Laura Roughton  
Division 4

Fauzia Rizvi  
Division 5

March 15, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Team  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

## **SUPPORT FOR THE HIDDEN VALLEY CREEK AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT, A COMPONENT OF THE SANTA ANA RIVER CONSERVATION & CONJUNCTIVE USE PROGRAM**

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Western Municipal Water District (Western Water), we would like to express our strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding.

The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability by implementing various watershed-wide projects for development of additional dry-year yield, reduction of water use, and habitat improvement for sustainable native species populations. As a watershed-wide cooperative venture, SARCCUP will allow the regional water managers to combine groundwater resources and water conveyance infrastructure for the benefit of the watershed as a whole.

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region, where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance. Evidence of the commitment to collaboration for water supply and environment is the completion of the Draft Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Impact Report. More than eight years in the making, the HCP proposes conservation for 20 species, 9 of which are listed, and new or expanded water capture projects that would add 87,000 acre feet of water on average to the supplies of the 11 cooperating agencies.



Valley District and its partners decided early on to construct mitigation even before the HCP was complete, a principal called “advanced mitigation” to minimize effects to covered species. The Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is part of this advanced mitigation strategy. The purpose of the project is to increase the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker, and act as a “pilot” project for the many restoration efforts to come, and to assure the partners, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, that the conservation strategies are not only implementable, but also provide direct and measurable species benefits. Implementation of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project will represent a major milestone in moving toward balancing municipal supply and wildlife conservation needs within the upper Santa Ana River Watershed.

Western Water completed a Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) in 2022, with support from the Bureau of Reclamation’s Drought Contingency Planning Grant. Valley District was an active participant in Western Water’s Drought Task Force. This project is consistent with the goals and objectives of Western Water’s DCP as a mitigation action because it supports the DCP goal of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Additionally, the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project helps the SARCCUP project partners, such as Western Water, to implement their conjunctive use projects, making the region more resilient to drought.

We strongly urge your thoughtful consideration of the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,



Ryan Shaw

Director of Water Resources  
Western Municipal Water District



4080 Lemon St. 3rd Fl. Riverside, CA 92502  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12008 Riverside, CA 92502-2208  
951.787.7141 • wrc-rca.org

March 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Financial Assistance Operations  
Attn: NOFO Coordinator (NOFO No. R23AS00089)  
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133  
Denver, CO 80225

**Subject:** Support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, a Component of the Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program

To Whom It May Concern:

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) expresses its strong support for the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding. The RCA supports the proposal because of the ecological significance of the Santa Ana River and because the project provides support to meet the goals of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) of which RCA is a Permittee.

The RCA was established in 2004 by the County of Riverside and the cities of western Riverside County to provide policy direction for implementation of the MSHCP. In this role, the RCA provides implementation guidance and direction to the county and 18 cities on MSHCP policies, acquires land for reserve assembly, and manages and monitors for 146 special-status species on over 65,000 acres of MSHCP additional reserve lands. The MSHCP not only manages at the species-level but also at the landscape level, which includes protecting watersheds, of which the Santa Ana River is the largest within the MSHCP plan area.

We understand the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project is one of the first habitat restoration components to be implemented as part of the broader Santa Ana River Conservation & Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP). SARCCUP is a multi-agency, watershed-wide collaborative program designed to improve the Santa Ana River watershed's water supply resiliency and reliability, while improving habitat for sustainable native species population.

Bureau of Reclamation

March 27, 2023

Page 2

SARCCUP embodies a new approach to water resources in the Santa Ana River Region where water supply and environmental needs for water are planned concurrently, on a regional scale, and given equal importance.

Once again, the RCA strongly supports the Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project and the application by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) for WaterSMART grant funding. We are confident the proposal will have dramatic long-term effects to furthering ecological sustainability of the Santa Ana River. Should you have any questions about our support, please do not hesitate to contact me at (951) 787-7141 or [amayer@rctc.org](mailto:amayer@rctc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne E. Mayer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Mayer  
Executive Director

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**APPENDIX C**

Official Resolution

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RESOLUTION NO. 1173

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT, IN SUPPORT OF VALLEY DISTRICT'S APPLICATION, AND APPROVING NEGOTIATION AND EXECUTION OF A GRANT OR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, FOR A WATERSMART ENVIRONMENTAL WATER RESOURCES GRANT (FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NO. R23AS00089) FOR THE HIDDEN VALLEY CREEK AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

**WHEREAS**, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District ("**Valley District**") is a municipal water district organized and operating pursuant to the Municipal Water District Law of 1911 (Water Code § 71000 *et seq.*); and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation ("**Bureau**"), provides monetary grants to states, tribes, or local governments, and other entities such as water districts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau is making funding available through the WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Grant; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Directors of the District OF Valley District has reviewed and approves of the application for the Bureau WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Grant; and

**WHEREAS**, Valley District agrees to the administration and cost sharing requirements of the WaterSMART Grant criteria;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved, determined and ordered by the Board of Directors of the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, as follows:

Section 1. Authorizes Valley District to apply for a grant through the Bureau WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Grant Program for the "Hidden Valley Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project".

Section 2. That, if recommended for funding by the Bureau, Valley District's Board of Directors authorizes the District to accept a grant of up to \$3 million.

Section 3. That, if recommended for funding by the Bureau, Valley District's Board of Directors authorizes and ensures the capability of Valley District to provide necessary matching funds in the form of cash, funding from partner agencies, and in-kind contributions.

Section 4. That, if recommended for funding by the Bureau, Valley District will work with the Bureau to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

Section 5. This resolution officially becomes a component part of Valley District's grant application.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Chief Executive Officer/General Manager, or their designee, is hereby authorized and empowered to take all actions necessary to carry out the intent and purpose of this Resolution, including the negotiation, completion, and execution of a grant or cooperative agreement with the Bureau and the receipt and administration of the WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Grant funding in accordance with the requirements of the Bureau.

ADOPTED, SIGNED, and APPROVED this 21ST day of MARCH 2023

**AYES:** 5 - BOTELLO, HARRISON, HAYES, KIELHOLD, LONGVILLE

**NOES:**

**ABSENT:**

**OBSTAINED:**



Paul R Kielhold  
President



Heather P. Dyer  
Secretary