NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

TO: State Clearinghouse,
Responsible and Trustee Agencies,
Property Owners and Interested Parties

FROM: Sonoma County Water Agency
2150 W. College Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

SONOMA VALLEY RECYCLED WATER PROJECT

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) on behalf of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (SVCSD) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Sonoma Valley Recycled Water Project (SVRWP). The EIR for the proposed SVRWP will be prepared by the Agency in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. The Agency will be the "lead agency" pursuant to CEQA and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested parties regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. The following sections provide information regarding project need and benefits, background and treatment process, project description and location, potential environmental impact areas, and public comment period.

PROJECT NEED AND BENEFITS

The SVCSD operates a wastewater treatment facility within the Sonoma Valley that, during certain times of the year (November through May), is permitted to discharge treated water to San Pablo Bay. In order to provide additional flexibility for its regional water management responsibilities, the Agency views the use of recycled water as a viable and environmentally responsible means of offsetting demand on natural water supply sources. The Agency has identified approximately 2,800 acres of agricultural and urban lands within Sonoma Valley that could potentially use recycled water.

Potential benefits of using recycled water from SVCSD include environmental benefits from reduced discharges to the San Pablo Bay, reduction of peak potable water demands on the Valley of the Moon Water District and City of Sonoma's distribution systems, and reduction of groundwater pumping (either for potable water supply or agricultural purposes) that may be creating stressed aquifer conditions in some areas of the Sonoma Valley.

The purpose of the SVRWP is to provide a reliable alternative source of water for agricultural and urban use to reduce reliance on natural regional water supplies and to address regional water supply and regulatory issues. The public would benefit from this project through the reduction of use of natural regional water supplies, the reduction of wastewater discharges to San Pablo Bay, and from the resulting environmental benefit to fish and wildlife.

BACKGROUND AND TREATMENT PROCESS

Background

The SVCSD service area is located within the proposed SVRWP area. The SVCSD service area extends from the unincorporated communities of Glen Ellen in the north to Schellville in the south (see Figure 1). The SVCSD includes a wastewater treatment facility and a collection system within Sonoma Valley.

Treatment Process

Wastewater is treated at the SVCSD treatment facility to a secondary level (recycled water). Under current operations, the recycled water from the SVCSD treatment facility is discharged to Schell Slough (waters of the United States) from November 1 through April 30. Discharges to waters of the United States are regulated under the SVCSD's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit administered by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region. Between May 1 and October 31 secondary treated recycled water is used for local irrigation of agricultural areas, and for wetland enhancement.

As a separate project, SVCSD plans to upgrade the treatment facility to tertiary treatment level within the next two to three years. Therefore, the EIR will assume that recycled water available for this project will be treated to a tertiary level.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

Project Description

The proposed SVRWP would provide a reliable recycled water distribution system serving water users in the Sonoma Valley. The proposed SVRWP would consist of the construction, operation, and maintenance of recycled water pipelines; capacity and operational storage reservoir; utilization of two abandoned City of Sonoma steel water storage tanks; booster pump stations; distribution pumps; associated connecting pipelines; and other appurtenances. The proposed SVRWP would provide turnouts along pipelines for property owners to connect into the recycled water pipelines.

The proposed recycled water pipelines would distribute recycled water from the SVCSD treatment facility to portions of Sonoma Valley. The Agency is currently considering two proposed alternative pipeline routes: Alternative 1, which consists of approximately 51 miles of pipe and appurtenances, and Alternative 2 which would consist of the same route as Alternative 1, with additional facilities, including approximately 15 miles of pipe, to provide reliability and operational flexibility.

The SVRWP would utilize operational storage facilities, which would be analyzed at a project level. The proposed operational storage reservoir would store recycled water to buffer between short-term fluctuating demands on the recycled water distribution system and the recycled water generated by treatment facility. The abandoned City of Sonoma steel storage tanks would provide 612,000 gallons of recycled water storage, including a 412,000 gallon and a 200,000 gallon storage tank. These steel storage tanks would sustain pressure in the recycled water distribution system, add operational storage capacity for pressure fluctuations, and would assist in meeting peak water demands. The proposed booster pump station would maintain sufficient water pressure to transport recycled water through the distribution system. The distribution pumps would pump recycled water from the operational storage reservoir to the recycled water distribution pipelines, which would then deliver the recycled water to users.

The SVRWP would also utilize capacity storage facilities, which would be analyzed on a program level. The specific locations of the capacity storage reservoirs have not yet been determined, and would be analyzed at a project level by the Agency at a later date. The proposed capacity storage reservoirs would be used for longer-term storage of recycled water in the winter for subsequent use during the summer, when demand is greater than supply. Connecting pipelines, booster pump stations, and appurtenances related to the capacity storage facilities will also be analyzed on a program level.

Project Location

The proposed SVRWP would generally be located in the southern portion of Sonoma Valley, California, as shown on Figures 1 and 2. The Sonoma Valley is located north of the San Francisco Bay approximately seventeen miles southeast of the City of Santa Rosa. The City of Sonoma is located near the southern portion of the Sonoma Valley within the recycled water distribution area. Sonoma Creek is the main surface water tributary in the project area, draining water from north to south into San Pablo Bay through a series of marshes and wetlands.

The recycled water pipelines would originate at the SVCSD treatment facility at 22675 8th Street East, Sonoma. The operational storage reservoir, associated connecting pipelines, and appurtenances would be located on 8th Street East, adjacent to and north of the SVCSD treatment facility. The two existing City of Sonoma steel water storage tanks are located on Norrbom Road, Sonoma. One booster pump station, associated connecting pipelines, and appurtenances would be located on Napa Road, Sonoma. The distribution pumps also would be located at the SVCSD treatment facility. Locations for the proposed SVRWP project (or site-specific) level components are shown on Figure 2.

The specific locations of the capacity storage reservoirs; other booster pump stations; associated connecting pipelines; and appurtenances are unknown at this time and will be addressed in this EIR on a program level.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

The SVRWP EIR will address 1) the general impacts, or program level impacts, of the proposed capacity storage reservoir(s) and associated facilities which include: booster pump stations, associated connecting pipelines, and other appurtenances; and 2) project level (or site-specific) impacts of constructing the recycled water pipelines, an operational storage reservoir, utilization of two existing City of Sonoma steel water storage tanks, booster pump station, distribution pumps; associated connecting pipelines, and other appurtenances. Because the location and design of the program-level proposed project components are conceptual, these proposed project components will be subject to future project level (or site-specific) environmental review in accordance with CEQA. The EIR will also discuss alternatives to the proposed SVRWP, and alternatives may be added based on input received during the NOP review period.

The EIR will address the potential environmental impacts associated with the SVRWP. Specific areas of analysis will include: Aesthetics, Agriculture Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. Areas of analysis may be changed based on input received during the NOP review period. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to avoid or reduce such impacts. Additionally, potential cumulative impacts of the SVRWP will be addressed in the EIR.

Information to be included in the SVRWP EIR will also be based on input and comments received during the NOP review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, property owners, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR after it is published and circulated for public review.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on October 20, 2005. Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person in your agency for all future correspondence on this subject. Please send your comments to:

Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Amy Harris Mai, Senior Environmental Specialist
PO Box 11628
Santa Rosa, CA 95406-1628

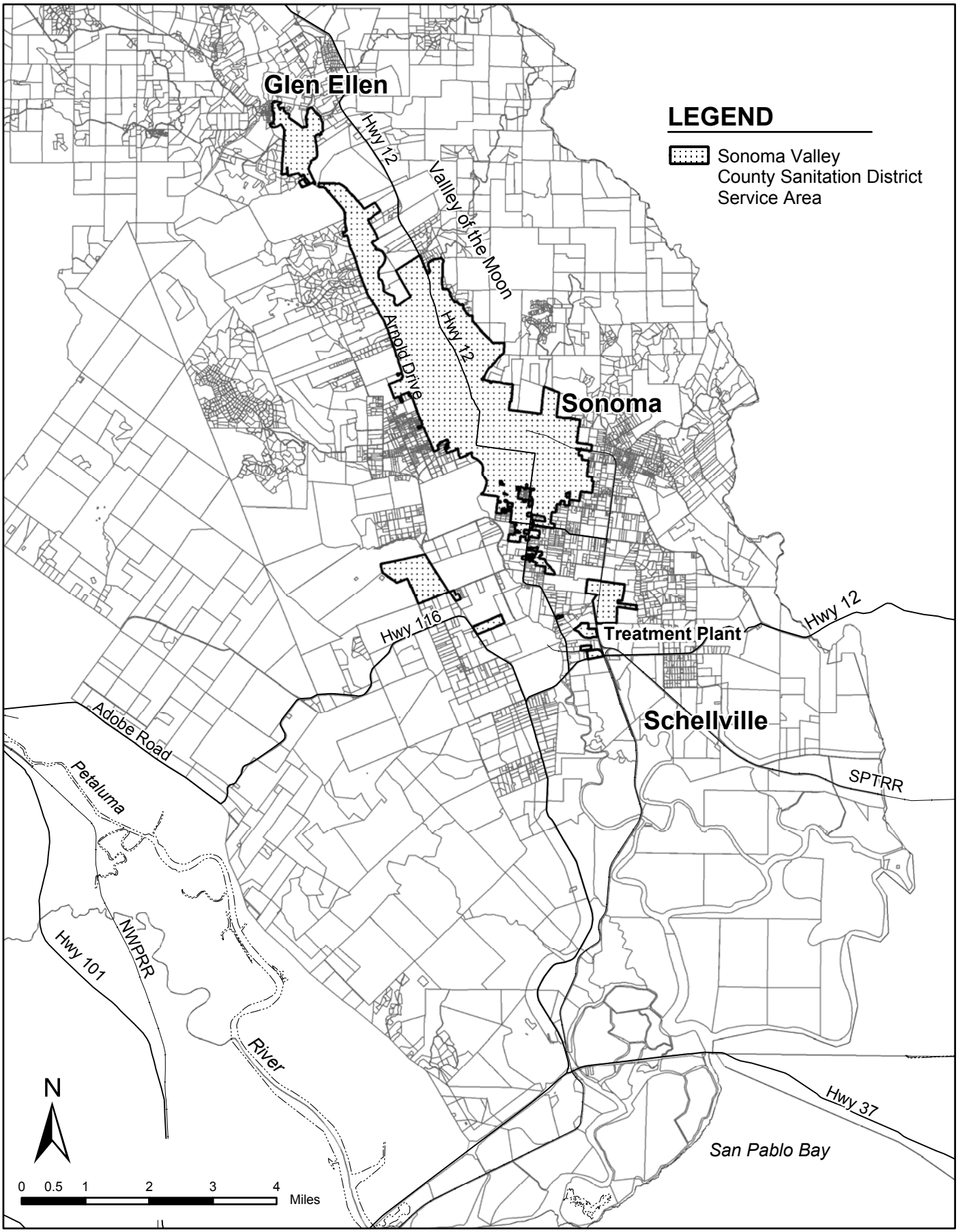
You may also submit your comments electronically at the Agency's website:
www.sonomacountywater.org

OPEN HOUSE SCOPING MEETING

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments on the scope of the EIR, a scoping meeting will be held during the NOP review period. The scoping meeting will use an Open House format, with a brief presentation providing an overview of the proposed project. Before and after the presentation, Agency staff will be available at informational tables to answer questions about the project. Written comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the scoping meeting; written comments may also be submitted anytime during the NOP review period. The scoping meeting will be held:

Thursday, October 6, 2005
4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Presentation at 5:30 p.m.
Sonoma Community Center
276 East Napa Street, Sonoma

Documents or files related to the SVRWP are available for review at the Agency's office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. If you have any questions, or if you wish to update your information on our mailing list, please contact Amy Harris Mai at (707) 547-1958.

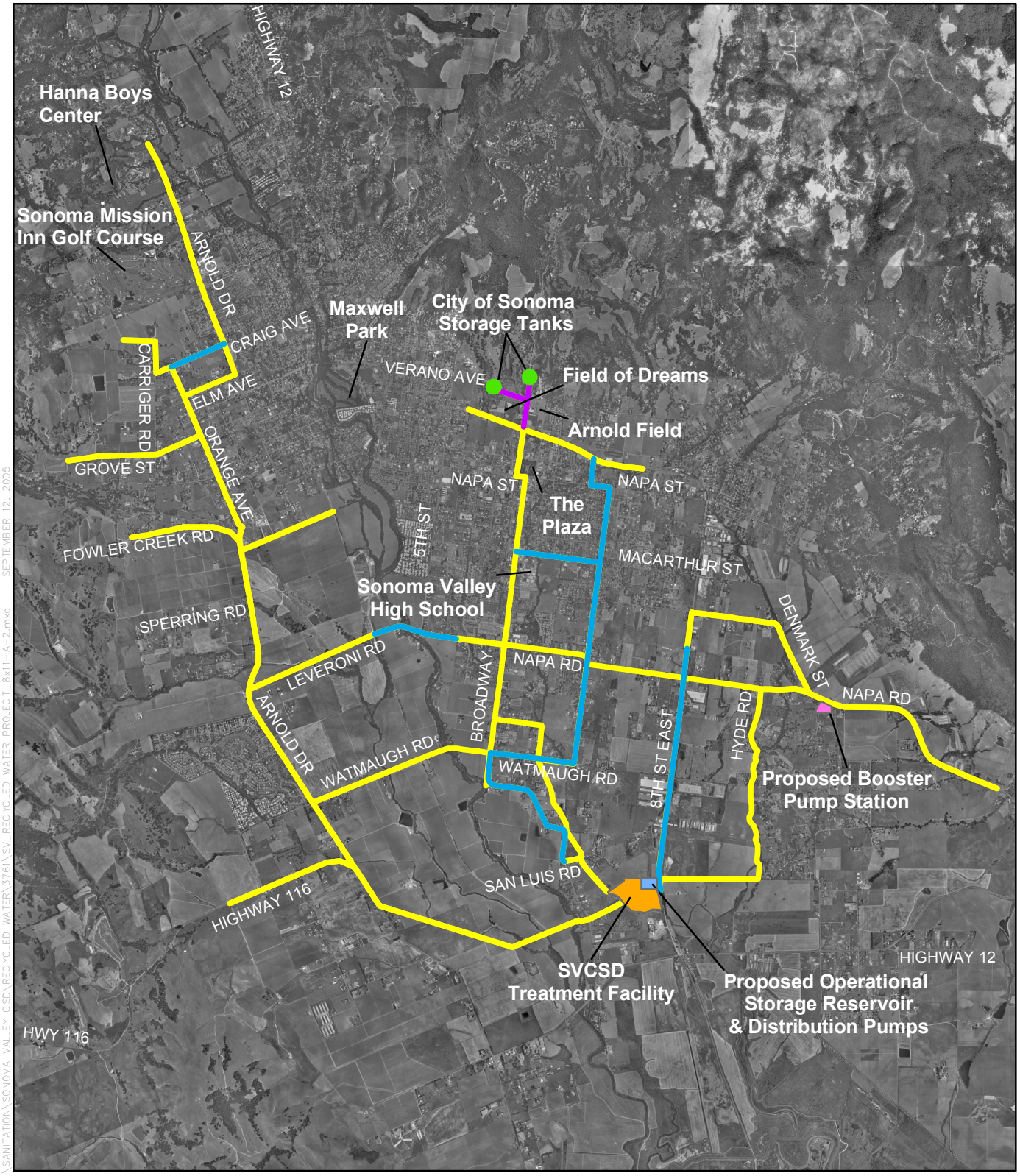


SONOMA VALLEY COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT SERVICE AREA

Sonoma Valley Recycled Water Project

FIGURE 1

\WATER TRANSMISSION\PROJECTS\WATER PROJECTS\VCSD-RECYCLE-Water-Fig1.mxd MARCH 3, 2004



Legend

- Alternative 1 Proposed Pipeline Route
- and Alternative 2
- Connecting Pipelines
- City of Sonoma Storage Tanks (Abandoned)
- Proposed Operational Storage Reservoir
- Proposed Booster Pump Station
- Sonoma Valley CSD Treatment Facility

N

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2
Scale in Miles

PROPOSED PROJECT COMPONENTS

Sonoma Valley Recycled Water Project

FIGURE 2