



Notice of Preparation of Initial Study

December 8, 2014

TO: State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Agencies and Parties

FROM: Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Occidental County Sanitation District Recycled Water Project

The Occidental County Sanitation District (District) is preparing an Initial Study for the Occidental Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Recycled Water Project (Proposed Project). The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency), which operates the District's WWTF under contract, will prepare the Initial Study on behalf of the District in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Water Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental impacts used to determine whether a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report will be prepared. It is a public document that analyzes the potential environmental effects related to construction, operation, and maintenance of a project and describes ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental damage. The District will act as 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 Initial Study

Background

The District's service area covers approximately 55 acres and provides service to approximately 95 parcels in the community of Occidental. The District collects wastewater in its service area through 7,500 feet of gravity sewer pipelines and one lift station (Figure 1). Secondary treatment is provided at the Occidental WWTF prior to discharge to Dutch Bill Creek or use as recycled water for irrigation purposes. The District has utilized Graham's Pond, located on the

Loades' property and originally constructed as an agricultural pond, as a year-round storage reservoir since 1977. However, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) analysis has determined that Graham's Pond is a water of the United States due to its construction and location at the headwaters of Dutch Bill Creek. Since Graham's Pond is considered a water of the United States (waters of the U.S.) and a tributary to the Russian River, it is not permissible to discharge into the pond from May 15 through September 30. Unfortunately, it is currently not possible for the District to meet this requirement and the District must discharge year-round since Graham's Pond is the only storage pond available.

The Regional Board adopted Cease and Desist Order (CDO) No. R1-2012-0102 on December 6, 2012, which identifies provisions of the *North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan* (Basin Plan) that require advanced wastewater treatment for discharges to surface waters and requires the District to cease discharging secondary treated water to waters of the U.S.. The Regional Board provided a schedule in the CDO to allow time to develop a project that would bring the District into compliance. The CDO requires the District to complete a capital improvement project and achieve full compliance with all applicable water discharge requirements by January 31, 2018.

The District received a grant in October 2010 from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for preliminary design of a recycled water storage and irrigation project that would allow the WWTF to be operated as a zero-discharge facility. A 30% Conceptual Design Report (Design Report) was prepared that identified a study area, developed design criteria to size the proposed storage pond, and assessed several proposed project alternatives on the Loades property and neighboring property across Graton Road. A Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (NOP) was issued in June 2013, and a public scoping meeting was held on June 20, 2013. Based on comments received during the NOP public review period, which indicated a lack of support from land owners and the interested public, the District abandoned the project proposed in the Design Report and began evaluating other options for compliance with the Regional Board's CDO.

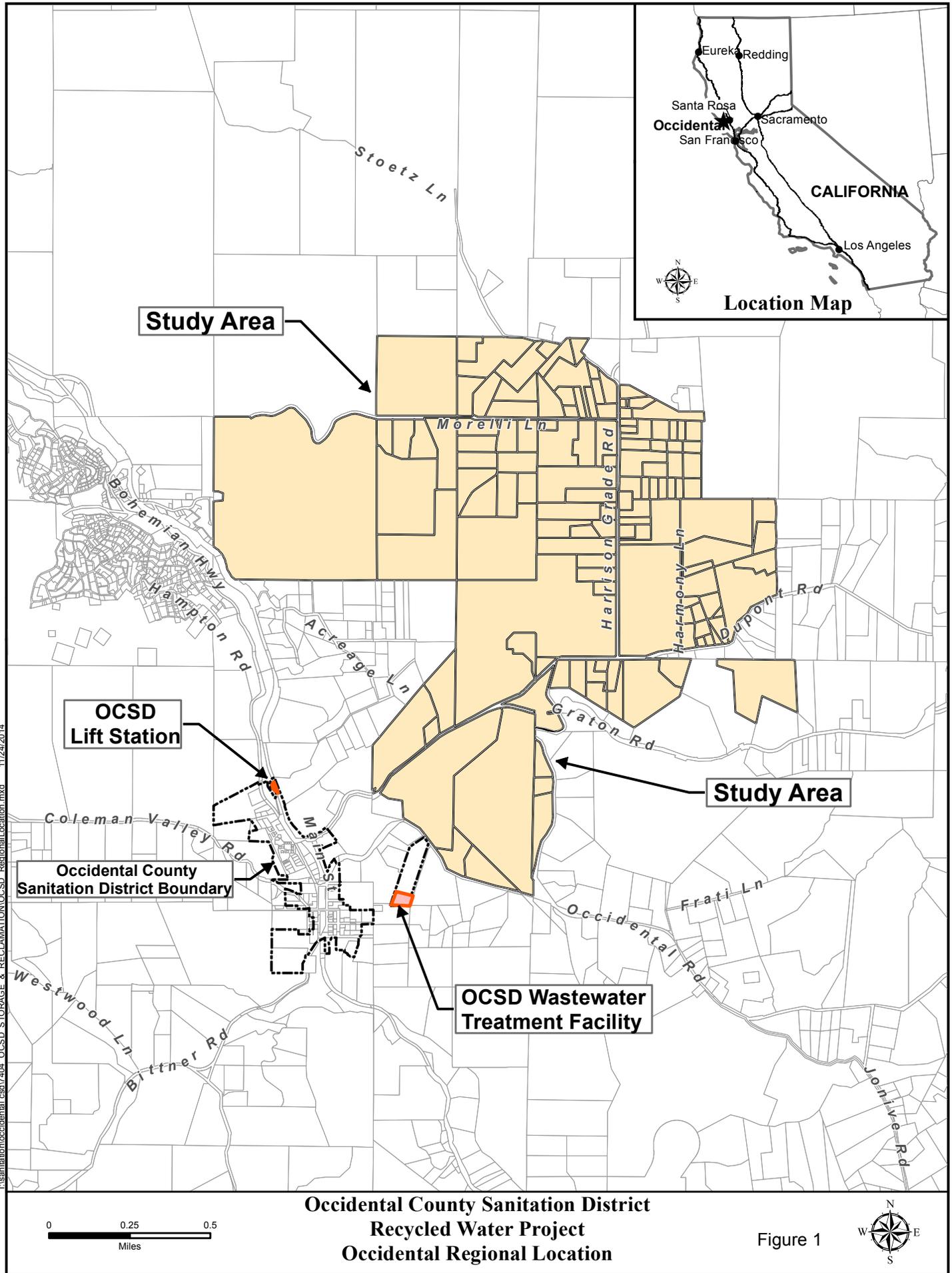
Project Need and Objectives

The Proposed Project is needed to comply with the CDO and reduce the possibility of discharge violations at the WWTF. The project objectives are to upgrade wastewater treatment levels, construct and utilize new off-stream storage, and expand beneficial reuse of recycled water. Upgrading the District's WWTF to tertiary treatment levels that satisfy National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements and construction of off-stream storage and related infrastructure would allow the District to seasonally discharge treated wastewater and expand beneficial reuse of recycled water.

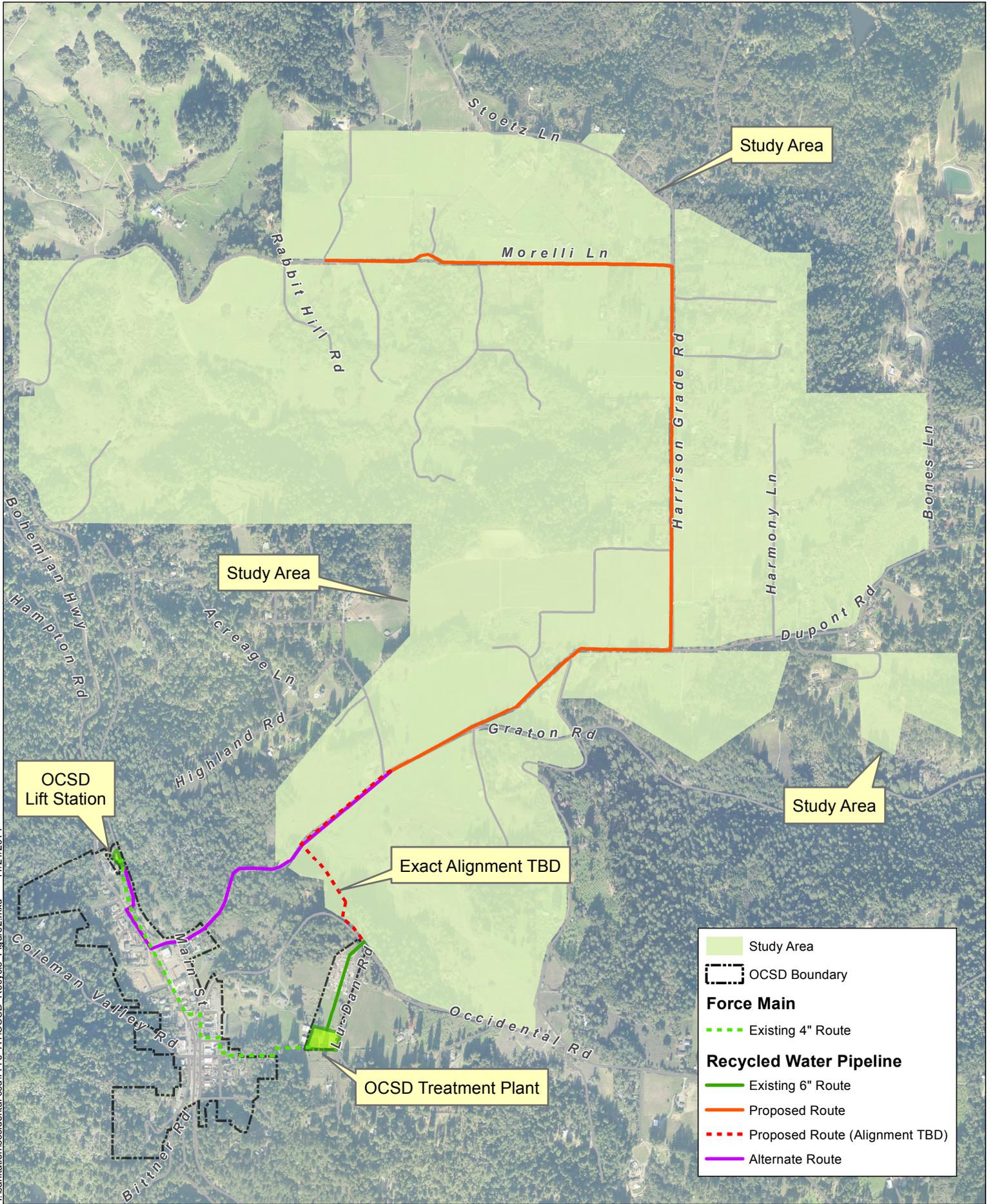
Project Location and Description

The Proposed Project would be located in unincorporated Sonoma County, near the community of Occidental, California (Figure 1). The District's existing facilities are comprised of the WWTF, located on property leased by the District from the Druid's Occidental Cemetery at 14445 Occidental Road (Figure 2), and the lift station, on property currently owned by the District at 4200 Occidental-Camp Meeker Road (Figure 2). Modifications to the existing WWTF and lift station would occur at these locations. The Proposed Project would include a recycled water pipeline that could potentially be located along county roadways in and east of Occidental including: Occidental-Camp Meeker Road, Bohemian Highway, Graton Road, Occidental Road, Harrison Grade Road, and Morelli Lane (Figure 1). The Proposed Project would also need off-stream recycled water storage, preferably on property located along the proposed recycled pipeline route. Other project components would be located along county roads proposed for the recycled water pipeline. The county roads that may be utilized for this project are located in a mixture of unincorporated urban areas, rural residential areas, and agricultural and forest lands in the coastal ranges of western Sonoma County (Figure 2).

The Proposed Project would consist of upgrades to the District's existing WWTF system and would improve water quality to meet "Title 22" tertiary standards (CCR Title 22, § 60301.230) and NPDES permit requirements for discharge into Dutch Bill Creek. Project components would include: treatment system upgrades, a recycled water pipeline, agricultural irrigation reuse areas, and off-stream storage for recycled water. Recycled water storage ponds would need to be utilized by the District to store water during the non-discharge season and to operate the recycled water pipeline system. A recycled water pipeline would be constructed northeast of the community of Occidental along Graton and Harrison Grade Roads, and Morelli Lane. There are two possible recycled pipeline routes to Graton Road, depending on the location of WWTF upgrades (Figure 2). Potential locations for beneficial reuse of recycled water have been initially identified as properties with agricultural irrigation needs that are adjacent to the proposed recycled water pipeline route (Figure 2). If treatment facility upgrades occur at the existing WWTF on Occidental Road, the existing pipeline through the Druid's cemetery would be utilized and a new recycled water pipeline would extend from the cemetery and connect to the existing discharge location on the Loades' property and then extend across the Loades' property to Graton Road. If upgrades are located at the existing lift station, the recycled water pipeline would extend from the lift station on Occidental-Camp Meeker Road to Bohemian Hwy and then to Graton Road. The winter discharge point would be moved to the lift station on Dutch Bill Creek. (Figure 2). The trucking of treated and/or untreated water to another wastewater treatment facility may also be a part of the project depending on available irrigation and storage capacity. Trucking may be necessary on a seasonal basis during peak winter inflows, on an emergency basis during process upset conditions, or as a short-term solution to address NPDES requirements if a No Project Alternative becomes the preferred project.



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Occidental County Sanitation District
 Recycled Water Project
 Proposed Recycled Water Pipeline Route

0 500 1,000 Feet



Figure 2

Issues to be Addressed in the Initial Study

In accordance with CEQA, the Initial study would address the potential environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively, associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Specific areas of analysis may include: Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Public Utilities and Service Systems. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to avoid or reduce impacts. Alternatives analysis will review the No Project Alternative and alternative sites within the study area. Areas of analysis may be changed based on comments received from responsible agencies and the public during the NOP review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the applicable CEQA document, as determined by the Initial Study (EIR or Negative Declaration) 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, responses must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 45 days after receipt of this notice. The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2015. Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person for all future correspondence on this subject. Please send comments to:

**Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Jeff Church
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

Comments may also be submitted electronically to: jchurch@scwa.ca.gov

Documents or files related to the Proposed Project are available for review online at <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/OCSD/> or at the Water Agency's administrative office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. The NOP will also be available for review at the county libraries in Occidental, Sebastopol, and Guerneville.

If you have any questions regarding this Notice of Preparation, or if you wish to update information on our mailing list, please contact Jeff Church at 707-547-1949 or jchurch@scwa.ca.gov.

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 Initial Study, a scoping meeting will be held during the NOP review period. The Scoping Meeting will use a modified Open House format. Water Agency staff will provide a brief presentation at the beginning of the scoping meeting and will then be available to answer questions and provide information about the project in order to allow interested parties to participate at any time during the Open House. Comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the Open House. Written comments may also be submitted anytime during the NOP review period, which closes on Thursday, January 22, 2015. The date, time, and location of the scoping meeting is listed below:

Thursday, January 8
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Back Room, Union Hotel
9731 Main Street, Occidental

DISABLED ACCOMMODATION: If you have a disability which requires an accommodation, an alternative format, or requires another person to assist you while attending this meeting, please contact the Sonoma County Water Agency at (707) 524-8378, as soon as possible to ensure arrangements for accommodation.



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OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT RECYCLED WATER PROJECT

Upcoming Scoping Meeting:

Thursday, January 8
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Back Room, Union Hotel
9731 Main Street,
Occidental

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