

RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Board Memorandum

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DATE: NOVEMBER 28, 2016

ITEM NO: 5

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR SALINITY MANAGEMENT IN THE SAN BERNARDINO BASIN AREA WITH EAST VALLEY WATER DISTRICT AND SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

ISSUES:

That the Riverside Public Utilities Board recommend City Council approve the Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the San Bernardino Basin Area with East Valley Water District and San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Public Utilities recommend City Council approve the Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the San Bernardino Basin Area.

BACKGROUND:

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) and East Valley Water District (EVWD) propose to develop the Sterling Natural Resource Center (SNRC) Project, which will reclaim 6 million gallons per day of wastewater and will recharge the treated effluent into the San Bernardino Basin Area (SBBA). Specifically, the SNRC will discharge to City Creek, located in the City of Highland, and to the Redlands Recharge Basins, located west of Interstate 210 along the Santa Ana River as shown in Figure 1. Valley District is the lead agency who will build and operate the SNRC.

Beginning with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report in December 2015, Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) expressed concern that the SNRC could adversely impact water quality extracted from RPU's wells. Specifically, RPU was concerned that the project could elevate levels of Total Dissolved Solids or salts within the groundwater in future years. Currently, the salt levels in RPU drinking water are within state and federal guidelines.

Based on current information, the SNRC project is not expected to significantly increase the salt levels at RPU's wells. However, RPU desired stronger assurances from Valley District and EVWD that mitigation would occur should salt levels increase in the future as a result of discharges from the SNRC. Not only would it impact RPU, but it could also affect Riverside's wastewater treatment process operated by the Department of Public Utilities. A portion of the RPU's water ultimately discharges to the City of Riverside's wastewater treatment plant. The wastewater treatment plant is regulated by the State and has strict guidelines on the levels of salt in its effluent. Any future salt increase within the SBBA could ultimately impact the City's wastewater treatment plant.

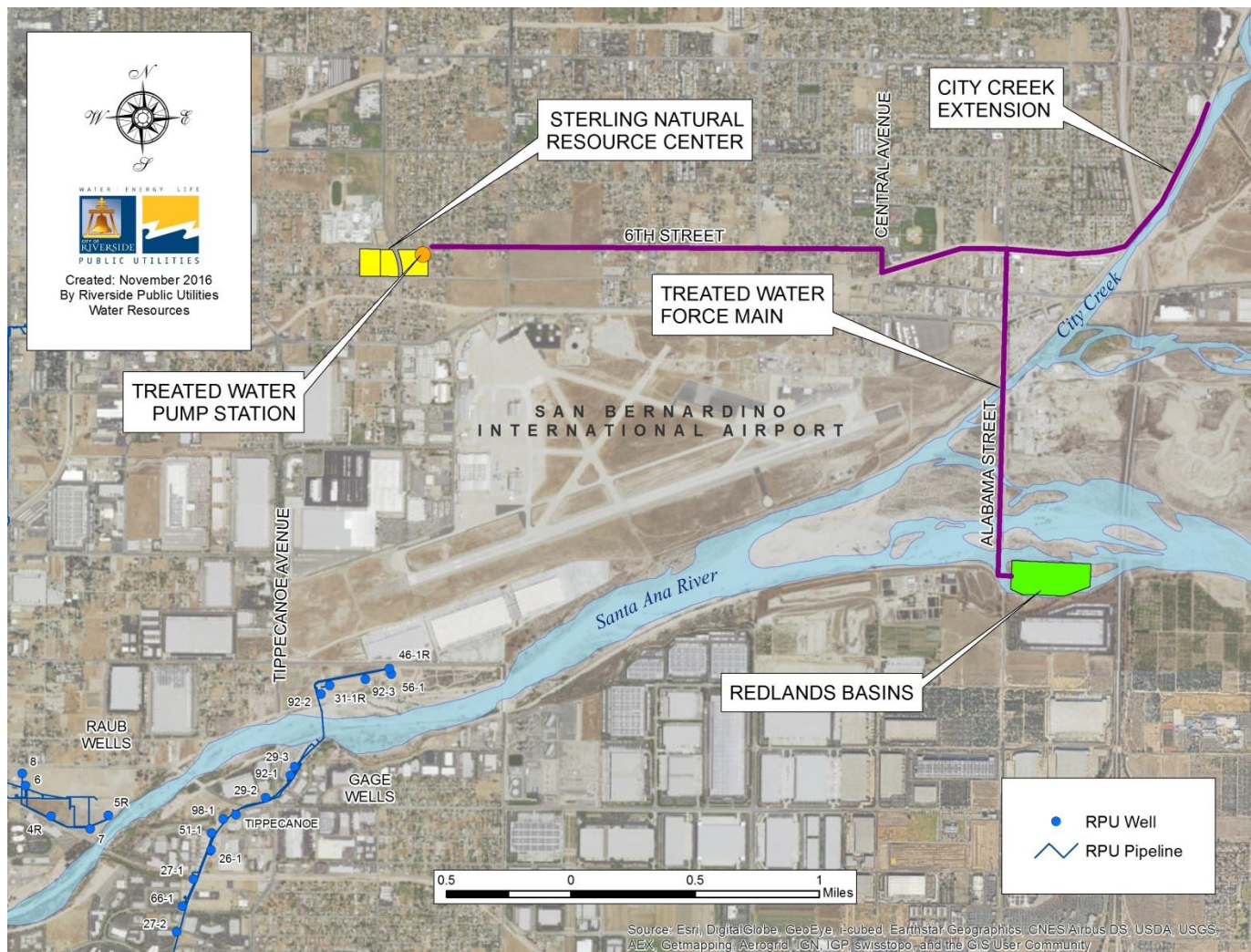


Figure 1. Sterling Nature Resource Center Discharge Location

On September 22, 2016, Valley District filed Wastewater Change Petition WW0095 with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). In order to address its concerns regarding salt levels in the basin, RPU sent a protest letter to the SWRCB regarding WW0095. Following the protest letter, the three agencies met to discuss RPU's concerns and to review technical groundwater modeling work for the SNRC Project that was completed on RPU's behalf. Working together, the agencies developed a Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the SBBA that works to address RPU's concerns by: 1) Implementing quarterly briefings to discuss regulatory and technical information leading up to the SNRC Project's implementation, 2) Conducting annual meetings that will last through the life of the SNRC Project for reviewing data and future projections, and 3) Implementing collaborative projects to mitigate any impacts caused by the SNRC Project.

The Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the SBBA provides RPU with the assurance that Valley District and EVWD will monitor the groundwater basin for any effects their project may have on water produced by RPU-owned wells and will work collaboratively to mitigate those impacts. Staff recommends that the Board of Public Utilities recommend City Council approve the Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the San Bernardino Basin Area.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with recommending City Council approve the Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the San Bernardino Basin Area.

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Approved by: John A. Russo, City Manager
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Certifies availability
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Attachments:

1. Memorandum of Understanding for Salinity Management in the San Bernardino Basin Area
2. Presentation