

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.14 Utilities / Public Services and Facilities

Public services and facilities in the CDCA planning area are provided by a number of public and quasi-public agencies, which ensure a coordinated system of services for residents and businesses. These various services are described below.

Given that most BLM parcels in the planning area are remote and undeveloped, they are not typically connected to public utilities, nor do they receive public services from outside agencies. However, some parcels are traversed by utility rights-of-way used for electric, natural gas, and supplemental water transmissions, as described below.

Domestic Water. Although development in outlying areas of the Coachella Valley relies upon privately owned, on-site wells for the delivery of potable water, most development is connected to a public or quasi-public water delivery system. Domestic water services are provided to the valley by a number of agencies, which extract groundwater from deep wells and convey it to homes and businesses through extensive systems of distribution pipelines. Supplemental Colorado River water is imported to the region via the Metropolitan Water District's Colorado River Aqueduct. This facility traverses the Coachella Valley at or near the base of the Little San Bernardino Mountains and crosses directly through scattered BLM lands, including those in the southern portion of the Big Morongo Canyon ACEC. The aqueduct, which transports water from Parker Dam, is constructed just below the ground surface and includes siphons which allow for the passage of vehicles and stormwater across the surface.

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is the principal domestic water provider serving the Coachella Valley. Other purveyors include the Mission Springs Water District (MSWD), Desert Water Agency (DWA), Myoma Dunes Mutual Water Company, and the cities of Indio and Coachella, which own and operate their own municipal water delivery systems. San Bernardino County and the Southern California Water Company provide domestic water to the Morongo Valley community. The Anza-Borrego portion of the planning area contains little development, which relies upon on-site wells.

Wastewater Collection and Treatment. Sewage collection and treatment services are provided throughout the Coachella Valley by several agencies, including CVWD, DWA, MSWD, the City of Palm Springs, and the City of Coachella. Although most urbanized areas within the Coachella Valley are connected to coordinated wastewater treatment systems, many homes and businesses continue to rely upon on-site septic systems for the treatment of effluent. Most unsewered sites are located in outlying areas of the valley, such as Sky Valley and remote areas of Desert Hot Springs, where the demand for services is relatively low. However, a substantial number of unsewered sites are located within the central, urbanized portion of the valley, including the Cathedral Canyon Cove neighborhood in Cathedral City and scattered development in Bermuda Dunes. No community sewer systems have been constructed in the Morongo Valley or

Anza-Borrego portions of the CDCA planning area; residents rely on on-lot septic systems.

Electric Service. Southern California Edison (SCE) is the primary electric service provider for the western Coachella Valley, while the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) serves the central and eastern portions of the valley. High-voltage (up to 500 kilovolt) transmission lines pass through the Coachella Valley within an east-west trending utility corridor located north of and roughly parallel to Interstate-10. This corridor passes directly through scattered BLM parcels in several locations throughout the valley, including east of Indio, within the San Geronio Pass area, and in the Coachella Valley Preserve in the central valley. Additional electrical transmission lines, including 230 and 115 kilovolt (kV) lines, carry power from the 500 kV system located in the northern end of the planning area south to power users throughout Coachella and Imperial Valleys.

Natural Gas. The Southern California Gas Company provides natural gas services to much of the planning area. Most development in the central, urbanized core of the Coachella Valley is connected to the natural gas distribution system. Rural, outlying areas and some isolated pockets of development are not connected, given the tremendous costs associated with expanding the necessary infrastructure. The natural gas pipeline originates in Texas and crosses the valley through an east-west trending utility corridor just north of Interstate-10. The pipelines include one 30-inch line and two 24-inch lines, with pressures of 2,000 pounds per square inch (psi). This utility corridor passes directly through scattered BLM parcels of land, including several east of Indio, within the San Geronio Pass area, and in the vicinity of the Coachella Valley Preserve.

Telephone Service. Verizon (formerly GTE) provides a wide range of residential and business telephone services to the CDCA planning area. The backbone of Verizon's communications network consists of central switching offices, which facilitate the connection of telephone and data transmissions. Numerous central switching offices are located throughout the region.

Cable Television. The Coachella Valley's largest cable television service provider is Time Warner, whose coverage area extends from Palm Springs to Coachella. Desert Hot Springs Cablevision provides services to the City of Desert Hot Springs and a portion of Sky Valley. Kountry Kable provides services to the communities of Mecca and Thermal.

Solid Waste Management. The largest provider of solid waste management services in the Coachella Valley is Waste Management of the Desert, whose coverage area generally extends from Cathedral City to North Shore. Waste Management also serves the Morongo Valley portion of the planning area. The cities of Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs contract with Palm Springs/Desert Valley Disposal for solid waste management and disposal services. Most cities in the valley have implemented a comprehensive recycling program, which has proven beneficial to the preservation of landfill space, and energy and other finite resources used in materials production. Most green waste collected in the valley is recycled at the BioMass facility in Thermal, while

other recyclables are transported to a recycling company in Los Angeles. Several privately operated recycling facilities are located within the Coachella Valley.

Most of the solid waste generated in the Coachella Valley is disposed of at the Edom Hill Landfill, located at the westerly extension of the Indio Hills. However, this facility is nearing its maximum capacity, and its anticipated closure date is 2004. A limited amount of waste collected in the easterly Coachella Valley is disposed of at the Mecca Landfill. The projected closure date for the Mecca Landfill is 2011; however, this date may change depending upon future levels of waste generation and demands for landfill space. Residential and commercial waste collected in the City of Cathedral City is transported by truck to the Copper Mountain Landfill in Wellton, Arizona.

Riverside County has long maintained a landfill lease within the entirety of T3S, R5E, Section 26 under the Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) Act. This landfill is presently in the closure process. As it is BLM policy to dispose of all landfill leases through the patenting process as provided in this Act, the BLM transferred ownership of 419 acres of landfill footprint lands to the County. The 221 acres of Section 26 which is undisturbed and outside of the footprint of the landfill facility, were retained by BLM because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified this area as being important to maintain connectivity between proposed reserve areas as part of the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard reserve system.

Public Schools. Public education services and facilities in the Coachella Valley are provided by the Palm Springs Unified School District, Desert Sands Unified School District, and Coachella Valley Unified School District. The Morongo Valley Unified School District serves the Morongo Valley portion of the planning area, and the Hemet Unified School District serves the Anza-Borrego portion. Additional educational opportunities are offered at numerous private schools throughout the planning area.

Libraries. The principal provider of library services in the CDCA planning area is the Riverside County Library System, a network of public libraries serving Riverside County residents. The Cities of Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage operate their own municipal libraries, independent of the County Library System. The County of San Bernardino provides public library services to the Morongo Valley portion of the planning area.

Fire Protection. BLM provides its own fire suppression services on BLM-administered lands and contracts with the California Department of Forestry for fire suppression in mountainous areas. The Riverside County Fire Department operates approximately 22 fire stations in the Coachella Valley and provides fire suppression and prevention, emergency medical response, hazardous materials response, fire investigations, and other related services to most communities in the valley, as well as the Anza-Borrego portion of the planning area. The cities of Palm Springs and Cathedral City operate their own municipal fire departments. Fire protection services in the Morongo Valley portion of the planning area are provided through a Community Services District (CSD), an independent district formed by the County Board of Supervisors and tailored to meet the needs of the local community. However, fires occurring within State Response

Areas (SRAs), which include large vegetated areas, are the responsibility of the California Department of Forestry, and fires occurring within the San Bernardino National Forest are the responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service.

Police Protection. With the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Congress granted BLM its statutory law enforcement authority. BLM law enforcement rangers provide a wide range of services on BLM lands, including providing security at recreation sites, protecting important cultural sites from vandalism, assisting local authorities with search and rescue operations, and guarding against the dumping of hazardous and other pollutants. For additional support, BLM maintains a mutual aid agreement with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

The following Coachella Valley cities contract with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department for police protection services: Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, La Quinta, and Coachella. In addition, the Sheriff's Department provides protection to unincorporated County lands throughout the CDCA planning area, including the Anza-Borrego area. The cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, and Indio maintain their own municipal police departments. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department serves the Morongo Valley portion of the planning area.