



Irvine Ranch  
Water District

## NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY Draft Environmental Impact Report

**DATE:** April 28, 2025

**TO:** Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Organizations, and Interested Parties

**LEAD AGENCY:** Irvine Ranch Water

**PROJECT TITLE/SUBJECT:** Santiago Creek Dam Improvement Project — Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2023050097)

**REVIEW PERIOD:** April 28, 2025 – June 11, 2025 (45 days)

This Notice of Availability (NOA) has been prepared to notify responsible and trustee Agencies (Agencies) as well as interested organizations and parties that Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD), as the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the proposed Santiago Creek Dam Improvement Project (Project) that is available for review and comment. The Draft EIR was prepared to comply with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and to provide agencies and the public with information on the potential significant environmental impacts of the proposed project, recommended mitigation measures to reduce or avoid those environmental effects, and the analysis of alternatives to the proposed project.

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The Project is located at Santiago Creek Dam at the northwest end of Irvine Lake in unincorporated Orange County, California. Santiago Creek Dam impounds Irvine Lake. The Project is located south of State Route 261 and east of State Route 241 and Santiago Canyon Road. Existing structures include the dam, outlet tower in Irvine Lake, spillway channel, flashboard storage shed, control house/outlet works, energy dissipater structure, a portion of the Irvine Lake Pipeline, and a dam access road. Surrounding land uses primarily consist of undeveloped open space. Irvine Regional Park is located northwest of State Route 241; Limestone Canyon Regional Park is located south of Santiago Canyon Road; and Oak Canyon Park is located at the southeast end of Irvine Lake. The closed Santiago Canyon Landfill is located adjacent to the west of Irvine Lake.



**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Santiago Creek Dam was originally constructed in 1933 to store water in Irvine Lake for the benefit of the surrounding communities. The Project proposes to rehabilitate and replace the Santiago Creek Dam outlet tower and spillway facilities and to modify the embankment to permit operation of the facilities for a long-term water resource benefit. The Project includes construction of a new inlet/outlet works, including an inclined inlet/outlet structure, intake riser pipelines and platforms, bifurcation valve vault, emergency outlet pipeline, and emergency outlet valve vault. The existing spillway would be replaced with a new side-channel spillway, and a portion of the Irvine Lake pipeline would be upsized and relocated to below ground beneath the proposed spillway structure. The Project includes improvements to the dam crest, removing the dam face, installing a filter drain system within new embankment shell material, widening the dam crest, raising the elevation of the dam crest by up to one foot, and installing protective railings. Ancillary site improvements are also proposed for the Project, including a new inlet/outlet access roadway, spillway bridge, dam control building, and emergency access walkway and stairs. The Project also includes raising the

spillway by six feet to approximately 797.9 feet, which is two feet higher than the existing maximum water storage elevation with the flashboards installed. Raising the spillway would allow the dam to impound water up to the 797.9-foot elevation contour year-round, which would allow for storage of an additional approximately 1,600 acre-feet of water. Construction work is anticipated to occur over a four-year period of time, assuming downtime associated with weather restrictions, beginning in approximately fall 2027 (exact dates subject to change).

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:** The Draft EIR evaluates the potential impacts of the Project and, for identified potentially significant impacts, the Draft EIR recommends mitigation measures that would reduce the impacts of the Project to a less-than-significant level for the following environmental topics: biological resources, cultural and tribal cultural resources, paleontological resources, hazards and hazardous materials. Impacts related to air quality would remain significant and unavoidable even with implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. The Project site is not on any of the lists of Hazardous Waste and Substances sites enumerated under California Government Code Section 65962.5.

**DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY:** The NOA and Draft EIR may be viewed and downloaded from the following IRWD website address <http://www.irwd.com/irvinelakeproject>. Printed copies of the Draft EIR are available for public review at Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, California 92618, and at the following locations during regular business hours:

- Heritage Park Library, 14361 Yale Avenue, Irvine, CA 92604
- Library of the Canyons, 7531 East Santiago Canyon Road, Silverado, CA 92676

**PUBLIC MEETING:** IRWD will hold one public meeting to receive public comments on the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. The public meeting will include a brief presentation providing an overview of the proposed project and findings of the Draft EIR. The meeting will be held at Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, California 92618 at 6:00 P.M. on May 21, 2025.

**PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS:** IRWD is soliciting comments from the public regarding the content of the environmental information contained in the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR must be received by the IRWD at the mailing and/or email addresses provided below no later than 4:00 PM on June 11, 2025.

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