



## WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT?

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) is an objective, full-disclosure and comprehensive environmental review of the Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project. The Draft EIR reviews how the proposed project meets the community's needs and what benefits the community can expect to see from its operation. It also describes the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed project and mitigation strategies being proposed by Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) to address all of them.

CEQA requires the Draft EIR to outline how IRWD will successfully mitigate potential impacts on aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, 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, tribal

cultural resources, utilities and services, and wildfire risks.

During a 60-day public comment period from March 19 through May 18, 2021, residents, neighbors, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft EIR. IRWD will review the comments and provide responses.

### PUBLIC MEETING

IRWD will hold a virtual public meeting to review the Draft EIR with the community at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21, 2021. This will be another opportunity to provide input. Information on how to access the meeting will be published on the IRWD website at [syphonreservoirproject.com](http://syphonreservoirproject.com).

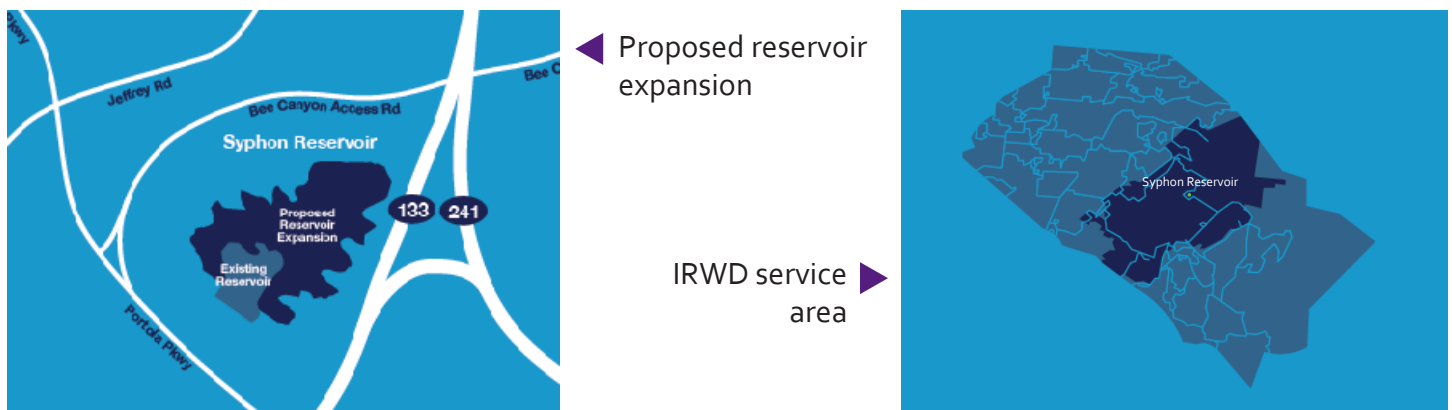
### COMPLETE REPORT

The complete Draft EIR is available at [syphonreservoirproject.com](http://syphonreservoirproject.com).

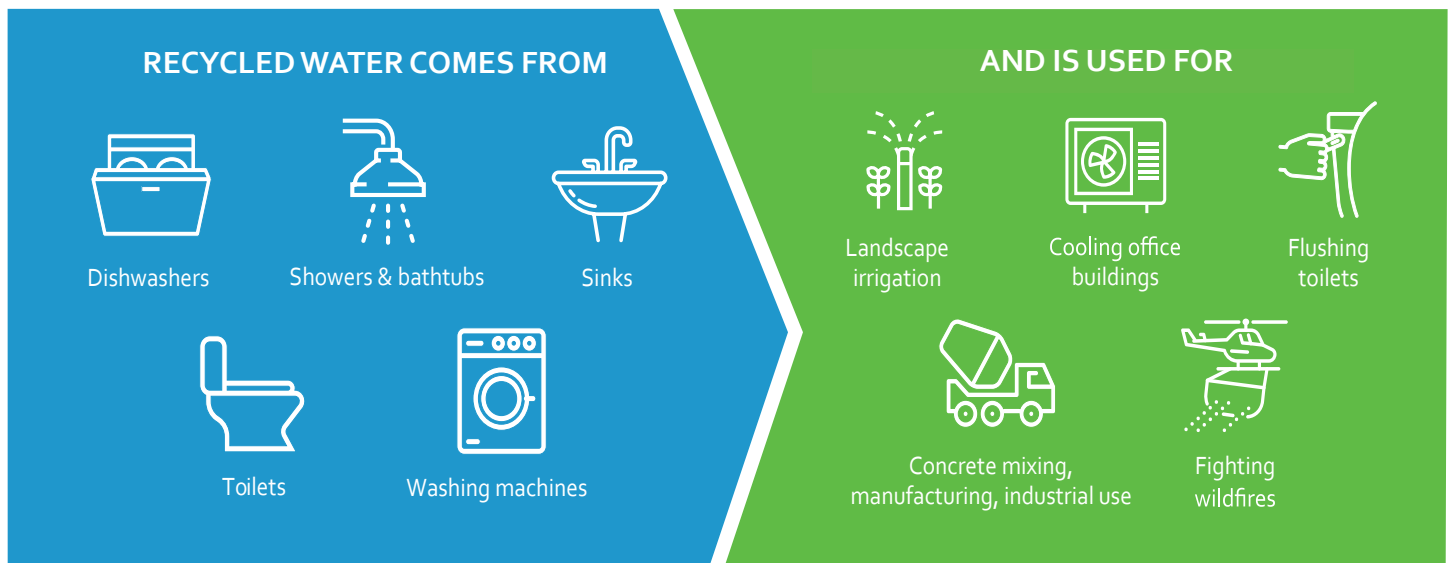
# WHAT IS THE SYPHON RESERVOIR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT?

The Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project is an investment to increase the capacity of the existing Syphon Reservoir, which is part of IRWD's recycled water system. The project will allow IRWD to store more recycled water to meet seasonal and future needs. By making more recycled water available, IRWD will reduce its dependence on costly imported water, making the community's water supply more self-sufficient.

The proposed project would increase the storage capacity of the existing Syphon Reservoir from approximately 578 acre-feet (AF) to 5,000 AF to better serve the community's seasonal and future recycled water needs. As a part of the reservoir expansion, the existing engineered dam would be replaced with a new engineered dam that would meet and exceed the latest safety standards established by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD).



# HOW IS RECYCLED WATER USED?



# WHY IS THE PROJECT NEEDED?

IRWD has one of the most robust and technologically advanced recycled water systems in the nation, but currently produces more recycled water than it can store, which means excess water goes to waste. Drinking water is limited, especially here in Southern California, and recycled water helps to keep communities green and beautiful without depleting the drinking water needed in

homes and businesses. By increasing the storage capacity of the Syphon Reservoir, IRWD can ensure recycled water is there for the community when it's needed most. To meet the needs of IRWD customers, the Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project is being proposed to meet the following objectives:



**Increase recycled water storage capacity**



**Ensure continued safety**



**Improve local supply reliability and decrease costly water imports**



**Maximize recycled water benefits for IRWD customers**



**Reduce diversions to the sewer system**



**Reduce recycled water discharges to the ocean**

## PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires that the Draft EIR evaluate potential alternatives to the Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project to assess their ability to achieve project objectives with similar or less impact. IRWD evaluated five alternative locations and five alternative projects and found that only the preferred Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project meets all of the objectives. For a complete analysis of the alternatives studied please refer to section 6.2 of the Draft EIR – Alternatives to the Proposed Project – which can be accessed by visiting [syphonreservoirproject.com](http://syphonreservoirproject.com).





# ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The Draft EIR includes a comprehensive review of 20 impact categories along with how those impacts can be mitigated. Below is a snapshot of potential impacts and how they will be mitigated by IRWD:

**Seismic Safety:** IRWD studied potential earthquake risk through a comprehensive fault study and found that the potential for future displacement of faults in the reservoir is negligible. The investigations provide evidence demonstrating that the faults that bisect the valley should be classified as inactive according to the criteria established by the California Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams.

**Aesthetics:** Construction materials will be selected to blend into the natural surrounding landscape.

**Air Quality:** There will be no significant impact to air quality after implementing standard mitigation measures, like dust controls.

**Agriculture & Forestry Resources:** No significant impact.

**Biological Resources:** IRWD has engaged in close coordination with state and federal wildlife agencies to develop a multi-faceted mitigation strategy to address all impacts to local vegetation and wildlife species.

**Cultural Resources:** To mitigate risks to unknown cultural resources, the District will implement stringent construction protocols and employ a qualified archeologist and paleontologist.

**Energy:** The project would not significantly impact energy consumption, delivery or efficiency.

**Geology & Soils:** If workers discover any potentially significant geological or soil resources, such as fossils, work at the discovery location shall cease until the qualified paleontologist has assessed the discovery.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Greenhouse gas emissions do not rise above any established safety threshold as a result of this project.

**Hazards & Hazardous Materials:** Traffic controls will be established to prevent any potential traffic hazards. No other hazards were identified that would require mitigation.

**Hydrology & Water Quality:** Hydrological impacts would be positive, with the finished project improving groundwater supplies.

**Land Use & Planning:** No significant impact.

**Mineral Resources:** No significant impact.

**Noise:** Construction would occur during fixed times consistent with the City Municipal Code. Therefore construction noise impacts are determined to be less than significant.

**Population & Housing:** The project would not lead to any unplanned population growth and is not associated with any proposed development.

**Public Services:** No significant impact.

**Recreation:** The project would not negatively impact currently available recreation opportunities and IRWD is considering including options to add a public walking trail to the site.

**Systems & Utilities:** No significant impact.

**Transportation:** A Traffic Control Plan will minimize impacts during construction and, once complete, the project will not impact local traffic.

**Tribal Cultural Resources:** To mitigate risks to unknown tribal resources, IRWD will implement stringent construction protocols, consult with the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation and employ a qualified archeologist and paleontologist.

**Wildfires:** The proposed project would adhere to all regulatory, emergency and safety requirements and would not exacerbate wildfire risk in any way.



## TIMELINE

The timeline for planning, environmental review and construction for the proposed Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project is:

- **March 19 – May 18, 2021:** 60-day public comment period for Draft EIR
- **Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 6 p.m.:** Virtual public meeting for the Draft EIR
- **Spring 2021 – summer 2021:** IRWD finalizes EIR
- **Fall 2021:** Final EIR submitted to IRWD Board for consideration of certification
- **Spring 2021 – winter 2023:** Preliminary and final design
- **Late winter 2023:** Construction would begin, estimated to take 2-3 years to complete



## COMMENT ON THE DRAFT EIR

Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report should be mailed or emailed to:

**Irvine Ranch Water District  
Water Resources & Policy Department  
15600 Sand Canyon Avenue  
Irvine, CA 92618  
Attn: Jo Ann Corey, Environmental Compliance  
Analyst  
[syphonEIR@irwd.com](mailto:syphonEIR@irwd.com)**

IRWD will accept comments submitted up to the close of business on May 18, 2021.

## LEARN MORE

IRWD encourages members of the community to learn more about how the Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project would provide an abundant, affordable and drought-proof source of recycled water and help to preserve low rates for customers. To learn more, visit [syphonreservoirproject.com](http://syphonreservoirproject.com).

## About IRWD

IRWD is a local not-for-profit government agency serving residents and businesses in central Orange County. It is led by a publicly elected Board of Directors who live in the community.

