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UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
“Conserving Water since 1927”

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December 03, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The public is invited to give input to the United Water Conservation District (United), National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (collectively referred to as “Services”) as they undertake the development of environmental documents evaluating the effects of certain proposed actions along the Santa Clara River.

United and the Services are in the scoping period for preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) and environmental impact statement (EIS), respectively, and the public is welcome to provide input in a number of ways.

Public comments are important and the purpose of the scoping period is to solicit the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies as they relate to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the EIR and EIS.

United is proposing to develop a habitat conservation plan and facility and operations modifications associated with implementing the conservation plan. The project area in the study is the Freeman Diversion near Saticoy, related spreading grounds, and the Santa Clara River directly above the Freeman Diversion down to the estuary.

United is preparing the habitat conservation plan in compliance with the Federal and California Endangered Species Acts. Southern California steelhead trout is the species at the center of the plan but the conservation plan will address 11 species total. As part of the conservation plan and the project considered in the EIR, United is proposing to construct and operate a new passage facility for steelhead and Pacific lamprey, another fish species that migrates between the ocean and the freshwater streams of the Santa Clara watershed.

The Services are preparing an EIS to evaluate the environmental effects resulting from the Services’ proposed issuance of incidental take permits under the Endangered Species Act for activities covered by United’s habitat conservation plan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is also acting as a cooperating agency for the EIS in anticipation of activities associated with the conservation plan requiring authorization under section 404 of the Clean Water Act for discharge of dredge or fill material to waters of the United States (including wetlands meeting the definition of waters of the United States).

United and the Services will be holding meetings on Dec 12, 2013, to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the proposed actions and to provide oral or written comments on the scope and content of the EIR and EIS. The meetings will be held from 1 to 3pm and 6 to 8 pm at: Courtyard by Marriott - Oxnard Ventura, 600 East Esplanade Drive, Oxnard, California 93036.

The public can submit written comments to United on the EIR until Jan 10, 2014, at HCP_CEQA_Scoping@unitedwater.org or 106 N. 8th Street, Santa Paula, California, 93060. A copy of the Notice of Preparation for the EIR and general information on the habitat conservation plan are available at www.unitedwater.org.

In addition, the public can submit written comments to the Services on the EIS until Jan 13, 2014, at unitedwaterhcp@noaa.gov. More information on the EIS and alternative ways to submit comments can be found in the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS posted at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-11-12/pdf/2013-27002.pdf>.

UWCD is a public water agency responsible for conserving and protecting groundwater resources in Ventura County. In addition to the District's Lake Piru Recreation Area, United Water's facilities include: Santa Felicia Dam; spreading grounds in Saticoy, El Rio and Piru; an agricultural water delivery system; a wholesale municipal water delivery system; and the Freeman Diversion facility. The District provides wholesale water to the City of Oxnard, the Port Hueneme Water Agency (which includes the CBC and Point Mugu naval bases), Pleasant Valley County Water District, and several small mutual water companies. A seven-member elected Board of Directors directs the District's policy and activities.

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