



# NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

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## Draft Environmental Impact Report

**Date:** May 22, 2020

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

**Lead Agency:** Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District

**Subject:** Onyx Ranch South Fork Valley Water Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2018021061)

**Review Period:** May 27, 2020 to July 27, 2020

This Notice of Availability (NOA) has been prepared to notify responsible and trustee agencies, interested organizations, and interested parties that the Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District (RRBWSD), as the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the proposed Onyx Ranch South Fork Valley Water Project (proposed 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.

It should be noted that the CEQA Guidelines require a 45-day public review period for a Draft EIR; however, the RRBWSD has extended the timeframe to a 60-day public review period for the Draft EIR and the submittal of comments to allow for more time when communities are dealing with the effects of COVID-19. The 60-day public review period for the Draft EIR is from May 27, 2020 to July 27, 2020.

**Project Location:** The project site consists of approximately 4,109 acres on the Onyx Ranch and Smith Ranch situated on either side of the South Fork of the Kern River, located within the South Fork Valley, in the Kern River Valley area of unincorporated northeastern Kern County (see attached figure). Located in and around the communities of Weldon and Onyx, the project site is approximately five miles from the eastern boundary of the Isabella Reservoir and approximately 50 miles east of the RRBWSD service area in the San Joaquin Valley. The project site is comprised of 29 parcels with the following Kern County Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 055-130-12; 055-130-14; 321-020-02; 321-020-05; 321-020-43; 321-030-02; 321-030-05; 321-030-11; 321-030-12; 321-030-13; 321-030-15; 321-030-16; 321-030-17; 321-030-21; 321-040-03; 321-040-04; 321-040-10; 321-061-01; 321-061-05; 321-181-01; 426-032-10; 426-032-11; 426-032-12; 426-032-13; 426-032-14; 426-032-15; 426-034-10; 426-035-02; and 426-080-04. The project site is located in: Sections 13, 14, 23, and 24, Township 26 S., Range 34 E. and Sections 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, and 17, Township 26 S., Range 35 E. and Sections 34 and 35, Township 25 S., Range 35 E., Mount Diablo Meridian and Base.

**Project Description:** The RRBWSD proposes to change the points of diversion and place of use for the 1914-water rights associated with the parcels on the project site so that the water can be delivered in the RRBWSD service area on the San Joaquin Valley floor and used for irrigation and groundwater recharge. The RRBWSD proposes to reduce the diversion and use of surface water on the project site by converting irrigated fields to non-irrigated pasture or native vegetation. With the proposed project, surface water that is diverted under the existing condition would remain in the South Fork of the Kern River and flow downstream. The net increase in the South Fork would flow downstream to the Isabella Reservoir, be released through the Isabella Dam, and flow downstream in the Lower Kern River until the water is diverted at the RRBWSD diversion points. From there, the RRBWSD would deliver the water to recharge basins and channels within and near its service area west of the City of Bakersfield. The increased water supplies to the RRBWSD's service area would mitigate the shortages in the RRBWSD's contracted SWP water supply from the State of California, which has been steadily reduced due to environmental constraints impacting exports in the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta.

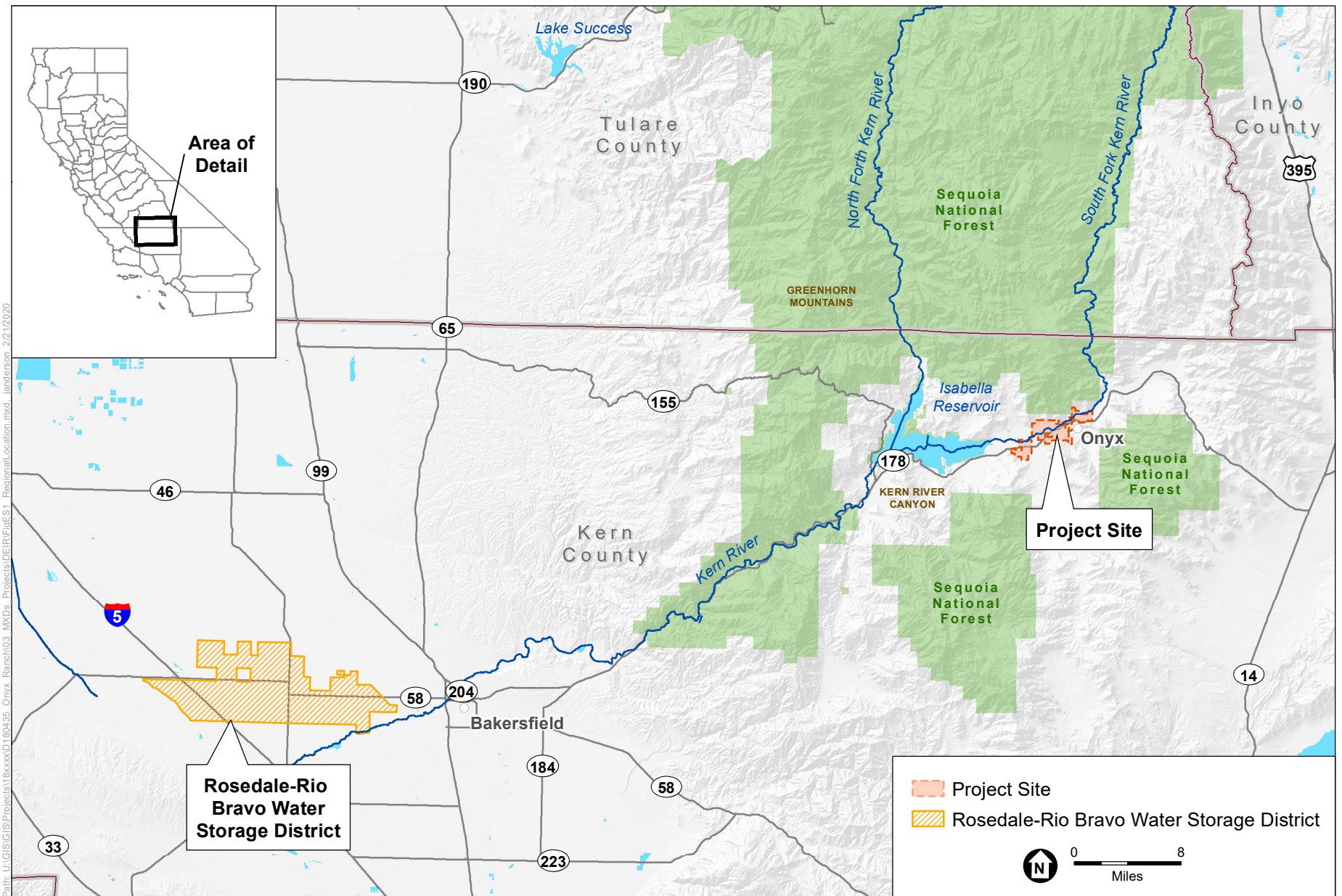
**Environmental Impacts:** The Draft EIR evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed project and, for identified significant impacts to biological resources, cultural resources, and paleontological resources, recommends mitigation measures that would reduce the potential significant impacts of the proposed project to a less than significant level. Per Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, there are no open active cases for hazardous materials sites within the project site.

**Document Availability:** The recipients that were mailed this NOA were provided with the Draft EIR on a USB flash drive. The Draft EIR is also available on the RRBWSD website (<http://www.rrbwsd.com>) and the proposed project's website ([www.onyxranch.org](http://www.onyxranch.org)). As permitted, printed copies of the Draft EIR will be available for public review at the following public libraries and the RRBWSD office when the restrictions due to facility closures and the need for social distancing required in response to COVID-19 are lifted by the appropriate governmental agencies: Wofford Heights Branch, 6400 B Wofford Boulevard, Wofford Heights, CA 93285; Kern River Valley Branch, 7054 Lake Isabella Boulevard, Lake Isabella, CA 93240; and Beale Memorial Library, 701 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301.

**Public Information Presentation:** During the 60-day public review period, the RRBWSD will post a Public Information Presentation online to describe: the proposed project; the contents and conclusions of this Draft EIR; and the key steps for the remainder of the public review process including the hearing on the proposed project before the RRBWSD Board of Directors. The Public Information Presentation will be available on the RRBWSD website (<http://www.rrbwsd.com>) and the proposed project's website ([www.onyxranch.org](http://www.onyxranch.org)) no later than June 14, 2020.

**Public Review and Comments:** The RRBWSD is soliciting comments from the public regarding the content of the environmental information provided in the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR must be received by the RRBWSD, at the address provided below, no later than July 27, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.

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SOURCE: ESRI; National Hydrography Dataset; DWR; Northcutt and Associates, 2015

Onyx Ranch South Fork Valley Water Project

**Figure 1**  
Regional Project Location