



Notice of Preparation of Initial Study

May 26, 2017

TO: State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Agencies and Parties

FROM: Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Occidental County Sanitation District to Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Sanitation Zone Wastewater Transport Project

The Occidental County Sanitation District (District) is preparing an Initial Study for the Occidental County Sanitation District to Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Sanitation Zone (ALWSZ) Wastewater Transport Project (Proposed Project). The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency), which operates the District's Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) under contract, will prepare the Initial Study on behalf of the District in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Water Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental impacts used to determine whether a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report will be prepared. It is a public document that analyzes the potential environmental effects related to construction, operation, and maintenance of a project and describes ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental impacts. The District will act as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, and interested parties regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the Initial Study.

Background

The District's service area covers approximately 55 acres and provides service to 118 parcels in the community of Occidental in Sonoma County, California. The District collects wastewater in its service area through 7,500 feet of gravity sewer pipelines and one lift station (Figure 1). Secondary treatment is provided at the District WWTF prior to discharge to Dutch Bill Creek or use as recycled water for irrigation. The District has utilized Graham's Pond, located on the Loades property at 5502 Graton Road and originally constructed as an agricultural pond, as a year-round, secondary-treated effluent storage reservoir since 1977.

The District's WWTF is permitted by the Regional Board under the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) adopted in Order No. R1-2012-0101 (Order), dated December 6, 2012, which serves as the

District's current National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. CA0023051. The five-year term of the WDRs began February 1, 2013.

The Order implements provisions of the *Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region* (Basin Plan), whereby no WWTF is allowed to discharge waste to the Russian River or its tributaries from 15 May to 30 September and requires advanced (tertiary-level) wastewater treatment for discharges to surface waters from 1 October to 14 May. Since Graham's Pond, located at the head waters of Dutch Bill Creek, is considered a water of the United States subject to NPDES permit requirements and a tributary to the Russian River, it is not permissible to discharge secondary-treated effluent into the pond. However, because Graham's Pond is the only storage pond currently available to the District, the District continues to discharge secondary-treated effluent into the pond year-round.

The Regional Board adopted Cease and Desist Order (CDO) No. R1-2012-0102 on 6 December 2012, which included provisions of the Basin Plan that require advanced wastewater treatment for discharges to surface waters. To remedy the problem of discharging secondary-treated effluent to Graham's Pond in the summer and Dutch Bill Creek in the winter, the CDO requires the District to complete a capital improvement project and achieve full compliance with the CDO and all applicable WDRs by January 31, 2018.

The District released a NOP on 8 December 2014 for a proposed project that identified two (2) potential alternatives to upgrade the existing treatment facilities to tertiary-level standards and construct a recycled water pipeline to a storage pond that would be located on private property. The NOP also discussed the option of trucking untreated wastewater to another sanitation facility for treatment, storage, and disposal. The District held a public scoping meeting on 8 January 2015. Comments received during the scoping period expressed concerns about the proposed treatment upgrade alternatives including: the location and safety of the recycled water storage pond; potential impacts to groundwater and surface water from the storage and irrigation of recycled water; costs and locations for treatment facility upgrades; property encroachment; and impacts to roadways from installation of the pipeline.

Following an engineering feasibility and cost analysis, it was determined that the construction, operation, and maintenance costs associated with treatment upgrade alternatives were not economically feasible for the small base of District ratepayers. Furthermore, the District did not qualify for grants that would help offset the cost. It was determined that construction costs to facilitate the transportation of untreated wastewater were significantly lower than the construction costs associated with treatment upgrade alternatives. Additionally, operation and maintenance costs to transport wastewater would be lower compared to the treatment upgrade alternatives.

The District held a community meeting on 7 January 2016 to discuss the engineering feasibility analysis and wastewater transport alternative with members of the public. Concerns were expressed regarding the preferred location of the treatment facility upgrades as well as the preferred pipeline route. Several ratepayers in the District voiced support for the lower cost alternative of transporting wastewater to another facility as a long-term interim solution for treatment, storage, and disposal until funding for treatment upgrades could be obtained.

As a result, the wastewater transport alternative was pursued and a draft Initial Study/Negative Declaration was completed that analyzed the potential impacts of transferring untreated wastewater by truck from the District facilities to the Russian River County Sanitation District (RRCSD) Main Lift Station,

located on Highway 116 in the unincorporated community of Guerneville. Untreated wastewater would be discharged into the RRCSD Main Lift Station collection system through a receiving station that would be installed on an adjacent vacant parcel owned by the RRCSD. Untreated wastewater would then be pumped to the RRCSD WWTF for treatment, storage, and disposal. In situations where transferring untreated wastewater to the RRCSD would not be feasible, including lack of access to RRCSD facilities during flood events, untreated wastewater would be transported to the ALWSZ WWTF for treatment, storage, and disposal.

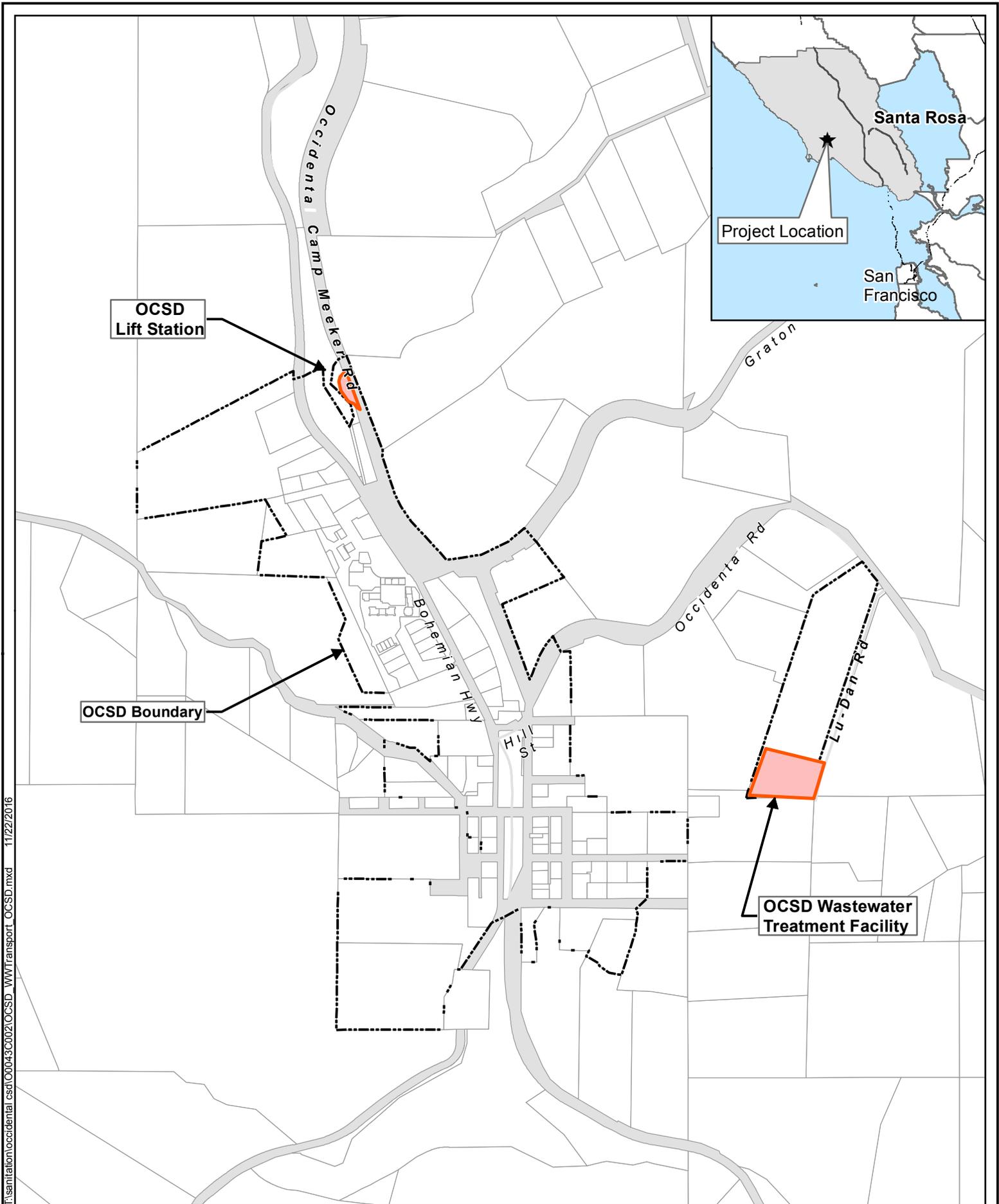
The Initial Study/Negative Declaration was released for public review on 22 December 2016 and a public hearing was held on 16 February 2017. Comments received on the proposed project expressed concerns regarding the location of the proposed receiving station, traffic safety, noise, and odors, and led the District to cease work on the proposed project to explore potential alternatives to transferring wastewater to the RRCSD. The District analyzed the feasibility of utilizing other sanitation districts to treat, store, and dispose of the District's untreated wastewater, including at the Graton Community Services District and the ALWSZ. The District is proposing to transport all untreated wastewater to the ALWSZ WWTF.

Project Need and Objectives

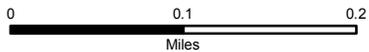
The Proposed Project would allow the District to comply with conditions set forth in Order No. R1-2012-0101 and CDO No. R1-2012-0102. The Proposed Project would transport untreated wastewater to the ALWSZ WWTF where it would be discharged into the collection system for treatment, storage, and disposal. The ALWSZ WWTF currently treats wastewater to tertiary-level standards and utilizes irrigation of agricultural lands for disposal of recycled water, with no discharges to surface waters. By transferring untreated wastewater to the ALWSZ for treatment, storage, and disposal, the Proposed Project would eliminate discharge of secondary-treated effluent into Dutch Bill Creek and Graham's Pond (a headwaters to Dutch Bill Creek), and would no longer rely on Graham's Pond for recycled water storage.

Project Location and Description

The Proposed Project would be located within the District service area, and would utilize existing sanitation facilities in the ALWSZ, which is also operated by the Water Agency. The District provides service to the community of Occidental, which is located approximately 52 miles northwest of San Francisco, California (Figure 1). The District's existing facilities are comprised of the WWTF, located on property leased by the District from the Druid's Occidental Cemetery at 14445 Occidental Road (Figure 1), and the Lift Station, located on property owned by the District at 4200 Occidental-Camp Meeker Road (Figure 1). Wastewater transportation would primarily occur between the District Lift Station and the ALWSZ WWTF, located approximately 18 miles from the District on Aviation Boulevard near the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa (Figure 2). Wastewater transportation would occur less frequently from the District WWTF located on Lu Dan Road off of Occidental Road in Occidental (Figure 2). Facility modifications would take place at the District WWTF, District Lift Station, and the ALWSZ WWTF. The county roads that would be utilized for this project are located in a mixture of unincorporated urban areas, rural residential areas, agricultural and forest lands, and commercial and industrial areas in and around the communities of Occidental, Graton, and Santa Rosa (Figure 2).



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**Occidental County Sanitation District
Wastewater Transport Project
OCSD Location Map**

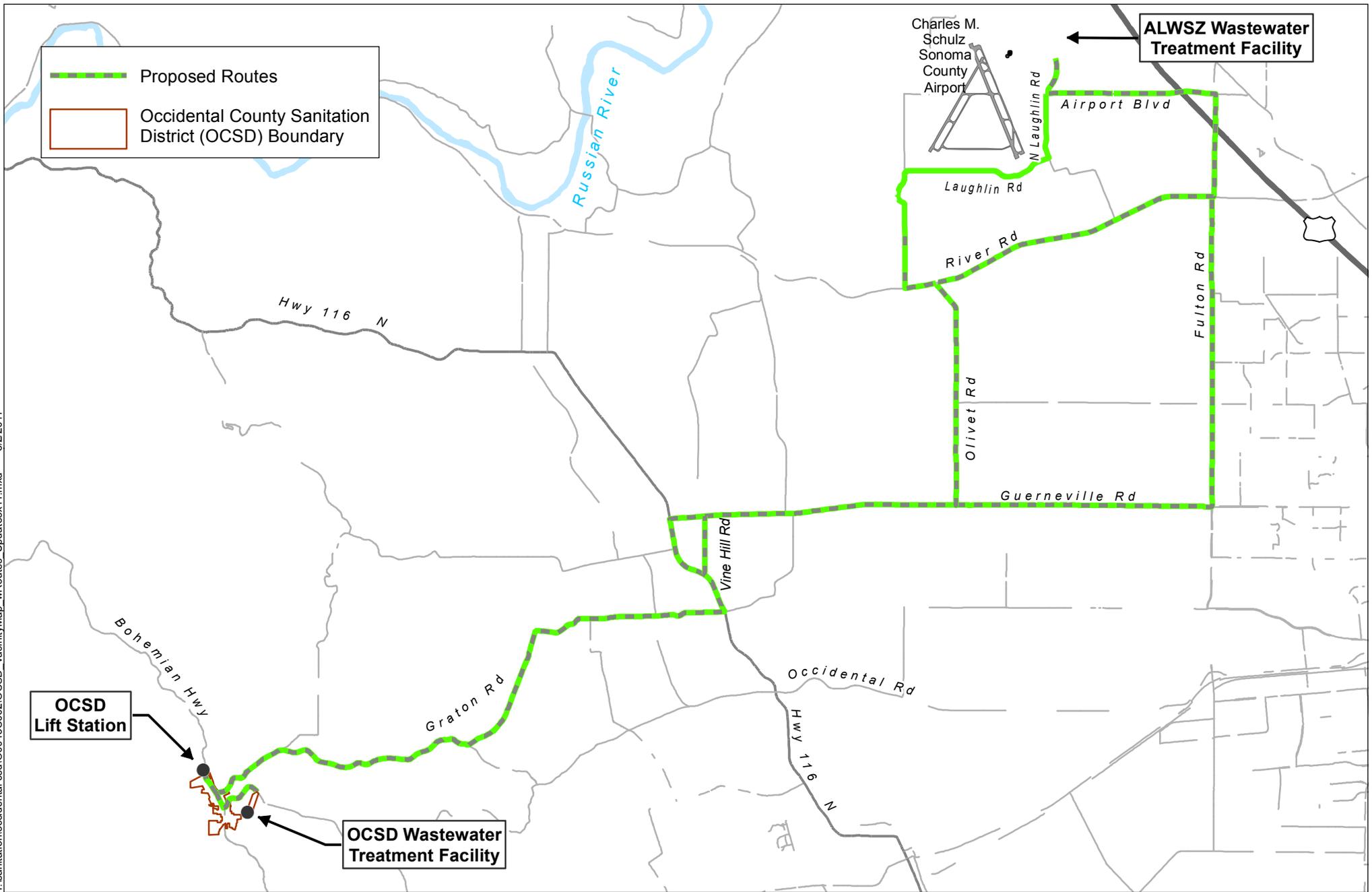
Figure 1



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Proposed Routes

Occidental County Sanitation District (OCSD) Boundary



OCSD to Airport Larkfield Wikiup Sanitation Zone (ALWSZ)
 Wastewater Transport Project
 Proposed Wastewater Transportation Routes

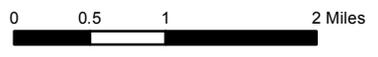


Figure 2



Issues to be Addressed in the Initial Study

In accordance with CEQA, the Initial Study will evaluate the potential environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively, associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Areas of analysis may include: Aesthetics; Agricultural and Forest Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; 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 and Traffic; Tribal Cultural Resources; and Utilities and Service Systems. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to avoid or reduce impacts. Areas of analysis may be changed based on comments received from responsible agencies and the public during the NOP scoping period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies, and interested persons will also have an opportunity to comment on the applicable CEQA document, as determined by the Initial Study, after it is circulated for public review.

Public Comment Period for this Notice of Preparation

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, responses must be sent no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 26, 2017. Please include a name, address, and telephone number, and email address of a contact person for all future correspondence on this subject. Comments may be submitted electronically to jchurch@scwa.ca.gov or mailed to:

Occidental County Sanitation District, c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Jeff Church
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Documents or files related to the Proposed Project are available for review online at <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/OCSD/> or at the Water Agency's administrative office at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. The NOP will also be available for review at the Sonoma County libraries in Occidental, Sebastopol, Guerneville, Santa Rosa (Northwest Branch), and Windsor.

If you have any questions regarding this NOP, or if you wish to update information on our mailing list, please contact Jeff Church at 707-547-1949 or jchurch@scwa.ca.gov.

Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting and open house will be held to provide the public and regulatory agencies an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments on the scope of the Initial Study. Water Agency staff will be available to answer questions and provide information about the project in order to allow interested parties to participate at any time during the Open House. Comment forms will be available for attendees to submit written comments. The meeting time and location are as follows:

Thursday, June 15, 2017
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Back Room, Union Hotel
3731 Main Street, Occidental, CA

DISABLED ACCOMMODATION: If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, an alternative format, or requires another person to assist you while attending this meeting, please contact the Sonoma County Water Agency at (707) 524-8378 as soon as possible to ensure arrangements for accommodation.



Notice of Preparation of Initial Study

OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT TO AIRPORT-LARKFIELD-WIKIUP SANITATION ZONE WASTEWATER TRANSPORT PROJECT

Upcoming Scoping Meeting:

Thursday, June 15, 2017

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Back Room, Union Hotel

3731 Main Street,

Occidental, CA

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