

# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Notice of Exemption (NOE) based on Appendix E to the  
State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines

County Clerk  
County of Los Angeles  
12400 Imperial Highway  
Norwalk, CA 90650

From: (Public Agency) Los Angeles County  
Public Works  
900 S. Fremont Ave, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Alhambra, CA 91803

Project Title: Revisions to the County Floodway Maps for the Santa Clara River  
Project Applicant: Los Angeles County Public Works on behalf of County of Los Angeles  
Project Location: See Attachment 1, Location Narrative, and Figure 1, Local Vicinity Map City: Santa Clarita County: Los Angeles

### Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

On June 14, 2022, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, acting on behalf of the County of Los Angeles (County), approved the following actions: Approved an ordinance for introduction amending the Santa Clara River Floodway and related maps and water surface elevations in the community of Castaic to reflect new engineering analysis of the Floodway based on updated information, and amending County Code, Title 11 - Health and Safety; and introduced the Ordinance. The County proposes to update County floodway and floodplain maps 43-ML26.1, 43-ML27.1, and 43-ML28 to reflect existing conditions in the Santa Clarita Valley (please see Memorandum for the Record No. 3 for supporting project background and overview). The proposed map revisions would not authorize or facilitate a physical change in the environment. The proposed map revisions would have no physical impact on the floodway or floodplain. Rather, the proposed map revisions would capture the changes in the floodway and floodplain that occurred since the publication of the maps in 1985/2011. The proposed map revisions would add approximately 24.1 acres to the Capital Floodplain and remove approximately 41.9 acres, for a net decrease of approximately 17.8 acres. The purpose of the floodway and floodplain mapping is to accurately depict areas that are at risk for inundation during the County's defined Capital Flood event. The floodway and floodplain maps do not authorize or specify allowable land uses; rather, the maps identify areas that are at risk for inundation in a Capital Flood event. This information is used by the County during the land use entitlement process to determine what level of floodproofing or flood protection is required for a proposed development or infrastructure project. The proposed map revisions would not change the County's land use designations, zoning, and land use entitlement process but, rather, would accurately inform the land use entitlement process regarding areas subject to flood hazard from the Capital Flood event.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project Patricia Wood, Senior Civil Engineer, Los Angeles County Public Works, Stormwater Engineering Division

### Exempt Status (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);  
 Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));  
 Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));  
 Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: \_\_\_\_\_

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines for Common Sense Exemption.

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

**State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), Common Sense Exemption**

The proposed map revisions would not authorize or facilitate a physical change in the environment; therefore, they are exempt from the requirements for environmental review pursuant to CEQA consistent with the parameters of Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The proposed map revisions would have no physical impact on the floodway or floodplain; rather, the proposed map revisions would capture the changes in the floodway and floodplain that occurred since the publication of the maps in 1985/2011, as a result of three primary factors:

- Changes in topography as a result of natural processes (fires and flooding) and anthropogenic forces such as conversion of open spaces to other land uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and related infrastructure development;
- Availability of additional data for precipitation and sediment transport; and
- Refinements to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers HEC-RAS model, originally released in 1995 and updated in 2010, used for hydraulic analysis, inundation mapping, and animations of water propagation.

A project is exempt from CEQA if there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed map revisions are an administrative mapping change to accurately characterize changes in the floodplain and floodway that occurred between 1985/2011 and 2016. The proposed map revisions would change the boundary lines of the County-designated floodway and floodplain on the Floodway Maps to more accurately depict the physical conditions of the watercourse but would not change any physical boundaries and would not directly cause any physical change in the watercourse itself or elsewhere in the environment. The proposed map revisions would not change zoning or land use designations in the Los Angeles County General Plan 2035. Land use development in floodways and floodplains would continue to be subject to the County's land use entitlement process. The maps would inform the property owners, property occupants, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, and Los Angeles County Public Works regarding the flood risk associated with development for properties within the Capital Flood floodplain and floodway. Similarly, the proposed map revisions would identify a reduced risk of flood hazard for those properties that are no longer in the floodplain or floodway due to changes in stream dynamics, additional data, and more refined hydraulic modeling. Capturing the changes in the floodway and floodplain as a result of natural processes (such as fires, sedimentation, and flooding) and anthropogenic forces such as conversion of open spaces to other developed land uses would more accurately inform the County, the landowner, and other interested parties regarding the flood risk associated with development for portions of properties within the floodplain and floodway. The proposed map revisions do not cause or authorize any physical change to the environment; therefore, the proposed map revisions would have no significant adverse effects on the environment, consistent with the common sense exemption (please see Memorandum for the Record No. 4 for supporting analysis). Therefore, the proposed map revisions would be consistent with the provisions of the Common Sense Exemption section, Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Memoranda for the Record Nos. 3 and 4 are maintained in the project file and available at the address listed above for the County.

Lead Agency Contact  
Person

Patricia Wood  
Senior Civil Engineer

Area Code / Telephone /  
Extension

(626) 458-6131

If filed by applicant

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

Patricia M. Wood  
Signature

6/14/22  
Date

Senior Civil Engineer  
Title

Revised 2011

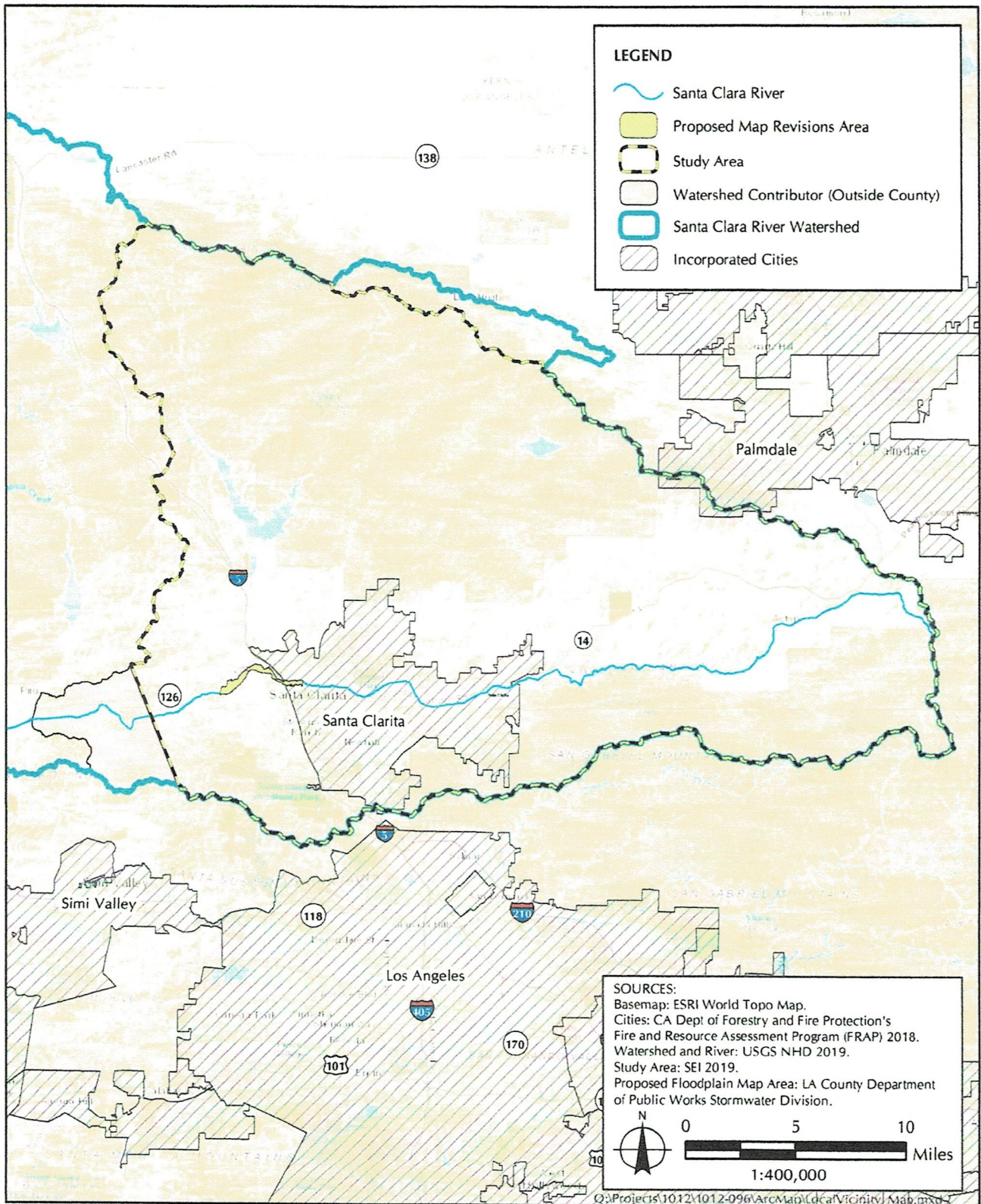
## Attachment 1: Project Location

The Revisions to the County Floodway Maps for the Santa Clara River (proposed map revisions) would be located along an approximately 4.6-mile-stretch of the Santa Clara River in the Santa Clara River Watershed. The proposed map revisions area is within the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area in Los Angeles County, immediately south of State Route 126, north of Magic Mountain Parkway and Six Flags Magic Mountain, and to the east and west of the Interstate 5 freeway (Figure 1, *Local Vicinity Map*). The elevation range of the area of the proposed map revisions, designated as County Floodway Map Nos. 43-ML26.2, 43-ML27.2, and 43-ML28.1 (proposed map revisions area), ranges from 940 feet above mean sea level (MSL) on the western side to approximately 1,086 feet above MSL on the eastern side of the proposed floodplain map area.<sup>1</sup> The proposed map revisions area is located within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Val Verde and Newhall 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles.

The County Floodway Maps depict the larger areas subject to inundation during a large storm event (Capital Floodplain) and the more specific areas within the floodplain where flows are deepest and fastest and where development is generally restricted (County Floodway). The proposed map revisions area encompasses approximately 667.8 acres in the Santa Clarita Valley, with proposed Map Nos. 43-ML26.2 and 43-ML27.2 in the unincorporated territory of Los Angeles County and proposed Map No. 43-ML28.1 in both unincorporated territory of Los Angeles County and the incorporated City of Santa Clarita. The proposed map revisions would revise the floodplain along the Santa Clara River from a total of 685.6 acres to 667.9 acres by addressing changes that have occurred in the physical environment and more refined modelling of the areas inundated by the Capital Flood event, that reflect changes in river topography, use of the update MODRAT hydrologic method (including update rainfall data and computer application enhancements), and 2010 USACE HEC-RAS refined hydraulic modelling software. The output of the refined modelling adds approximately 24.1 acres to the Capital Floodplain and removes approximately 41.9 acres for a net decrease of approximately 17.8 acres. Within the larger Capital Floodplain area, the proposed map revisions would add approximately 23.5 acres to the County Floodway area, the proposed map revisions would add approximately 23.5 acres to the County Floodway and remove approximately 46.3 acres from the County Floodway, for a net decrease of approximately 22.8 acres.

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<sup>1</sup> Elevations are based on the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88) Datum.



**FIGURE 1**  
 Local Vicinity Map

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From: (Public Agency) Los Angeles County  
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Project Applicant: Los Angeles County Public Works on behalf of County of Los Angeles  
Project Location: See Attachment 1, *Location Narrative*, and Figure 1, *Local Vicinity Map* City: Santa Clarita County: Los Angeles

### Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

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Name of Public Agency Approving Project County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project Patricia Wood, Senior Civil Engineer  
Los Angeles County Public Works, Stormwater  
Engineering Division

### Exempt Status (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);  
 Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));  
 Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));

Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15308 of the State CEQA Guidelines and County of Los Angeles Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines Class 8 Exemption.

Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 and County of Los Angeles Reporting Procedures and Guidelines Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment

Class 8 consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies as authorized by State and local ordinance to ensure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. Construction activities are not included in this exemption. The proposed map revisions are consistent with the parameters of Section 15308 and County of Los Angeles Environmental Reporting and Procedures Guidelines Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment, because the County manages the floodway and floodplain pursuant to Title 11, Section 11.60; Title 20, Section 20.94.040; Title 21, Section 21.44.320; Title 26, Section 110.1 and Appendix J, Section J101.2 of the Los Angeles County Code. The County's development regulations in County-mapped floodways prohibit new development or substantial improvement to or repair of substantially damaged structures within a floodway that could cause any increase in flood heights (that have the potential to affect other properties within the watershed) without appropriate measures to protect other properties in the watershed from increased flood heights and notification to the property owners that would be within the extent of the increased flood heights. The proposed map revisions would not involve construction activities or authorize a physical impact on the floodway or floodplain; rather, the proposed map revisions would capture the changes in the floodplain and floodway that occurred since the publication of the maps in 1985/2011. The proposed map revisions are necessitated as a result of three primary factors that occurred subsequent to the 1985/2011 publication of the maps:

- Changes in topography as a result of natural processes (fires and flooding) and anthropogenic forces such as conversion of open spaces to other land uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and related infrastructure development;
- Availability of additional data for precipitation and sediment transport; and
- Refinements to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers HEC-RAS model, originally released in 1995 and updated in 2010, used for hydraulic analysis, inundation mapping, and animations of water propagation.

The Santa Clara River County Floodway Maps serve as a flood hazard and risk mapping effort that must be revised in order to reflect current Capital Flood floodplain and floodway areas with accuracy. The County Floodway Maps, which would become more accurate with the proposed revisions based on scientific modeling consistent with the protocols described in the Los Angeles County Comprehensive Floodplain Management Plan, protect the environment by requiring development to consider floodway risk beyond the 100-year flood accounted for in FEMA's FIRMS where the County Floodway Maps are more conservative than mapped FEMA FIRMS. Although the County Floodway maps are usually more conservative than the FEMA FIRMS, they are not always more conservative; however, the most conservative map is used for evaluation of flood hazard impacts from development projects. Rather than causing impacts on the floodway, the proposed map revisions would more accurately depict the changes to the floodplain and floodway that have occurred between the prior mapping in 1985 and 2016. Floods can cause erosion and

sedimentation, destruction of property, dispersion of pollutants that reduce water quality, and a safety hazard that can lead to injuries and death among humans and livestock. In addition to the personal and economic losses to communities from flooding, wildlife habitats can be destroyed by floodwater, contaminated floodwater can pollute rivers and habitats, silt and sediment can destroy crops on farms and degrade riparian habitat, and plants can die when inundated with water. The proposed map revisions would affect the CEQA analysis in relation to flood risk and erosion/siltation effects for future development projects where the County-mapped floodplain boundary is more conservative than the mapped FEMA flood hazard zone. As development is not precluded in the County Capital Flood floodway or floodplain, the proposed map revisions would serve to inform property owners, property occupants, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, and Los Angeles County Public Works regarding those properties located in the portion of the Santa Clara River within the unincorporated territory of Los Angeles County that are at risk of flood hazard from the Capital Flood event and are required to comply with the appropriate development regulations if located in a County-mapped floodway. The proposed map revisions would more accurately guide development and incorporation of mitigation to protect the environment. By delineating areas subject to flooding in accordance with established engineering principles, the public and the building officials charged with ensuring the public's safety through building codes will know where the existing flood-prone areas are located. Thus, floodplain maps provide a tool to alert the public of potential flood hazards and to help landowners and building officials evaluate owners' ability to build in a manner that is safe for both themselves and neighboring properties. Capturing the changes in the floodway and floodplain as a result of natural processes (such as fires, sedimentation, and flooding) and anthropogenic forces such as conversion of open spaces to other developed land uses would more accurately inform the County, the landowner, and other interested parties regarding the flood risk associated with development for portions of properties within the floodplain and floodway. The proposed map revisions would more accurately guide development and incorporation of mitigation to protect the environment.

The proposed map revisions would remove areas from the floodplain and floodway that the HEC-RAS demonstrates are no longer subject to damage from the Capital Flood and would add areas to the floodplain and floodway that modeling predicts would be subject to damage from the Capital Flood. The proposed map revisions are an administrative mapping change and would not cause or authorize any physical change to the environment. Therefore, the proposed map revisions would not affect water quality standards, discharge requirements, or surface or ground water quality for the Santa Clara River. Therefore, the proposed map revisions involve an action taken by a regulatory agency as authorized by local ordinance to ensure the protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment, consistent with the Class 8 categorical exemption (please see MFR No. 4 for supporting analysis).

Therefore, the proposed map revisions would be consistent with the provisions of the applicable Categorical Exemption section, Section 15308 of the State CEQA Guidelines and the County of Los Angeles Environmental Reporting and Procedures Guidelines, Class 8.

**Inapplicability of Exceptions to the State CEQA Guidelines for Categorical Exemptions**

Additionally, none of the exceptions to the use of categorical exemptions that would



make the exemption inapplicable are triggered under the exceptions criteria articulated in Section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines and County of Los Angeles Environmental Reporting and Procedures Guidelines (please see MFR Nos. 5 and 6 for supporting analysis).

Section 15300.2(a) and the County Guidelines Appendix G, Location. Not Applicable to Class 8 Exemption.

Section 15300.2(b) and the County Guidelines Appendix G, Cumulative Impact and (c) and County Guidelines Appendix G, Significant Effect. The proposed map revisions would not contribute to significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts (please see MFR Nos. 5 and 6 for supporting analysis). Section 15355 of the State CEQA Guidelines defines cumulative impacts as when two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or increase other environmental impacts. As the proposed map revisions would result in no impacts to the environment, they would not contribute incrementally to a cumulative impact when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. The proposed map revisions reflect changes that have occurred in the environment. The changes that have occurred in the environment allow property owners that are not subject to inundation from the Capital Flood event to develop their property. Therefore, the proposed map revisions do not facilitate or authorize development or infrastructure project. Rather, the maps inform the planning and entitlement process of properties that are subject to inundation from the Capital Flood event. However, development and infrastructure projects would continue to be subject to County land use entitlement and building and grading permits. As the proposed map revisions would not cause a physical change in the environment, the proposed map revisions would not contribute to cumulative impacts.

Section 15300.2(c) and Appendix G of the County Guidelines establish that a categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. As the proposed map revisions reflect changes that have occurred in the environment since the adoption of existing maps rather than authorizing or facilitating development, the proposed map revisions would not cause a physical change to the environment (please see MFR Nos. 5 and 6 for supporting analysis). As the proposed map revisions would not cause a physical change in the environment, the proposed map revisions would not contribute to significant adverse effects on the environment.

Section 15300.2(d) and the County Guidelines Appendix B, Section 3.2.a, Scenic Highways. The proposed map revisions would not affect scenic resources within an eligible or designated State or Local scenic highway corridor (please see MFR No. 5 for supporting analysis). The nearest officially designated state scenic highway is the recently designated State Route (SR) 27, which is approximately 18.5 miles southeast of the proposed map revision area. Angeles Crest Highway (SR-2) is an officially designated state scenic highway located over 24 miles east of the proposed floodplain map area, and Maricopa Highway (SR-33) is an officially designated state scenic highway located over 35 miles west of the proposed floodplain map area. The proposed map revisions would be located within the scenic highway corridor of the two nearest eligible state scenic highways—Henry Mayo Drive (SR-126) and the Golden State Freeway (Interstate 5 [I-5])—because the proposed floodplain map area is adjacent to these scenic routes. The proposed map revisions are a science-driven

project that would not cause a visible change, or any change, in the environment. In addition, there are no designated state scenic highways whose viewshed includes the area of proposed map revisions; therefore, there would be no adverse impact or contributions to significant cumulative impacts to scenic resources within a designated state scenic highway.

Section 15300.2(e) and the County Guidelines Appendix B, Section 5.2, Hazardous Waste Sites. The proposed map revisions would not be located on an active site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (please see MFR No. 5 for supporting analysis). Based on an Environmental Data Resources LLC (EDR) search of all available federal, state, and local government records and databases, no mapped hazardous waste sites in the proposed map revision area (please see MFR No. 5 for supporting analysis). The proposed map revisions area contains no active, open, or active remediation hazardous materials sites. The proposed map revisions would therefore not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.

Section 15300.2(f) and the County Guidelines Appendix B, Section 3.1.c, Historical Resources. The proposed map revisions would not directly affect historical resources because the proposed map revisions would not cause a physical change in the environment (please see MFR No. 5 for supporting analysis). There are three historical resources that were identified by a records search at the South Central Coastal Information Center within the existing mapped floodplain areas that would remain within the proposed mapped floodplain areas: the Old Road Bridge, Valencia Water Reclamation Plant, and the Southern California Edison's Big Creek East & West Transmission Line.

MFR Nos. 3, 4, 5, and 6 are maintained in the project file and available at the address listed above for the County.

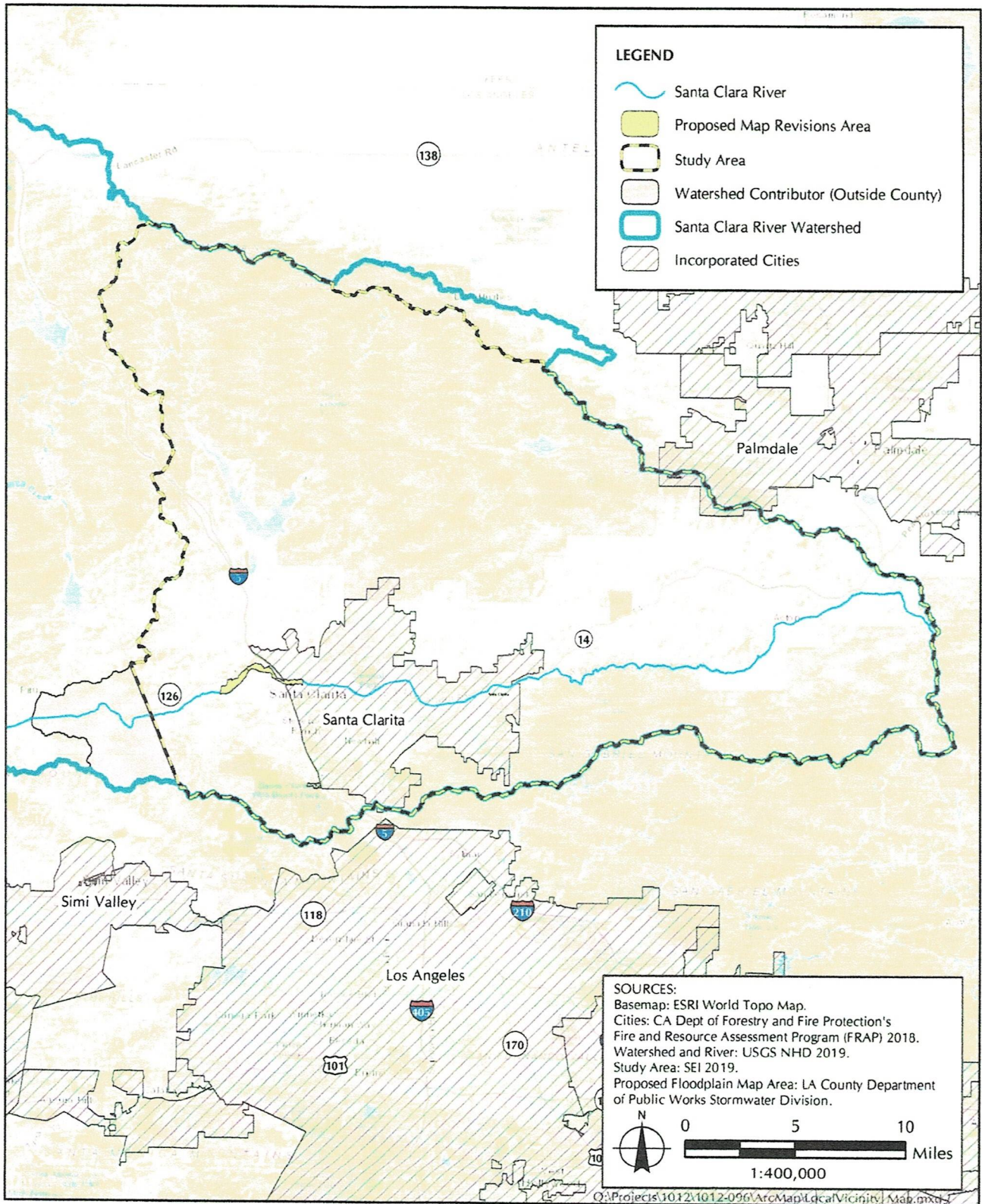
Lead Agency Contact Person	Patricia Wood Senior Civil Engineer	Area Code / Telephone / Extension	(626) 458-6131
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If filed by applicant

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

<u>Patricia Wood</u> Signature	<u>6/14/22</u> Date	<u>Senior Civil Engineer</u> Title
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Revised 2011



**FIGURE 1**  
 Local Vicinity Map

## Attachment 1: Project Location

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