



SECTION 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT APPLICANT

Newhall County Water District (NCWD)
23780 North Pine Street
Post Office Box 220970
Santa Clarita, California 91322-0970
Contact: Mr. Kenneth Petersen, General Manager (661/259-3610)

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The NCWD Vasquez Water Main Project is located in the Mint Canyon area, of the southern portion of the Liebre Mountains region (Western Transverse Ranges, California), at the eastern end of the City of Santa Clarita (Los Angeles County, California), but is outside the city limits (Figure 2-1, Map of Vasquez Water Main Service Area, and Figure 2-2, General Project Site Location Map). The project site follows a total path length of approximately 2.4 miles.

A portion of the water main has already been installed immediately south of the southern project site boundary. The installed 18-inch-diameter pipeline begins on Sand Canyon Road at the approximate coordinates of 34°26.671' North latitude, 118°25.204' West longitude; or, at the Southwest ¼, of the Northeast ¼, of Section 11, Township 4 North, Range 15 West (SW¼ NE¼ S11, T4N, R15W), Mint Canyon, California Quadrangle (USGS 7.5-minute Series Topographic Map); at approximately 1,965 feet in elevation; and heads northwest for approximately 0.53 mile. The installed pipeline then heads northeast on Sierra Highway for approximately 0.25 mile, and ends where the proposed uninstalled portion of the project site begins.

The uninstalled portion of the project site follows the remaining approximate 1.65 miles beginning on Sierra Highway, at the approximate coordinates of 34°27.157' North, 118°25.273' West; or, SW¼, SE¼, S2, T4N, R15W; at approximately 1,723 feet in elevation; and heads northeast for approximately 0.18 mile.

The proposed pipeline then heads North/Northwest on Vasquez Canyon Road for approximately 1.47 miles, and intersects Mint Canyon Creek (Figure 2-1, Aerial Photograph of Proposed Water Main Crossing Mint Canyon Creek at Vasquez Canyon Road) at the approximate coordinates of 34°27.29' North, 118°25.223' West; or, NE¼, SW¼, SE¼, S2, T4N, R15W; and at approximately 1,702 feet in elevation. The pipeline will end on Vasquez Canyon Road at the approximate coordinates of 34°28.264' North, 118°25.956' West; or, at the western border of the SW¼, NW¼, SW¼, S35, T5N, R15W; and at approximately 1,939 feet in elevation.



Figure 2-1. Map of Vasquez Water Main Service Area

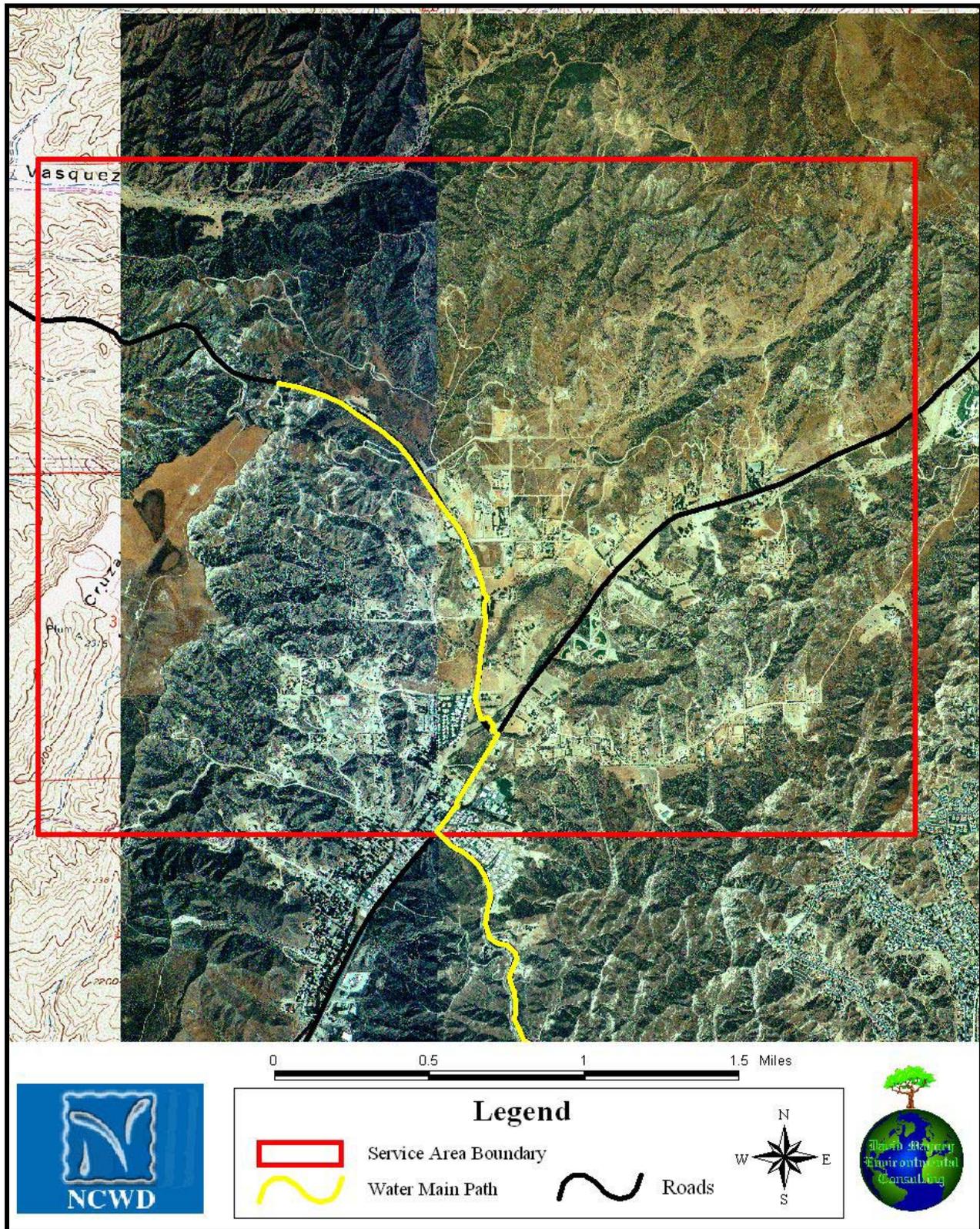
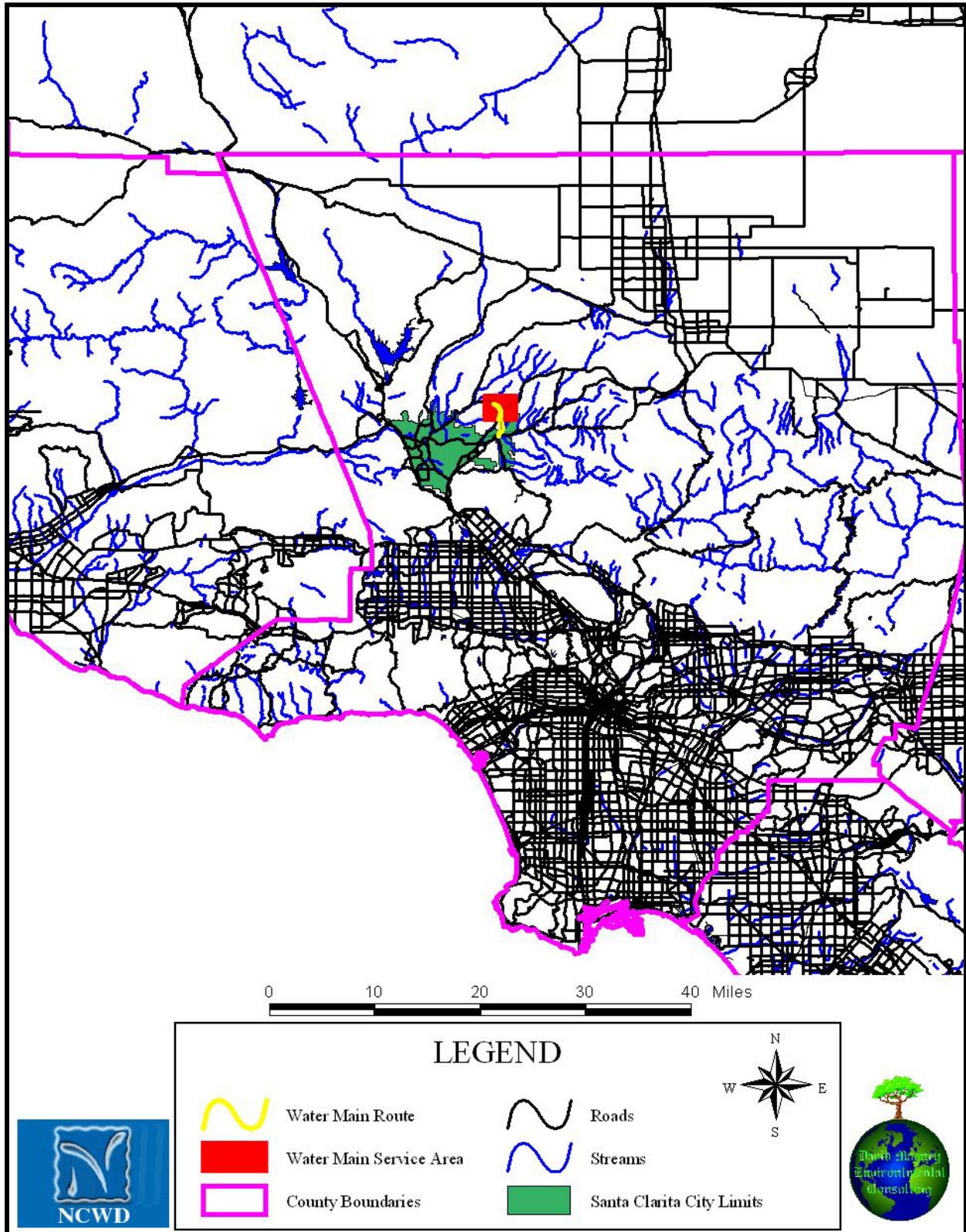


Figure 2-2. General Project Site Location Map





The Vasquez Water Main Project pipeline route/path is adjacent to, or intersects with, the following parcels, identified by Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs). Each parcel is located within or adjacent to the existing road corridors/rights of way along Vasquez Canyon Road, Sierra Highway/Mint Canyon Creek, and Sand Canyon Road. (Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2):

- 3231-007-903 (the parcel in which the Mint Canyon Creek portion of the project is located);
- 3231-005-006, -010, -011, -013, -0014, -060, -500, and -501;
- 3231-004-025, -014, -015, -033, and -034;
- 3231-001-015 and -019;
- 3231-017-024 and -026; and
- 2813-015-024.

2.3 EXISTING SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The project site (location of the proposed pipeline) consists of an approximate 3-foot wide, 2.4-mile-long corridor in the existing road right-of way of a 1.48-mile long section of Vasquez Canyon Road. This corridor consists of a 0.4-mile-long section of Sierra Highway/Mint Canyon, and a 0.46-mile-long section of Sand Canyon Road. The corridor is situated along land consisting of unimproved parcels with primarily a mix of invasive plants and native vegetation and intersecting road intersections and bridges crossing existing creeks and ephemeral drainages.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

NCWD proposes to build a 2.4-mile-long, 18-inch-diameter water main pipeline to provide water service to both existing residences and businesses in the service area and proposed new housing developments on Vasquez Canyon Road, Santa Clarita Valley, California. The service connections to residences will be by 1- and 2-inch-diameter water service lines. The Vasquez Water Main service area includes an area of approximately seven square miles (Figure 2-2), including the following sections of the Mint Canyon, California Quadrangle (USGS 7.5-minute Series Topographic Map):

- Sections 1, 2, and 3 of T4N, R15W;
- Sections 34, 35, and 36 of T5N, R15W;
- The North 1/3 of Sections 10, 11, and 12 of T4N, R15W;
- The western 1/3 of Sections 6 and 7 of T4N, R14W; and
- The western 1/3 of Section 31 of T5N, R14W.

2.5 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

2.5.1 Summary

The NCWD Vasquez Water Main, which originates from an existing water main at the corner of Sand Canyon and Soledad Canyon Roads, will be installed under existing roads (Sand Canyon Road, Sierra Highway, and Vasquez Canyon Road) except in three locations where the water main will cross natural watercourses, including Mint Canyon Creek. The Mint Canyon Creek crossing will involve trenching through the creek bed a short distance upstream from the Vasquez Canyon Road bridge. The remaining two water main crossings, which cross two ephemeral drainages, will span the drainages and will not involve channel soil disturbances.



The water main installation project, within the vicinity of the Mint Canyon Creek portion of the project site, includes a maximum impact area of approximately 50 feet wide along the length of the pipeline (a maximum of 25 feet along each side). This water main crossing Mint Canyon Creek will result in filling activities within Mint Canyon Creek, which contains jurisdictional waters of the U.S., including wetlands. In addition, the water main construction activities may substantially adversely affect existing aquatic and wildlife resources within the portion of Mint Canyon Creek, and existing vegetation and habitat resources in the vicinity of the project site.

2.5.2 Regulatory Components

Discretionary permits necessary for the completion of the project include:

- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) water quality certification, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act;
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) permit, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act;
- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Streambed Alteration Agreement, pursuant to Section 1601 of the Fish and Game Code; and
- Department of Health Services (DHS) Safe Drinking Water Program amended water supply permit.

2.5.3 Project Phasing

As the first phase of the project, a portion of the water main has already been installed immediately south of the southern project site boundary. This installed 18-inch-diameter pipeline is approximately 0.70 mile in length that begins on Sand Canyon Road at the approximate coordinates of 34°26.671' North, 118°25.204' West and heads northwest for approximately 0.46 mile, and then heads northeast on Sierra Highway for approximately 0.24 mile, ending where the proposed uninstalled portion of the project site begins.

The second phase of the project is to install the remaining length of the 18-inch diameter pipeline within the project site. The pipeline to be installed will follow the remaining approximate 1.64 miles of the proposed water main path, beginning on Sierra Highway, at the approximate coordinates of 34°27.157' North, 118°25.273' West heading northeast for approximately 0.16 mile, then heading north/northwest on Vasquez Canyon Road for approximately 1.48 miles. This section of pipeline intersects Mint Canyon Creek (Figure 2-1), Aerial Photograph of Proposed Water Main Crossing Mint Canyon Creek at Vasquez Canyon Road) at the approximate coordinates of 34°27.29' North, 118°25.223' West and ends on Vasquez Canyon Road at the approximate coordinates of 34°28.264' North, 118°25.956' West.

2.5.4 Build-Out Characteristics

The proposed project, a 2.4-mile long, 18-inch diameter pipeline, at build-out, will be large enough to serve fire protection and municipal water to approximately 2,000 equivalent dwelling units (DU). Currently, 300 DU exist that could be served by the pipeline extension. Subtracting the existing DU from the total DU to be served by the water main leaves 1,700 equivalent DU that could be served by the project in the future. This 1,700 DU figure, multiplied by the County of Los Angeles countywide DU population average (2.89 persons/DU), would be equal to a 4,930-person-population increase. These water connections would be by 1- and 2-inch-diameter water service lines according to the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.



2.6 REQUIRED APPROVALS

The portion of the Vasquez Water Main that will cross Mint Canyon Creek has the potential to negatively affect existing biological resources onsite, and will result in filling activities of Mint Canyon Creek, which contains jurisdictional waters of the U.S., including wetlands. Implementation of the proposed project would require the following discretionary approvals from the agencies located in the County of Los Angeles:

- RWQCB water quality certification, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act;
- Corps permit, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act;
- CDFG Streambed Alteration Agreement, pursuant to Section 1601 of the Fish and Game Code;
- DHS Safe Drinking Water Program amended water supply permit; and
- NCWD project approval.

2.7 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

As required by Section 15126(d) of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, this EIR will examine at least three alternatives to the proposed project. Four project alternatives are examined in this EIR. The following alternatives are described in detail in Section 8.0, Alternatives:

2.7.1 Alternative 1: No Project

This option assumes that the project is not constructed, thereby, not providing water service to existing residences and businesses in an approximate 7-square-mile service area, and not providing water service for proposed new housing developments. This No Project Alternative assumes that the project site will remain in its current state.

2.7.2 Alternative 2: Reduced Pipeline Size

This Alternative assumes that the original NCWD 2.4-mile-long pipeline project will be constructed as originally proposed, however, the pipeline size would be reduced to an 8-inch-diameter size to provide water service to existing residential, commercial and industrial water users. This alternative would avoid growth-inducing impacts.

2.7.3 Alternative 3: Creek Avoidance

This Alternative assumes that the original NCWD 2.4-mile-long pipeline will be constructed as proposed; however, the pipeline would be bored entirely under Mint Canyon Creek to avoid impacts to the creek. This alternative would avoid all direct impacts to biological resources and water quality resources associated with the creek.

2.7.4 Alternative 4: Environmentally Superior

This Environmentally Superior Alternative combines components of both Alternatives 2 and 3 by reducing the size of the pipeline to an 8-inch diameter and boring the pipeline under Mint Canyon Creek. The pipeline length would remain as originally proposed. This alternative will avoid the significant adverse impacts to biological resources and avoid growth-inducing impacts.



