



2025 – 2026

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY PLATFORM





INTRODUCTION

The 2025-2026 Legislative & Policy Platform (Platform) provides a summary of core policy principles to help guide the legislative, regulatory, and administrative advocacy efforts for the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) at the local, regional, state, and national levels of government. The Platform has been developed for the new biennial session of the California Senate and Assembly and the 119th Congress, and to be consistent with CVWD’s mission statement “to meet the water-related needs of the people through dedicated employees, providing high quality water at a reasonable cost.” While the bimonthly meetings of CVWD’s Board of Directors provide opportunities to receive direction from the Board on policy issues and introduced legislation, once adopted by the CVWD Board of Directors, the Platform provides guidance for the General Manager, his designees, and lobbyists so timely action may be taken consistent with the principles outlined below.

The Government Affairs team developed this document in collaboration with CVWD’s Board of Directors and department directors. While this document strives to cover CVWD’s anticipated needs and its positions for the legislative term, there may be issues that arise that are not addressed in this Policy Platform, or on which the Board may change its position. It is anticipated that Government Affairs staff’s regular interaction with the CVWD Board of Directors will provide the iterative process necessary to ensure that advocacy needs of CVWD are met.

POLICY POSITIONS CONSIDERED BY CVWD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CVWD staff may adopt or recommend to the CVWD Board of Directors the following legislative or policy positions. CVWD staff may adopt a position without a Board of Directors vote if the bill or policy language clearly falls within one of the policy directives established in this Platform. Advocacy strategies and activities will be guided by the Board's policies and priorities through advancement of CVWD's adopted bill or policy position. For purposes of this section, bills and legislation may also include legislative amendments, regulations, or other policy proposals.

- **SUPPORT:** This position reflects CVWD's unconditional interests to see the legislation become law. CVWD staff and legislative advocates will work to pass the bill in its present form
- **SUPPORT AND SEEK AMENDMENTS:** This position reflects a similar level of unconditional support for a bill as the SUPPORT position. However, this position implies that CVWD would prefer specific amendments to be considered that would improve the measure. CVWD staff and legislative advocates will communicate and advocate in support of the legislation, even if amendments extended by CVWD are not included in the measure.
- **SUPPORT IF AMENDED:** This is an affirmative position that suggests conditional support for a measure, but only if it is amended to incorporate specific amendments approved by the CVWD Board. CVWD staff and legislative advocates will not advocate in support of the legislation unless it is amended as requested by CVWD.
- **WATCH:** This position reflects a position on a bill that would not directly affect CVWD at that time or a bill that CVWD will maintain a neutral position on. Staff monitors "Watch" bills for further developments and future amendments. "Watch" bills may be recommended for different positions should developments and amendments require it.
- **OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED:** This position suggests conditional opposition to a measure, unless it is amended to incorporate specific amendments approved by CVWD. CVWD staff and legislative advocates will actively work to defeat the legislation until and unless it is amended as requested by CVWD. If legislation is amended as requested by CVWD, the CVWD staff and legislative advocates will either stop working to defeat the legislation or will support depending on the type of amendment received and so long as it is in line with the CVWD policy principles.
- **OPPOSE:** This position reflects CVWD's unconditional interests to defeat the legislation. CVWD staff and legislative advocates will work to defeat the legislation in its present form and will not pursue amendments to address the measure's shortcomings.

All other bills that are of potential interest or concern to CVWD are monitored by staff and legislative advocates. If any of those measures are amended, they will be reevaluated to determine if a formal position should be recommended for Board or Legislative Committee consideration.



POLICY DIRECTIVES

1. Maintain Local Control of Water Resources.

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is committed to maintaining local control over the water resources that have been responsibly managed in the Coachella Valley for more than 100 years. Any efforts at the state or federal level, particularly in Sacramento or Washington, D.C., to reduce the amount of local control or autonomy of the District and its local groundwater

management partners should be strongly opposed. Ensuring local decision-making authority over water resources is essential to preserving the Valley's long-standing water management practices.

2. Remove Burdens on CVWD Operations and Water Resources.

Equally important is the need to remove legislative or regulatory burdens that hinder CVWD's ability to effectively manage water resources and serve its customers. This includes advocating for reforms to policies that impose unnecessary regulatory burdens or operational restrictions on CVWD's mission. Efforts to alleviate such burdens will help maintain affordable and reliable water services for the residents and businesses of the Coachella Valley and should be strongly supported.

3. Protect CVWD's ability to operate day-to-day business functions efficiently.

Other measures that may impede CVWD's ability to maintain day-to-day business operations, which could include categories such as employment matters, building codes, environmental requirements, and public agency contracting, to name a few, will also be closely monitored and generally opposed.



4. Protect CVWD’s local and imported water supplies.

CVWD’s protection of diverse supplies of local water (groundwater and local surface runoff) and imported waters (Colorado River Water and State Water Project) is critical to meet the agricultural, domestic, irrigation, and other customer demands in a sustainable manner. Advocacy efforts should focus on the sustainability of the groundwater aquifer, and the

preservation of the reliable delivery of imported surface water to the Coachella Valley. CVWD must ensure that the allocations and contracted volumes of imported waters are protected, in both amount and quality, and maintain the reliability of the infrastructure for conveyance.

CVWD’s policy is to support actions that preserve or increase the volume of water available for beneficial use by CVWD and its customers, to ensure water delivery infrastructure reliability, and to preserve CVWD’s ability to achieve sustainable groundwater management in the most economical means. Any actions that may have a contrary effect should be monitored and generally opposed.

5. Protect Colorado River supply.

a. Support development of post-2026 guidelines, drought contingency plans, and agreements that are fair, sustainable, and respect the Law of the River.

The 2007 Interim Guidelines for Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead and the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan expire in 2026. Recognizing that a long-term agreement is important to ensure stability of water deliveries to all Colorado River water users, CVWD will work with the Colorado River Board of California and its California water agencies to engage with the Upper and Lower Basin states and the Federal government on the development of post-2026 guidelines, including all related agreements, management plans, and environmental reviews for the Colorado River. To achieve this goal, CVWD supports cooperative efforts among all parties to achieve new agreements that will allow the sustainable operations of the Colorado River system while respecting the bedrock Law of the River. Examples of actions to strengthen the basins’ resilience and sustainability include verifiable water use efficiency projects and investments in long-term conservation.

b. Support investments to improve Colorado River water quality.

CVWD supports short-term and long-term salinity mitigation measures on the Colorado River. Increased federal funding and implementation of measures to reduce salinity through the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control System will benefit the Basin as a system.

c. Support investments in voluntary conservation in the Upper and Lower basins.

CVWD recognizes the importance of conservation in preserving the integrity and sustainability of the Colorado River system, and supports incentives and funding for increased participation in these programs.

The Coachella Valley is a unique area of productivity and water use. CVWD invested heavily in its irrigation delivery system to minimize system losses through the use of pipes and also metering properties served; this results in approximately 5% system loss. Over 60% of CVWD's agricultural areas use drip irrigation. CVWD continues to maximize use of recycled water as an alternative water source.

CVWD has spearheaded many conservation programs and will continue to do so.

6. Support and potentially sponsor efforts to amend state and federal compliance periods for new water quality standards, including the monitoring of new regulations for various contaminants.

When a new maximum contaminant level (MCL) for a drinking water contaminant is adopted by the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), water agencies are generally mandated to start compliance monitoring within six months of the MCL effective date or beginning in January of the calendar year following the MCL effective date, depending on the nature of the contaminant. The current state regulations often do not provide water agencies impacted by a new, unavoidable MCL sufficient time to comply with the regulatory level, thereby placing agencies in a position of noncompliance and triggering a series of consequences for that agency.

Advocacy efforts will benefit California water agencies if the State Legislature or SWRCB adopted a fair and reasonable compliance period similar to that of the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency's five-year timeline for compliance with its new MCLs for six PFAS substances. The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) supports this goal, and CVWD staff actively engage with the ACWA Water Quality Committee and State and Federal Affairs Committees to promote reasonable compliance periods.

CVWD will also continue to advocate for fair, reasonable, and achievable monitoring and compliance periods for new Federal MCLs. In response to comments by public water agencies, EPA's Final MCL for six PFAS substances extended the compliance deadline from three years to five years after the final MCL was issued.



Staff will continue to pursue policies that are science-based and provide realistic compliance and notice requirements, monitor and provide comments on new drinking water regulations, including those anticipated for Hexavalent Chromium, PFAS, arsenic, and manganese, among others.

7. Support extended compliance period and reporting requirements for Hexavalent Chromium-6 regulations, liability protection, and support external funding for compliance.

In April 2024, the SWRCB adopted a Hexavalent Chromium MCL and mandated a two-year compliance period for large systems, three-years for medium systems, and four-years for smaller systems. This approach fails to address and recognize other factors such as environmental, financial, logistical, and regulatory constraints when implementing a compliance plan regardless of system size. CVWD will support legislative efforts to secure liability protection or an extended compliance period that enables water suppliers to evaluate the most cost-effective compliance options and to secure appropriations and grants for implementation costs to maintain water affordability for customers.

8. Support federal legislation to remove the taxation requirement for conservation rebates issued by water districts in the state.

Presently, under federal law, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) classifies water conservation rebates as taxable income, while energy efficiency rebates are not treated as taxable income. The IRS currently requires CVWD to produce tax-forms for each recipient of rebates in CVWD's water conservation programs. The process of complying with tax requirements and explaining the requirements to customers is lengthy, requiring significant administrative time and money by CVWD. Additionally, the taxable nature of the funds provides a disincentive to customer participation in rebate programs. Imposing federal taxes on water conservation rebates negatively impacts economically disadvantaged residents, as the rebate counts as income and potentially disqualifies people from other assistance programs. CVWD will monitor and support legislative developments while collaborating with partner agencies to advocate for legislation to amend the tax code, ensuring that water conservation rebates are exempt from customers' taxable income.



9. Continue to advocate to ensure Coachella Valley disadvantaged and underserved communities are considered for funding by local, regional, state and federal agencies.

The Coachella Valley and CVWD's service area, like many regions across California, confront challenges related to income inequality, particularly in disadvantaged and underserved areas. CVWD will continue to advocate for funding for these communities.

Due to legal restrictions stemming from financial equity issues related to Proposition 218, CVWD cannot allocate current ratepayer revenues to pay for infrastructure improvements that connect non-customers, including those in disadvantaged and underserved communities. To address this, CVWD supports the development of grant programs and efforts to obtain grant funding from State and Federal governments. This approach allows progress to be made in the areas of strategic planning, funding procurement, infrastructure improvement, needs assessment, and reporting.

CVWD will support Cathedral City's efforts to obtain grant funding to construct sewer infrastructure and will support legislation that allocates grant funding for sewer infrastructure development. Once constructed, the Cathedral City Septic to Centralized Sewer Conversion Project will allow residents within identified Cathedral City neighborhoods to connect to a public sewer system instead of relying on septic systems. This project will provide safe, reliable sewer service and reduce nitrate levels in Coachella Valley groundwater.

CVWD and the Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) Infrastructure Task Force developed the Eastern Coachella Valley Water and Wastewater Supply Master Plans, which identified, mapped, and prioritized approximately 100 small, private systems that are eligible to consolidate with CVWD's domestic water and wastewater systems. Many of the small water systems have elevated levels of arsenic, nitrates, and fluoride. Consolidation provides reliable and safe drinking water and sewer services.



Working closely with our legislative delegations and state and federal agencies, CVWD continues to secure state and federal funding for water main projects and consolidation of several communities throughout the Coachella Valley including the Eastern Coachella Valley and the City of Cathedral City. CVWD will continue to pursue opportunities for additional connections. In coordination with the DAC Infrastructure Task Force, CVWD will continue to advocate to accelerate progress for these communities through efforts at the local, regional, and state levels. CVWD will also support the efforts of the DAC Infrastructure Task Force to obtain and accelerate federal funding.

10. CVWD supports water affordability, however, CVWD continues to oppose a water “tax” or “fee” and monitor ways in which the state and/or federal governments will address water affordability through water assistance programs or legislative actions.

CVWD supports water affordability programs; however, CVWD opposes a water tax and administratively burdensome measures to implement those programs.

CVWD generally supports programs that supplement its existing customer assistance program to help low-income customers, leveraging existing program processes to keep administrative costs low, and avoid the need for individual water agencies to hire staff. Additionally, a third-party administrator should perform customer eligibility screenings instead of individual water agencies, as CVWD does not collect personally identifiable information from customers. Funding for these programs should come from a sustainable state or federal sources without the possibility of creating a water tax, a fee for funding, or mandating that individual water providers create assistance programs funded with ratepayer contributions.

11. Seek external funding for new facilities or facilities improvements, infrastructure and cybersecurity.

CVWD continues to provide reliable service in the areas of water delivery, water capture and reuse, and storm water management, which often requires new facilities or improvements to its existing facilities. In order to meet the “reasonable cost” component of CVWD’s mission statement, CVWD should maximize opportunities to leverage external funding whenever possible in order to reduce the cost burdens associated with the required facilities to customers.

Aging and deficient infrastructure is an important issue that has been identified in numerous industry studies, and CVWD should encourage lawmakers to make available grants and fund-matching opportunities to encourage capital investment and improvements in infrastructure to ensure reliable service. Advocacy efforts in the area may include requesting an authority expansion for program funding to include new arenas not traditionally undertaken by the agency in question, particularly at the federal level but also at the state level.

Cybersecurity threats are impacting organizations worldwide, including many public agencies and utilities across the United States. Among the cybersecurity risks, facing utilities are the theft of confidential information, ransomware attacks, and the hacking of information systems to change operating conditions at utilities. CVWD will encourage policies that expand funding to utilities to address cybersecurity threats and create programs, policies, and tools that minimize cybersecurity risks.



12. Support investments to preserve the State Water Project, Delta Conveyance Project, and Sites Reservoir Project and improve imported water supply reliability in a cost-conscious manner.

CVWD has been closely involved with the State Water Project (SWP) since its inception in the 1960s, being one of the original State Water Contractors; CVWD's annual payment to the SWP is more than \$50 million. Over the past 50+ years, the reliability of the water deliveries from this project has decreased to less than 50% since 2007. In July 2024, the California Department of Water Resources issued a report projecting that SWP delivery capability and reliability could be reduced as much as 23% from the 2023 baseline conditions, or 496,000-acre feet per year, in 20 years due to changing flow patterns and extreme weather shifts – underscoring the need for additional investments in SWP infrastructure.

CVWD's Board has supported two important projects that attempt to restore the SWP's reliability so that CVWD and other participating contractors may receive closer to their contracted-for allocations. The first is a tunnel project envisioned to convey water across the environmentally sensitive Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during wet years so that the water may be stored for use during dry years. The tunnel project has evolved through many iterations, including the Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP), California WaterFix, and most recently, the Delta Conveyance Project (DCP). Recent actions by the CVWD Board include supporting the Delta Conveyance Project and participating in its funding through the Design and Construction Authority (DCA) and the Delta Conveyance Finance Authority (DCFA).

The second major supply reliability restoration project that the CVWD Board supports is the Sites



Reservoir Project. This off-stream project is intended to capture and store excess storm water runoff which will provide additional storage capacity, flexibilities, and resilience for California water supplies, especially during dry years. CVWD has been a member of the Sites Reservoir Committee since 2017 and is one of the original investors from south of the Delta.

Other pressures threaten to reduce exports from the Bay Delta, including the proposed “unimpaired flow” option under the new State Water Resources Control Board’s Sacramento/San Joaquin Water Quality Control Plan. As an alternative, CVWD supports resolving the competing environmental demands on the Bay Delta water system through the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes process,

commonly referred to as the “Voluntary Agreements” or “VAs.” The VA process recognizes that the best possible solution to increasing flows in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river systems while meeting the water supply needs for the majority of Californians is through a dynamic and cooperative process that balances the competing demands on the Bay-Delta.

In addition to water supply pressures, the SWP is also facing significant cost increases from other regulatory requirements, including SB 1020 (Clean Energy, Jobs, and Affordability Act of 2022), which places demands on CA users to switch to power from renewable energy sources by 2040. The SWP is among the largest of CA’s energy users, and meeting SWP’s future energy demands while transitioning to a green economy will require significant efforts to secure the potentially costlier renewable energy contracts. CVWD supports the DWR and State Water Contractor’s role in ensuring the transition to meet the intents of SB 1020 is executed in the most cost-efficient manner possible.

CVWD staff will continue to monitor the developments on the SWP, Delta Conveyance Project, Sites Reservoir, and any legislative or regulatory actions that could impair or improve the reliability and flexibility of water delivery to the contractors. CVWD will also engage with the Newsom Administration on the implementation of its “California’s Water Supply Strategy: Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future,” released in August 2022. As the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project operate in a combined fashion, CVWD should also support investments to increase the operational flexibility and reliability of these systems.

13. Protect CVWD interests related to the Quantification Settlement Agreement, Salton Sea, and the Salton Sea Management Program.

CVWD was one of the principal parties during the historic Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) discussions. Executed in 2004, the QSA is a 75-year intra-California agreement that limited the annual Colorado River water delivery to California to 4.4 million acre-feet. The effect of the QSA for CVWD is the annual paid transfer of up to 103,000 acre-feet from the Imperial Irrigation District. CVWD has actively participated on issues related to the Salton Sea, including financial contributions to the QSA Joint Powers Authority for actions to mitigate the environmental impacts from the water transfer, and two of CVWD’s Board members serve on the Salton Sea Authority Board.

Although CVWD is supportive of requiring the State of California and the federal government to fulfill its obligation for environmental restoration of the Sea (the most recent iteration of this effort is the



Salton Sea Long-Range Plan adopted in April 2024, it is opposed to any actions that may negatively impact the water transfer agreements.

CVWD will continue to engage with staff at the Salton Sea Authority, Riverside County, and other agencies, including the newly formed Salton Sea Conservancy, as appropriate, at the federal, state, and regional levels to advance state and federal investments in environmental restoration and air quality improvement while respecting water transfer agreements that are critical for the region.

14. Strongly support a liability exemption for water and wastewater agencies regarding the designation of PFAS as a hazardous substance under CERCLA and strongly support a sound regulatory scheme to address PFAS.

As per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have gained national attention in both the press and the popular media and health impacts associated with prolonged contact with subsets of these chemicals are highlighted, there are efforts at both the state and federal level to regulate the class of chemicals. PFAS are currently used in firefighting foam, used in industrial processes, and in numerous consumer products treated to repel grease, stains, water, and thousands of other products. PFAS are best addressed by removing these chemicals from the supply chain of manufactured products, rather than imposing requirements or potential liability on water and wastewater agencies who do not create or use PFAS, but are rather passive-receivers of the contaminant through the use of others.

Without protection for CVWD, our ratepayers, and passive receivers, CVWD will oppose any future efforts to expand regulation of the class of PFAS chemicals under CERCLA, which creates potentially burdensome and expensive clean-up requirements, and gives PFAS manufacturers and users potential legal actions seeking contribution to cleanup costs.

CVWD will continue to work with a coalition of water and wastewater agencies support a statutory exemption from CERCLA liability for public water and wastewater agencies, who are passive receivers and have not used or benefited from those substances. CVWD's intention with this is to ensure that CERCLA remains a polluter-pay law, and the costs are not unduly bore by water ratepayers.

Further, CVWD supports regulatory and legislative measures that ensure the science and technology to address PFAS exists prior to the implementation of laws and regulations. Without this sequencing, CVWD and other water and wastewater agencies will be responsible for becoming compliant with laws, where the technology and science do not allow for the current possibility.

15. Support and potentially sponsor efforts to streamline federal and state loan and grant processes and policies to reduce delays and remove barriers.

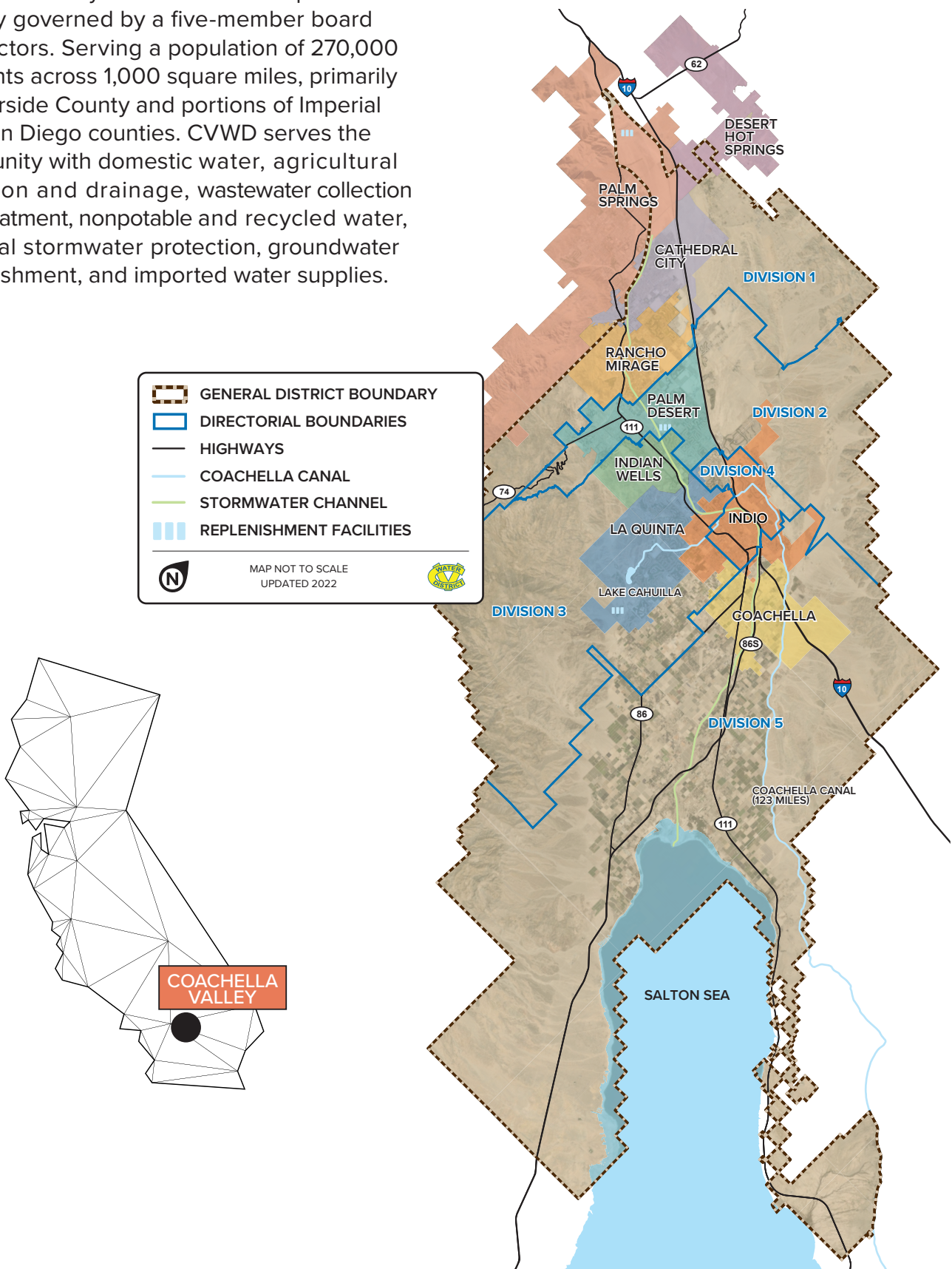
CVWD relies on a range of state, federal, and federally supported grant and loan programs to address water infrastructure and consolidation needs, including, but not limited to, grants and loans from USDA, EPA-funded grants and loans from State Revolving Funds and State and Tribal Assistance Grants, State Water Resources Control Board loans and grants, and the Bureau of Reclamation's Title XVI and Aging Infrastructure Programs. CVWD will continue to identify and support opportunities to expedite and expand the deployment and execution of these funding programs and to remove barriers to their usefulness for local partners and the public they serve.

16. Support efforts to streamline project approval processes while minimizing high mitigation costs and barriers to developing infrastructure.

CVWD will advocate for regulatory reforms focused on reducing high mitigation costs and making projects more accessible and financially viable. By supporting collaborative efforts among stakeholders to identify and eliminate barriers that hinder timely project execution, these actions will ensure infrastructure improvements are implemented cost effectively to maintain water affordability and sustainably serve CVWD customers.

COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Coachella Valley Water District is a public agency governed by a five-member board of directors. Serving a population of 270,000 residents across 1,000 square miles, primarily in Riverside County and portions of Imperial and San Diego counties. CVWD serves the community with domestic water, agricultural irrigation and drainage, wastewater collection and treatment, nonpotable and recycled water, regional stormwater protection, groundwater replenishment, and imported water supplies.





For questions regarding these legislative and policy directives and their implementation, please contact the Government Affairs division at 760-398-2661, ext. 3564, or email **governmentaffairs@cvwd.org**.

*This Legislative & Policy Platform was approved by the Board of Directors on **January xx, 2025**.*

COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

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