



Clean Water • Healthy Environment • Flood Protection

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING

DATE: January 10, 2023

FROM: Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Scoping Meeting

PROJECT TITLE: Canal Maintenance Program

PROJECT LOCATION: San Jose, Morgan Hill, Los Gatos, Campbell, and unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water)—the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency—will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Valley Water’s proposed Canal Maintenance Program (proposed project or project). Public agencies, members of the public, and other interested parties are invited to provide written comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR. If you are a Responsible or Trustee Agency with jurisdiction by law over natural resources held in public trust, Valley Water needs to know what environmental information germane to your statutory responsibilities should be included in the Draft EIR.

A brief description of the Canal Maintenance Program, including the canals and the canal maintenance activities, and the potential environmental effects of the project are provided in the attached materials. This NOP is also available online: <https://www.valleywater.org/public-review-documents>.

If you wish to provide comments, please send your comments to the mailing address and/or email address provided below. Comments should be sent at the earliest possible date but **no later than Monday, February 12, 2024**. Please include your name and contact information if you would like to receive future information on the project.

Santa Clara Valley Water District
Attn: Kelly White, Associate Environmental Planner
5750 Almaden Expressway, B-1244
San Jose, CA 95118
Email: CanalMaintenanceProgram@valleywater.org
Subject Line: CMP Scoping Comments

A public scoping meeting will be held at **5:30p.m. on Thursday, January 25, 2024**. Participants may attend in-person (Santa Clara Valley Water District, 5750 Almaden Expressway, San Jose, CA 95118), via Zoom (<https://valleywater.zoom.us/j/85129173252>) or phone (1-669-444-9171). Webinar ID: 851 2917 3252.

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Rick L. Callender, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer

1/5/2024

Date

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Scoping Meeting for Valley Water's Canal Maintenance Program

INTRODUCTION

Notice is hereby given that a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared for the Santa Clara Valley Water District's (Valley Water's) Canal Maintenance Program (project or proposed project). As the Lead Agency responsible for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Valley Water has determined the project may have a significant impact on the physical environment and an EIR is required. A detailed environmental analysis will be conducted for the proposed project and presented in the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR will evaluate and identify the possible environmental impacts of the project and propose measures to avoid, minimize, and/or reduce significant impacts. An analysis of alternatives to the proposed project will also be included in the Draft EIR. Valley Water is seeking input from the public, interested parties, and public agencies on the scope and content of the Draft EIR.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) provides a brief overview of the Canal Maintenance Program, the project objectives, the CEQA environmental review process, and the possible environmental impacts of the project. Preparation of the NOP initiates the public scoping process and provides an opportunity for public input and participation in the decision-making process.

CANAL HISTORY

Valley Water's canals were built in the 1930s and 1950s to transfer water supplies to groundwater percolation facilities and surface storage reservoirs. A handful of the canals remain a critical part of the raw water distribution system today and are maintained to ensure ongoing functionality and structural integrity. The water supply transport function of other canals was eliminated over time due to commercial and residential developments, changes in land rights, and expansion of the Valley Water raw water distribution system. Regardless of status, all of the canals collect and convey incidental stormwater runoff, provide incidental flood protection benefits for nearby developments, and require maintenance to maintain the functionality and reliability of operable canals and minimize liability risks associated with inoperable canals. The Canal Maintenance Program addresses preventative, routine, and corrective maintenance of both operable and inoperable canals.

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Valley Water's canals are located within the Santa Clara hydrologic basin (watershed) in the cities of Campbell, Los Gatos, San Jose, and Morgan Hill and unincorporated Santa Clara County. The canals in Campbell and Los Gatos are typically aligned through urbanized areas such as residential and commercial developments. In San Jose, Morgan Hill, and unincorporated areas, the environmental setting is generally more rural and the canals are aligned along hillsides and open grasslands.

The canals that would be covered under the Canal Maintenance Program are described below. The canal locations are depicted in **Figures 1 through 4**.

Coyote Canal — Located in the cities of San Jose and Morgan Hill, and in unincorporated Santa Clara County, the Coyote Canal is a 7.2-mile-long canal extending from its historic point of diversion at Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek Visitor Center to the Coyote Creek Parkway (near Field Sports County Park). The canal was last operated in

1998 and is no longer in use.

Coyote Extension South — Located in unincorporated Santa Clara County, the Coyote Extension South extends 1.2 miles from Coyote Canal in the south (near Field Sports County Park) to Metcalf Road in the north. The extension was last operated in 1988 and is no longer in use.

Coyote Extension North — Located in the city of San Jose and unincorporated Santa Clara County, Coyote Extension North extends 2.1 miles from the vicinity of Piercy Road and Hellyer Avenue in the south to the Evergreen Pump Station on Hellyer Avenue in the north. The extension was last operated in 1988 and is no longer in use.

Coyote Alamos Canal — Located in the city of San Jose and unincorporated Santa Clara County, the Coyote Alamos Canal is a 10.6-mile shotcrete-lined canal along the northern edge of the Santa Theresa Foothills. The canal extends from the Coyote Extension South at Metcalf Road and Malech Road in the east to Guadalupe Creek just upstream of its confluence with Alamos Creek in the west. The canal was last operated in 1980 and is no longer in use.

Vasona Canal — Located in the town of Los Gatos, the Vasona Canal extends 2.5 miles from Vasona Dam to San Tomas Aquino Creek. Last operated in 2014, the Vasona Canal is used as a standby facility.

Kirk Ditch — Located in the town of Los Gatos and city of Campbell, Kirk Ditch is comprised of 1.6 miles of earthen open channel connected by underground sections. Kirk Ditch is used to convey Los Gatos Creek water and imported water from Central Pipeline to the Oka and McGlincy Groundwater Percolation Ponds.

Upper Page Ditch — Located in the city of Campbell, upper Page Ditch is a 0.75 concrete-lined ditch used to convey Los Gatos Creek water and imported water from Central Pipeline to the Camden and Page Groundwater Percolation Ponds.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Valley Water is pursuing the Canal Maintenance Program to streamline the environmental approvals needed to conduct preventative, routine, and corrective maintenance along operable and inoperable canals. The objectives of the Canal Maintenance Program are:

- Preserve the structural and functional integrity of operable canals and adjoining facilities.
- Reduce costs associated with canal failure.
- Facilitate access and timely completion of inspections and routine, preventative, and corrective canal maintenance.
- Protect public health and safety.
- Streamline environmental approvals for canal maintenance so that maintenance can be coordinated as a comprehensive program and conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts to the environment, sensitive species, and habitat.

CANAL MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

Valley Water would maintain only those sections of canals where Valley Water has fee title or maintenance easements. Whenever possible, maintenance equipment and vehicles would be stationed on the canal access road. The Canal Maintenance Program would include the following maintenance activities:

Vegetation Management — Vegetation management would be conducted to maintain access, maintain conveyance capacity and channel velocity, prevent blockages, prevent damage to the canal lining and embankment, abate weeds and reduce the control of invasive plant species, and reduce fire hazards. Equipment used for vegetation management would include small tools, hand-held equipment (chainsaws and weed-eaters), and heavy equipment (disc attachments on tillers, flail mowers, backhoes, rubber-tracked excavators). Small trees on the access road, embankment, and edges of the canal would be removed using hand tools and a crane.

Sediment Removal — Sediment and debris that accumulates in the canals and canal siphons can reduce conveyance capacity and channel velocity, create blockages, increase flood hazards, and encourage the growth of in-channel vegetation by providing a medium for plants to grow on. Sediment and debris would be mechanically removed using excavators, dump trucks, and high-pressure water hoses. Sediment would be tested prior to prior to be being hauled to an appropriate disposal facility.

Bank Stabilization — Banks that exhibit instability such as settlement, sloughs, landslides, and erosion may be repaired using excavators, bulldozers, crawlers, rollers, cranes, front-end loaders, dump trucks, water trucks, pumps, generators, compactors and hand-operated compactors. Whenever possible, staging and the stationing of heavy equipment would occur along the canal access road. In areas with severe instability, retaining walls or other hard structural solutions may be used to stabilize the hillside above the canal, the canal embankment, and/or the access road.

Repairs to Canal Lining and Walls — This activity includes repairing damaged or failed sections of canal lining using grout, concrete patches, or shotcrete.

Culvert Repairs, Replacement, and Installation — All of the canals collect incidental runoff from adjacent upland areas. Others, including the Coyote Alamitos Canal and the Coyote Canal, also provide stormwater conveyance and flood protection. Existing culverts and other drainage controls collect runoff and convey it over, under, or into the canals. Culvert repairs, replacement, and installation would be conducted using an excavator, small cranes, and compactors.

Access Road Maintenance — In addition to keeping the access roads clear of vegetation, road access maintenance also includes filling in potholes and regrading to eliminate ruts and gullies and maintain proper drainage. Periodic re-graveling may also be necessary to maintain a strong road base and allow for year-round access. Equipment used for re-graveling activities would include a skip loader, motor-grader, smooth drum roller, water truck, transport truck and trailer, and dump truck.

Management of Animal Conflicts — Animal burrows can cause structural damage to the canal or destabilize the embankment. Animal conflicts would be managed primarily by trapping.

Minor Maintenance — Minor maintenance includes repairing and installing fences, gates, and signage.

Implementation of the Canal Maintenance Program would not affect future canal operations or uses.

TOPICS TO BE ANALYZED IN THE DRAFT EIR

The Draft EIR will be prepared pursuant to the CEQA statute (California Public Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines and will describe existing conditions and disclose the Canal Maintenance Program's potential to result in significant impacts to the environment. A preliminary discussion of the project's potential effects on environmental resources, based on existing available information, is provided below. Strategies to avoid, minimize, and/or reduce significant impacts will be provided in mitigation measures and project alternatives. The Draft EIR will also evaluate the potential for growth-inducing impacts as well as cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the Canal Maintenance Program in combination with other projects in the vicinity. The Draft EIR will consider all environmental resource topics and checklist questions in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines; however, the project is not anticipated to adversely affect the following resources: agriculture and forestry resources, mineral resources, land use and land use planning, geology and soils, public services, and population and housing. Responses received to this NOP may modify or add to the preliminary assessment topics listed below.

Aesthetics

Valley Water's canals are located below grade and set in rolling grasslands (Coyote Alamitos Canal, Coyote Canal, and the Coyote Extensions) and urban areas (Vasona Canal, Kirk Ditch, and Upper Page Ditch). Public views of the canals tend to be distant and/or fleeting, and obscured by intervening topography and vegetation. The Canal Maintenance Program would not result in the construction of new facilities nor introduce any elements to the setting that are not already present. Although the project is not expected to adversely affect aesthetic resources, the Draft EIR will evaluate the potential for vegetation management activities to impact aesthetic resources.

Biological Resources

Portions of the Coyote Alamitos Canal, Coyote Canal, and Coyote Extension South are in areas with documented occurrences of serpentine resources, rare plants, California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, western pond turtle, Crotch's bumble bee, and host plants for Bay checkerspot butterfly. The Coyote Canal and Coyote Extensions intersect isolated wetlands and natural drainages. The Draft EIR will address the potential for implementation of the Canal Maintenance Program to adversely affect aquatic and terrestrial habitats, and special-status plants and wildlife. Individual plants and animals could be directly impacted by maintenance activities (e.g., species mortality) or indirectly impacted by maintenance-related noise, dust, soil erosion, degradation of water quality, and the presence of human activity. Terrestrial and aquatic wildlife could also be adversely affected if vegetation management, sediment removal, and other maintenance activities were to impact habitat or impair movement corridors.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The management of in-channel vegetation, sediment removal, maintenance of Valley Water access roads, and other ground-disturbing activities along earthen canal segments and nearby creeks and drainages could cause soil erosion, increase sedimentation of receiving waterbodies, and/or otherwise degrade surface water quality. In addition, although canal maintenance reduces the potential for channel obstructions, overtopping, seepage through the canal embankment, and localized flooding, the Draft EIR will also evaluate the potential for in-channel canal maintenance work to temporarily impede flow, alter drainage patterns, and adversely affect runoff conditions.

Hazardous Materials

Portions of the Coyote Alamitos Canal, Coyote Canal, and Coyote Extension South are in areas with serpentine

soils, which create a potential human health hazard when disturbed due to the presence of Naturally Occurring Asbestos. Hazards impacts could also result from the improper use, storage, transport, or disposal of hazardous materials or hazardous waste.

Air Quality

Canal maintenance would result in temporary short-term increases in dust and criteria pollutants from ground disturbance and the operation of heavy equipment. Emissions will be estimated and compared to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) CEQA thresholds.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Canal maintenance would result in temporary greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the operation of maintenance vehicles and equipment. The Draft EIR will evaluate project consistency with applicable GHG reduction plans, policies, and regulations.

Energy

The Draft EIR will evaluate the potential for canal maintenance to result in the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary use of energy resources.

Transportation

The Canal Maintenance Program is not a land use development project and would have no effect on existing land uses. Vehicle trips generated by canal maintenance activities would be similar to vehicle trips generated by existing canal inspections and maintenance activities. Because the project would not result in a long-term or permanent increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b), the Draft EIR will include a qualitative VMT analysis. The Draft EIR will also address the project's potential to increase transportation hazards, impede emergency access, or conflict with plans, ordinances, or policies related to transit, roadways, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Maintenance is anticipated to occur within previously disturbed areas and within the existing footprints of the canals and adjacent canal maintenance roads. Valley Water has initiated outreach to tribes to obtain information regarding Tribal Cultural Resources that may be present along the canals and that could be adversely affected by the project. The Draft EIR will evaluate potential impacts to known and unknown Tribal Cultural Resources.

Cultural Resources

The Draft EIR will evaluate potential impacts on known and unknown historical and archaeological resources and on human remains .

Noise

The Draft EIR will identify sensitive noise receptors and evaluate potential impacts resulting from temporary increases in noise and ground borne vibration during maintenance.

Wildfire

Some canal reaches are located in State Responsibility Areas and/or in areas classified as high fire severity zones. The Draft EIR will evaluate the project's potential to increase wildfire hazards from the operation of maintenance equipment.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

This NOP initiates the CEQA process and EIR scoping period through which Valley Water will refine the scope of issues and environmental information that should be included in the Draft EIR. Public agencies, members of the public, and other interested parties are invited to provide comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIR.

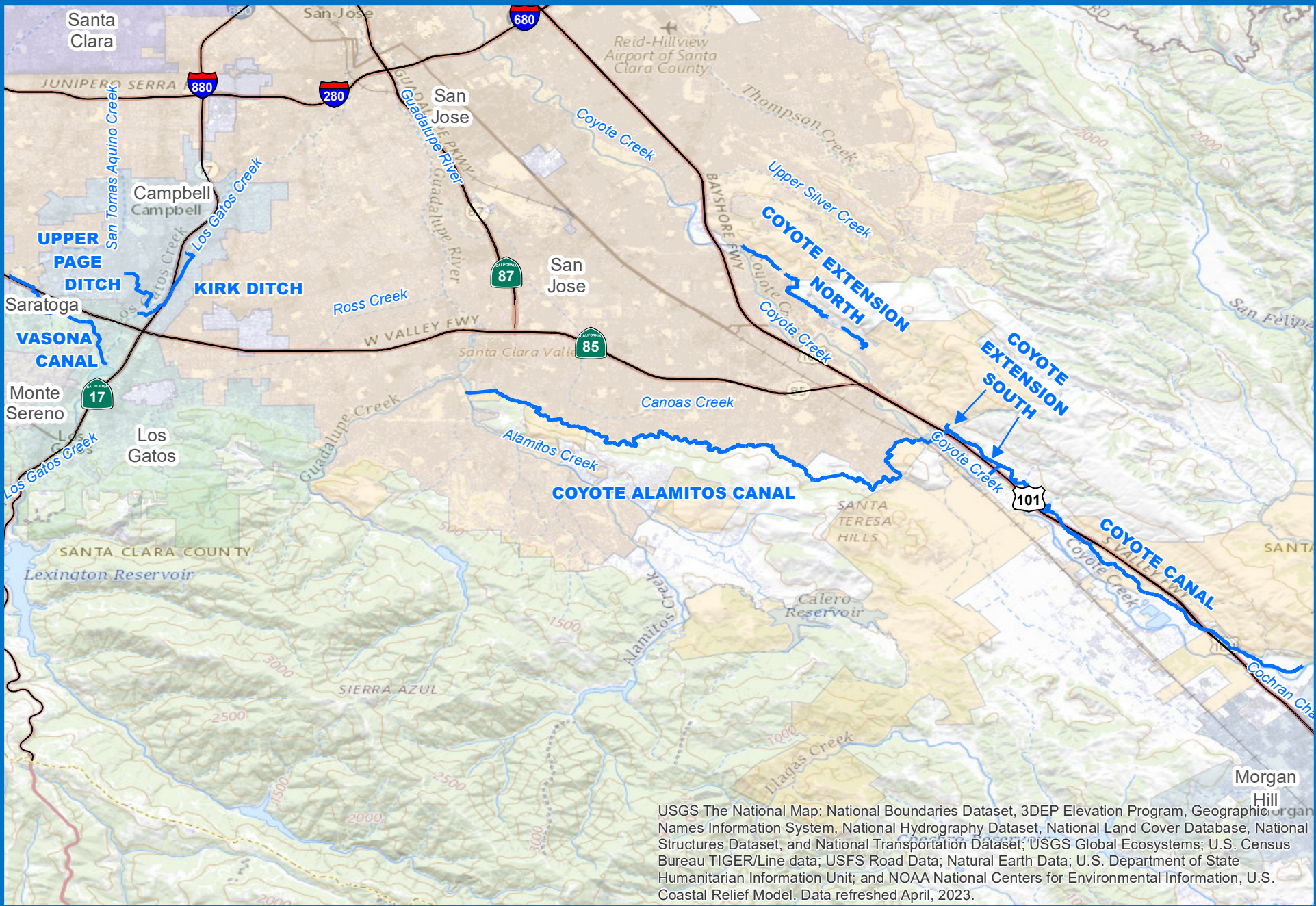
After the 30-day review period for the NOP is complete and all comments are received, a Draft EIR will be prepared in accordance with CEQA, as amended (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.), and the State Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (CCR §15000 et seq.). The Draft EIR will be made available for a 45-day public review and comment period. A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR will be sent directly to public agencies, organizations, and persons that comment on this NOP. The Draft EIR will be posted on Valley Water's website (<https://www.valleywater.org/public-review-documents> and <https://www.valleywater.org/canal-maintenance-program>). Hardcopies will be made available for viewing at Valley Water's offices and at public libraries.

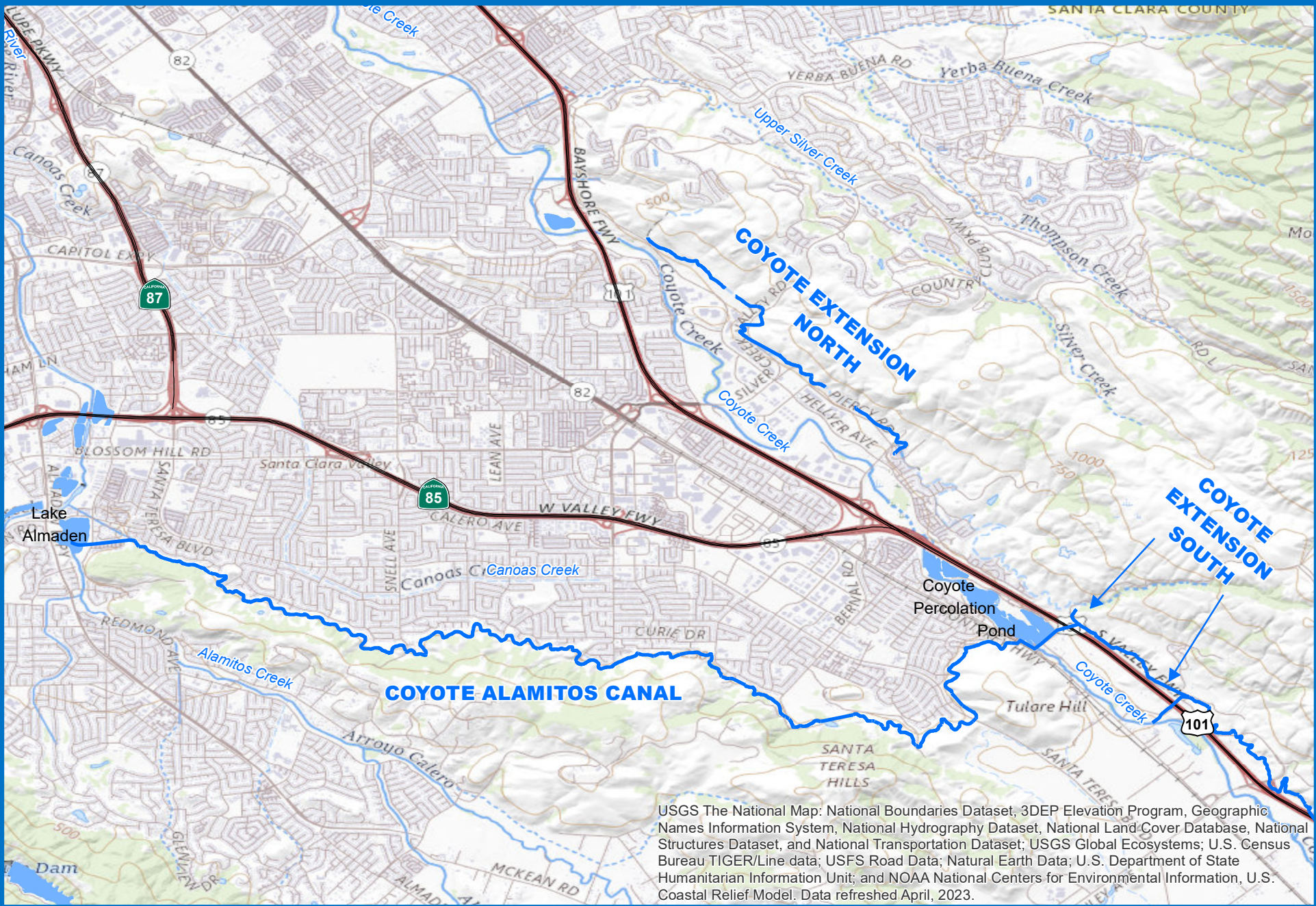
CONTACT INFORMATION

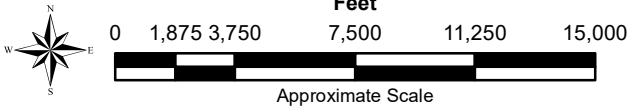
For further information, please contact:

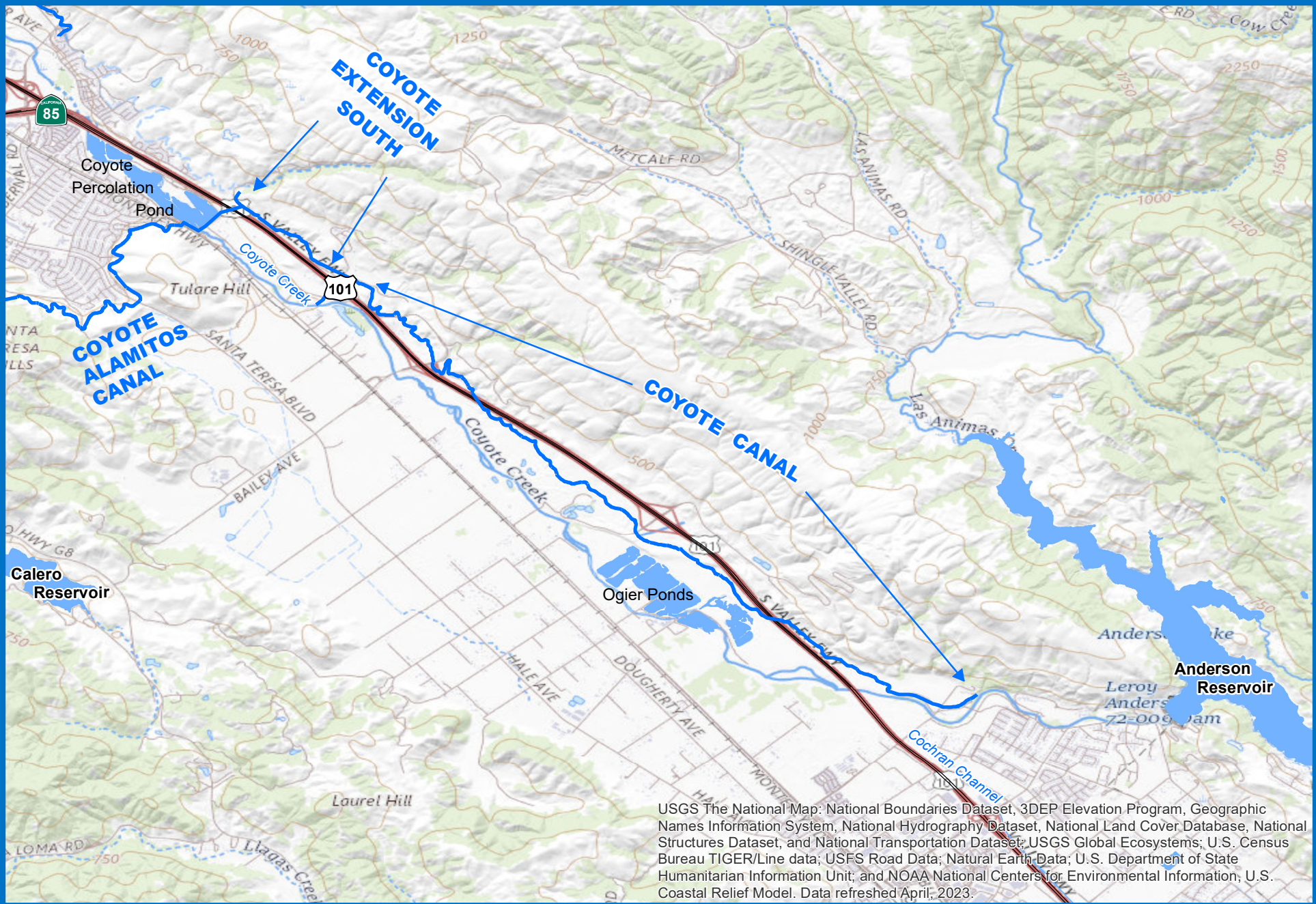
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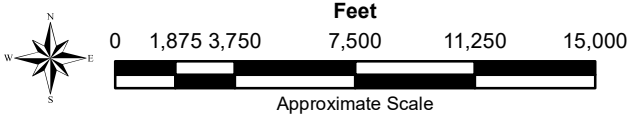
Future updates and documents will be posted on the project website: <https://www.valleywater.org/project-updates/canal-maintenance-program>.

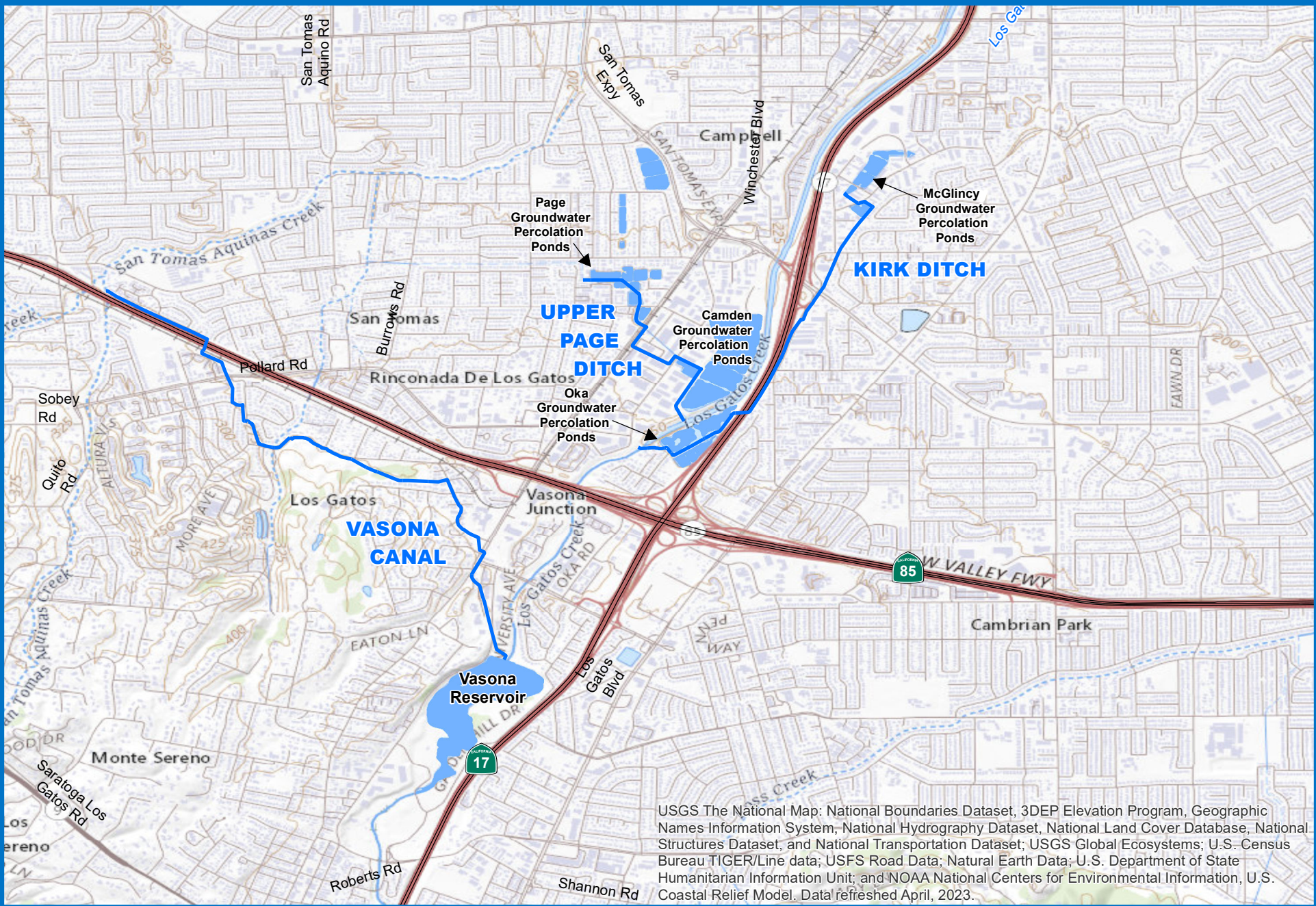




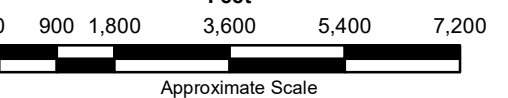
	 Feet 0 1,875 3,750 7,500 11,250 15,000 Approximate Scale	Legend — Canal	Canal Maintenance Program Figure 2: Coyote Alamos Canal & Coyote Extensions
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	 Feet 0 1,875 3,750 7,500 11,250 15,000 Approximate Scale	Legend  Canal	Canal Maintenance Program Figure 3: Coyote Canal & Coyote Extension South
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USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed April, 2023.

	  0 900 1,800 3,600 5,400 7,200 Approximate Scale	Legend  Canal	Canal Maintenance Program Figure 4: Vasona Canal, Kirk Ditch, & Upper Page Ditch
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