

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
RIVERSIDE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

1. INTRODUCTION

The County of Riverside (County), in cooperation with participating local governments and landowners, will prepare an EIR for the proposed General Plan of Riverside County. Because CEQA requires that “all phases of project planning, implementation, and operation must be considered,” and because it is clear that future development that will be facilitated by the proposed Riverside County General Plan could have a significant effect on the environment, an EIR is required. The EIR will be prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended (Public Resources Code, Section 21000, *et seq.*), and State CEQA Guidelines. The EIR will also comply with the procedures of the County of Riverside for implementing CEQA.

The challenge of balancing the housing, transportation, and economic needs of existing and future populations with limited natural resources and the sensitivity of the natural environment required Riverside County to develop the Riverside County Integrated Planning Project (RCIP) process, which consists of three coordinated plans to determine future planning, transportation, and conservation needs for the County. The goals of the effort are threefold:

- Adopt the County’s 2002 General Plan.
- Create a Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) for western Riverside County and integrate the ongoing Coachella Valley MSHCP into the fabric of comprehensive planning for the County.
- Identify transportation corridors to meet the County’s future transportation needs through the Community Environmental and Transportation Acceptability Program (CETAP).

Pursuant to the provisions of CEQA and the State and local guidelines, the County is the Lead Agency and is charged with the responsibility of deciding whether or not to approve the proposed General Plan. The discretionary action anticipated to be taken by the County is the adoption of the *2002 Riverside County General Plan*, which incorporates 19 Area Plans as part of the Riverside County General Plan, and the adoption of proposed boundary changes to zoning districts to coincide with the 19 Area Plan boundaries.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) is a brief notice sent by a Lead Agency to notify responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and involved Federal agencies that the lead agency plans to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The purpose of the NOP is to solicit guidance from those agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. While the RCIP process is a threefold effort, the environmental documentation for each component effort will be prepared and certified independently. Therefore, the notification action of this NOP applies only to the Riverside County General Plan EIR.

2. PROJECT LOCATION

Riverside County, California, encompasses approximately 7,295 square miles, stretching 200 miles from the eastern portion of the Los Angeles metropolitan area to the Colorado River. It is bounded by Orange County on the west, San Bernardino County to the north, the State of Arizona to the east, and San Diego and Imperial Counties to the south (Figure 1). Riverside County, the fourth largest county in California, is one of the most diverse counties in the State, including well-established urban, suburban, and rural