



## Features

The Riverside County Vision builds heavily on the value of its remarkable environmental setting. That applies here as well. While not as close to the surrounding mountains as some other areas, the central location of the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area affords an ample view of the mountain vistas that dominate the remarkable setting of western Riverside County. We find here a wide variety of physical features: flat valley floors, gently rolling foothills, abrupt buttes and hillsides, and the ever-present rock outcroppings. Watercourses meandering through the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area include Warm Springs and Salt Creeks. This section describes the setting, features, and functions that are unique to the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area. These defining characteristics are shown on Figure 2, Physical Features.

## SETTING



Double Butte rising sharply from the flat valley floor

The Harvest Valley/Winchester area is actually part of a system of broad, sweeping valleys and is framed by the Menifee Valley to the west and the Domenigoni Valley to the south. Situated within this valley, the Double Butte, Dawson and Lakeview Mountains, and Diamond Valley Lake are the major physical features defining the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area. The Lakeview Mountains to the north and the Dawson Mountains in the southeast, though mainly located in adjacent planning areas, create a strong visual backdrop. Salt Creek generally separates the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area into northern and southern halves, and the San Diego Aqueduct bisects the land into east-west segments. Warm Springs Creek, which ultimately flows into the Santa Margarita River, is piped underground to approximately Scott Road where it then flows southwest out of the planning area.



The Diamond Valley Lake

## UNIQUE FEATURES

### Double Butte

Double Butte is a steep, dual peaked mountain centrally located between Winchester and Homeland. A central portion of Double Butte is designated as a recreation area, which is remarkable considering that it is an abandoned waste management facility. The intent is to establish recreational uses once clean-up and mitigation measures have been completed.

### Diamond Valley Lake

Diamond Valley Lake is an 800,000-acre-foot (260 billion gallon) lake that provides critical water storage for much of southern California. The lake nearly doubles the surface water storage for most of southern California, and it secures emergency water storage for six months. This massive new landmark is not just a startling presence on the landscape; it performs the critical role in this arid climate of reducing the threat of water shortages during droughts and peak summer needs. The Diamond Valley Lake was created by a set of three dams and



An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, enough to meet the annual water needs of two typical southland families.



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was approved for water storage in 2000. Most of the water for this facility is delivered through the Colorado River Aqueduct and the California State Water Project. The 13,000-acre Dr. Roy E. Shipley Reserve stretches between the Diamond Valley Lake and Lake Skinner, which is located in the Southwest Area Plan to the south. Potential recreational opportunities available at the Diamond Valley facility include bicycle, hiking and equestrian trails, camping, fishing, boating, golfing, and picnicking.

### Lakeview Mountains



*A view of Double Butte from the community of Winchester*

The Lakeview Mountains, which lie north of Harvest Valley, define the northern portion of the Harvest Valley/Winchester planning area. Though lower in elevation than the Dawson Mountains to the south, they nevertheless create a valuable scenic backdrop. Large rock outcroppings and boulders accent the slopes, as they do throughout much of western Riverside County. These mountains are home to the Buck Jewel flower, an indicator of Coastal Sage Scrub habitat. These species also document the relatively dry, arid micro climate that prevails here.

### Dawson Mountains



*The Dawson Mountains are home to the Diamond Valley Lake.*

The Dawson Mountains create the southern wall of the Diamond Valley Lake. This range also creates a striking backdrop for communities on the valley floor like Winchester. The range is a series of rugged mountains providing an exceptional environment for hiking trails, equestrian uses, bicycling, and places for camping. These mountains also serve as a corridor between the habitats that are found in and around Diamond Valley and the Shipley Reserve to the south.

### Vernal Pools

Water bodies at any scale are welcomed in this climate. Vernal pools are seasonally flooded depressions found on ancient soils with an impermeable layer such as hardpan, claypan, or volcanic basalt. The impermeable layer allows the pools to retain water much longer than the surrounding lands; nonetheless, the pools are shallow enough to dry up each season. Vernal pools often fill and empty several times during the rainy season. Only plants and animals that are adapted to this cycle of wetting and drying can survive in vernal pools over time. In this case, the vernal pools are located in the northeast portion of the planning area.

### San Diego Canal/Aqueduct

Running from north to south and intersecting the western end of Diamond Valley Lake is the San Diego Canal/Aqueduct. Its function is to transport State Project water as well as Colorado River water to Lake Skinner, where the canal ends. From that point, deliveries are made to MWD's member agencies in southern Riverside County and San Diego County via a system of pipelines.