II. Management Objectives (Goals) for the Basin

Prior to 1980, all water supplies in the Upper Santa Clara River Area were developed from local groundwater. Since 1980, the major water purveyors within the CLWA service area have developed their water supplies from a combination of local groundwater and imported supplemental surface water from the State Water Project (SWP). CLWA is the state SWP Contractor which holds the contract for SWP water. CLWA also operates the treatment and distribution system for delivery of SWP water to the local purveyors. Some imported SWP water has historically been delivered for non-municipal uses although, in aggregate, total non-municipal uses have been almost negligible (less than one percent).

A relatively small fraction of water supply in the area is still devoted to agricultural and other irrigation, and essentially all of that remains developed from groundwater. Over the last two decades, that use has been in a range between about 10,000 and 17,000 acre-feet per year.

The development and importation of a supplemental surface water supply from the State Water Project represents the first of a number of water resource and water supply management actions, all of which are formalized in this plan, aimed at what can be considered to be the overall goals or objectives for the basin. In no priority, those management objectives for the basin can be expressed as follows:

1. Development of an integrated surface water, groundwater, and recycled water supply to meet existing and projected demands for municipal, agricultural, and other water supply; since pumpage for other uses is from the same aquifer system, this objective includes agricultural, small community, non-agricultural irrigation, and individual domestic uses.

2. Assessment of groundwater basin conditions to determine a range of operational yield values that will make use of local groundwater conjunctively with SWP and recycled water to avoid groundwater overdraft and the undesirable effects associated with it. In effect, this objective equates to more detailed quantification of the yield of the basin in order to continue to avoid overdraft, consistent with what has historically been the case in the basin. In addition to avoiding the traditional overdraft symptoms

and effects, e.g. chronic water level decline, loss of groundwater storage, onset of land subsidence, groundwater quality degradation, a corresponding basin objective is to manage groundwater levels and associated groundwater discharge to the Santa Clara River at the west end of the basin, and thus not adversely impact surface and groundwater discharges to the downstream basin(s).

3. Preservation of groundwater quality for beneficial use in the basin, and for beneficial use of surface water and groundwater discharges from the basin. Included in this management goal will be the active characterization and solution of any groundwater contamination problems, through cooperation with responsible parties or through independent action if timely action by responsible parties is not forthcoming and the preceding management objectives are thereby impacted or constrained.

4. Preservation of interrelated surface water resources. Included in this management goal will be the maintenance of appropriate surface water flows and non-degradation of surface water quality as a result of managing groundwater conditions to meet the other management goals for the basin.

Quantitatively, the preceding goals translate into general preservation of groundwater levels and quality in the Alluvial aquifer system consistent with the last 30 years, including fluctuations through seasonal demands and local hydrologic variations (wet and dry periods). As discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the hydrogeologic setting in the area has resulted in smaller Alluvial groundwater level fluctuations toward the western half of the basin (generally west of Bouquet Canyon), and larger fluctuations to the east. However, largely due in part to the importation of supplemental surface water over the last 20 years, and the integrated or conjunctive use of that supplemental water with local groundwater, there has been no chronic decline in groundwater levels or storage. A continuation of such basin conditions, possibly complemented by management actions to decrease the historical water level fluctuations in the eastern part of the basin, will accomplish the second basin objective (continued avoidance of overdraft as has been the ongoing historical condition in the basin) while continuing to utilize local groundwater to meet part of projected water requirements. Corresponding management actions to sustain recharge and not overdraft groundwater storage will accomplish the third basin objective by replenishing the aquifer system with sufficient water to sustain what has been generally consistent quality of groundwater on a long-term basis.

In general, the same goals of preservation of groundwater levels and quality pertain to the Saugus Formation as well as to the Alluvium. However, while those goals are generally expected to equate to Alluvial pumping rates comparable to recent historical pumping, the Saugus Formation may be intermittently utilized at higher than historical pumping rates for dry-period and/or emergency water supply. Interpretation of historical pumping fluctuations and corresponding aquifer response suggests that such intermittent utilization of a small fraction of the Saugus' large storage capacity can successfully contribute to a firming of local water supplies while still accomplishing all the management objectives listed above, primarily via reduction in Saugus pumping during wet-normal conditions, possibly complemented by management actions to accelerate recharge of the Saugus.

III. Groundwater Basin Conditions

Occurrence of Groundwater

Groundwater in the Santa Clara River Valley East groundwater subbasin occurs in two aquifer systems, the Alluvium associated with the Santa Clara River and its tributaries, and the Saugus Formation. There are also some scattered outcrops of Terrace deposits in the basin that likely have the capacity to contain limited amounts of groundwater; however, since these deposits are located in limited areas that are situated at elevations above the regional water table and are also of limited thickness, they are of no practical significance as aquifers and have consequently not been developed for water supply.

The Alluvial aquifer system, of Quaternary to Holocene (Recent) geologic age, consists primarily of stream channel and flood plain deposits of the Santa Clara River and its tributaries. The Alluvium is deepest along the center of the present river channel, with a maximum thickness of about 200 feet near the area known as Saugus. It thins toward the flanks of the adjoining hills and toward the eastern and western boundaries of the basin and, in the tributaries, becomes a mere veneer in their upper reaches. The spatial extent of the Alluvium throughout the basin is illustrated in Figure 3-1.

The Alluvium is the most permeable of the local aquifer units. Based on well yields and aquifer testing, transmissivity values in the range of 50,000 to 500,000 gallons per day per foot (gpd/ft) have been reported for the Alluvium, with the higher values where the Alluvium is thickest in the center of the valley and generally west of Bouquet Canyon (Slade 1986 and 2002). The amount of groundwater in storage can vary considerably because of the effects of recharge, discharge and pumping from the aquifer. The maximum storage capacity of the Alluvium has been estimated to be about 240,000 acre-feet (af) (Slade, 1986 and 2002).

The Saugus Formation, of Pliocene to Pleistocene geologic age, has traditionally been divided into two stratigraphic units: the lowermost, geologically older Sunshine Ranch member, which is of mixed marine to terrestrial (non-marine) origin; and the overlying, or upper, portion of the Formation which is entirely terrestrial in origin. The Sunshine Ranch Member of the Saugus Formation has a maximum thickness of about 3,000 to 3,500 feet in the central part of the valley;