

Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan  
 Proposition 50 Round 2, Step 1 Grant Application  
**Attachment 4: Disadvantaged Communities-  
 Environmental Justice**

*Attachment 4 must include a discussion of how the MHI was calculated and provide information on the presence of any disadvantaged communities in the region. Document how the Plan identifies any disadvantaged communities in the region and the specific critical water-related needs of such communities. Discuss what mechanisms were used in development of the Plan to ensure participation of disadvantaged communities. Document how the Plan identifies any water-related Environmental Justice concerns for the region. Discuss what mechanisms were used in development of the Plan to ensure that implementation of the Plan addresses Environmental Justice concerns.*

**Overview**

Community outreach within the Antelope Valley Region was identified as a key component of Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (AV IRWM Plan) success. For the AV IRWM Plan, community outreach included outreach to non-signatory stakeholders and other interested parties, to disadvantaged communities, and to underrepresented and traditionally isolated communities. Additional effort was also made to identify communities with environmental justice concerns. Initial outreach efforts began in the early stages of the planning process to improve stakeholder participation through increased agency and organized committee involvement. However, it soon became clear that many smaller and disadvantaged communities in the Antelope Valley Region with valuable input were not being represented at the general group meetings. Therefore, outreach efforts were accelerated in January of 2007 to broaden the scope to improve outreach to smaller communities in the region through the formation of the Public Outreach Subcommittee. The goals of the Public Outreach Subcommittee were to:

- Encourage participation and solicit input into AV IRWM Plan development, and
- Educate target audiences about the purpose and benefits of the AV IRWM Plan

**Did the Plan identify the disadvantaged communities in the Region?**

Identification of Disadvantaged Communities in the Antelope Valley

As defined by Proposition 50, Chapter 8, disadvantaged communities (DAC) are defined as communities whose median household income (MHI) is less than 80 percent of the statewide MHI (or 80 percent of \$47,493 which is \$37,994). To begin identifying disadvantaged areas in the Region, Subcommittee members conducted an initial assessment of the Antelope Valley Region using Census 2000 data. In order to provide the most accurate determination of the DACs in the Antelope Valley Region, MHI was compared at the census tract level. Census tracts are relatively permanent geographic subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity used to document regional demographic trends. The analysis showed that approximately 20 census tracts within the Region have an MHI less than 80 percent of the statewide MHI. These tracts equate to approximately 20 percent of the Region's population. A census block is the smallest geographic unit used to collect data at a localized, household level. Census block information provides greater social and economic detail than census tract level information. The Census data collected was further refined through the creation of a map with residential household areas. This map allowed members to compare census tract and residential information to more-accurately pinpoint specific communities within the census blocks that were disadvantaged, as census blocks tend to cover large areas with very few residents.

By identifying the actual residential areas within the blocks, Subcommittee members could then effectively locate the organizations that would ensure communication with DAC community members (see Figure 1 on page 4-5). Using these methods, the following DACs were identified in the Antelope Valley:

- Lake Los Angeles, Unincorporated Los Angeles County
- Littlerock, Unincorporated Los Angeles County
- Mojave, Unincorporated Kern County
- Portions of the City of Lancaster
- Portions of the City of Palmdale (Desert View Highlands)
- Roosevelt, Unincorporated Los Angeles County

Please note that the communities of Littlerock and Roosevelt do not technically fit the profile of a disadvantaged community due to slightly higher income levels. However, the disadvantaged community map showing the residential overlay clearly shows the close proximity of disadvantaged households to these two communities. Therefore, the Outreach Subcommittee determined that the outreach meetings scheduled for these communities were prime opportunities to reach the disadvantaged households shown. Refer to Appendix C of the AV IRWM Plan for larger DAC Census Block and Residential Area Maps and Census data printouts.

### Underrepresented Communities Within Disadvantaged Communities

Underrepresented communities are a subset of DACs. These communities are composed of minority communities living within DACs. There are two areas within the Antelope Valley Region that were identified that can be characterized as underrepresented, and they are both contained within the Cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. These Cities are working to identify the exact community locations to receive public outreach. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has also been contacted in an effort to reach underrepresented minorities in these communities. Additionally, events such as the Sun Village Juneteenth Festival, which is traditionally attended by minority community members, have been included in outreach efforts to further outreach to underrepresented community members.

### **Did the Plan discuss the specific critical water-related needs of disadvantaged communities?**

While attending community outreach meetings, the Outreach Subcommittee talked with community members about their specific needs and concerns. The issues and concerns gathered from each disadvantaged community meeting is outlined below:

#### Lake Los Angeles, Unincorporated Los Angeles County

- Interest in restoring Lake Los Angeles - could create reservoir for farming, fire usage, recreation, tourism/commercial, possible groundwater recharge site, possible use of recycled water.
- Provide flood control at Big Rock Creek Wash - heavy rains cause flooding along local roads.
- Transition from septic systems to sewer - they have some sewer lines installed but have not been used.

#### Littlerock, Unincorporated Los Angeles County

- Would like to see the creation and enforcement of zero-scaping ordinances designed for their community.
- Interested in opportunities for water recharge, banking, and conservation – although no specific examples were cited at the time.
- Concern about growth of communities vs. water reliability for the region.

#### Mojave, Unincorporated Kern County

- Water conservation concerns. Specifically, the Mojave School District is interested in constructing two new high schools in a water-efficient manner. The Outreach Subcommittee put the School District in contact with Mojave Utilities District and EJCW representative, Cindy Wise.

#### Roosevelt, Unincorporated Los Angeles County

- Primarily concerned with protecting their wells, protecting agricultural water rights, and preventing LACSD from “wasting water” on “new farms.” An LACSD Outreach Subcommittee member followed up directly with community member concerns about the current and future LACSD water usage in their area.

The disadvantaged community meetings are currently being scheduled for the portions of the City of Lancaster and the City of Palmdale (Desert View Highlands) that have been determined to be disadvantaged communities. As such, there are no water-related needs to report at this time.

### **Did the Plan discuss the mechanisms used in development of the Plan to ensure participation of disadvantaged communities?**

#### Disadvantaged Community Outreach

This section discusses how DACs were engaged during the AV IRWM Plan planning process and were provided information about how the process would benefit their communities. As mentioned, DACs were identified as key target audiences for the outreach efforts. During the plan development, outreach efforts continued to identify the issues and needs of the DACs to ensure that their concerns in terms of water and environmental resources were adequately represented in the AV IRWM Plan. A complete list of the meetings and events in which DACs were present is listed in the table below.

Meeting/Event	Presenters	Meeting Date	Attendance
<i>Previously Held Meetings</i>			
Association of Rural Town Councils*	LACWWD	April 26, 2007	14
Lake Los Angeles Town Council*	LACSD	May 22, 2007	17
Roosevelt Town Council*	City of Lancaster /LACWWD	May 29, 2007	19
Sun Village Juneteenth Festival**	LACWWD/PWD	June 16-17, 2007	TBP
Sun Village & Littlerock Town Councils*	LACWWD/AVRCD/ Kennedy/Jenks	June 25, 2007	20
Mojave Chamber of Commerce*	LACWWD/RCSD	June 28, 2007	25
Littlerock Town Council*	LACWWD/PWD	July 12, 2007	40

*Future Meetings*

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Palmdale*	TBP	TBP	TBP
Division High School, Lancaster*	TBP	TBP	TBP

\*DAC or DAC Leaders Present

\*\*Underrepresented Community Present

TBP- to be provided

Presentations and outreach at these meetings focused on soliciting input and participation. The Subcommittee emphasized that within the AV IRWM Plan, project ideas are evaluated based on their merits and not on the size or relative power of the project proponent. For example, within the AV IRWM Plan there are smaller projects, such as the Leona Valley Town Council Stormwater Harvesting Project (now part of the regional Comprehensive Water Conservation/ Water Use Efficiency Program), that have been evaluated and determined to be high priority by the Stakeholder Group, which includes the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG), whose project proponents were small, traditionally underserved communities.

The DAC outreach strategy and action steps took advantage of existing efforts and relationships, worked directly with community leaders and RWMG members, and gathered and used input from all stakeholders. The outreach Subcommittee members provided technical assistance and other resources, as well as encouraged participation from the smaller, DACs within the Stakeholder Group.

The Public Outreach Subcommittee contacted community groups within the identified DACs to schedule additional outreach meetings. Contacts were made with the Mojave Chamber of Commerce, Mojave School District, and Mojave Utilities District based on information received from the Mojave Desert News reporter who covered the Stakeholder Group meetings. Subcommittee members representing the Cities of Palmdale and Lancaster assisted in arranging community meetings to present the AV IRWM Plan and gathered information from residents in the identified DAC areas of their respective cities. Town Council meetings in Lake Los Angeles, Littlerock, and Roosevelt were held in order to reach the DACs living in those areas.

Concurrent with identification of underrepresented DAC areas, Public Outreach Subcommittee members provided all meeting materials in printed and electronic formats and also prepared all materials in English and Spanish for distribution. Meeting materials included a PowerPoint presentation, a listing of RWMG general stakeholder meetings, a list of technical resources, AV IRWM Plan goals and objectives, and a list of proposed project ideas.

Additionally, the governance structure for the AV IRWM Plan will be designed to encourage regional participation, to accept project proposals on an ongoing basis, and to continue to reach out to DACs and provide technical assistance to those who need it. Representation from DACs in the Stakeholder group will be necessary to implement an AV IRWM Plan that addresses the issues and needs of all the Antelope Valley Region, and in a fair and balanced way.

**Did the Plan identify water-related Environmental Justice concerns for the Region?**

**Did the Plan discuss the mechanisms used in development of the Plan to ensure that implementation of the Plan addresses Environmental Justice concerns?**

**Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice is important to every community, and the Antelope Valley is no exception to this rule. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines "environmental justice" as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Simply stated, this means that that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies.

To begin identifying potential environmental justice issues facing the Antelope Valley, Public Outreach Subcommittee members performed independent research, contacted the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW) for further documented information and expert advice, and continued to solicit input from community groups. The EJCW was not aware of any water-related environmental justice concerns in the Antelope Valley. Additionally, the Public Outreach Subcommittee used the EPA EnviroMapper maps found on [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com) (provided in Appendix C of the AV IRWM Plan) to locate any hazardous waste sites within the Antelope Valley Region. The EPA maps did show some hazardous waste landfills within the Region, but they did not appear to be located in populated areas or concentrated in any one community. Based on reviews of the EPA maps and discussions with EJCW, other non-governmental organizations, and community members, it was determined that there were no documented environmental justice issues in the Antelope Valley. However, a potential environmental justice issue centers on water quality, specifically arsenic and nitrate contamination that has been revealed through routine, regulatory water quality monitoring performed by the water districts. Naturally-occurring arsenic contamination problems occur in many areas of the Antelope Valley Region, including DAC areas. There are projects included in the Plan to address arsenic contamination through treatment as well as efforts to develop additional projects to better understand the

regional problem for arsenic and other contaminants. Therefore, arsenic contamination that could impact DACs are being addressed. Nitrate contamination, however, is a water quality issue that has not been linked to an environmental justice concern because the disposal does not occur in or near any DAC.

The EJCW provided valuable advice in successfully incorporating DACs into the AV IRWM Plan planning process that would help prevent future environmental justice issues from developing. The major suggestions made by the EJCW were the following:

- Provide technical assistance, both to facilitate participation and to assist with project development.
- Include an EJCW representative on the governing body of the AV IRWM Plan.
- Ensure that the ongoing governance structure defined in the AV IRWM Plan includes a prominent role for environmental justice communities, including some influence over which projects are selected for future implementation grants.
- Ensure that there is a mechanism for environmental justice communities to participate in the evaluation of the plan over time.

Each of these suggestions was incorporated into the overall outreach strategy for the AV IRWM Plan. Technical resources were provided in the outreach presentation at each meeting with specific contact information of persons to call or email directly. As feedback from individual communities was received, this technical resource list expanded, and community members had specific questions forwarded to appropriate agencies and organizations to receive further information.

The AV IRWM Plan was founded on the basis of broad agreement among all participating stakeholders. The selection of projects, the development of a governance structure, and the mechanism for updating the AV IRWM Plan are all dependent upon this foundation. As a result, the DACs located in the Antelope Valley Region are ensured an equal voice in the current and future development of the AV IRWM Plan. Collaboration is expanded as more members of the Rural Town Councils, like Antelope Acres, Lake Los Angeles, and Roosevelt, join the AV IRWM Plan efforts.

The main concern regarding environmental justice seems to be directed toward the future. As the Antelope Valley Region continues to grow (Lancaster was designated as the fastest growing city in California in 2007), care will need to be taken to prevent creating environmental justice issues that unfairly affect certain communities. The IRWM Plan objectives of ensuring water supply, water quality, flood protection, wise land use management, and environmental protection must be consistently applied to future projects and development to benefit all residents equally. Land use planning must designate enough open space to meet the recreational needs of all communities and include habit preservation and restoration throughout the Valley.

As the Antelope Valley communities expand and evolve, the AV IRWM Stakeholder Group will continue to assess environmental justice concerns throughout implementation of the Plan.

#### **Future Disadvantaged Community Outreach in the Antelope Valley**

Public Outreach Subcommittee members have shared the responsibility of traveling and presenting the AV IRWM Plan at eighteen (18) community meetings and events throughout the Antelope Valley Region, all of which were in disadvantaged, underrepresented, and/or rural communities. Specifically, nine of the outreach meetings were in DACs, three of which reached primarily underrepresented minority communities as well. The remaining meetings were held in rural communities. These meetings collectively reached hundreds of community members directly and many more indirectly when the information was shared by those attending, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive from all sects. Overall, presentation at these community meetings further solidified the two most important aspects of the AV IRWM Plan outreach strategy:

- To attend the individual community meetings held in areas to present information and solicit input rather than holding a meeting and inviting community members to attend; and
- To provide resources and technical assistance so that these communities could fully develop potential project proposals.

As a result of these direct interactions, the individual communities expressed appreciation at the genuine interest of the AV IRWM Plan group members to incorporate the ideas and willingness to listen to all community members as exhibited through the outreach meetings. These outreach efforts, motivated through the development of the AV IRWM Plan, have provided an invaluable step towards helping unify the very diverse Antelope Valley Region. Together, the Public Outreach Subcommittee activities, in combination with the AV IRWM Plan Stakeholder meetings have reached over 40 public and non-governmental organizations, of which 20 percent represent DACs. Our Stakeholders believe the AV IRWM Plan to be a living document, and as such, community outreach will be ongoing and will continue to change as the Plan and the Region evolve.

All community outreach materials, including the DAC Outreach Plan, the Outreach Subcommittee meeting agendas and meeting minutes, various outreach materials, the Antelope Valley Water Plan presentation on CD-Rom (CD), Stakeholder testimonial videos

on CD, press releases, correspondence from the Environmental Justice Coalition and Native American Tribes, and other relevant community outreach information can be found in Appendix C of the AV IRWM Plan.

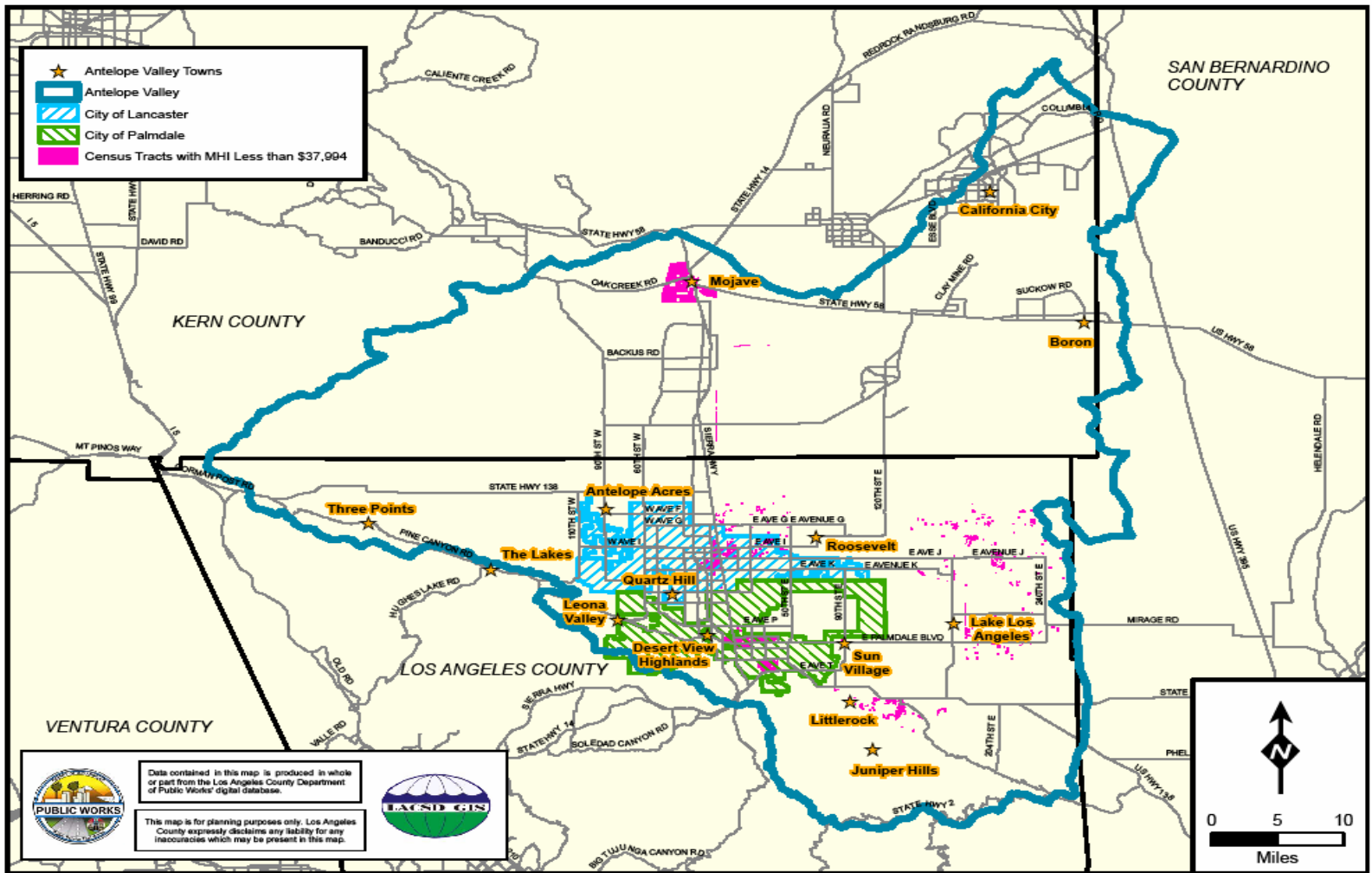


Figure 1. Antelope Valley Disadvantaged Communities



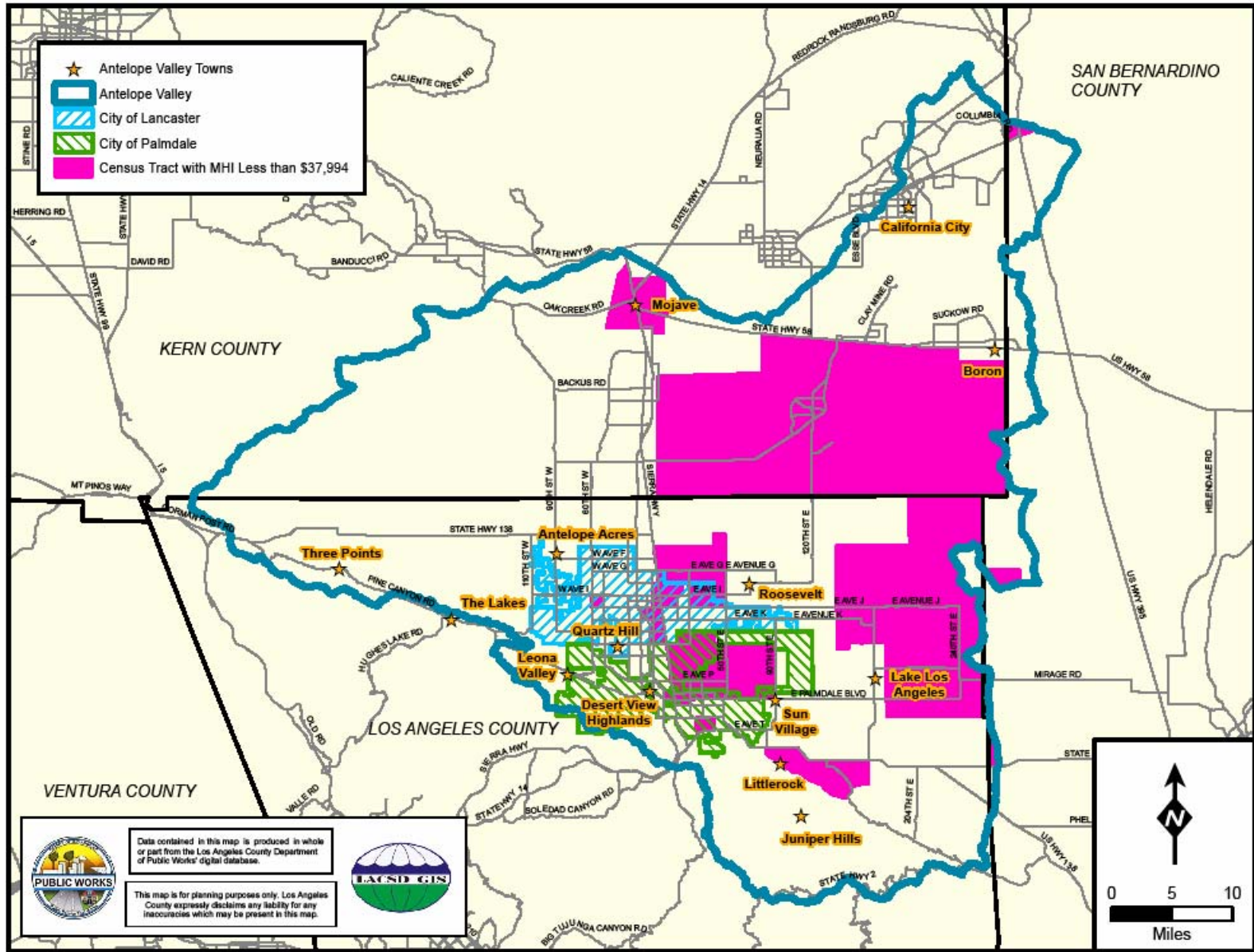


Figure 2. Antelope Valley Census Block Map

