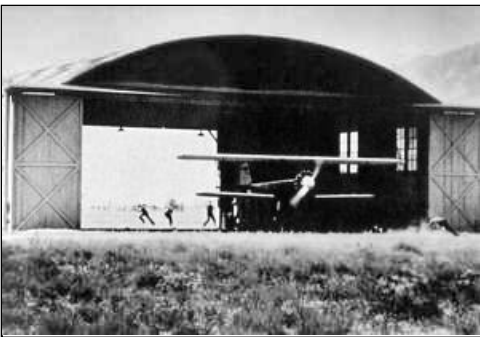


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# Background and Inventory

## JACQUELINE COCHRAN REGIONAL AIRPORT

### Airport History



In 1942, the U. S. Government developed the Thermal Airport for military aviation training purposes during World War II. The field was used in turn by both the U.S. Army Air Corps and the U.S. Navy. After the war, in December 1948, the airfield was decommissioned and transferred to Riverside County under the auspices of the War Assets Administration. At this stage, the airport consisted of approximately 2,473 acres.

During the 1950's the airport was the site of considerable historic aviation activity, due in part to its location in the (then) relatively undeveloped Coachella Valley. Eleanor Wagner, airport manager in the 1950's and veteran of the WWII Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP), stated that the airport supported flight training classes, Air Force Reserve meetings, Civil Air Patrol missions, Ninety-Nine's women pilot activities, crop dusting, and model airplane building. The last of the low altitude speed runs designed to break the sound barrier were conducted at the airport by North American Aviation and Douglas Aircraft Corporation with F-86 Sabrejet and F4D Skyray aircraft.

Many aviation greats were associated with the Thermal Airport. Paul Mantz, a famous stunt pilot and founding partner (along with



Jackie Cochran

Frank Tallman) of Tallmantz Aviation (a firm that provided aviation services to the motion picture industry), flew a clipped-wing Stearman through a hangar at Thermal Airport for a movie. Jackie Cochran, called “America’s First Lady of Aviation,” was the first living woman enshrined into the Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio. She was founder of WWII WASPs and was the first woman to break the sound barrier. She broke the sound barrier while flying solo over the Coachella Valley. She was also among the first of many to use Thermal Airport as the “winter home” for her personal airplane. On April 20, 2004, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors voted to rename the airport Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport.



Capt. Chuck Yeager, 1947

Many other famous personages used the Thermal Airport during its early years; most notable was President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had his “Western White House” in the Coachella Valley. Other famous people associated with the Airport include General Jimmy Doolittle, General Chuck Yeager (the first man to break the sound barrier), General Frank K. “Pete” Everest (the first to claim the title “Fastest Man Alive”), General Albert “Al” Boyd (commander of Edwards Air Force Base, Air Research and Development Command and Air Force Flight Test Center), General Hoyt S. Vandenberg (second Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force), and numerous other test pilots, politicians, industrialists, and ranchers.



Lt. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg

For almost forty years the Thermal Airport operated much as it had from the time it was transferred to Riverside County in 1948. In 1987, when local community leaders realized that an “expanded and developed” airport would be necessary to properly support and serve the desert communities that had grown up in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The City of Indio, the oldest and largest of these communities, took a leadership role forming a task force to foster the growth and development of the airport.

As a result, the Friends of the Thermal Airport was incorporated as an airport action group to study the economic impact of the airport, create special events and fund-raisers, recruit members, and educate and inform the public about airport issues. One of the first tests to the future economic well-being of the airport came in 1989 when a state court set aside the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission’s (ALUC) 1986 Airport Land Use Plan for Thermal Airport on the grounds that the ALUC plan had not been based on an actual airport master plan. This was in response to a lawsuit by Riverside County and the ALUC to halt the development of a \$26 million housing development near the airport that had been approved by the City of Coachella. This served to highlight the need for an airport master plan.

Riverside County and the Friends of Thermal Airport worked together to secure federal funding for a 20-year airport master plan study as a prerequisite to future airport expansion and development.

On December 23, 1986, Riverside County Board of Supervisors approved four areas for redevelopment in the County. In 1987 and 1996, two additional project areas were added, Jurupa Valley and Project Area 5-1987, respectively. One of the initial project areas approved by the County was the Desert Communities Project Area. As of 1999, this area covered nine sub-areas, as well as six airport project areas. Located in the eastern region of the County, the area currently comprises over 27,000 acres.

One of the largest sub-areas supported by the County is part of the Desert Communities Project Area, the Thermal Community sub-area. It includes approximately 17,250 acres, the majority of which are marked for agricultural use. The area is located north and east of the Airport. Because of the proximity to State Highway 111, the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Airport, and undeveloped parcels, about 1,600 acres in the northeastern corner of the project area are planned for industrial/commercial use. In addition, there are plans to improve existing residences and to increase the number of housing units for low-moderate income families within the project area.

In May 1988, the FAA granted the County \$135,000 to conduct an airport master plan study. This amount was supplemented by an additional \$15,000 from the County Redevelopment Agency. The firm of Coffman Associates of Phoenix, AZ was selected as the airport master plan consultant. The County Board of Supervisors approved the first ever Airport Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Thermal Airport in June 1991. The adoption of the Thermal Airport Master Plan also necessitated an update of the ALUC's Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Thermal Airport. The ALUC Plan was updated in August 1992.

At the same time the airport master plan was being developed, it was decided to make the Thermal Airport the hub of a state-designated Enterprise Zone. An Enterprise Zone is a specific geographic area identified as being economically depressed and in need of private sector investment. Businesses are encouraged to locate within Enterprise Zones by means of tax credits and other incentives. In June 1991, some 27,000 acres surrounding the Thermal Airport were designated as an Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone is operated under a Joint Powers Authority consisting of Riverside County and the Cities of Coachella and Indio. The Airport is included in the Enterprise Zone and was subject to policy advisory direction from the Coachella Valley Regional Airport Authority. The Airport Authority is comprised of representatives

from Riverside County and the cities of Coachella, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta and Palm Desert.

In 1998, the Joint Powers Authority changed the name of the airport to Desert Resorts Regional Airport with the hope that the new name would help identify the attractiveness of the airport as a close-in alternative to the Palm Springs Airport for those with winter homes in the area or for visitors to the many upscale golf resorts located nearby. At about the same time, the Coachella Valley Regional Airport Authority was re-named the Desert Resorts Regional Airport Authority. In addition to the name change, the Riverside County Economic Development Agency's Aviation Division received \$7 million in grants from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Caltrans Division of Aeronautics for runway and taxiway improvements at the airport.

Two major multi-million dollar improvement projects were recently completed at the airport to attract new business and increase opportunities for existing businesses. The Terminal Area Infrastructure Improvement Project consisted of the reconstruction of the airport's existing access road (Higgins Drive) and the construction of new access roadways to the airport's existing and proposed development areas. The airport's water, storm water and sewer systems were improved or reconstructed, and the old on-airport sewage treatment and disposal facility was removed.

The Runway Safety Extension and Infrastructure Improvement Project was comprised of three elements: 1) the main runway (Runway 17-35) was extended from 6,700 feet to 8,500 feet in length; 2) a two-inch thick asphalt concrete overlay was applied to the existing main runway; and 3) the airport's landing light system was replaced with a new, updated system. These airport revitalization projects, along with a new marketing/advertising plan, were expected to introduce Desert Resorts Regional Airport as the up-and-coming general aviation destination in the desert region.

## **County Policies**

Riverside County has established that the provision of general aviation facilities and services is an important component of the County's transportation system. To meet these needs, the County has concluded that it must facilitate coordination of its airport plans with the aviation planning conducted by the State, the County Economic Development Agency, and local agencies related to transportation, land use, and financing. The County also recognizes that it is important to provide civilian airport facilities for general aviation and emergency purposes, and to protect airports from encroachment by future development within areas that would be subject to high noise levels. Because the County's GA airports

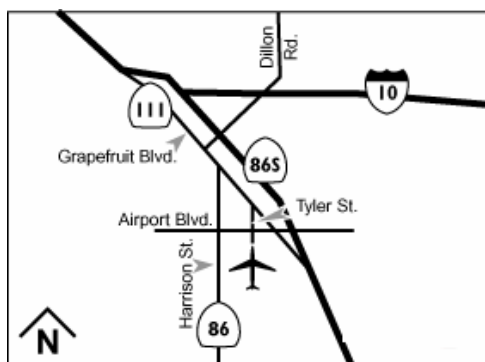
are an integral part of the regional transportation system, they must be operated efficiently and provide convenient transportation for people and goods.

## Economic Development

The Riverside County Economic Development Agency (EDA) promotes economic and community development through a variety of programs, including assistance to businesses relocating or expanding in Riverside County and through two state Enterprise Zones and five large Redevelopment Project Areas. As noted above, one of the state Enterprise Zones encompasses the area around the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport, and the Thermal Community Sub-Area of the Desert Communities Redevelopment Project Area is the largest single project area in the county.

The Thermal Community Sub-Area is at the convergence of the spheres of influence of the cities of Coachella, La Quinta and Indio. It contains approximately 17,250 acres, with the majority of the project area used for agricultural purposes. Of this area, only about 1,600 acres bordering on the City of Coachella north and east of the Airport are suitable for industrial development. This area, generally bounded by Harrison Street, the Airport, Elmore Street and the northerly boundary of the project area is readily accessible from State Highway 111 and the Southern Pacific Railroad. Large, flat parcels in this area are currently ready for development. The County believes that by improving Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport, the development potential of this area will be enhanced.

To this end, the County has embarked on a major public improvement program in the area, including such infrastructure components as water, sewer, storm drains, flood control channel slope protection, bridge improvements, traffic signals, recreational facilities, and additional fire protection facilities. This is in addition to the airport improvements discussed above. In addition, the County is also engaged in commercial revitalization in the area of Airport Boulevard and Highway 111, and will also be participating in programs to upgrade and increase the number of low- and moderate-income housing units in the area.



Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport

## Airport Location and Environs

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is located in the lower Coachella Valley between the San Jacinto and San Bernardino Mountains in central Riverside County, California approximately 25 miles southeast of Palm Springs (Figure 1-1).

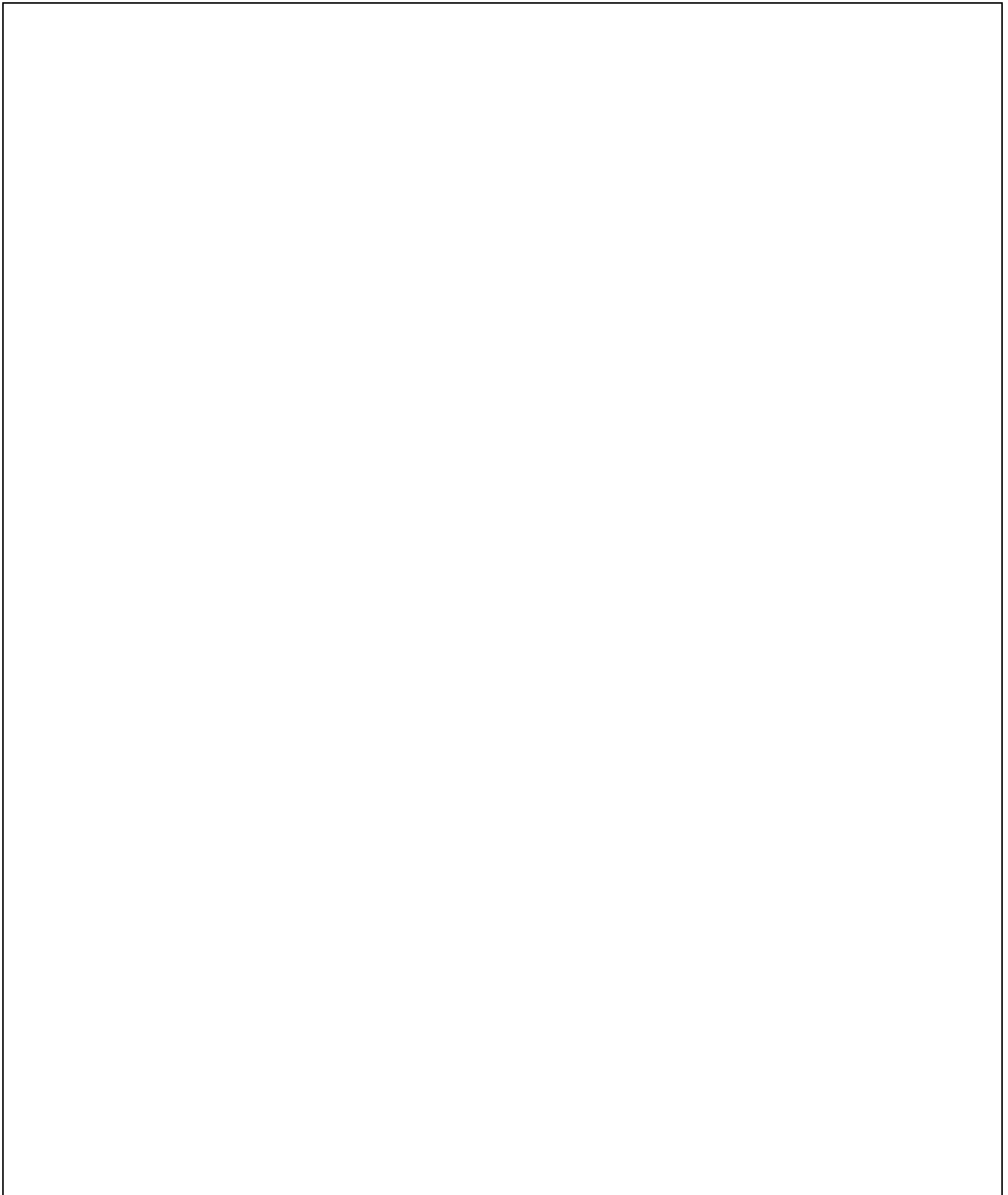


Figure 1-1

### Location Map

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport

The airport lies one mile west of the unincorporated community of Thermal and two miles south of the City of Coachella. Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport primarily serves the aviation needs of the communities of Coachella, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta and Palm Desert, as well as the surrounding communities of Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Rancho Mirage, Mecca and Vista Santa Rosa. Private country club communities such as PGA West, The Vintage, The Quarry, Eldorado, Santa Rosa Cove, and Mission Hills are within minutes of Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport, as are many of the 100 public and private golf courses in the Coachella Valley.



Cap Rock  
Joshua Tree National Park

The airport also provides convenient access to attractions such as Joshua Tree National Park, the Salton Sea, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains, and the many parks and recreation areas in the desert region.

Terrain in the vicinity of the airport varies from the relatively flat ground around the airport at an elevation of 113 feet below mean sea level (-113 feet MSL) to over 6,700 feet in the Santa Rosa Range of the San Jacinto Mountains, twelve miles southwest of the airport. South of the airport the terrain falls away into the Salton Sink and the Salton Sea (-228 feet MSL). To the north and east of the airport, the Indio Hills and the Mecca Hills rise gradually to heights of over 1,500 feet.



Salton Sea

Vehicular access to Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is from State Highways 86 or 111 via Airport Boulevard to the airport's main entrance on Vic Higgins Drive. The airport is located approximately six miles south of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10), which provides connections between Los Angeles, California and Phoenix, Arizona, and points east. State Highways 86 and 111 crisscross each other for most of the length of the Coachella Valley. Route 111 runs from the Mexican border at Calexico and along the east side of the Salton Sea through the communities of the Coachella Valley and intersects Interstate Highway 10 approximately 30 miles from the airport northwest of Palm Springs. Highway 86 forms the western boundary of the Airport and extends from just north of Calexico along the west side of the Salton Sea to just north of Coachella. Table 1A profiles the regional airport community.

## AIRPORT FACILITIES AND SERVICE

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is owned by Riverside County and operated by the County's Economic Development Agency, Aviation Division. The Desert Resorts Regional Airport Authority advises the County on airport policy matters.

**Table 1A**

## General Aviation Airport

**GENERAL AVIATION (GA)** - All civil aviation except that classified as air carrier, air taxi, or by commercial operators of large aircraft. The types of aircraft typically used in general aviation activities can vary from small single-engine piston aircraft to large multi-engine jet aircraft.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) classifies Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport as a general aviation airport<sup>1</sup> in its “National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) (2001-2005).” Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is one of 2,558 general aviation airports listed in the 2001-2005 NPIAS. The NPIAS is composed of all commercial service airports, all reliever airports, and selected general aviation airports. There are an additional 1,000 publicly-owned, public-use airports that are not included in the NPIAS because they do not meet the minimum criteria (i.e., ten based aircraft within twenty miles of another NPIAS airport) or are located at inadequate sites and cannot be expanded or improved to provide safe and efficient airport facilities.

Airports included in the NPIAS are important to national transportation needs, and, as a consequence, are eligible to receive grants under the FAA’s Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

## Business Activities

**FIXED BASE OPERATOR (FBO)** — A business based at an airport that provides aircraft, aviation services, and/or aircraft storage to the general public, including but not limited to the sale of fuel and oil; aircraft sales, rental, maintenance and repair; parking and tiedown or storage of aircraft; flight instruction; air taxi/charter operations; and such specialty services as instrument and avionics maintenance, aircraft painting, engine overhaul, aerial application, aerial photography, aerial hoists, and/or pipeline patrol.

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport plays a vital role in maintaining the region’s economic base. Although not a commercial service airport, many business travelers and tourists using a variety of private, corporate and charter aircraft appreciate the airport’s convenient location. These travelers also use the aviation-related businesses on the airport. Businesses operating at an airport and providing aircraft services are termed Fixed Base Operators (FBOs). Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is primarily served by one full-service FBO, Million Air La Quinta, and two specialty FBOs; La Quinta Air Services and Sailplane Enterprises. These FBOs offer a variety of general aviation services including aircraft fuel distribution, aircraft maintenance, aircraft parking and storage, aircraft charter, air ambulance transport, and sailplane rides. FBO and other aviation services provided at Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport are described in Table 1B.

Million Air La Quinta is the major FBO operation at the Airport. Million Air provides aviation fueling services (100LL Avgas and Jet A), aircraft parking (ramp and tiedown), and hangar storage. Million Air La Quinta also provides a concierge service (e.g., arranges courtesy car and car rental/limo), pilot/passenger lounges and supplies. It also caters theme parties and automobile exhibits.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A—Glossary of Terms Used in Airport Master Planning for this and other terms used in this report.

Table 1B



Million Air La Quinta's apron area includes an aircraft-parking ramp capable of handling the largest GA and corporate aircraft, 12 small aircraft tiedowns and three rectangular box hangars of various sizes.

Million Air La Quinta has announced plans to construct new corporate offices and additional hangars on approximately six acres north of its existing leasehold.

An affiliate of Million Air La Quinta, La Quinta Air Services is an FAA-certified repair station that provides aircraft maintenance (airframe and power plant for small aircraft), inspections, and oxygen and nitrogen services. La Quinta Air Services shares a 26,200 square foot hangar with Million Air La Quinta.



From October through May, Sailplane Enterprises provides sailplane rides at the airport. The company has the capability to launch over 100 flights per day with both one- and two-passenger sailplanes. Sailplane Enterprises operates at the airport under a permit, but does not currently have a storage facility or leased premises. Its principal place of business is the Hemet-Ryan Airport.

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport also serves as a base for three governmental agencies: the Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD), the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). RCFD Fire Station 39 is located on the north side of the airport at Vic Higgins Drive and Avenger Boulevard, but is not an ARFF facility. The CHP office is located in a hangar used to store its helicopter at Million Air La Quinta and the Sheriff's Department operates out of an office in Million Air's terminal building.

## Airfield Facilities



Boeing 737

The airfield at Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport consists of two runways: primary Runway 17-35; a crosswind runway, designated Runway 12-30; and associated taxiways. Runway 17-35 is oriented generally north-south. It is 8,500 feet in length and 150 feet wide. The runway was recently extended from 6,800 feet and is constructed of asphalt. The older section of the runway was also overlaid with asphalt to bring it up to the standard of the new section. Appendix B to this report contains a comprehensive pavement report for all airport surfaces. Runway 17-35 can accommodate dual wheel aircraft weighing up to 174,000 pounds (e.g., Boeing Business Jet or B-737).

To facilitate landing operations, Runway 35 is equipped with a Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI). Runway 35 is also equipped with Medium-Intensity Runway Lighting System (MIRL) and Runway End Identifier Lights (REILs) on Runway 17. Runway 35 is marked with standard non-precision instrument markings and Runway 17 is marked with standard visual markings. Runway 17 is equipped with a VASI.

Crosswind Runway 12-30 is 5,000 feet long and 100 feet wide. Runway 12-30 is oriented northwest/southeast. The runway is constructed of asphalt and can accommodate aircraft weighing up to 26,000 pounds with single-wheel landing gear configurations. To assist in landing operations, the runway is equipped with a Medium-Intensity Runway Lighting System (MIRL). Runway 12-30 is marked with standard visual markings.

There are currently five taxiways, A, B, C, D, and F on the airfield. The taxiway system consists of parallel and connecting taxiway segments. Each segment serves arriving and departing aircraft. Taxiways A, D, and F are lighted. All taxiways are 50 feet wide. Taxiway A primarily serves the general aviation apron on the north side of the airport. Taxiway B and F are parallel to and serve Runway 17-35. Taxiway C is parallel to and serves Runway 12-30. However, due to the poor pavement condition of Taxiway C, this taxiway should be evaluated for replacement by a new inboard taxiway. Taxiway D is the southerly most east-west taxiway and serves Runway 30 and Runway 35.

Security fencing is located along the airport property boundary and within the primary building area. A summary of major features, air traffic procedures, services and environs is provided in Table 1C.

## Building Area

The airport's primary building area is located on the north side of the airport, south of Airport Boulevard and west of Runway 17. The building area is characterized by existing, as well as proposed development. Virtually all development is concentrated within this area, as this is where aircraft fueling facilities, maintenance, storage, the general aviation apron, and the major FBO are located. With the recent addition of paved access roads and infrastructure improvements, the areas to the north of Million Air La Quinta, bounded by Avenger Boulevard, Invader Avenue, and Lightning Street, and the area to the west of Warhawk Way and south of Avenger Boulevard have been opened for development. Already, new hangars are being designed for construction along the west side of Liberator Lane.



## TABLE 1C

## AERONAUTICAL SETTING

### Area Airports

Eight airports are within 25 nautical miles of Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport. Of these, six are public-use airports (Bermuda Dunes, Borrego Valle, Chiriaco Summit, Ocotillo, Palm Springs International and Salton Sea), and two are private-use airports (Desert Air Sky Ranch and Julian Hinds). Among these airports, Palm Springs International is the only one that provides air carrier service. Table 1C summarizes selected features of each of these airports and Figure 1-2 shows their location.

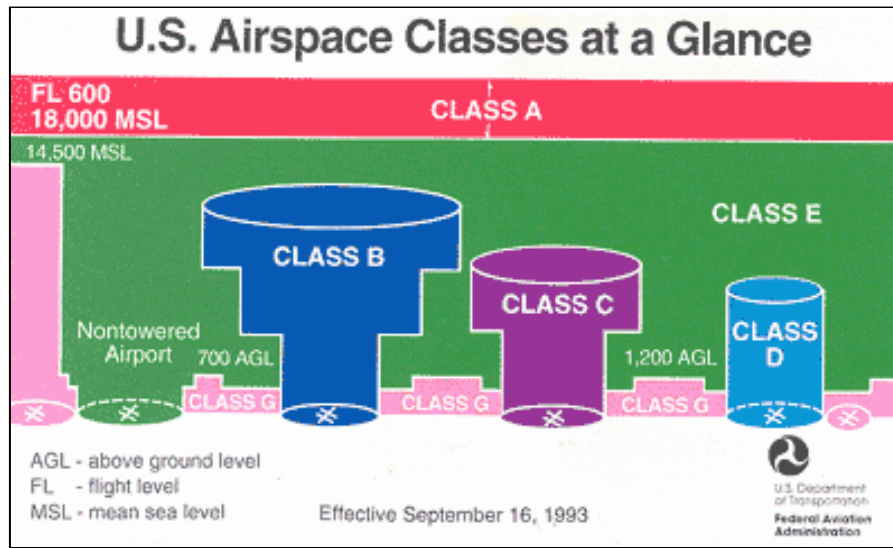
### Area Airspace

Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) define six categories of airspace, each with distinct operating requirements and which conform in both name and description with airspace designations used internationally. These airspace classifications are defined as Class A, B, C, D, E, and G, and are illustrated on Table 1D and Figure 1-3.

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is designated as “surface based” Class E (controlled) airspace, with a radius of four nautical miles around the airport. Surface based Class E airspace starts at the surface and serves as the control zone for non-towered airports. The Jacqueline Cochran Class E airspace extends from the surface up to 700 feet AGL (above ground level). An additional trapezoidal area of Class E controlled airspace overlies Jacqueline Cochran Class E airspace from 700 feet AGL to 3,500 feet AGL.

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport is also within the Terminal Radar Service Area (TRSA) for Palm Springs International Airport. The Palms Springs TRSA is the only remaining TRSA in the United States. Palm Springs Approach Control provides radar traffic advisories to aircraft operating inside the TRSA. The Palm Springs TRSA overlies the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport with a floor of 3,500 feet MSL and a ceiling of 10,000 feet MSL. Arriving VFR pilots are encouraged, but not required, to contact Palm Springs Approach Control before entering the TRSA. However, before entering the inner core of the TRSA, termed Class D airspace, communication with ATC by arriving aircraft is mandatory.

Figure 1B



Airspace Classes	Communications	Entry Requirements	Separation	Special VFR in Surface Area
A	Required	ATC clearance	All	N/A
B	Required	ATC clearance	All	Yes
C	Required	Two-way communications prior to entry	VFR/IFR	Yes
D	Required	Two-way communications prior to entry	Runway operations	Yes
E	Not required for VFR	None for VFR	None for VFR	Yes
G	Not required	None	None	N/A

Figure 1-3

## Airspace Classes

Table 1D

This latter proscription applies only to aircraft entering the Palm Springs International Airport Class D airspace.

Class E (controlled) Airspace low altitude Federal (Victor) Airways provide pilots with defined routes offering clearances from mountains and tall structures. They are used for both instrument and visual flight. There are four enroute Victor Airways overhead Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport. These are: V-64-460, V-137, V-208-514, V-432 and V-460.

The nearest enroute navigational aid providing bearing as well as distance information to pilots is the Thermal VORTAC, located on the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport.

Instrument approaches to Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport include both straight-in and circle-to-land. There are four non-precision approach procedures serving the airport:

- ▶ GPS approach to Runway 30, straight-in and circle-to-land
- ▶ GPS approach to Runway 35, straight-in and circle-to-land
- ▶ VOR DME approach to Runway 30, straight-in and circle-to-land
- ▶ VOR-A approach to all runways, circle-to-land

Instrument approaches to Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport have minimums as low as 361 feet above ground level and visibility minimums as low as 1 statute mile.

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

Certain considerations are made when evaluating the extent of services offered at an airport. For example, careful consideration is given to the existing and potential users of the airport, as well as the demand the users place upon airport facilities and services. Examining population trends in the immediate and surrounding communities within an airport's service area is an important part of this assessment. The discussion that follows provides an overview of the characteristics of local communities within the Coachella Valley, as well as providing a broader view of the greater community, Riverside County, which ultimately affects development at Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport.

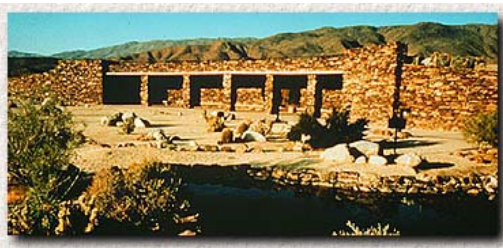
## Population

Riverside County is located in the southern region of California. The County stretches over 7,200 square miles and is the sixth-largest county in California. Riverside County shares boundaries with Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Imperial and San Bernardino Counties, and the State of Arizona along the Colorado River. The County was incorporated on May 9, 1893, assuming portions of San Bernardino and San Diego Counties. Historically, the County's economy was supported by agriculture. Today, Riverside County has evolved into a suburban community with a diverse economy.

In 1900, the population of Riverside County was 17,897. By 1940, the population of the County had reached 105,524. According to California Department of Finance (DOF), the population of Riverside County was over 1.6 million in the year 2000.

The County experienced an annual average growth rate of 2.7 percent from April 1, 1990 to January 1, 2000. The population of the County is projected to increase to 2,459,600 in the year 2015. By 2020, The California department of Finance (DOF) estimates the County's population will reach nearly 3 million. A community profile of the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport vicinity is provided in Table 1A.

The Coachella Valley is part of the Colorado Desert area of southeastern California. The Valley is 15 miles wide and 45 miles in length, stretching between the Little San Bernardino, San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountains. Communities within Coachella Valley are Palm Springs, Palm Desert, Indio, La Quinta, Coachella and others as noted above. In addition to providing an array of desert resorts to visitors, Coachella Valley offers recreational attractions such as Joshua Tree National Park, the Living Desert, and Palm Springs Air Museum. The largest (600,000 acres) state park in the United States, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, is located at the southern end of the Coachella Valley.



Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

In 2001, the population of the Coachella Valley was over 330,000. From April 1, 1990 to January 1, 2000, the population of the Cities of Coachella and Indio increased at the same rate as Riverside County, 2.7 percent. During the same time, La Quinta, approximately 9 miles northwest of Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport, experienced rapid growth; with an annual growth rate of 7.4 percent. Over a 10-year period, its population doubled from 11,463 in 1990 to over 23,000 in 2000.

By 2015, the population of Coachella Valley is expected to reach 463,000. This represents an annual growth rate of 2.4 percent, a rate that is estimated to continue through the year 2020.

## Employment

Historically, Riverside County's economy was linked to agriculture. However, by 2000, only 20,900 people in the County were employed in agricultural jobs. The California Department of Finance (DOF) combines nonagricultural employment information of Riverside County and San Bernardino County. Consequently, the economy of both Counties is primarily based on service, trade, state-local government and manufacturing industries. Collectively, the service and trade industries represent over 50 percent of non-agricultural employment.

According to Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP) employment data from 1999, the majority of Coachella Valley's economy was based on retail trade (21%), hotel and amusement (15%), and agriculture (12%). Other industry sectors included construction, health services, other services, education and government. Collectively, these sectors made up approximately 37 percent of Coachella Valley's economy.

CVEP lists the largest firms in Coachella Valley by industry sector i.e.; manufacturing, agricultural, retail, tourism and health. In 1999, the largest firms in Coachella Valley included Armtec Defense Products, Amazing Coachella, Desert Fresh Inc., Wal-Mart, Lucky Stores, Vons, Marriot Hotel, California Hyatt Hotels, Eisenhower Medical Center & Clinics, and John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital.

**Regional Transportation Plan.** The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is responsible for developing a comprehensive transportation plan for the largest metropolitan planning area in the United States. This area includes six counties: Riverside, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Imperial, Orange and Ventura, and 184 cities. SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), "CommunityLink 21", was adopted on April 12, 2001.

According to the RTP, by 2025 transit trips in the six-county SCAG region are forecast at approximately 800 million annually. Plans to improve the region's transit system during the course of the RTP include increasing Metrolink commuter rail service; investing in community-based transit; improving service management; establishing transit centers; and making multi-model trans-

fers. Additionally, the RTP includes rerouting bus line services to support existing and proposed urban and commuter rail systems.

The Plan identifies three transit corridor projects in Riverside County; only the Interregional Rail (Amtrak) extension from Colton in San Bernardino County to Palm Springs; and Amtrak to Indio are of significance to the airport's region. This project is scheduled for 2025. Other plans identified under the RTP for Riverside County include mixed-flow freeway lanes; connections to High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV); improvements to streets, transit and toll corridors; providing dedicated truck lanes; and improving railroad grade crossings.

**City of Coachella Circulation Element.** The City of Coachella's General Plan was adopted on October 7, 1998. City policies concerning transportation of people and goods are outlined in the Circulation Element of the General Plan. The City of Coachella is located approximately six miles north of Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport, but the airport is located within the City's sphere of influence and planning area.

The circulation system in Coachella's Planning Area covers 84 square miles. This system primarily serves mixed uses in the downtown areas of Coachella and Thermal. It also serves agricultural uses throughout most of the City's Planning Area. The transportation system includes State Highways 86 and 111 and Interstate 10, as well as arterial and collector streets.

**Street System.** The majority of local roads in Coachella's planning area are undivided two-lane streets. Four-lane roadway segments are typically on major arterials. Portions of Harrison Street, Dillon Road and Avenue 52 are divided.

**Highways.** State Highway 111 is a four-lane highway that provides access to Coachella's Central Business District. The highway also serves as an intra-regional and inter-regional passageway for Coachella Valley. Access to Coachella is provided by State Highway 86, a four-lane divided expressway oriented northwest-southeast. Interstate 10 is oriented east-west and is a four and six lane freeway which supports regional and national vehicular traffic. Access to the Salton Sea and Imperial County is provided by Harrison Street, a four-lane divided highway that changes to two-lane undivided highway south of Avenue 54.

**Public Transportation.** SunLine Transit Agency provides bus service in the City of Coachella. SunBus provides service seven days a week throughout Coachella Valley; SunDial provides curb-to-curb service for ADA-certified riders seven days a week by ap-

pointment; and SunLink provides express service from the desert to Inland Empire, four round trips in the morning and late afternoon, Monday through Friday. Refer to Table 1A for additional public transportation information.

**Land Use.** The predominant land use in the immediate vicinity of the airport is agricultural. Some low-density residential development is located northeast of the Airport in the community of Thermal, adjacent to State Highway 111.

Irrigated agriculture in the form of field and row crops, date palm groves, and nurseries currently surround the airport. However, this likely to change in the future as new development takes place to the north, west and south of the airport.

To the north, the City of Coachella recently updated its General Plan. The City's Central Corridor Planning Area lies immediately north of the airport along Airport Boulevard between Harrison Street and Highway 111. The General Plan update calls for this area to be developed with light industrial uses with some low- and medium-density residential uses.

Located immediately to the south of the airport, the 2,172- acre Kohl Ranch Specific Plan is bounded by 60<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, Polk Street on the east, Avenue 66 on the south and Tyler Street on the west. The site is also within the boundaries of the Coachella valley Enterprise Zone and a portion of the site is within the Thermal Redevelopment Area. The specific plan call s for a balanced mix of land uses including residential, business, commercial, industrial, open space/recreation, and public facilities. The residential component of the plan includes 7,171 dwelling units distributed over 1,103 acres, along with a proposed freeway corridor.

The Vista Santa Rosa Community is located to the immediate west of the airport. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors recognized this new community in 2001. The community's boundaries extend from Avenue 50 on the north, to Monroe Street on the west, to Highway 86 (Harrison Street) on the east, and south to Avenue 66. Vista Santa Rosa is a special community where country club and residential development interface with agricultural, rural, and equestrian-oriented lifestyles. To this end, Riverside County has begun preparation of a detailed Vista Santa Rosa community land use plan that will be incorporated into the eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan.

## PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

In October 1990, Coffman Associates Inc. prepared a Master Plan for the (then) Thermal Airport. Key recommendations from the Plan included:

- ▶ Extension of Runway 17-35 from 5,000 feet to 8,500 feet, ultimate runway length to 10,000 feet to accommodate airline service.
- ▶ Construction of a 4,600 foot parallel runway, parallel to Runway 17-35, to accommodate the load bearing capacity of a 12,500 pound single wheel landing gear aircraft.
- ▶ Strengthen Runway 17-35 load bearing capacity or pavement strength for dual wheel landing gear aircraft to 60,000 pounds; ultimate to 150,000 pounds dual wheel landing gear aircraft.
- ▶ Construction of full length parallel taxiway on the Runway 17-35, initially 50 feet wide; ultimate extension of taxiways (recommended length was not provided) and widening of taxiways to 75 feet.
- ▶ Installation of Runway End Identifier Lights (REILs) and installation of High Intensity Runway Lighting (HIRL).
- ▶ Installation of a Precision Instrument Approach Light System (PAPI).

Of these recommendations, the following have been completed to date: extension of Runway 17-35 to 8,500 feet and pavement strengthened to accommodate 174,000 pound dual wheel landing gear aircraft; the Visual Slope Indicators (VASIs) on Runway 35 have been abandoned and replaced with the installation of a Precision Instrument Approach Light System (PAPI); A VASI was installed on Runway 17; and Taxiway F constructed.

In April 1991, Coffman Associates, Inc. prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA) for development proposed in the 1990 Airport Master Plan for Thermal Airport (now Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport). Emphasis was placed on extension of Runway 17-35 to 8,500 feet and a full-length extension of parallel Taxiway B, connecting to the end of Runway 17.

In August 1992, Coffman Associates also prepared a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for the Thermal Airport. The CLUP was designed to protect and promote the safety and welfare of residents in the airport's vicinity and airport users, while ensuring

the continued operation of the airport. Implementation of the CLUP would promote compatible urban development in the airport vicinity and restrict incompatible development.

This master plan study continues the planning process begun in 1990 and is designed to provide decision makers with new and updated information on the airport and its future potential. Among the factors influencing future airport development were the horrific events of September 11, 2001.

The consequences of these attacks included an immediate and substantial effect on air travel, a new emphasis on aviation security, and, in some cases, temporary deferment of airport capital improvement projects. The overall decline in commercial air travel is expected to be only temporary and, in fact, may have a positive impact on the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport as a result of increased charter aircraft operations.