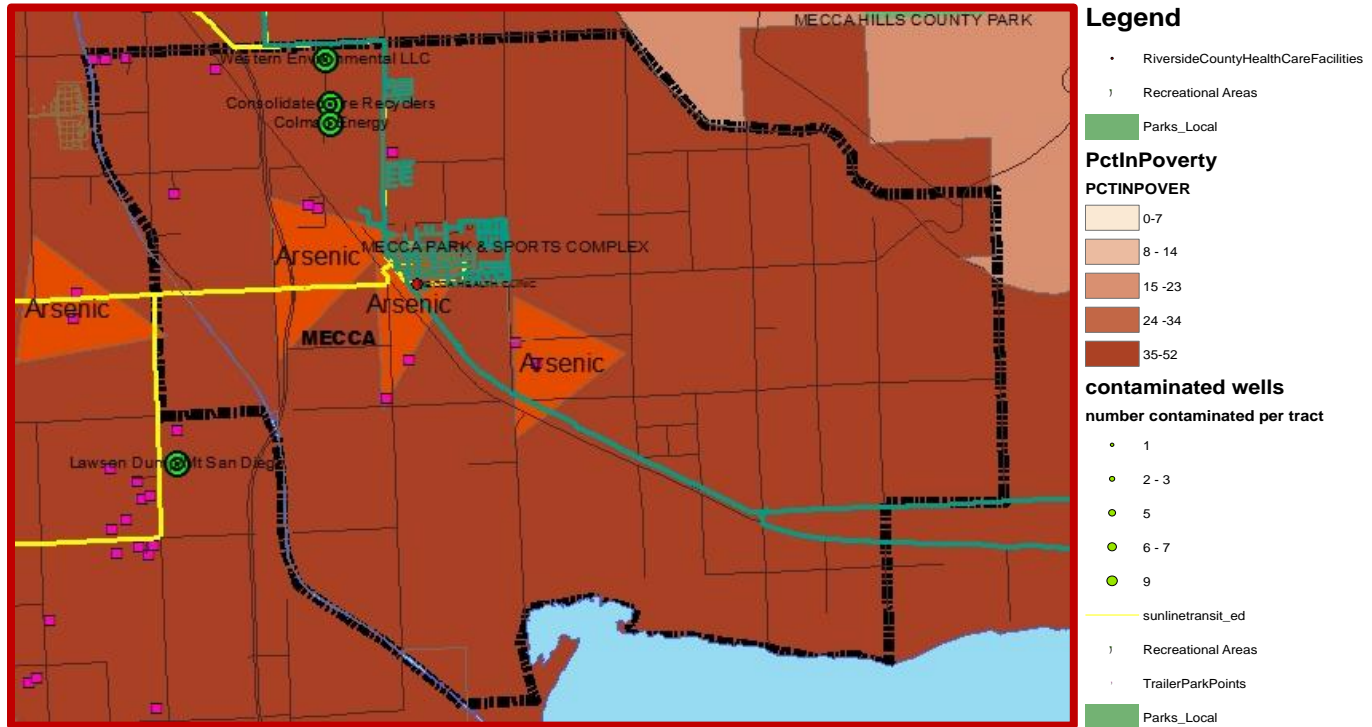


MECCA

“Mecca: A place that is regarded as the center of an activity or interest.”ⁱ

In and Around Mecca



General information

Mecca is a Census Designated Place located in Riverside County at latitude 33.5717 and longitude -116.0772. The elevation is 187 feet below sea level. The population was 8,577 at the 2010 census, up from 5,402 at the 2000 census. Between the 2000 and 2010 census, the population growth of Mecca was estimated at almost 59% compared to 10% for the state of California.

Mecca is an agricultural community - with a large portion of its population consisting of migrant farm-workers employed throughout the Coachella Valley. The population density is estimated at 1200 people per square mile. During the agricultural peak season, Mecca has been considered to have the densest population of any rural region in California. Area of the town is 6.959 square miles.ⁱⁱ

What the map shows

The map above is an overview of Mecca using the percent population in poverty as its base. In 2010, about 15% of the US population was in poverty.ⁱⁱⁱ Mecca data show between 35 and 52% of the population in poverty with the average being 48%.^{iv} Added to this base map are data on transportation, medical facilities, water quality, recreation facilities and parks and landfills. It was compiled to provide an overview of both environmental risks and resources in Coachella.

Transportation

Mecca has broadly spaced roads within the town limits. There is a public bus line serving the most densely settled section of the town.

Mecca Fast Facts

County: Riverside

Population: 8,577

Hispanic/ Latino of any race: 99%

Poverty Rate: 48%¹

Number of Landfills within 2 miles of residences: 4

Air Quality:
98/100 for ozone and
107/100 for particulates

Water Contaminants:
Chromium 6, Arsenic

Medical facilities

There is 1 clinic in Mecca.

Water quality

Municipal water and sewer systems are limited to the most densely populated areas of town. Trailer park residents do not have municipal water and sewer services. According to district water data, water quality is high and contamination from arsenic is mitigated through treatment. However, residents who are reliant on well water are clearly exposed to high levels of arsenic as shown in the large triangle shapes. These shapes represent a compilation of well data that show contamination above healthy levels of arsenic registered consistently over a six year period.

Recreation facilities and parks

There is one park and recreation facility in the town of Mecca. It is the Mecca Park and Sports Complex.

Landfills

There are two disposal facilities within the town boundaries and one biomass fuel power plant.

Western Environmental, Inc.

On May 9 2011, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a statement that they had determined WEI is handling, storing, treating, transporting or disposing of "solid waste that may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to health or the environment." WEI has received more than 165,000 tons of contaminated soil since January 2009, and mounds of untreated contaminated soils at the site are at least forty feet high. Since mid-December 2010, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) has responded to numerous odor complaints received from local schools, local community services facilities and nearby neighborhoods regarding various odors present in the community of Mecca. In response, the AQMD initiated a series of investigations and air monitoring activities. The AQMD has identified Western Environmental, Inc. and their co-owned adjacent facility, Waste Reduction Technologies, as the primary source of the odors.

Consolidated Tire Recyclers

An estimated 160,000 tires are currently stored on site at a facility designed for no more than 40,000 tires. The EPA states that the past and present handling, storage and treatment of waste tires may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health or the environment. In fact, on or about May 17, 2011, a fire broke out in a building at the CTR facility. According to the Riverside County Fire Department report on the event: "... A fire ignited in the rubber aspiration system which is a piping system that moves shredded tire product. Personnel had to break apart the piping to make access to the smoldering product. ..." As a result of that fire, EPA issued an order that prohibited Consolidated Tire Recyclers from collecting more scrapped tires and required it to reduce its existing piles.

Colmac Energy

The Colmac Energy power plant consists of two biomass-fired boilers to supply steam to a single turbine generator producing 47 MW of electric power which is sold into the electric grid. The facility is located on the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians Reservation. Ammonia is used onsite for the purpose of reducing nitrogen oxide emissions in the combustor flue gas. Ammonia is delivered to the site by truck.^v The Colmac plant draws fuel from the Los Angeles basin and primarily burns urban wood waste. In addition to this fuel source, agricultural residues are also burned.

End Notes

ⁱ Merriam Webster Dictionary

ⁱⁱ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0646660.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau, 2010

^{iv} ACS

^v <http://toxicrisk.com/reports/6044/source.htm>



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