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## Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the affected environment and the environmental consequences of implementing the various alternatives described in Chapter 2. Issues discussed include land use; geology, fluvial geomorphology and soils; water resources; water quality; fishery resources; vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands; recreation; socioeconomics, population, and housing; tribal trust; cultural resources; air quality; environmental justice; aesthetics; hazards and hazardous materials; noise; public services and utilities/energy; and transportation/traffic circulation.

Each section includes a discussion of the affected environment (California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] existing conditions), environmental consequences (CEQA environmental impacts), methodology, significance criteria (if applicable), and mitigation measures. Some sections address issues that are required to satisfy federal law (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]) but are not required to comply with CEQA. Because CEQA generally does not require lead agencies to consider the purely economic or social effects of proposed projects, Sections 3.9 (Socioeconomics), 3.10 (Tribal Trust), and 3.13 (Environmental Justice) were not prepared to comply with CEQA. Individual sections in Chapter 3 are organized in the following manner.

#### 3.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT (CEQA EXISTING CONDITIONS)

The Affected Environment sections for each of the issues discussed describe the existing regional and local conditions using the most current information available. The information in these sections is used as the environmental baseline for analyzing the significance of potential effects of the Proposed Action and the significance of the effects of project alternatives with respect to each specific resource area (See *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15125, subd. (a)).

#### 3.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (CEQA ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS)

As required by the *CEQA Guidelines*, the impacts of a proposed project (action) are defined as “a change in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is prepared” (Section 15126.2). For purposes of NEPA, the term “environmental consequences” is synonymous with the term “impacts.” The impacts of the project are identified and the level of significance of the impacts is determined in the following sections of this chapter.

The following subsections are also presented in the Environmental Consequences section for each issue area:

- **Methodology:** This subsection identifies the methods used to analyze impacts, as well as the key assumptions used in the analysis process. Sections that incorporate quantitative assessments reference complementary technical appendices, as appropriate. Key assumptions used in qualitative analyses are also described for those sections that do not rely on quantitative tools.

- **Significance Criteria:** This subsection presents the criteria and thresholds used to identify potentially significant effects on the environment, in accordance with *California Public Resources Code (PRC)* Section 21082.2 and *CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15064 and 15065. “Thresholds” include guidance provided by the *CEQA Guidelines*, agency standards, legislative or regulatory requirements as applicable, and professional judgment. All impacts that do not exceed the stated significance criteria described for each section are assumed to be less than significant and are therefore not discussed in detail in the document (PRC Section 21100 and *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15128).
- **Summary of Impacts Table:** At the beginning of the Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection is a table that identifies all the impacts evaluated for that particular environmental issue area (i.e., Land Use, Fishery Resources, etc.). Included in this summary table are the various levels of significance (i.e., No Impact, Less than Significant, Significant) for the alternatives associated with the proposed project, including the No-Action Alternative. To enhance readability, the tables provide additional columns that describe the level of significance after mitigation.
- **Impacts:** At the end of each impact statement heading, the impact significance determination (i.e., No Impact, Less than Significant, Significant) is provided for each alternative evaluated. Following the impact statement, a detailed impact analysis is provided for each alternative that is fully evaluated in the EA/DEIR. In instances where the effects of one alternative are similar to another alternative, redundant impact analysis is not presented; rather a simple statement to the effect that the impacts of the two alternatives is provided. An example of the impact analysis structure is provided below:

**Impact 3.2-1:** Construction of the proposed project could temporarily disrupt existing land uses adjacent to the project site. *No Impact for the No-Action Alternative; Significant Impact for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1.*

*No-Action Alternative*

Under the No-Action Alternative...

*Proposed Action*

Construction and maintenance of the Proposed Action...

*Alternative 1*

Land use impacts associated with Alternative 1 are similar to the Proposed Action...

- **Mitigation:** Potentially feasible mitigation measures that would reduce significant impacts associated with each of the alternatives to less-than-significant levels are provided after each impact discussion. In those instances where no feasible mitigation can be identified, such impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable. An alphanumeric coding system is used to present each mitigation measure. For example, Mitigation Measure 1 would correspond to the first impact statement listed in the impact discussion. Following the mitigation measure(s) is a subheading entitled “Significance After Mitigation” that identifies the level of significance following implementation of the prescribed mitigation measure(s). In those instances where no mitigation measures were proposed because the impact was not significant, a “Not Applicable” statement follows this subheading. An example of the mitigation measures structure is provided below.

## **Mitigation Measures**

### *No-Action Alternative*

Since no significant impact was identified, no mitigation is required.

*Significance After Mitigation:* N/A.

### *Proposed Action*

**1a:** Reclamation shall clearly identify all ...

### *Alternative 1*

**1a:** Reclamation shall clearly identify all ...

*Significance After Mitigation:* Less than Significant.