

5 Other CEQA Considerations

Section 15126 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that all aspects of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment, including planning, acquisition, development, and operation. The environmental impact report (EIR) must also discuss (1) significant environmental effects of the proposed project, (2) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented, (3) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project, and (4) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project.

This chapter summarizes the significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the Laguna Creek Diversion Retrofit Project (Proposed Project) is implemented (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts). It also addresses the significant irreversible environmental changes and growth-inducing impacts of the Proposed Project. An evaluation of the significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project, applicable mitigation measures, the level of impact significance before and after mitigation, and evaluation of cumulative impacts, is provided in Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures. Chapter 6, Project Alternatives, addresses alternatives to the Proposed Project.

5.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The CEQA Guidelines require a description of any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance (Section 15126.2[b]). Where there are impacts that cannot be alleviated without imposing an alternative design, their implications and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, should be described. This EIR identified no significant unavoidable project or cumulative impacts.

5.2 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

The CEQA Guidelines require a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes with project implementation, including uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project (Section 15126.2[c]). As described in Section 15126.2(c), uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts, such as those arising from highway projects that provide access to a previously inaccessible area, generally commit future generations to similar uses. Irreversible damage can also result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

According to Section 15126.2(c), a project would generally result in a significant irreversible impact if:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources during initial and continued phases of the project;
- Primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses;
- The project would involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from environmental accidents; or
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

Implementation of the Proposed Project would involve the use of a limited amount of nonrenewable resources. Specifically, the construction of the Proposed Project would require the use of fossil fuels, construction materials, and labor. These expenditures would be, for the most part, irrecoverable. However, the Proposed Project would use a limited amount of such resources and their use for this project would not impede the continued availability of these resources for other projects. Proposed Project operation would continue the existing land use on the project site; therefore, it would not commit future generations to land uses that do not already exist. As evaluated in Section 4.6, Energy, the demand for energy during construction would be minor and demand during operation would not substantially increase over existing conditions.

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials associated with construction activities. However, construction and operation of the Proposed Project would entail use of a limited quantity of hazardous materials, such as fuel for equipment during construction and for the backup emergency generator during operations. Additionally, as described in Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, environmental accidents would be minimized through adherence to federal, state, and local regulations and through application of the City's Standard Construction Practices, described in Section 3.6.3, Standard Construction Practices, which include measures to prevent accidental release of hazardous materials and development of emergency plans that outline procedures to follow in the event of an accidental release. Therefore, the potential for accidental release of hazardous materials would be less than significant.

No other irreversible changes are expected to result from the construction or operation of the Proposed Project.

5.3 Growth-Inducing Impacts

CEQA requires that any growth-inducing aspect of a project be discussed in an EIR. This discussion should include consideration of ways in which the project could directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth in adjacent and/or surrounding areas. Projects that could remove obstacles to population growth, such as expansion of major public services, must also be considered in this discussion.

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(e), a project would have the potential to induce growth if it would:

- Remove obstacles to population growth (e.g., through the expansion of public services into an area that does not currently receive these services), or through the provision of new access to an area, or a change in restrictive zoning or land use designation; or
- Result in economic expansion and population growth through employment opportunities and/or construction of new housing.

The Proposed Project would consist of modifications and improvements to infrastructure at the existing Laguna Creek Diversion Facility (Facility) to protect a critical water supply for the City by addressing constraints, improving environmental conditions on site and downstream of the site, improving operational efficiency, improving safety and access at the Facility, and implementing a project that is relatively cost-effective. The Proposed Project would not entail an increase in the amount of water diverted at the Facility, procurement of additional water supplies, or expansion of public services into areas that do not currently receive these services. Thus, the Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly remove obstacles to population growth. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, Population and Housing, the Proposed Project would not result in economic expansion, population growth, new housing, or substantial new employment opportunities. As an improvement to an existing water supply facility, the Proposed Project would not result in uses that would directly or indirectly induce substantial economic growth.