

5.0 Environmental Analysis



5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The following SEIR subsections contain a description of the existing (baseline) conditions, an analysis of Project impacts (including direct and indirect, short-term, long-term, and cumulative), recommended mitigation measures, and unavoidable significant impacts. As presented in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see [Appendix A, Notice of Preparation, Project Information Packet/Environmental Checklist, and NOP Comment Letters](#)), this SEIR analyzes those environmental issue areas where the proposed Project could have impacts, which may be considered significant, and therefore additional analysis is conducted to identify mitigation measures that could avoid potentially significant impacts, or reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant.

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| 5.1 | Aesthetics; | 5.5 | Hydrology and Water Quality; |
| 5.2 | Air Quality; | 5.6 | Land Use and LCP Compliance; |
| 5.3 | Biological Resources; | | and |
| 5.4 | Cultural Resources; | 5.7 | Noise. |

The environmental issue areas examined in this SEIR are as outlined in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*.

As presented in the NOP (see [Appendix A](#)), no significant impacts involving the following environmental issue areas are anticipated:

- Agriculture and Forestry;
- Geology and Soils;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Mineral Resources;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services;
- Recreation;
- Traffic and Transportation; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

Therefore, these issue areas are addressed in [Section 8.0, Effects Found Not To Be Significant](#).

Each potentially significant environmental issue area is addressed in a separate SEIR section and organized into seven subsections, as follows:

- “*Environmental Setting*” typically describes the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published (the Project’s NOP was published March 4, 2015). However, given the Sustainable Water Facility (SWF) (formerly Emergency Water Supply Project) was constructed in response to the CCSD Board of Directors’ declared Stage 3 Water Shortage Emergency Condition, and since the Project was required to be constructed within 180 days from issuance of the Emergency Coastal Development Permit (E-CDP) (E-CDP Condition 5), the Project is



unique involving environmental analysis after Project completion.¹ Therefore, the Environmental Setting will instead describe the physical environmental conditions in the Project's vicinity, as they existed before construction of the SWF.

- *“Regulatory Setting”* lists and discusses the laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards that apply to the Project. It is noted, the NCAP Combining Designations and standards relevant to the Project are summarized in Appendix B, NCAP Combining Designations and Standards, and the E-CDP Conditions of Approval are included in Appendix C, E-CDP Conditions of Approval.
- *“Summary of Water Master Plan PEIR Conclusions”* summarizes the Water Master Plan Program EIR's environmental impacts/conclusions.
- *“Impact Thresholds and Significance Criteria”* provides the thresholds that are the basis of conclusions of significance, which are primarily the criteria in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (California Code of Regulations, Sections 15000 – 15387).

Primary sources used in identifying the criteria include the CEQA Guidelines; local, State, Federal, or other standards applicable to an impact category; and officially established significance thresholds. “. . . An ironclad definition of significant effect is not possible because the significance of any activity may vary with the setting” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064[b]). Principally, “. . . a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within an area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance” constitutes a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines Section 15382).

- *“Impacts and Mitigation Measures”*

“Impacts” typically describes changes or potential changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur if a proposed project is implemented. However, as previously noted, the Project is unique involving environmental analysis after SWF completion. In order to ensure the SEIR informs decision makers and the public of the Project's significant environmental impacts, as CEQA mandates, the comparison is made between the physical environmental conditions in the Project's vicinity, as they existed without the Project (pre-SWF construction), and the conditions expected to be produced by the Project.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4, *Consideration and Discussion of Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize Significant Effects*, specifies that “an EIR shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts.” It further notes that “if a

¹ Construction of the emergency Project began on May 20, 2014 and was substantially completed on November 14, 2014. The construction phase was followed by an approximately two-month start-up period. Production of potable water began on January 20, 2015.



mitigation measure would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the effects of the mitigation measure shall be discussed but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.” Various mitigation measures have been identified to avoid/reduce environmental impacts resulting from SWF operations. These mitigation measures, which generally involve evaporation pond repurposing, mechanical spray evaporator removal, offsite RO concentrate disposal, surface water treatment, and modified surface discharge to San Simeon Creek, are described in detail in Section 3.5.2, *Project Characteristics – Mitigation Measures (Project Modifications)*. Therefore, in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4 requirements, the environmental effects of the mitigation measure are also discussed in this SEIR.

For purposes of analysis contained in this SEIR, the “Sustainable Water Facility” “SWF” involves the built and operational Project components, whereas the “Mitigation Measures (Project modifications)” involve proposed Project components, including modifications to Project components required for compliance with evaporation pond and lagoon surface discharge operations-related mitigation measures.

Evidence, based on factual and scientific data, is presented to show the cause and effect relationship between the proposed project and the potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, range or other parameters of a potential impact are ascertained, to the extent possible, to determine whether impacts may be significant; all of the potential direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect effects are considered.

This SEIR uses the following terminology to describe the Project’s environmental effects:

- *No Impact.* The development would not have any measurable environmental impact on the environment.
- *Less Than Significant Impact.* The development would have the potential for impacting the environment, although this impact would be below established thresholds that are considered to be significant.
- *Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.* The development would have the potential to generate impacts, which may be considered as a significant effect on the environment, however, mitigation measures or changes to the development’s physical or operational characteristics can reduce these impacts to levels that are less than significant.



- *Potentially Significant Impact.* The development would have impacts, which may be considered significant, and therefore additional analysis is conducted to identify mitigation measures that would reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels.
- *Significant Unavoidable Impact.* When an impact, despite the inclusion of mitigation measures, cannot be mitigated to a level considered less than significant, it is identified as “significant unavoidable impact.”

It is also noted that the Project could result in a beneficial impact. If the analysis concludes that the Project would result in a beneficial environmental impact, it is identified as such.

The “Level of Significance After Mitigation” identifies the impacts that would remain after implementation of mitigation measures, and whether the remaining impact is or is not considered significant.

“Mitigation Measures” are measures that would be required of the Project to:

- Avoid a significant adverse impact;
- Minimize a significant adverse impact;
- Rectify a significant adverse impact by restoration;
- Reduce or eliminate a significant adverse impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations; or
- Compensate for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environment.

Mitigation measures (Conditions of Approval) that were implemented during SWF construction are also outlined in [Appendix C](#).

- “*Cumulative Impacts*” describes potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur as a result of the proposed Project together with cumulative projects, which include past and present projects, as well as future projects that would change the “existing physical conditions” or that are “reasonably foreseeable, planned, and approved future projects.”
- “*Significant Unavoidable Impacts*” describes impacts that would be significant and cannot be feasibly mitigated to less than significant despite mitigation, and thus would be unavoidable.

To approve a project with unavoidable significant impacts, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. In adopting such a statement, the lead agency is required to balance a project’s benefits against its unavoidable environmental impacts



in determining whether to approve the project. If the benefits of a project are found to outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse effects may be considered “acceptable” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093[a]).

- “*Sources Cited*” identifies the sources used throughout the section.



SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY PROJECT



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