

Chapter 3.0

Environmental Analysis

3.0.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the structure and format of the analysis provided for each of the 15 environmental resource areas addressed herein and defines the terminology used in characterizing the level of significance for each potential impact and, where appropriate, associated mitigation.

The following 15 resource areas addressed in this chapter were determined by SDCRAA to require further evaluation.

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change
- Human Health Risk
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Traffic and Circulation
- Utilities

For those resource areas where it was determined that no impact would occur (i.e., agriculture and forestry resources, mineral resources, population and housing, and wildfire), a brief evaluation of the no impact determination is provided in Chapter 1, Introduction.

The analysis of each resource area includes the following components:

- *Introduction* – provides an introduction to the resource area analysis and summarizes any relevant Notice of Preparation (NOP) comments.
- *General Approach and Methodology* – identifies how potential impacts on a resource area were determined.
- *Regulatory Framework* – contains an overview of the federal, state, regional, and local laws and regulations that apply to the proposed project relative to each resource area.

Development at SDIA must comply with various federal, state, and local regulations, which help shape the way development occurs on the project site.

- *Environmental Setting* – describes current conditions with regard to the resource area reviewed. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 states that “An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project. This environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant. The description of the environmental setting shall be no longer than is necessary to provide an understanding of the significant effects of the proposed project and its alternatives.”
- *Thresholds of Significance* – presents the criteria against which the significance of impacts is judged for the resource area. In general, and unless otherwise noted, the thresholds of significance used in the analysis of proposed project impacts reflect guidance provided in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.¹
- *Project Impacts* – states whether a given impact meets or exceeds a threshold of significance (using terms detailed below, under Section 3.0.2) prior to mitigation, if applicable. If mitigation is recommended for a particular impact, the EIR will then determine whether the impact, once mitigated, would remain significant or would be reduced to a less than significant level. For purposes of determining significance, impacts were compared to the environmental baseline conditions, as further described in Section 3.0.2.1 below.
- *Summary of Impact Determinations* – summarizes the impact conclusions for each impact, based on the applicable threshold of significance.
- *Mitigation Measures* – lists the mitigation measures that are recommended to reduce or avoid a significant impact.
- *Significant Unavoidable Impacts* – identifies those significant impacts, if any, which would remain significant even after all feasible mitigation measures are applied.

3.0.2 Terminology Used in This Environmental Analysis

3.0.2.1 Environmental Baseline

Section 15125 of the State CEQA Guidelines states that “[g]enerally, the lead agency should describe physical environmental conditions as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published...”

The Notice of Preparation or “NOP” for the original Draft EIR was published on January 21, 2017. As such, 2017 generally served as the baseline year for characterizing existing

¹ State of California, Guidelines for California Environmental Quality Act (State CEQA Guidelines), California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387, as amended December 2018.

conditions in the environmental analysis for the 2018 Draft EIR. However, where existing conditions data specific to 2017 were not available or where 2017 data did not accurately represent baseline conditions, the 2018 Draft EIR explained why this was the case and then identified the alternative information used to represent baseline conditions. More specifically, for certain analyses, a full year's worth of data was considered necessary and appropriate to characterize existing baseline conditions. For example, air pollutant emissions and noise impacts from aircraft operations tend to vary according to the season, resulting in "existing" conditions that likewise vary depending on time of year. For these analyses, data for the prior calendar year, which in the case of the 2018 Draft EIR was 2016, were used to define existing baseline conditions for these topics.

For the Recirculated Draft EIR, the characterization of existing conditions was updated in light of more current data, as available. Similar to the 2018 Draft EIR, the characterization of existing baseline conditions for certain analyses, such as those related to aircraft operations (i.e., aircraft-related air pollutant emissions and noise impacts), was based on one year's worth of data. For those analyses, the 2016 baseline year was updated to reflect 2018 conditions. Further explanation of where and how existing baseline conditions were updated for the Recirculated Draft EIR is provided in each affected section in Chapter 3.

3.0.2.2 Impacts and Mitigation

For each potential impact of the proposed project, this Recirculated Draft EIR applies significance criteria specific to the impact category in question (e.g., traffic). These criteria establish a significance threshold which, if exceeded, triggers the need for mitigation of the impact under review. The following terms are used to describe each impact and, where significant impacts are determined, how mitigation measures are to be applied:

- *No Impact* – Designation of no impact is given when a project does not apply to the impact category, or would not create an impact. In addition, no impact is identified if no adverse or beneficial changes in the environment are expected.
- *Less Than Significant Impact* – A less than significant impact is identified when the proposed project would cause no substantial adverse change in the environment (i.e., the impact would not reach the threshold of significance), or where impacts have been reduced to less than significant after application of mitigation.
- *Significant Impact* – A significant impact would create a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the proposed project. Such an impact would exceed the applicable significance threshold established by CEQA prior to application of mitigation.
- *Significant Unavoidable Impact* – Per Section 15126.2(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, a significant unavoidable impact is a project-related substantial adverse effect that cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through any feasible mitigation measure(s).

- *Mitigation* – Mitigation refers to measures that would be implemented to avoid or lessen potentially significant impacts. Mitigation includes:
 - avoiding the impact completely by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
 - minimizing the impact by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;
 - rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
 - reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and/or
 - compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The mitigation measures would be proposed as a condition of project approval and would be monitored to ensure compliance and implementation.

Note that the Recirculated Draft EIR “shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts, including where relevant, inefficient and unnecessary consumption of energy” (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.4(a)(1)). In addition, the discussion of mitigation measures “shall distinguish between the measures which are proposed by project proponents to be included in the project and other measures proposed by the lead, responsible or trustee agency or other persons which are not included but the lead agency determines could reasonably be expected to reduce adverse impacts if required as conditions of approving the project” (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.4(a)(1)(A)). Mitigation measures must be enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally-binding instruments (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.4(a)(2)). Note, however, that if a mitigation measure cannot *legally* be imposed or implemented, the lead agency need not recommend it or analyze it (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.4(a)(5)).

As further discussed in Chapter 5, Alternatives Analysis, in accordance with Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines, four alternatives (including the No Project alternative) were selected and carried forward for further consideration in this Recirculated Draft EIR to evaluate whether such alternatives would avoid or substantially reduce any of the significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed project that are identified in the following sections.