CEQA Addendum/Findings Analysis for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project EIS/EIR

Modification to Water Diversion on New River

SCH # 2010061062

Salton Sea, Imperial County, California

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December 2021

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms/Abbreviations	Definition
BMPs	best management practices
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
dBA	A-weighted decibels
DFG	California Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly Department of Fish and Game)
DDE	dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene
DWR	(California) Department of Water Resources
EIS/EIR	Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report
GHG	greenhouse gas
ICAPCD	Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
Leq	equivalent sound level
MM	mitigation measure
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NGVD	National Geodetic Vertical Datum
NOx	oxides of nitrogen
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O_3	ozone
$PM_{2.5}$	particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller
PM_{10}	particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or smaller
PRMMP	Paleontological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
SCH	Species Conservation Habitat
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This environmental document is an Addendum prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR), certified in August 2013 (Approved Project) by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA). The project that is the subject of this Addendum includes a change in how water is diverted along the New River within the current SCH boundary (Figure 1), as well as an added feature to allow continued boat access to the Sea along the New River (referred to as the Modified Project or Project in this Addendum). This project is consistent with the SCH Project and would not have any significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Approved Project EIS/EIR (hereafter referred to as EIS/EIR).

Under the CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, an addendum to a previously certified EIR is prepared if some changes in the adopted project are proposed and none of the conditions in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 would occur.

As discussed in Section 1.3 of the EIS/EIR (CEQA Project Goals and Objectives/National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] Purpose and Need), the SCH Project's goals are two-fold: (1) develop a range of aquatic habitats that will support fish and wildlife species dependent on the Salton Sea; and (2) develop and refine information needed to successfully manage the Approved Project habitat through an adaptive management process. The SCH Project is located at the mouth of the New River and encompasses dry playa that will be converted into aquatic habitat to support bird and fish populations at the Sea, and control dust emission from the playa. This project would not change these goals and would be consistent with them.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section describes the location and components of the proposed modification to the SCH Project that are addressed in this Addendum.

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed weir and diversion structure and boat access feature would be placed along the existing footprint of the New River, with two sedimentation ponds located on either side, as part of the SCH construction, as shown in Figure 2.

2.2 PROJECT COMPONENTS

2.2.1 Diversion Weir

In the approved SCH project, pumped diversion of the New River was originally proposed to be located adjacent to the SCH ponds, upstream of the existing New River/Salton Sea confluence and would pump river water into sedimentation basins before the water goes into the SCH ponds. A change in design from pumped diversion to a diversion weir (a weir is a small overflow dam) was made because the diversion weir requires less maintenance and demands less power usage than a pumping system.

As was described in the EIS/EIR, the water supply for the SCH Project ponds would be a combination of brackish river water and saline water from the Salton Sea, blended to maintain an appropriate salinity range for target biological benefits. Salinity in the sedimentation basins is controlled by regulating the inflow of fresh and hypersaline water into the basins. Flood flows would be managed within the New River intake basin through flow control gates. Benefits from using a weir system in the New River versus the originally proposed pumping system include that the weir system:

- Uses passive gravity flows that are more reliable than pumped flows and eliminates the need for power pumps,
- Allows for additional flood protection and mitigation (i.e., wider channel, reduced backwater effect and larger flood passage capacity),
- Allows for easier clean out of in-river sediment by opening the weir gates and flushing the system,
- Facilitates the expansion of the habitat ponds in the future (i.e., it is easier and more economical to add more gravity flow gates to increase diversion of freshwater from the New River, as required), and
- Mitigates risks associated with unforeseen seepage increases in the ponds as it is easier and more cost-effective to open a few more gravity flow gates than increase pumping capacity.

A labyrinth style free overflow weir is proposed across the New River as part of the SCH Project. The weir is designed to safely pass the project design flood flow (1:100-year return period event), downstream of the New River Diversion Structure facilities, and into the Salton Sea. Fluctuations in the New River would be managed by operating the flow control weir and gates that release flows back into the New River downstream of the weir. The flow control weir is set at -225.9 feet below mean sea level such that this minimum water level can continue to be maintained. As flows within the New River change, water depth within the New River intake basin will also change. As water depth changes, the downstream flow control gates will be actuated to maintain a water surface elevation of no less than -225.9 feet below mean sea level. A labyrinth weir has been selected to provide a longer effective weir length over a much smaller footprint. This design allows the water depth resulting from flood flows to be minimized upstream of the weir, thereby reducing the potential for upstream flooding due to the weir.

The labyrinth weir would be constructed of reinforced concrete and set on a concrete apron slab that is 104 feet long (across the New River) and 40 feet wide (parallel to the New River). Slide gates (7 feet wide by 7 feet high) would be installed on either side of the weir. This assemblage would be surrounded by riprap and other fill to provide long-term protection of the weir from water, wind, and seismic events. The total effective length of the weir across the New River is 447 feet. The weir height is 6 feet from the crest to the top of the apron slab. The weir crest elevation is set at an elevation of -225.9 feet using the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 [NAVD 88] (or -228 feet using the National Geodetic Vertical Datum [NGVD 29]), which is the normal Salton Sea water level before the Sea began to recede in recent years. During normal SCH Project operations, the water level in the New River will be maintained at approximately this same elevation to minimize adverse effects on upstream water usage.

2.2.2 Boat Portage Access

With installation of a diversion weir, boat passage along the New River would be blocked. To avoid recreational impacts, public boat access to the Salton Sea from the New River would be maintained by adding an access feature near the proposed diversion feature. This access feature would include a boat portage path, approximately 2,500 feet long, as shown on Figure 2, with boat ramp locations at upstream and downstream points on either end of the new path. The path would be located along the bank of the New River along existing access roads covered in base course material. Users (boaters) would float down the New River, pull up to a boat ramp, portage their boat around the weir, put in at the downstream boat ramp, and continue on to the Sea. Boat ramps would be cut into the existing bank of the New River. This stretch of road would be fenced to allow people continued access along the New River but limit their ability to get on the SCH project site.

Figure 1. Project Vicinity

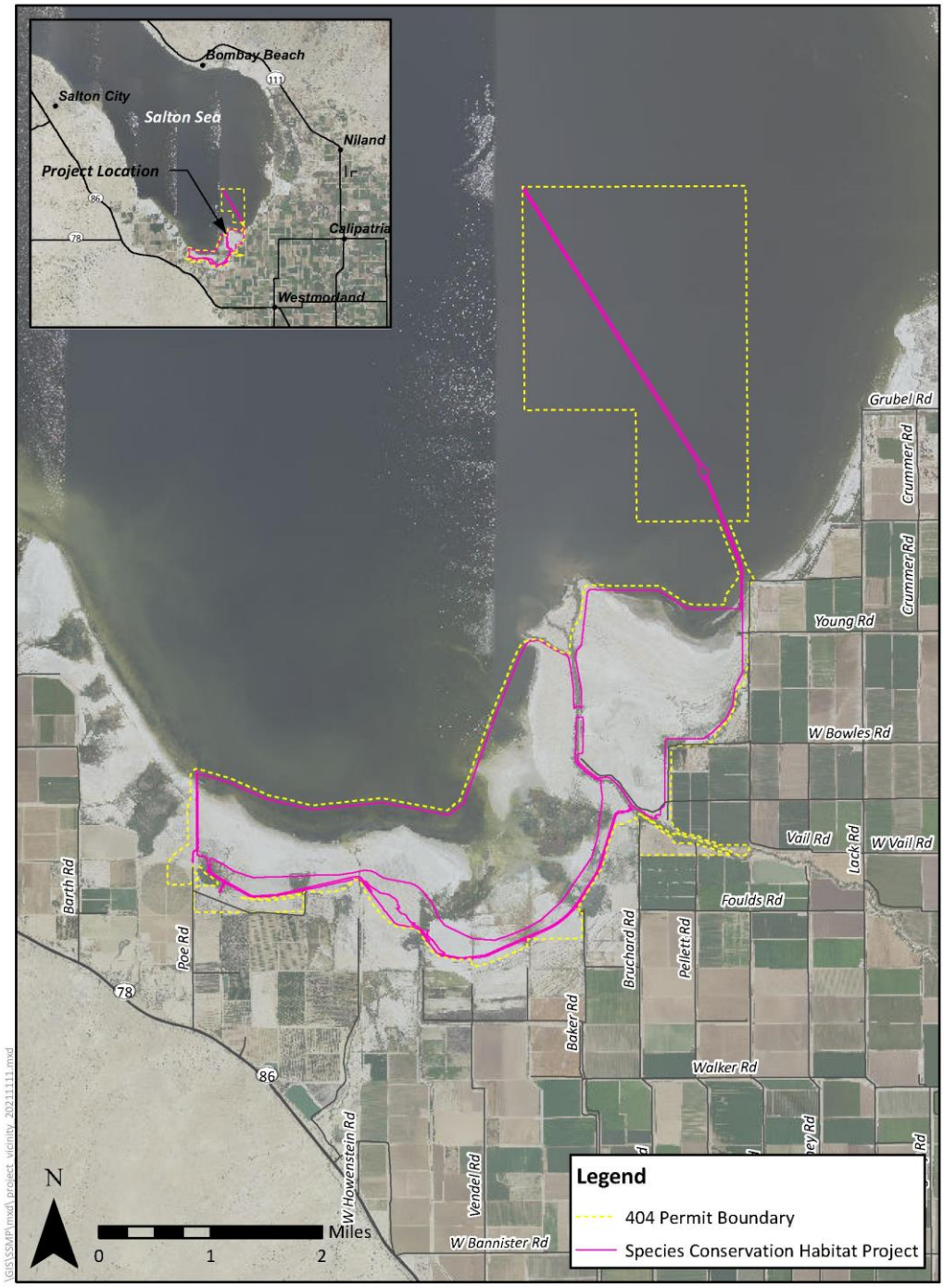
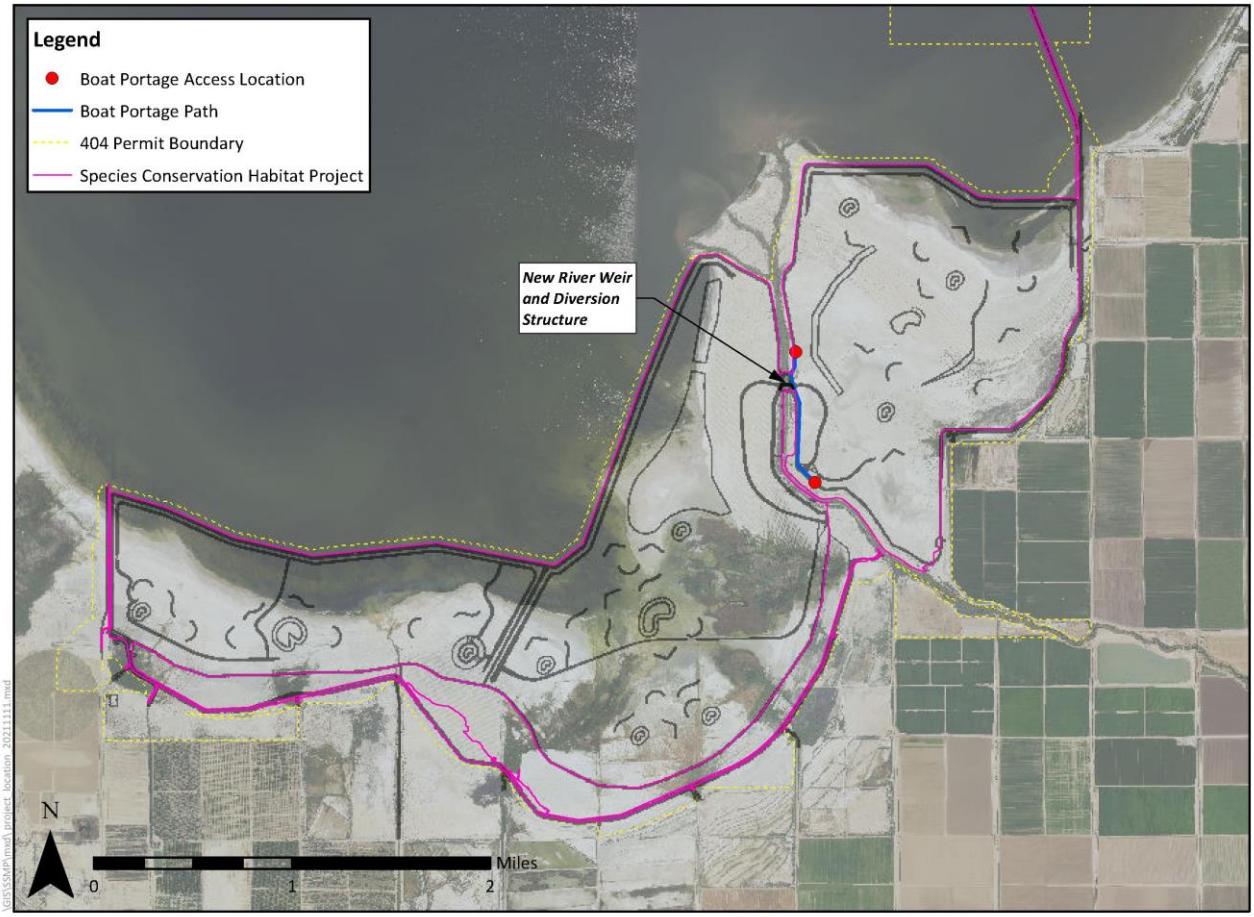


Figure 2. Project Location



3.0 FINDINGS

This section describes the environmental impacts of the proposed Modified Project in the context of the Approved Project EIS/EIR. The order of discussion follows the environmental analysis categories that were analyzed in the EIS/EIR. The impact numbers and impact names in the following sections (e.g., Impact AES-1) refer to those in the EIS/EIR. The **bold text** identifies the impact from the EIS/EIR, followed by the analysis for the Modified Project (not bold). The impacts have been separated into two categories for each issue area: "Applicable Impacts" and "Inapplicable Impacts" to clarify which impacts from the EIS/EIR are relevant to the Modified Project. An explanation of each impact from the EIS/EIR is provided to support the determination of whether or not the impact is applicable to the Modified Project.

No new significant impacts would occur as a result of the Modified Project, nor would the severity of previously identified significant effects increase substantially. The Modified Project is limited to changing how water in the New River is diverted, and adding a feature to allow boat portage along the New River once the SCH project is complete. Project features would be implemented within the SCH boundary and are consistent with those analyzed in the SCH EIS/EIR.

Each impact discussion includes applicable mitigation measures (MMs) from the EIS/EIR to avoid or minimize potential environmental impacts. If specific MMs from the EIS/EIR do not apply to the Modified Project, it is so noted.

3.1 AESTHETICS

Applicable Impacts

Impact AES-1: Project construction could temporarily degrade the scenic quality, character, or scenic vistas of the site and surrounding areas. Implementation of the Modified Project would require similar construction activities and equipment within the Approved Project site analyzed in the EIS/EIR and, therefore, the Modified Project would not result in any new impacts to aesthetic resources. As described in the EIS/EIR, construction impacts on scenic vistas would be temporary and less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact AES-2: The SCH ponds would enhance the scenic quality and character of the site and surrounding areas. The Modified Project would not substantially change the visual character of the site, and would not change the location or shape of ponds being constructed as part of the SCH that was analyzed in the original SCH EIS/EIR. As described in the EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would improve the overall scenic quality of the site, resulting in a beneficial impact. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact AES-3: Other SCH facilities would be compatible with the existing character of the surrounding area. Improvements associated with the Modified Project would be limited to a change in how water is diverted in the New River, which would not be visible to the public, and adding a boat portage feature along one of the berms already proposed as part of the SCH. These modifications are proposed far from any public viewing areas, including the SCH visitor observation area which would be over two miles away. The boat portage feature would be fenced, similar to fencing needed elsewhere at the SCH for basins and ponds to prevent unauthorized access. As such, the Modified Project would not require any new facilities that were not previously analyzed that would conflict with the visual character of the surrounding areas, and impacts would be less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Inapplicable Impact

Impact AES-4: Some construction activities may occur at night, requiring lighting. Construction required to implement the Modified Project would only occur during daytime hours. No nighttime construction lighting would

be needed. Therefore, no impacts associated with night lighting would occur. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Aesthetic Resources compared to the Approved Project. **MM AES-1** included in the EIS/EIR pertains to night lighting and is not applicable to the Modified Project. No mitigation is required.

3.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Inapplicable Impacts

Impact AG-1: Construction of the diversion and conveyance facilities and brackish water pipeline maintenance would temporarily disrupt agricultural production but would not permanently convert Farmland to nonagricultural use. The Modified Project does not include construction of diversion and conveyance facilities or maintenance of a brackish pipeline. As such, Impact AG-1, is not applicable to the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AG-2: Construction of the sedimentation basin would result in the permanent conversion of a small amount of Farmland to nonagricultural use. The Modified Project does not include construction of a sedimentation basin. As such, Impact AG-2 is not applicable to the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AG-3: Construction of the sedimentation basin potentially would result in the permanent conversion of Williamson Act contract land to nonagricultural use. The Modified Project does not include construction of a sedimentation basin, and does not include any land subject to Williamson Act contracts. As such, Impact AG-3 is not applicable to the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Agriculture and Forestry Resources compared to the Approved Project. **MM AG-1** included in the EIS/EIR pertains to Williamson Act contracts and is not applicable to the Modified Project.

3.3 AIR QUALITY

Applicable Impacts

Impact AQ-1: Emissions from Project construction and maintenance are accounted for in applicable air quality plans and would not conflict with or obstruct their implementation. Emissions from implementation of the Modified Project would not change emissions already accounted for with the original SCH project. General estimated basin-wide construction-related emissions are included in emission inventories established for the applicable Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) air quality plan. In addition, all required emissions reduction rules and regulations would be implemented for the Modified Project to ensure construction-related air emissions are minimized. As such, construction emissions associated with the Modified Project would not prevent attainment or maintenance of state or federal ozone (O_3) or particulate matter standards within the Salton Sea Air Basin. Moreover, the Modified Project would not result in the operation of any stationary emissions sources or long-term operation of area or mobile emission sources. Therefore, the Modified Project would not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of an applicable air quality plan and impacts would be less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-3a: The Project would contribute incrementally to violations of Federal and State O_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ standards and exceed ICAPCD's NO_X and PM_{10} thresholds during construction. Construction activities

required for the Modified Project would be similar (and be a part of) construction activities already accounted for in the original project and, therefore, would not contribute to violations of Federal and State 0_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ standards and exceedance of ICAPCD's peak daily NOx and PM_{10} thresholds beyond what was analyzed in the EIS/EIR.

As with other aspects of construction for the SCH project, to minimize construction emissions, the Modified Project would be required to comply with all minimization measures required for all projects by the ICAPCD. In addition, ***MM AQ-1*** and ***MM AQ-2***, described in the EIS/EIR, would be implemented to further minimize significant impacts associated with NO_X, O_3 and fugitive dust emissions during construction activities. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-4: The Project would contribute incrementally to violations of Federal and state O_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ standards during operations but would not exceed any regulatory thresholds. The Modified Project would not change construction activities already accounted for in the approved SCH project. Operation of the diversion weir uses gravity for flow, rather than requiring a pump thereby reducing operational impacts identified in the EIS/EIR. Construction of the boat portage feature would not change how many members of the public would access the Salton Sea via the New River and, therefore, would not change operational impacts of the SCH project.

Impact AQ-5: Project construction would result in a cumulatively considerable/significant net increase in emissions. Construction of the diversion weir and boat portage features would not change air emissions associated with construction of the SCH and, therefore, would not be cumulatively considerable/significant or different from that discussed in the EIS/EIR. Similar to the Approved Project, the Modified Project would be required to comply with all minimization measures required for all projects by the ICAPCD. In addition, ***MM AQ-1*** and ***MM AQ-2***, described in the EIS/EIR, would be implemented to further reduce significant cumulative air emissions during construction activities. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-6: Project emissions from construction and maintenance would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Construction of the Modified Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. The Modified Project is well within the SCH project boundaries, which is in a sparsely populated agricultural area. Therefore, impacts from construction of the Modified Project would continue to be less than significant. In addition, implementation of the control measures for diesel exhaust described in ***MM AQ-2*** would further reduce any potential impacts associated with diesel particulate matter. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-7: The Project could result in localized odors during construction, operations, and maintenance. The Modified Project would not change the type or level of construction activities analyzed in the EIS/EIR. In addition, the construction areas for the Modified Project are well within the SCH project boundaries, which is in a sparsely populated agricultural area. No sensitive receptors are located near the construction area or access routes that would be impacted by odors from diesel-powered construction equipment. As such, the Modified Project would result in no new impacts associated with objectionable odors. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Inapplicable Impacts

Impact AQ-2: The SCH ponds would cover more playa than would be exposed as a result of the Project, reducing the potential for wind-blown fugitive dust. The Modified Project would not change the SCH ponds already part of the approved project. This impact is not applicable to the Modified Project and the EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-8: The Project would have a minor effect on the microclimate near the Salton Sea. Implementation of the Modified Project would not impact the shoreline or microclimate near the Salton Sea

because it would not alter the implementation of the Approved Project. This impact is not applicable to the Modified Project and the EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Mitigation Measures

MM AQ-1 **Implement fugitive PM_{10} control measures.** The following measures will be incorporated into the construction contract specifications in order to reduce PM_{10} emissions from fugitive dust, in addition to those measures that are required for all projects by the ICAPCD:

- Water exposed soil with adequate frequency for continued moist soil (at least twice daily and indicated by soil and air conditions).
- Replace ground cover in disturbed areas as quickly as possible.
- Limit vehicle speed for all construction vehicles to 15 miles per hour on any unpaved surface at the construction site.
- Develop a trip reduction plan to achieve a 1.5 average vehicle ridership for construction employees.

MM AQ-2 **Implement diesel control measures.** The following measures will be incorporated into the construction contract specifications in order to reduce PM_{10} and NO_X emissions from diesel engines, in addition to those measures that are required for all projects by the ICAPCD:

- A schedule of low-emissions tune-ups will be developed, and such tune-ups will be performed on all equipment, particularly for haul and delivery trucks.
- Low-sulfur (≤ 15 ppm S) fuels will be used in all stationary and mobile equipment.
- Curtail construction during periods of high ambient pollutant concentrations as directed by the ICAPCD.
- Reschedule activities to reduce short-term impacts to the extent feasible.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not change construction impacts or cumulative impacts associated with the Approved SCH Project. Implementation of ***MM AQ-1*** and ***MM AQ-2***, included in the EIS/EIR, are still applicable to any construction activities and to all applicable fugitive dust rules set forth by ICAPCD (Regulation VIII) and would further minimize cumulative construction air emissions. The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Air Quality not already identified in the EIS/EIR.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Applicable Impacts

Impact BIO-1a: Project construction and operation would affect habitat and individuals of desert pupfish and several special-status bird species. Construction of the Modified Project would not result in new or additional impacts to desert pupfish beyond what was discussed and mitigated for in the EIS/EIR. In addition, the area where the Modified Project would be implemented has already been cleared of pupfish as part of SCH project initiation in accordance with requirements of ***MM BIO-1***. Maintenance activities would be subject to the requirements of ***MM BIO-1*** as well. Similarly, construction of the Modified Project would not result in new or additional impacts to special-status bird species beyond what was described and mitigated for in the EIS/EIR because construction methods and timing would be the same as for the Approved Project and would take place in the middle of the Approved Project boundary. ***MM BIO-2*** would continue to be implemented to ensure impacts to special-status bird species would be minimized. Construction activities associated with the Modified Project would not generate any more noise than discussed for the Approved Project in the EIS/EIR. ***MM BIO-3*** would continue

to be implemented to minimize construction-related impacts to special status bird species. As such, no new impacts to desert pupfish and special-status bird species would occur as a result of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-1b: Project construction and operation would have minor effects on habitat and individuals of several special-status bird and mammal species. The Modified Project would not be implemented on habitat for sensitive species as it would be part of the construction of the ponds for the Approved Project. No new impacts would occur. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact BIO-1c: Project operation would provide habitat for desert pupfish and several special-status bird species. The Modified Project does not change the number of ponds or design of ponds that are part of the Approved Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact BIO-2: Project construction and operation would cause a temporary disturbance or loss of riparian habitat and/or sensitive habitat. Construction of the Modified Project would not disturb or cause the loss of any additional riparian habitat and/or sensitive habitat beyond what was described in the EIS/EIR for the Approved Project because construction methods and timing would be the same as for the Approved Project and would take place in the middle of the Approved Project boundary. In addition, ***MM BIO-5*** would continue to be implemented to avoid disturbances of sensitive and riparian habitats in or near these habitats during the bird breeding season. As a result, no new impacts to riparian or other sensitive habitat would occur because of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-3a: Project construction would result in temporary disturbance of Federal Waters of the U.S. and minimal effects on wetlands. Construction of the Modified Project would not change or increase the disturbance of federal waters of the U.S. or wetlands described and mitigated for in the EIS/EIR. ***MM BIO-5*** would continue to be implemented to avoid disturbances of sensitive habitats that may occur in federal waters or in wetland areas. As a result, no new impacts to federal waters or wetland habitat would occur because of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-3b: Project operation would increase the amount of Federal Waters of the U.S. Construction of the Modified Project would not change or increase the amount of federal waters of the U.S. or wetlands associated with construction and operation of SCH ponds under the Approved Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact BIO-4: Project construction and operation would not interfere with movement of fish and wildlife species, but construction could remove snags for colonial nesting birds. Construction of the Modified Project would take place in an area already scheduled for construction of the Approved Project. ***MM BIO-5*** would continue to be implemented to avoid interfering with movement of fish and wildlife species. In addition, no tree snags are expected to be removed for the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-5a: Project construction and operation could affect nesting by some common bird species and introduction of invasive species. See response to Impact BIO-1a above. With implementation of ***MM BIO-2*** and ***MM BIO-3***, impacts to nesting birds as a result of the Modified Project would be less than significant. In addition, the introduction of invasive species would be minimized with implementation of ***MM BIO-6***. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-5b: Project construction and operation would have minor effects on common fish (native and nonnative), wildlife species, and native plant communities. Construction of the Modified Project would not disturb or cause the loss of any additional common fish, wildlife species, or native plant communities beyond what was described in the EIS/EIR for the Approved Project because construction methods and timing would be the same as for the Approved Project and would take place in the middle of the Approved Project boundary. No significant impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-5c: Project construction and operation would benefit common fish (native and nonnative) and wildlife species. The Modified Project does not include construction of ponds for fish, but would enhance habitat for other wildlife species. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Mitigation Measures

The implementation of ***MM BIO-1***, ***MM BIO-2***, ***MM BIO-3*** *and* ***MM BIO-5*** would ensure potential impacts to desert pupfish and special-status bird species are avoided. Implementation of ***MM BIO-6*** would reduce residual impacts of invasive species to less than significant by minimizing the potential for introduction of such species. MM BIO-4 (design of interception ditches) included in the EIS/EIR is not applicable to the Modified Project.

MM BIO-1 **Prepare and implement a desert pupfish protection and relocation plan.** This plan applies primarily to construction and maintenance of the drain interception ditches but will also apply to pond construction and maintenance activities as noted and will provide:

1. Protocols for preconstruction and premaintenance surveys to assess species presence and spawning within or immediately adjacent to work areas (e.g., in the drains/drain channels, along the shoreline if construction is in the "wet," and around the pond margins for maintenance).
2. Capture (e.g., trapping in the drains for construction and maintenance; or trapping, dip netting, and seining in the ponds if drained or if the water level is dropped) and transport methods to minimize handling and stress as well as exposure to heat, low dissolved oxygen, and crowding.
3. Identification of locations for release of captured desert pupfish.
4. Timing windows when construction or maintenance in shallow shoreline areas and in the drain mouths/channels may be conducted with minimal effects on desert pupfish spawning.
5. Protocols for maintenance activities in the drain interception ditches, such as a rotating schedule to ensure only a portion of the channel is maintained at one time, clearing only part of the vegetation at on time, and timing of maintenance to avoid peak spawning.
6. Maintenance protocol for the 1/8-inch mesh screen on the saline water intake until salinity reaches 68 parts per trillion.
7. Adaptive management procedures that include assessment of mitigation measure effectiveness, development of revised measures to improve effectiveness, and similar assessment of revised measures to verify effectiveness.

MM BIO-2 **Prepare and implement a preconstruction/maintenance survey plan for bird species.** The plan will include preparation of suitable habitat maps that are updated periodically to focus survey locations as well as survey methods consistent with current science and regulations. Adaptive management measures will also be included in the plan. The following describes the surveys and their timing for various bird species.

Burrowing Owl. To avoid impacts on nesting or wintering burrowing owls within the Project impact area, conduct preconstruction (or pre-maintenance) surveys within suitable burrowing owl habitat that could be affected by Project activities. Surveys will be conducted using the latest protocol methods and with concurrence from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW); currently, methods described by the Department of Fish and Game Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (DFG 2012) will be used. If burrowing owls are detected nesting or wintering within the Project impact area, a buffer will be established around the active burrow so that direct impacts on the burrow will be avoided. For construction during the breeding season (February through August), a buffer of 250 feet around the active nesting burrow will be maintained until breeding is complete and the young have fledged (can fly). For nonbreeding birds, the buffer will

be 160 feet. If burrowing owls are detected occupying a burrow within the Project impact area at any time of year, the owls will be removed using passive methods during the nonbreeding season. Passive removal involves excluding owls from their occupied burrows and creating alternate natural or artificial burrows for them that are at least 160 feet from the impact area and that are within or contiguous to a minimum of 6.5 acres of foraging habitat for each pair (DFG 1995). Passive relocation may be implemented during the breeding season if a qualified biologist can verify through noninvasive methods, such as scoping, that breeding has not begun, or juveniles are foraging independently and able to fly. The unoccupied burrows would be collapsed in accordance with CDFW-approved guidelines (DFG 1995).

California Black Rail and Yuma Clapper Rail (now known as Yuma Ridgway's Rail). Conduct preconstruction (or premaintenance) focused surveys for California black rail and Yuma Ridgway's rail where Project features are within or immediately adjacent to suitable habitat. If California black rails or Yuma Ridgway's rails are detected within 500 feet of planned construction/maintenance activity locations, work within that distance of the birds will be avoided or rescheduled for after the birds complete nesting.

Nesting Birds. Conduct preconstruction (or premaintenance) surveys for all Project features within suitable habitat if construction or maintenance activities will take place during the breeding season. Breeding birds are protected under the Migratory Treaty Bird Act as described in Impact BIO-5a. Surveys will be conducted using methods approved by CDFW. If breeding birds are detected within the Project impact area, a protective buffer (100 to 500 feet, depending on species) will be provided until it is confirmed that breeding is complete.

Western Snowy Plover. Conduct preconstruction (or pre-maintenance) focused surveys for western snowy plovers within suitable habitat that could be affected. Surveys will be conducted using current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) methods and/or methods approved by CDFW. If western snowy plovers are detected within the Project impact area, construction or maintenance activities will be conducted under a qualified biologist's supervision so that direct impacts are avoided. If breeding snowy plovers are detected within the Project impact area, construction or maintenance will be postponed and a protective buffer provided until it is confirmed that breeding is complete.

MM BIO-3 **Conduct noise calculations/measurements and implement noise attenuation measures, if needed.** Based on equipment specifications, calculate or measure the distance from equipment where noise would be greater than or equal to 60 dBA equivalent sound level (Leq). This would also include multiple noise sources, if applicable. Then, use that distance to determine where noise could exceed 60 dBA Leq within known or potential nesting habitat adjacent to the Project footprint. If any such overlaps occur, schedule work to avoid the breeding season in those areas. If construction must occur during the breeding season at those sites, monitor nesting activity to determine if any effects are occurring. If effects are observed, implement noise attenuation measures such as noise walls and hay bales. Monitor the noise and bird behavior to verify that attenuation measures are successful. Develop and implement additional protection measures if monitoring shows that impacts are still occurring. If noise would be less than 60 dBA Leq, no additional measures are required. (Note: The threshold of 60 dBA Leq used here to protect bird nesting is a conservative estimate of the level above which adverse effects could occur. The actual threshold varies by species and type of noise.)

MM BIO-5 **Prepare and implement a Habitat Protection, Mitigation, and Restoration Program.** Plan preparation will be complete prior to commencement of construction. The restoration program will address the following considerations:

1. Avoidance of sensitive and riparian habitats to the greatest extent feasible, including avoidance of disturbances in or near these habitats during the bird breeding season.
2. Quantifying maximum area of naturally occurring plant communities that could be temporarily and permanently removed for construction of Project facilities, by plant community.
3. Restoration at a minimum rate of 1:1 for nonnative plant communities (i.e., tamarisk woodland or scrub) and 3:1 for native plant communities temporarily removed during Project construction, or as required in Project permits. Habitats restored at 1:1 will be preferentially restored where they were removed, unless it is infeasible or a more desirable off-site location is identified. Species to be used in restoration may include either those that were removed or native species are used to replace nonnative species, mitigation ratios can be reduced. For restoration of tamarisk temporarily removed, natural colonization of the disturbed area is likely to occur and no planting may be needed. The area would still be monitored to document restoration. Permanently removed riparian habitat within the pond area would be replaced by aquatic habitat of equal surface area with a similar or greater ecological value.
4. Identification of locations for on- and off-site restoration, including funding for land purchases and/or easements and agreements with property owners to complete the restoration.
5. Use of only local native seed (or propagule) sources for native species used in restoration.
6. Details on propagation, planting/seeding, irrigation, maintenance (including weed control for species that could interfere with restoration), site access, remedial measures, monitoring, reporting, and photo-documentation. These details will be specific to each site if more than one planting area or type is addressed in the plan.
7. Performance criteria to be met for each habitat type being restored.
8. Monitoring, with a funding source, until performance criteria are met, which may be for a minimum of 5 years.

MM BIO-6 **Clean equipment prior to site delivery.** Specifications for ensuring that all equipment, personal gear, and materials brought to the site are clean and free of invasive plants (including seeds) and animals will be included in all construction and maintenance contracts. Equipment, gear, and other materials will be inspected to verify that it is clean.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Biological Resources compared to the Approved Project. Modified Project improvements would be limited to areas of within the approved SCH footprint.

3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Applicable Impact

Impact CR-1: Ground-disturbing activities could change the significance of historical resources, damage unique archaeological resources, disturb human remains, eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory, and adversely affect historic properties. In general, the Salton Sea and surrounding area is considered an “archeologically sensitive” area and therefore, construction activities could inadvertently encounter previously unknown cultural resources or human remains associated with the area's historical occupation by both Native Americans and Euro Americans. However, the Modified Project would be constructed in an area that will already be disturbed by the Approved Project and no new impacts to cultural resources would occur. Nevertheless, implementation of ***MM CR-1*** would ensure that any potential inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources are properly treated. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Mitigation Measure

Implementation of a construction survey, monitoring and inadvertent discovery plan would ensure the potential inadvertent discovery of cultural resources are properly treated, as required in MM-CR-1 from the EIS/EIR. This mitigation measure has been modified and updated, as described here.

MM CR-1: **Prepare and implement a survey plan and an inadvertent discovery plan.** A plan for the survey of Project areas not previously surveyed would be prepared to facilitate identification of cultural resources prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. A plan for the inadvertent discovery of cultural resources and human remains also would be prepared and would provide protocols for addressing the discovery of cultural resources and human remains including, but not limited to, monitoring; immediately halting all construction in the vicinity of a discovery; investigation of the discovery by an archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Professional Qualifications in order to evaluate the eligibility of the resources pursuant to California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria; and implementation of California Health and Safety Code section 7050.5, California Code or Regulations (CCR) section 15064.5(d) and (e), and, if applicable, 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 800.13. Resources considered significant would be avoided or subject to a data recovery program. The data recovery program would be designed in consultation with appropriate state (i.e., Office of Historic Preservation) and Federal agencies and include excavation of an archaeological site to recover any buried artifacts or other data.

Conclusion

The Modified Project, including the implementation of the modified mitigation measure from the EIS/EIR, would not result in any new significant impacts to Cultural Resources compared to the Approved Project.

3.6 ENERGY

Inapplicable Impact

Impact EN-1: Pumping would require power for the duration of the Project. The Modified Project would not include installation and operation of a seawater pump or other features that would require energy, but would include installation and operation of a diversion weir that works by gravity instead of with a pump, thereby reducing electrical demand associated with the Approved Project. As such, Impact EN-1 is not applicable to the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Energy Resources compared to the Approved Project.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Applicable Impacts

Impact GEO-1: A seismic event could cause the berms to fail and damage the water diversion/conveyance structures. The Modified Project would not change the berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project but would result in a new feature being constructed in and on those already being constructed. As discussed in the EIS/EIR, once the ponds are filled with water, berm failure could release water directly into the Salton Sea or on to exposed playa where it would then flow to the Sea. Similarly, weir failure could result in a release of water into the Sea. The weir would be constructed to withstand a certain level of seismic event. Regardless, this would not expose people, property, or structures to substantial adverse effects. A less than significant impact would occur. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact GEO-2: Best management practices would be used to prevent soil erosion and the loss of topsoil during construction. As with the Approved Project, best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented during construction activities for the Modified Project to minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact GEO-3: The Project would be located on unstable soils, potentially affecting the stability of the berms. The Modified Project would be constructed on and near berms being constructed for the SCH ponds. These ponds would be designed and constructed for stability. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact GEO-4: Construction would require the use of rock as riprap or pond substrate. The Modified Project would be constructed on and near berms being constructed for the SCH ponds. These ponds would be designed and constructed for stability which includes the use of riprap. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Geology and Soils compared to the Approved Project. No mitigation is required.

3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Applicable Impacts

Impact GHG-1: The Project would generate minor amounts of GHG emissions during construction and operations, both directly and indirectly, that would not have a significant impact on the environment. Similar to the discussion for Air Quality, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from implementation of the Modified Project would not change emissions already accounted for with the original SCH project. Operation of the diversion weir relies on gravity for flow, rather than requiring a pump thereby reducing operational impacts. Construction of the boat portage feature would not change how many members of the public would access the Salton Sea via the New River and, therefore, would not change operational impacts of the SCH project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact GHG-2: The Project would generate GHG emissions during construction and operations, but would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. The Modified Project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions for the reasons described in the EIS/EIR, and impacts would remain less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not change the GHG emissions associated with the Approved SCH Project and, therefore, would not result in any new significant impacts to GHG emissions not already identified in the EIS/EIR. No mitigation is required.

3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Applicable Impacts

Impact HAZ-1: Hazardous materials used during construction could be released into the environment. Similar types of hazardous materials would be used during implementation of the Modified Project as analyzed in the EIS/EIR, and BMPs would be implemented consistent with the required SWPPP. As such, no new impacts

associated with accidental release of hazardous materials during construction would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact HAZ-2: Project construction could encounter contaminated soils during soil excavation. There is potential for worker exposure to contaminated soil present in sediments within the project area. Compliance with the ICAPCD's Regulation VIII (Appendix G), which is mandatory, would reduce the potential for fugitive dust emissions at the construction site. This would also reduce the potential for worker exposure. As such, no new impacts associated with contaminated soils during construction would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact HAZ-3: The ponds would attract birds in proximity to low-level military training routes. The Modified Project would not include installation of any additional SCH ponds that would attract birds into low-level military training routes. As such, the EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact HAZ-4: Increased traffic and construction near roadways would not impair the implementation of an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. As described in the EIS/EIR, construction would take place in sparsely populated rural areas. The Modified Project would not require additional workers for construction than have already been accounted for in the EIS/EIR. As such, no new impacts associated with implementation of an emergency response plan would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact HAZ-6: Project construction could release air and dust-borne disease-causing viruses. Construction of the Modified Project would not be different than what has already been covered in the existing EIS/EIR for the Approved Project. To ensure safety of workers during construction, implementation of ***MM HAZ-1*** would require worker training, which would include tips for recognizing symptoms and use of personal protective equipment. As such, no new impacts associated with risk of release of air and dust-borne disease would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Inapplicable Impacts

Impact HAZ-5: Project construction could increase the risk of wildland fire. By the time the Modified Project is constructed, the existing vegetation in the SCH area will have already been removed and, therefore, there will be no fuel available for a wildland fire. As such, Impact HAZ-5 is not applicable to the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact HAZ-7: Project operation could increase breeding habitat for mosquito vectors but implementation of the Mosquito Control Plan would prevent threats to public health. The Modified Project would not include installation of any additional SCH ponds that would further increase breeding habitat for mosquito vectors beyond what was analyzed in the EIS/EIR. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact HAZ-8: Selenium and dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene (DDE) levels in the SCH ponds could cause increased selenium and DDE levels in sport fish and waterfowl using the ponds. The Modified Project would not include installation of any additional SCH ponds that would further cause increased levels of selenium and DDE in sport fish and waterfowl. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Mitigation Measure

Implementation of ***MM HAZ-1*** would improve worker safety regarding air and dust-borne disease.

MM HAZ-1 Worker training will be provided to workers who may be exposed to air-borne diseases during excavation activities. Training will include recognizing symptoms and use of personal protective equipment.

Conclusion

The Modified Project, including implementation of the new mitigation measure, would not result in any new significant impacts associated with Hazards or Hazardous Materials compared to the Approved Project.

3.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Applicable Impacts

Impact HYD-4: Construction of the SCH ponds would temporarily degrade water quality at the Salton Sea. The Modified Project would not change the ponds or berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project. The gravity flow weir structure would be constructed across the New River to create a stable basin that would aid in managing operational flows into the Project. The weir would not exacerbate flooding of adjacent properties or backing up of existing drain facilities during normal flows or storm events. As with the Approved Project, construction of the weir would temporarily degrade water quality at the Salton Sea, but this would be a less-than-significant impact. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. No mitigation in required.

Impact HYD-5: Berm failure could increase erosion and sedimentation of the adjacent river and the Salton Sea. The Modified Project would not change the berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project but would be constructed in and on those already being constructed. As discussed in the EIS/EIR, once the ponds are filled with water, berm failure could release water directly into the Salton Sea or on to exposed playa where it would then flow to the Sea. This would result in a temporary impact to water quality in the area of the failure. This would be a less than significant impact. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Inapplicable Impacts

Impact HYD-1: Project implementation would cause a reduction in the Salton Sea's water surface elevation. The Modified Project would not change the ponds or berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project and, therefore, would not result in a reduction of the Salton Sea's surface water elevation. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. No mitigation in required.

Impact HYD-2: Project implementation would increase the Salton Sea's salinity. The Modified Project would not change the ponds or berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project and, therefore, would not result in an increase in the salinity of the Salton Sea. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. No mitigation in required.

Impact HYD-3: Project operations would cause changes in Salton Sea water quality but would not violate established standards. The Modified Project would not change the ponds or berms being constructed as part of the Approved Project and, therefore, would not result in a change in the water quality of the Salton Sea. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. No mitigation in required.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in changes that have an adverse effect on water quality or evaporation, or salinity of water that flows to the Salton Sea beyond those already evaluated in the EIS/EIR. Therefore, there are no new significant environmental impacts on hydrology and water quality or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Applicable Impacts

Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, the SCH Project would be compatible with

the Imperial County General Plan and other applicable land use plans or policies. The Modified Project would include similar improvements as outlined in the EIS/EIR within the same footprint and, therefore, would not result in new land use impacts. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses. The Modified Project would not change the footprint of the Approved Project and, therefore, the impact conclusions in the EIS/EIR that the project would not have substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses remains unchanged.

Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses. The Modified Project would not change the footprint of the Approved Project and, therefore, the impact conclusions in the EIS/EIR that the project would not have substantive conflicts with future planned land uses remains unchanged.

Conclusion

No new significant land use impacts would occur as a result of the proposed modifications to the Approved Project. No mitigation is required.

3.12 NOISE

Applicable Impact

Impact NOI-1: Daytime construction and maintenance activities would cause a temporary increase in noise levels near the Project sites. Construction associated with the Modified Project would be similar to that already analyzed in the EIS/EIR in that similar construction equipment would be used and the overall construction schedule would not change as a result of the Modified Project. In addition, there are no sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Construction activities could generate noise sufficient to affect special status birds. This is discussed in Section 3.4, Biological Resources, and is addressed in ***MM BIO-3***.

Inapplicable Impacts

Impact NOI-2: Dredging could extend beyond the hours typically allowed by Imperial County. The Modified Project would not require dredging. As such, Impact NOI-2 is not applicable to the Modified Project. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact NOI-3: Construction truck traffic at some locations on local roads would cause a temporary increase in noise near residents. There are no residents near the project areas that comprise the Modified Project. As such, no new impacts associated with temporary noise increases from construction traffic would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact NOI-4: Noise from installation of the seawater pipeline and associated pump could exceed Imperial County's construction thresholds. The Modified Project would not require installation of seawater pipeline. As such, Impact NOI-4 is not applicable to the Modified Project. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact NOI-5: Noise from operation of the seawater pump could exceed Imperial County's thresholds at Red Hill Park. The Modified Project would not involve operation of the seawater pump or be located near Imperial County's Red Hill Park (which is near the Alamo River). As such, Impact NOI-5 is not applicable to the Modified Project. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Modified Project would not result in new significant noise impacts beyond what was analyzed for the Approved Project. The EIS/EIR conclusion remains the same. No new significant noise impacts would occur as a result of the proposed modifications to the Approved Project.

3.13 PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Applicable Impact

Impact PALEO-1: Ground-disturbing activities could expose and damage undiscovered paleontological resources. The Modified Project would not result in new ground-disturbing activities but is in an area of potential paleontological sensitivity, as discussed in the EIS/EIR. The plans required in ***MM PALEO-1*** and ***MM-PALEO 3*** have already been prepared and would continue to be implemented to ensure inadvertent finds of paleontological resources during ground disturbance are properly treated. Worker training, as required in ***MM PALEO-2***, is also currently being implemented at the SCH. No new impacts associated with paleontological resources would occur with implementation of the Modified Project compared to the Approved Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Mitigation Measures

MM PALEO-1 **Prepare and implement a survey plan and a paleontological monitoring plan.** A plan for the survey of Project areas will be prepared to facilitate identification of paleontological resources prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities. Additionally, prior to construction, a certified paleontologist retained by the lead agencies will supervise monitoring of construction excavations and produce a Paleontological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (PRMMP). Paleontological monitoring will include inspection of exposed rock units and microscopic examination of matrix to determine if fossils are present. The monitor will have authority to temporarily divert grading away from exposed fossils to recover the fossil specimens. Monitoring will take place on a full-time basis when construction occurs at depths greater than 5, part-time (4 hours a day) when excavations exceed 2 feet, and on a spot-check basis on excavations less than 2 feet. The paleontologist will document interim results of the construction monitoring program with monthly progress reports. Additionally, at each fossil locality, field data forms will record that locality, stratigraphic columns will be measured, and appropriate scientific samples will be submitted for analysis.

MM PALEO-2 **Conduct worker training.** Construction supervisors and crew will receive training by a certified paleontologist in the procedures for identifying and protecting paleontological resources, as well as procedures to be implemented in the event fossil remains are encountered during ground-disturbing activities.

MM PALEO-3 **Prepare and implement a paleontological resource data recovery plan.** If fossils are encountered during construction, construction activities will be temporarily diverted from the discovery, and the monitor will notify all concerned parties and collect matrix for testing and processing as directed by the Project paleontologist. To expedite removal of fossil-bearing matrix, the monitor will be empowered to request heavy machinery to assist in moving large quantities of matrix out of the path of construction to designated stockpile areas. Construction will resume at the discovery location once all the necessary matrix is stockpiled, as determined by the paleontological monitor. Testing of stockpiles will consist of screen washing small samples to determine if important fossils are present. If such fossils are present, the additional matrix from the stockpiles will be water screened to ensure recovery of a scientifically significant sample. Samples collected will be limited to a maximum of 6,000 pounds per locality.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Paleontological Resources compared to the Approved Project.

3.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Applicable Impacts

Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in Imperial County population. Construction of the Modified Project would not change the number or type of workers than discussed for the Approved Project in the EIS/EIR. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact POP-2: Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days. Construction of the diversion weir would result in a barrier to those wanting to traverse the New River across the SCH ponds to the Sea. The addition of a boat portage path would offset the impact of the barrier created by the new weir. No changes to the number of visitors to the Sea are expected from the Approved Project or the Modified Project. Impacts would remain less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

No new significant impacts on Population and Housing would occur as a result of implementation of the Modified Project. No mitigation is required.

3.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

Applicable Impact

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increase use of the Project site by recreational visitors. The Modified Project would not change the type or tempo of construction activities associated with the Approved Project and, therefore, would not increase the demand for emergency or other services during construction in comparison to the Approved Project. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Conclusion

No new significant impacts on Public Services would occur as a result implementation of the Approved Project. No mitigation is required.

3.16 RECREATION

Applicable Impact

Impact REC-1: The SCH Project would create recreational opportunities at the pond sites. The Modified Project would not include construction of any additional SCH ponds than those analyzed for the Approved Project. However, the addition of the diversion weir would result in a barrier to those wanting to traverse the New River across the SCH ponds to access the Sea. The public currently uses a section of the New River to access the Sea using small boats, often for hunting. The use is seasonal, as waterfowl season is from October to January. As the Sea recedes, it is getting more difficult for the public to find places to put in their boats to get to the Sea.

The addition of a boat portage path would offset the impact of the barrier created by the new weir. This would include boat ramps upstream and downstream of the weir for people to portage on foot around the weir in a manner that protects the structure while allowing users of the New River to continue to access the Sea. The

stretch of road would be fenced to allow continued access along the New River, but limit their ability to get on the SCH site.

Providing this access would be consistent with the EIS/EIR, which stated that the Project would accommodate recreational activities in the New River through SCH operations and adaptive management plans. The addition of the boat portage feature is proposed to maintain boat access to the Salton Sea via the New River. As a result, no new significant environmental impacts to recreational opportunities would occur in the project area.

Conclusion

No new significant impacts on Recreation would occur as a result of implementation of the Modified Project. No mitigation is required.

3.17 TRANSPORTATION

Applicable Impacts

Impact TRAN-1: The SCH Project would increase traffic during construction and operations, but would not reduce the level of service of any roadways below the County of Imperial's standard (LOS C). The Modified Project would not change the type or tempo of construction activities associated with the Approved Project and, therefore, would not increase traffic on local roadways during construction and would not reduce the level of service of any roadways below Imperial County standards. Therefore, the Modified Project would not result in a substantial increase in traffic. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact TRAN-2: Construction/maintenance equipment and tractor trailers could be present in areas used by farm equipment, but would not pose a substantial safety hazard. Construction vehicles would use existing roadways and staging areas to access the various project areas, as with the Approved Project. As such, construction vehicles required for the Modified Project would not pose a safety hazard within proximity of agricultural lands. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact TRAN-3: Emergency vehicles would retain their ability to access the Project area during construction and operations despite increased traffic and construction near roadways. Construction vehicles would use existing roadways to access the various project areas. All construction staging would be contained within each project area. As such, all existing roadways would remain open and accessible to emergency vehicles during construction of the Modified Project. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

Construction and maintenance activities associated with the Modified Project would not change traffic on local roads and, therefore, no new significant impacts on Transportation would occur.

3.18 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Applicable Impacts

Impact UT-1: Dust suppression water would be required, but would not exceed supplies. The Modified Project would take place within the existing construction footprint for the Approved Project and would not require additional dust suppression water beyond what is needed for the Approved Project. No new significant impacts would occur. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Impact UT-2: Construction and operations would generate solid waste requiring disposal in landfills. The Modified Project would take place within the existing construction footprint for the Approved Project and would not change the type or amount of construction needed and, therefore, would not generate additional solid waste

beyond what was discussed in the EIS/EIR for the Approved Project. No new significant impacts would occur. This EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not result in new impacts to existing utilities and service systems. No new significant impacts on Utilities and Service Systems would occur as a result of the proposed modifications to the Approved Project.

3.19 CUMULATIVE IMPACT

The Modified Project would not result in new significant cumulative impacts or increase the severity of cumulative impacts identified in the EIS/EIR. Cumulative impacts would be similar to those of the Approved Project and impacts associated with the Modified Project would be short-term and limited to intermittent work during construction. Long-term impacts would be the same as forecast for the Approved Project and would not contribute to adverse environmental impacts in combination with other projects.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Section 15164 of the CEQA Guidelines describes the conditions under which an addendum to an EIR should be prepared as follows:

> (a) The lead agency or responsible agency shall prepare an addendum to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.

Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines calls for preparation of a subsequent EIR in limited circumstances, including "the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects…."

As discussed in Section 3, implementing the Modified Project, would result in impacts similar to those already analyzed in the SCH Project EIS/EIR, and no new impacts would occur to trigger the need for preparing a subsequent EIR or a supplement to the EIR because:

- There are no substantial changes that would cause new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects, nor have substantial changes occurred to the circumstances under which the Project would be constructed.
- No new information of substantial importance has been identified that would result in significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or a substantial increase in the severity of significant effects.
- No new mitigation measures or alterations to mitigation measures are required.

Thus, this addendum meets the requirements under CEQA.

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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6.0 REFERENCES

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