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

North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project

SCH # 2010061062

Salton Sea, Riverside County, California

PREPARED FOR

California Natural Resources Agency
715 P Street, 20th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

PREPARED BY

Tetra Tech
301 E Vanderbilt Way, Suite 400
San Bernardino, California 92408

January 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

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
CVWD	Coachella Valley Water District
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
gpm	gallons per minute
ICAPCD	Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
IID	Imperial Irrigation District
Leq	equivalent sound level
LOS	level of service
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
ppm	parts per million
PRMMP	Paleontological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCAQMD	South Coast Air Quality Management District

Acronyms/Abbreviations	Definition
SCH	Species Conservation Habitat
SRA	State Recreation Area
SSA	Salton Sea Authority
SSMP	Salton Sea Management Program
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
TCR	Tribal Cultural Resources
TDS	Total Dissolved Solids
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
WDR	Waste Discharge Requirement

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 construction of a demonstration pilot project at the north end of the Salton Sea consisting of approximately 154 acres of both shallow and deep-water fish and bird habitat that would also have recreational opportunities (Figure 1) (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 be similar in that dry playa would be converted to aquatic habitat and, therefore, would not change the goals of the SCH project and would be consistent with them.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section describes background information regarding the development of the pilot project, as well as the location and components of the proposed modification to the SCH Project that are addressed in this Addendum. This information has primarily been summarized from a Technical Memorandum regarding Salton Sea North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project Alternatives Analysis – Addendum #1: Revised Alternative 1 (Webb 2021).

2.1 BACKGROUND

The Salton Sea North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project is being funded through the Proposition 68 grant for the Salton Sea revitalization which includes various habitat and dust suppression projects under the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) 10-Year Plan. One of the proposed SSMP 10-year projects is this Modified Project. After years of studies and analysis, it is the goal of the Demonstration Project Grant Partner Agencies (Riverside County Transportation Land Management [County], Salton Sea Authority [SSA], California Department of Water Resources [DWR], and California Natural Resources Agency [CNRA]) to deliver a completed project that not only meets state objectives and commitments for fish and wildlife habitat at the Salton Sea, but also provides an opportunity to stimulate the local economy and provide recreational opportunities to the region (Webb 2021).

Four locations along 23 miles of shoreline at the north end of the Salton Sea were evaluated as part of a Project Alternatives Analysis to inform the decision of which alternative to proceed with for the design and construction. Each alternative was evaluated for water supply, land ownership, infrastructure, access, recreational activities, and cost (Webb 2021). The preferred/selected alternative is the subject of this Addendum.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Project is in the North Shore area of the Salton Sea in Riverside County, approximately 1,000 feet west of Highway 111, between Mecca Avenue on the southeast end of the site to north of Desert Beach, and south of 72nd Avenue. The Salton Sea State Recreation Area is approximately 1,200 feet southeast of southeast end of the site. Figure 2 shows the conceptual footprint of this alternative as well as possible locations of infrastructure associated with the project including a parking area, boat ramp, and water supply pipeline. The Project footprint is approximately 6,300 feet in length and 1,200 feet wide, with an area of approximately 154 acres.

2.3 PROJECT COMPONENTS

2.3.1 Water Supply

A consistent water supply is needed for the Project. Based on conceptual planning, the Project would require approximately 1,900 to 2,650 acre-feet of water per year. The four main water supply strategies considered for the Modified Project include drain water, well water, canal water, and temporary use of canal water. Conveyance design is proposed to include all underground piping installed in a 2-foot-wide trench requiring a 15-foot-wide footprint during construction.

Drain Water

The Coachella Valley has an extensive irrigation network that is fed by Colorado River water that is delivered by the Coachella Canal. A separate network of tile drains and irrigation drainage lines dewater excess irrigation from fields. Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) monitors and measures discharges from various drain lines throughout the Coachella Valley. Drain water typically has a brackish total dissolved solids (TDS) concentration of 2,500 to 3,000 part per million (ppm). Under existing conditions, drainage discharges freely flow from the drain

lines to the Salton Sea. If blending of the water was required to reduce the TDS going to the new lake, it would be done either inline or in a junction structure along the conveyance alignment. The drain closest to the Project site is to the northwest of the site and is shown on Figure 2.

Well Water

The Modified Project is located on the southeast edge of the East Whitewater River Groundwater Basin. Lower layers of this aquifer have regularly been used as a source of potable water for residents in the Coachella Valley. Recent water quality standards have made use of this water more difficult due to naturally occurring constituents in the water. The upper layer of the aquifer is not currently used as a source of potable water. Nearby wells have a reported TDS concentration of 1,200 to 2,500 ppm. Site specific information for annual yield from shallow wells in this area of the aquifer is not known.

Based on a preliminary investigation conducted by Webb Associates for Riverside County, well water is feasible in the area of the Modified Project. It is anticipated that between 1,100 and 1,700 acre-feet per year would be required, which would require a continuous flow rate of between 680 and 1,050 gallons per minute. Further investigation would be required to determine the well yield and subsequent number of wells that would be required. A footprint of 100 feet by 100 feet of temporary disturbance would be required to install and equip a well. Two possible well locations are shown on Figure 2.

Canal Water

The Coachella Canal, which is managed by CVWD, delivers Colorado River water to the Coachella Valley. Water in the Coachella Canal typically has a TDS concentration of 600 to 800 ppm. Canal water could be used in-lieu of pumping groundwater from the East Whitewater River Groundwater Basin and the ability to use canal water would be dependent on the in-lieu program. To qualify for this, groundwater wells would have to be constructed and used for a period of one year before canal water could be purchased. The wells that would be constructed would be kept as a backup/ supplemental water supply source. In addition, approximately 6,000 feet of irrigation line would need to be constructed from existing irrigation lines to the Project site.

Temporary Use of Canal Water

Another strategy for water supply would be the temporary use of canal water before it is ultimately used for irrigation and other purposes. This would entail introducing water to one end of the Project lake and an intake pump would be placed at the opposite end of the lake. Canal water would temporarily be detained in the lake as it flows through. Once the canal water flows through the lake, it would be pumped upland and reintroduced to the irrigation system. If this strategy was used instead of purchasing and using canal water, multiple wells would not need to be constructed to qualify for the in-lieu use of canal water. There would be some water loss due to evaporation and a more detailed water quality simulation that analyzes the water after it travels though the lake would be needed to ensure that the temporary use of this water does not adversely impact the ultimate irrigation use of the water. To implement this water supply strategy, all alignments would be placed in roads or along existing road easements. Existing lines may be upgraded but would not be moved. Approximately 11,700 feet of supply line would be required. A 2,000 gallon per minute (gpm) pump at the opposite end of the Project and 14,000 feet of return line would also be required.

2.3.2 Land Ownership

The Modified Project is located on property that is not currently owned by Riverside County or SSA. It has a footprint of approximately 154 acres and includes portions of eight parcels with four property owners, including Imperial Irrigation District (IID), federal land, and two private property owners, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Underlying Land Ownership for Modified Project

Owner	Assessor Parcel Number (APN)	Parcel Acreage	Project Alternative
County of Riverside	723-221-001-8	10.91	10.91
Bureau of Land Management	723-240-012	69.50	15.73
Bureau of Land Management	723-240-014	87.50	50.46
Home Pride Financial Inc.	725-210-005	39.10	1.42
Imperial Irrigation District	725-210-009	25.45	12.04
Imperial Irrigation District	725-210-012	45.56	9.22
Imperial Irrigation District	725-210-013	49.97	48.43
Imperial Irrigation District	725-220-001	320.00	4.09
Spletter	735-030-002	94.79	0.99
Total Acreage	--	742.78	**153.29**

2.3.3 Infrastructure Requirements

The infrastructure required for the Modified Project varies based on which water supply strategy is employed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Infrastructure Requirements by Water Supply Strategy

	Drain Water	Well Water	Canal Water	Temporary Canal Water
Item				
Irrigation Line		500 linear feet	6,000 linear feet	11,700 linear feet
Wells		2 each	2 each	-
Return Line		-	-	14,000 linear feet
Pumps		-	-	1 each
Lake Levee	8,400 linear feet	8,500 linear feet	8,500 linear feet	8,500 linear feet

2.3.4 Access

Access to the Project site would be from the existing North Shore Beach and Yacht Club where there is ample parking, and no additional access infrastructure would be required to access the site except to possibly repave the access road from Highway 111 to the parking area.

2.3.5 Recreational Opportunities

Historically, the Salton Sea was an amenity to local citizens and other visitors. Because the Sea has receded, the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club and nearby State Park (Salton Sea State Recreation Area) are not able to

offer the recreational benefits that they once did. Existing amenities at the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club would be used for the Modified Project including the parking area and the marina. No new infrastructure at the Marina would need to be built as part of the project except to possibly repave the access road from Highway 111 to the parking area. Paddle boards and canoes could be used on the lake. Power boats would not be used, with the possible exception of low-speed electric boats. In addition, a trail with interpretive signage would be also be constructed around the perimeter of the lake to provide walking, running, and sightseeing opportunities. Revamping the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club could encourage other recreational activities for the local community and region.

An existing unimproved boat ramp near the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club that used to provide access to the Salton Sea is now unusable due to the decline of the Sea. The Modified Project would allow boat access to the new North Lake but would not provide access to the Sea itself. To offset this impact, a new concrete boat ramp is proposed at the end of Mecca Avenue, which would extend southerly into the Salton Sea approximately one-quarter mile from the existing terminus of Mecca Avenue. The ramp would need to be submerged a minimum of 7 feet into the Sea and would be designed such that as the Sea continues to recede, it can be further extended into the Sea to remain functional. The boat ramp right-of-way would be approximately 60 feet wide, and a small parking area (50 feet by 100 feet) would be located adjacent to the boat ramp. Road improvements would also be provided. The location of the new boat access for the Sea is shown on Figure 2.

Figure 1. Project Vicinity

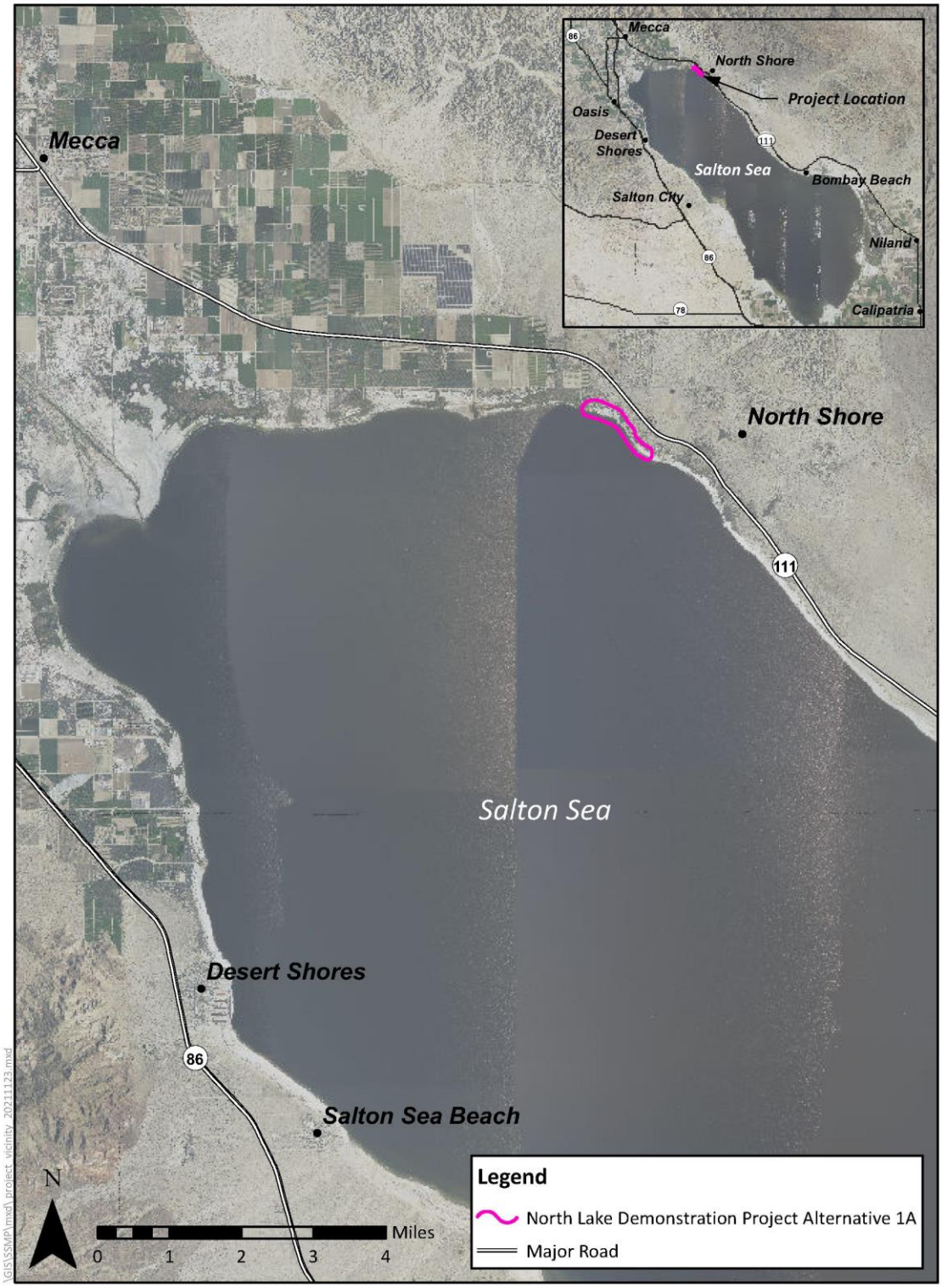
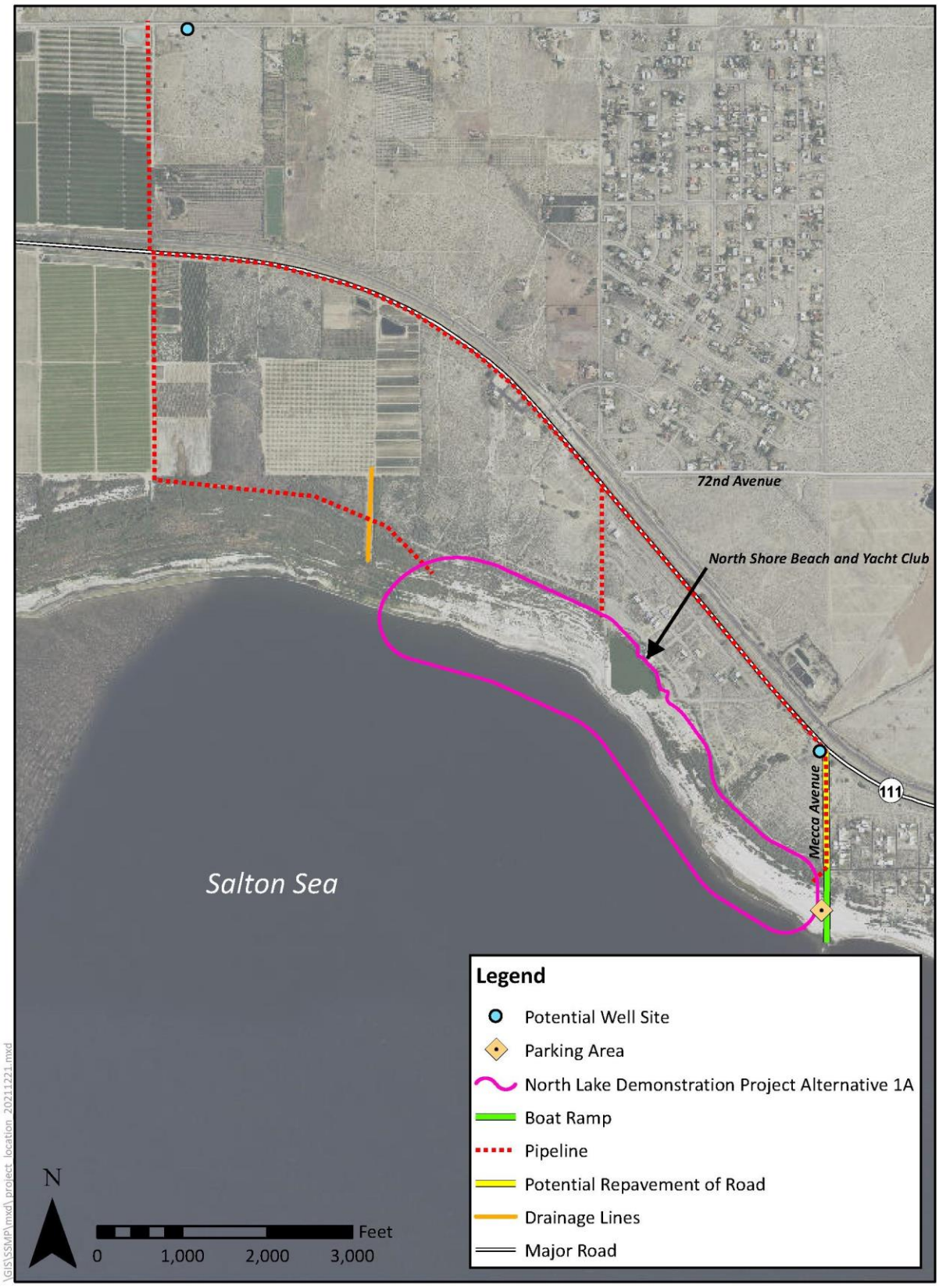


Figure 2. Project Location



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 would be the construction of a demonstration pilot project at the north end of the Salton Sea consisting of approximately 154 acres of both shallow and deep-water fish and bird habitat, that would also support recreation, consistent with those habitats analyzed in the SCH EIS/EIR. This is less than 5 percent of the size of the Approved Project (154 acres compared to 3,770 acres) and, as such, impacts would be substantially less. The Approved Project was proposed and approved in Imperial County, while the Modified Project is proposed in Riverside County. In most cases, the types of impacts and mitigations needed to offset impacts are universal, regardless of location. In other cases, local ordinances for the same issues vary slightly by county or city but with the same result of addressing or mitigating an impact. The sections where such differences are addressed include the following: air quality, land use, noise, population and housing, and transportation.

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. The Modified Project would not result in any new impacts to aesthetic resources. 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. Similar to the SCH Approved Project, the Modified Project would enhance the scenic quality and character of the Project site by creating a lake where there is currently exposed playa subject to generation of dust especially during wind events. Upon completion of construction activities, fugitive dust emissions in the immediate areas of the Modified Project site would be reduced and visibility would improve. As such, the scenic quality and character of the project sites and surrounding areas would be improved. As described in the EIS/EIR, the Modified Project would improve the overall scenic quality of the site, resulting in a beneficial impact. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AES-3: Other SCH facilities would be compatible with the existing character of the surrounding area. Improvements associated with the Modified Project would consist of adding a lake in an area that used to

be part of the Salton Sea and, therefore, would be consistent with what was proposed as part of the SCH. In addition, the Modified Project would not require any new facilities beyond what was either previously existing in the North Shore area (i.e., a marina and recreation facilities and habitat for fish and wildlife) or previously analyzed in the SCH EIS/EIR. Therefore, the Modified Project would not 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. No mitigation is required.

3.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Applicable Impact

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 but does include the piping of water from canals or from wells. This may include laying pipe along areas used for agriculture and would require land right-of-way to be obtained from a willing owner. This may result in negligible temporary disruptions to agricultural uses along the pipeline route. This impact is less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Inapplicable Impacts

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.

In addition, most acreage in the Modified Project area was fairly recently inundated by the Salton Sea and, as such, is not farmland. The Project site does not include Farmland of Local Importance, which is defined for Riverside County as unirrigated and uncultivated lands with Prime and Statewide soils, lands producing major crops for Riverside County, dairy lands with permanent pasture or hay land of 10 acres or more, and lands identified by city or county ordinance as Agricultural Zones or contracts. In addition, none of the Project area is within Prime Farmland.

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 be located on recently exposed playa and would not affect agricultural lands or forestry resources. The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to Agricultural Resources

or forested areas 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. No mitigation is required.

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. The Salton Sea lies in the Salton Sea Air Basin. Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) has jurisdiction over the areas within Imperial County and South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has jurisdiction over the areas within Riverside County, which is where the Modified Project is located. General estimated basin-wide construction-related emissions are included in emission inventories established for the applicable South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) 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 but instead would result in a lake being created where existing exposed playa exists thereby reducing dust emissions in the Air Basin. 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-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. Currently, more playa is being exposed as the Sea recedes. The Modified Project would not change the SCH ponds already part of the approved project but would add an additional lake at the north end of the Sea which would similarly reduce wind-blown fugitive dust emissions. Therefore, the Modified Project would result in a beneficial impact associated with reduction of potential for wind-blown fugitive dust. 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 contribute incrementally to violations of Federal and State 0_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ standards but would not exceed SCAQMD's peak daily NO_x and PM_{10} thresholds. Peak daily NO_x and fugitive PM_{10} emissions during construction (248 lbs/day and 169 lbs/day, respectively) were projected to exceed ICAPCD's thresholds for these pollutants (100 lbs/day and 150 lbs/day, respectively) and was considered a significant impact. The North Lake Pilot Project is within the jurisdiction of SCAQMD, which has the same emissions significance thresholds for criteria pollutants as ICAPCD and would generate significantly less emissions during construction. Assuming construction type and tempo for the North Lake Project would be similar to the SCH Project, emissions would be approximately 5 percent of those projected for the SCH Project, bringing emissions well below emissions significance thresholds for all criteria pollutants. These contributions would occur primarily through diesel engine exhaust and fugitive dust emissions during earth-moving associated with construction of the lake levees. Construction of the Modified Project would occur over approximately one year, so the increase in construction emissions would be temporary and would not exceed the daily construction limits as outlined 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 SCAQMD (similar to those required by ICAPCD in the EIS/EIR). 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. Estimated operational emissions for the SCH Project were well below significance thresholds for all criteria pollutants, therefore, operational emissions for the North Lake Project are expected to also be below significance thresholds. In addition, once constructed, the Modified Project would not result in emissions that would contribute incrementally to violations of federal or state standards because the presence of the lake would reduce fugitive wind-blown dust emissions that occur on exposed playa. Some additional emissions could occur from the use of motor boats on the lake, but these would either electric boats or those that are low-powered and, therefore, would have less than significant emissions impacts. As such, the Modified Project would not contribute air emissions within the project area that would exceed regulatory thresholds. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact AQ-5: Project construction would result in a cumulatively considerable/significant net increase in emissions. Project construction would contribute cumulatively to air emissions in the Salton Sea Air Basin, but these impacts would be temporary. Similar to the Approved Project, the Modified Project would be required to comply with all minimization measures required for all projects by the SCAQMD (similar to requirements identified in the EIS/EIR for 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. The Modified Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. The Modified Project site is located in a sparsely populated area. There is a small residential community across Mecca Avenue at the east end of the proposed lake, with the closest houses approximately 400 feet from one corner of the lake although most construction would occur closer to the shore. There are also a few residences a similar distance from the proposed lake that are near the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club. Construction activities requiring earth-moving may expose these residents to additional dust. However, with Implementation of ***MM AQ-1*** to control fugitive dust, these impacts would 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 could result in localized odors during construction activities associated with diesel-powered equipment. The construction areas for the Modified Project are in a sparsely populated area adjacent to the Salton Sea. As such, the Modified Project would result in no new impacts associated with objectionable odors. 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 impact the shoreline near the Salton Sea because it would result in the construction of a lake at the shoreline but is relatively small compared to the size of the Sea and the length of its shoreline. This impact would be less than significant and the EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Mitigation Measures

MM AQ-1 and ***MM AQ-2*** from the EIS/EIR addressed fugitive dust emissions and emissions from diesel equipment for projects within Imperial County and followed requirements of the ICAPCD. Since the Modified Project is proposed in Riverside County, these mitigations have been modified to reflect the requirements of the SCAQMD to address the same issues. Two SCAQMD rules were adopted with the purpose of reducing the amount of fugitive dust entrained as a result of human activities. Rule 403 applies to any construction activity capable of generating fugitive dust and requires implementation of best available fugitive dust control measures during active construction periods capable of generating fugitive dust emissions from on-site earth-moving activities, construction/ demolition activities, and construction equipment travel on paved and unpaved roads.

Rule 403.1 is supplemental to Rule 403 and applies only to fugitive dust sources in Coachella Valley, which includes the Project area. Rule 403.1 requires a Fugitive Dust Control Plan approved by SCAQMD or an authorized local government agency prior to initiating any construction/ earth-moving activity.

MM AQ-1 **Implement fugitive PM_{10} control measures.** A fugitive Dust Control Plan will be prepared and approved in accordance with SCAQMD Rule 403.1 prior to the start of project construction. This plan will include best management practices (BMPs) from Rule 403 and will be incorporated into the construction contract specifications in order to reduce PM_{10} emissions from fugitive dust. An overview of BMPs from Rule 403 include:

- Water exposed soil on disturbed surfaces, unpaved roads, and open storage piles with adequate frequency for control of fugitive dust.
- Apply chemical stabilizers to unpaved roads and disturbed surface areas prior to wind events
- Stabilize disturbed surface areas when active operations will not occur for more than four consecutive days.
- Limit vehicle speed for all construction vehicles to 15 miles per hour on any unpaved surface at the construction site.

MM AQ-2 **Implement diesel control measures.** SCAQMD requirements for controlling diesel engine emissions during construction will be incorporated into the construction contract specifications in order to reduce PM_{10} and NO_X emissions from diesel engines. This includes measures such as:

- All off-road diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 horse-power shall meet the Tier 4 emission standards, where available. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with Best Available Control Technology (BACT) devices certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).
- Compliance with all feasible emission reduction measures identified by the SCAQMD will be required.

Conclusion

The Modified Project would not change construction impacts or cumulative impacts associated with the Approved SCH Project and would not result in any new or significant impacts to air quality. 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 SCAQMD 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

While the entire North Lake Project site has not been fully surveyed for biological resources, a survey was conducted on a portion of the site for a different project in November 2020. The summary here provides an overview of the type of biological resources (vegetation and wildlife) that occur in the Project area but prior to project construction, a complete survey of the Project site would be conducted to further refine the impacts discussion and determine if additional, more specific mitigation would be required.

The site is dominated by playa habitat in which no plants were observed to be growing, presumably because the soils are highly saline/alkaline-affected as evidenced by the salt encrusted surface. Away from the shoreline, along the eastern side of the site, Tamarix Shrubland Alliance is the dominant habitat type with thickets of salt cedar dominating in some places. Four-winged saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) was occasionally observed mixed in with iodine bush (sp.) and quailbush (*A. lentiformis*). Overall, plant cover within the North Shore site was estimated to be approximately 10 to 15 percent. There are some areas that appear to be fed by fresh water

coming from off-site. These areas would need to be surveyed for the presence of sensitive habitats such as wetlands and sensitive species including desert pupfish and special-status bird species.

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 may affect habitat and individuals of desert pupfish and special-status bird species, but these impacts would not be different than those discussed and mitigated for in the EIS/EIR. ***MM BIO-1*** and ***MM BIO-2*** would be implemented to ensure that impacts to pupfish and bird species would be minimized. ***MM BIO-3*** would also 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. See response for Impact BIO-1a above. With implementation of ***MM BIO-2*** and ***MM BIO-3***, impacts to special-status birds and mammal species as a result of the Modified Project would be less than significant. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact BIO-1c: Project operation would provide habitat for desert pupfish and several special-status bird species. The Modified Project would provide habitat for desert pupfish and several special-status bird species, which would be a beneficial impact. 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 could disturb or cause the loss of sensitive habitat beyond what was described in the EIS/EIR but this impact would be offset by the construction of a lake which would provide additional habitat for sensitive species. ***MM BIO-5*** would 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 could result in temporary disturbance of federal waters or wetlands (depending on the outcome of the survey). ***MM BIO-5*** would be implemented to avoid disturbances of sensitive habitats that may occur in federal waters or in wetland areas. These temporary impacts are consistent with those discussed for the SCH project and would be offset by the construction of a lake where there is currently exposed playa. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. To further address potential impacts to Waters of the U.S. and waters of the state, CNRA will obtain the following permits: Streambed and Lake Alteration Agreement with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code, a certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) for a Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR), and a decision from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about whether a permit is needed. If needed, a permit will be received prior to work in Waters of the U.S.

Impact BIO-3b: Project operation would increase the amount of Federal Waters of the U.S. Construction of the Modified Project would 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 that has the potential to contain desert pupfish or other sensitive wildlife species. ***MM BIO-5*** would be implemented to avoid interfering with movement of fish and wildlife species. 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 could 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 but these impacts are consistent with those discussed for the SCH project and would be offset by the construction of a lake where there is currently exposed playa. 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 creates a lake which would enhance habitat for 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. 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 that are not consistent with those already discussed for the Approved Project.

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. A cultural resource records search has been initiated through the Eastern Information Center although the results have not yet been received. In addition, a cultural resources survey would be conducted prior to project implementation to determine if any such resources are within the Modified Project site. Implementation of ***MM CR-1*** would ensure that any potential inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources are properly treated. In addition, at the time the EIS/EIR for the Approved Project was prepared, Tribal Cultural Resources (TCR) were not required to be analyzed separately. A new mitigation measure, MM CR-2, has been added to address this issue. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Existing 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.

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.

New Mitigation Measure

MM CR-2: **Native American Consultation and Monitoring.** The lead agencies shall continue to consult with interested tribes throughout the planning process and prior and during construction of the Project.

Conclusion

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

3.6 ENERGY

Applicable Impact

Impact EN-1: Pumping would require power for the duration of the Project. If the water supply needed to implement the Modified Project includes the temporary use of canal water or well water, then some pumping of water would be required. Power supply for the pumps and wells would be obtained from solar-powered systems, diesel electric generators, or electric lines, depending on cost and proximity to the supply. In addition, energy would be required for construction and maintenance of the Modified Project and would be limited to petroleum and/or diesel fuel to power construction equipment and worker vehicles. Energy consumption would cease upon completion of construction activities and occasional maintenance activities. As such, Impact EN-1 is applicable to the Modified Project. However, overall energy use would not result in inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy and would not be significant. 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 include berms to contain the new lake. As discussed in the EIS/EIR, once the ponds (in this case the lake) 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. 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 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 designed and constructed for stability. 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. The Modified Project would generate minor amounts of GHG emissions during construction activities and occasional maintenance activities. Once constructed, the lake would attract some people for recreation including bird watching and boating on the new lake. However, the Salton Sea already attracts people for those purposes and the Project would not add to appreciably to regional recreational trips or activities. As discussed in the EIS/EIR,

construction of the Approved Project would generate up to approximately 6,650 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO2e) over the course of 2 years, which is well below the 25,000 metric tons of CO2e threshold for which major facilities are required to report emissions. These emissions would be temporary and would cease upon completion of work. The Modified Project would generate substantially less GHG emissions than the Approved Project and, therefore, would not be significant. 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. In addition, Riverside County's Climate Action Plan has a 3,000 metric ton CO2e threshold and given that construction emissions are amortized over a 30-year period, impacts would fall well under that threshold. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Conclusion

GHG Emissions generated during construction and maintenance of the Modified Project would be temporary and cease upon completion of construction activities and occasional maintenance activities. The Modified Project would not result in any new significant impacts to GHG Emissions compared to the Approved Project.

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 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (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 SCAQMD's regulations for fugitive dust, 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 includes construction of a lake, similar to the ponds for the SCH that would attract birds. However, the lake would be adjacent to the Salton Sea and, therefore, would not change the existing conditions with respect to low-level military training routes in the area. 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. . Similar types of typical roadway safety precautions would be taken for the Modified Project as the EIS/EIR to ensure that traffic and construction near roadways would not impair the implementation of an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. 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.

Impact HAZ-5: Project construction could increase the risk of wildland fire. Operation of construction equipment associated with the Modified Project could temporarily increase the risk of wildfire in the project area. All regulations requiring fire suppression equipment would be followed for the Modified Project during construction and maintenance activities as required under the EIS/EIR. As such, no new impacts associated with risk of wildland fire would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

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.

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 include installation of a lake, similar to the SCH ponds that could further increase breeding habitat for mosquito vectors beyond what was analyzed in the EIS/EIR. However, as discussed in the EIS/EIR, open water (such as would occur with the Modified Project) is not conducive to mosquito production. Open water should reduce the survival of immature mosquitos because of disturbance and drowning caused by wind-driven waves and high susceptibility to predators. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

Inapplicable Impact

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 include installation of an additional lake but the water supply for the lake is not from the New River, which contains selenium and DDE. Therefore, this impact is not applicable to the Modified Project. The 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 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-1: Project implementation would cause a reduction in the Salton Sea's water surface elevation. The Modified Project would result in a new lake adjacent to the Salton Sea that would be filled with drain water, groundwater, or canal water that could divert surface water for the purpose of creating a lake adjacent to the Sea. This may result in an incremental decrease in surface water reaching the Sea but would not alter the inevitable receding of the Sea and would be a less-than-significant impact. Use of this water for the Modified Project would be beneficial to the natural resources and air quality in the area. As such, the EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact HYD-2: Project implementation would increase the Salton Sea's salinity. As discussed for Impact HYD-1, the Modified Project would result in a new lake adjacent to the Sea that would divert some drain water that would otherwise go to the Sea. This may result in an incremental increase in the Sea's salinity but would not alter the inevitable increasing salinity of the 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. Maintaining the new lake's elevation requires on-going use of local surface water and groundwater. However, most of this water (e.g., canal water and groundwater) does not go directly to the Sea and, therefore, would not affect Salton Sea water quality. Drain water that would otherwise go to the Sea could be diverted to the lake. Similar to the discussion for Impact HYD-1 and HYD-2, this may result in incremental changes to the water quality of the Sea but would not alter the inevitable changes to the Sea that are occurring regardless of the Modified Project. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged. No mitigation in required.

Impact HYD-4: Construction of the SCH ponds would temporarily degrade water quality at the Salton Sea. The Modified Project would be constructed adjacent to the Salton Sea which could result in increased sediment and other constituent loads into the Sea. As discussed in the EIS/EIR, construction would temporarily increase suspended sediment and nutrient cycling in waters near active construction. The Project would include an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan and a SWPPP for construction and maintenance activities. These plans would address the potential for erosion and incorporate appropriate protections into the design. These impacts would be temporary and would be less than significant. 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 include berms to contain the lake which, as discussed in the EIS/EIR could result in berm failure which 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.

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 and, therefore, would not result in new land use impacts. This would be true with respect to the Riverside County General Plan and other applicable land use plans or policies, as it was for Imperial County. In addition, the Modified Project would comply with all applicable mitigation measures included in the EIS/EIR. As a result, no new impacts associated with land use compatibility would occur with implementation of the Modified Project. 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 be constructed within

exposed playa adjacent to the Salton Sea in areas that were fairly recently submerged and, therefore, will be resubmerged for the Project. As such, the Modified Project would not conflict with any existing or planned land uses. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses. The Modified Project would be consistent with land uses in the area that were dependent on the recreation and habitat of the Sea. 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 Impacts

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. The Modified Project site is in a sparsely populated area. There is a small residential community across Mecca Avenue at the east end of the proposed lake, with the closest houses approximately 400 feet from one corner of the lake although most construction would occur closer to the shore. Improvement of Mecca Avenue and construction of the new dirt/gravel boat ramp proposed at the end of Mecca Avenue would result in temporary construction noise impacts to these residents. There are also a few residences a similar distance from the proposed lake that are near the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club. These residents may also be exposed to temporary construction noise. The EIS/EIR includes a table (Table 3.14-7) showing the attenuation of a noise source typical for construction equipment. At 400 feet, the noise level is estimated to be between 60 and 70 dBA, which is above what is typically allowed in residential areas although the County noise ordinance allows for exceptions due to construction. In addition, construction impacts would be temporary and would not occur at night. 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***.

Impact NOI-3: Construction truck traffic at some locations on local roads would cause a temporary increase in noise near residents. As discussed in the EIS/EIR, noise from trucks during construction would be temporary and not significant because truck trips would take place within the hours allowed by the local county (in this case, Riverside County), and would not conflict with local construction noise standards. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged, and no mitigation is required.

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-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 result in new ground-disturbing activities and 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, other than more workers may come from Riverside County than from Imperial County. 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 North Lake Pilot Project would provide additional recreational opportunities for residents and visitors in the North Lake area. This would be a beneficial impact. 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. Construction of the Modified Project could result in a small temporary increase in demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers) during construction. The Modified Project does not include any unusually dangerous activities, and the increased demand associated with Project construction would be within the capacity of local emergency service providers. The temporary increased demand would not be expected to affect the ability of providers to maintain their current level of service or require new or altered facilities. 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 create recreational opportunities at a new lake adjacent to the Salton Sea. These opportunities include allowing small boat access to a new lake and encouraging other recreational activities for the local community and region as a result of revamping the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club. In addition, a trail with interpretive signage would be also be constructed around the perimeter of the lake to provide walking, running,

and sightseeing opportunities. To offset the loss of boat access from the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club due to the receding Sea and the proposed Project, a new concrete boat ramp is proposed at the end of Mecca Avenue, which would extend southerly into the Salton Sea approximately one-quarter mile from the existing terminus of Mecca Avenue. For reference, the nearby Salton Sea State Recreation Area (SRA) extends for approximately 14 miles along the Salton Sea shoreline from the north end of the Sea down to Bombay Beach, and offers boating, fishing, picnicking, and camping recreation opportunities. While usage was much higher in the late 1990s and early 2000s, over the past 10 years, this SRA attracted an average of 43,000 visitors per year. This includes paid and free day use, as well as camping use. Boat launches over the past 10 years has dropped to an average of about 20 per year. The Modified Project would provide additional recreation opportunities to those who already come to the Salton Sea.

These are all beneficial impacts. The EIS/EIR impact conclusion remains unchanged.

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). Construction of the Modified Project would temporarily increase traffic on local roadways, mostly in Riverside County, although it is unlikely to affect the level of service of any roadways below Riverside County standards. Construction impacts would be temporary and not significant. The Modified Project consists of creating a lake over about 154 acres whereas the Approved Project is creating ponds on well over 3,700 acres. Operation of the new lake would attract recreational visitors. However, as discussed in the Recreation section, the Salton Sea SRA already attracts visitors, and the Modified Project would provide an additional recreational amenity to these users. The use of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) to calculate traffic and transportation impacts was not a requirement at the time the original EIS/EIR was prepared. VMT measures the per capita number of car trips generated by a project and distances cars will travel to and from a project rather than congestion levels at intersection, such as is done using LOS. However, it is assumed that people already travel to the Salton Sea SRA for recreation and would continue to do so for the Modified Project and, therefore, no additional traffic or transportation analysis is needed. `The 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 to access the project area. 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 project area. All construction staging would be contained within a designated 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 over a much smaller area than was needed for the Approved Project and, therefore, would require much less dust suppression water than 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. Construction of the Modified Project would generate significantly less solid waste than for the Approved Project. Waste generated by the Approved Project was considered less than significant in the EIS/EIR. Therefore, 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 IMPACTS

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

California Department of Water Resources

Melinda Dorin, Program Manager

Tetra Tech, Inc.

Mary McKinnon, Principal Environmental Analyst

Carrie Munhill, GIS Analyst

6.0 REFERENCES

California State Parks

2022 Department of Parks and Recreation, Fiscal Year Attendance for Salton Sea State Recreation Area from 1995 through 2020. Received via email from Steve Quartieri. January 25.

Cardno, Inc.

2011 *Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project*. Prepared for the California Natural Resources Agency. August.

2013 *Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project*. Prepared for the California Natural Resources Agency. August.

2017 *CEQA Addendum/Findings Analysis for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project EIS/EIR*. Prepared for the California Natural Resources Agency

Webb (Albert A.) Associates

2021 *Technical Memorandum for Salton Sea North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project Alternatives Analysis – Addendum #1: Revised Alternative 1*. Prepared for Riverside County. June 17.