

5 Other CEQA Considerations

Section 15126 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that all aspects of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment, including planning, acquisition, development, and operation. The environmental impact report (EIR) must discuss (1) significant environmental effects of the proposed project and mitigation measures proposed to minimize the significant effects, (2) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented, (3) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project, (4) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project, and (5) alternatives to the proposed project.

This chapter summarizes the significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the Newell Creek Pipeline (NCP) Improvement Project (Proposed Project) is implemented (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts). It also addresses growth inducement and whether significant irreversible environmental changes of the Proposed Project are required to be evaluated. An evaluation of the significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project, applicable mitigation measures, the level of impact significance before and after mitigation, and evaluation of cumulative impacts, is provided in Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures, and impacts and mitigation measures are summarized in Chapter 1, Summary. Chapter 6, Alternatives, addresses alternatives to the Proposed Project.

5.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The CEQA Guidelines require a description of any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance (Section 15126.2[c]). Where there are impacts that cannot be alleviated without imposing an alternative design, their implications and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, should be described. This EIR identified one significant unavoidable impact associated with construction noise impacts from the limited nighttime pipeline pullback activities required at the Brackney North pipe section (see Impact NOI-2 in Section 4.10, Noise and Vibration).

5.2 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

The CEQA Guidelines require a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes with project implementation, including uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project (Section 15126.2[d]). However, CEQA Guidelines Section 15127 indicates that information concerning irreversible changes needs to be included only in EIRs prepared in connection with:

- (a) The adoption, amendment, or enactment of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency;
- (b) The adoption by a Local Agency Formation Commission of a resolution making determinations; or
- (c) A project which will be subject to the requirement for preparing an environmental impact statement pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 United States Code Sections 4321–4347.

As the Proposed Project is not one of the above project types, this EIR is not required to include an analysis of significant irreversible environmental changes.

5.3 Growth Inducement

CEQA requires that any growth-inducing aspect of a project be discussed in an EIR. This discussion should include consideration of ways in which the project could directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth in adjacent and/or surrounding areas. Projects that could remove obstacles to population growth (such as major public service expansion) must also be considered in this discussion. According to CEQA, it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

According to the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have the potential to induce growth if it would:

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

As discussed in Section 4.1.5 of this EIR, the project would not include construction of new housing or generate new employment opportunities. The project would consist of replacement of existing infrastructure and associated minor appurtenances associated with the NCP, which conveys raw water between Loch Lomond Reservoir and the City's Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant. The proposed 24-inch diameter pipeline is the same size as the majority of the existing pipeline, and thus, the Proposed Project would not change capacity of the existing NCP. The Proposed Project would not involve procurement of additional water supplies or expansion of public services into areas that do not currently receive these services. Thus, the Project would not remove obstacles to population growth. As an improvement to a water supply transmission facility, the Proposed Project would not result in uses that would directly or indirectly induce substantial economic growth.

It is noted that the Santa Cruz Water Department is in the process of implementing a Capital Improvement Program (CIP), also known as the Santa Cruz Water Project, which includes plans and funding for numerous capital improvements projects, including rehabilitation or replacement projects, upgrades and improvements projects, water supply reliability studies, and water main replacements as discussed in Section 4.0.4.2. The City has submitted applications for changes to its existing water rights that would change the manner of diversion and location of use and also has embarked on a pilot water-sharing agreement with Soquel Creek Water District. These future projects could result in a change and/or increase in inflows to and seasonal withdrawals from Loch Lomond Reservoir. However, the Proposed Project is independent of these other planned projects and would not result in population growth inducement.