

# 1 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

## PROJECT INFORMATION

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|--|--|
| 1. Project Title:                      | High Groundwater Mitigation Project  |
| 2. Lead Agency Name and Address:       | Henry Miller Reclamation District; 11704 Henry Miller Ave, Dos Palos, CA 93620     |
| 3. Contact Person and Phone Number:    | John Wiersma, General Manager; 209-387-4305  |
| 4. Project Location:                   | San Luis Canal Company – Company Wide: 11704 Henry Miller Ave, Dos Palos, CA 93620 |
| 5. Project Sponsor’s Name and Address: | Henry Miller Reclamation District; 11704 Henry Miller Ave, Dos Palos, CA 93620     |
| 6. General Plan Designation:           | Agriculture  |
| 7. Zoning:                             | NA   |
| 8. Description of Project:             |  |

San Luis Canal Company (SLCC or Company) is one of the four San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors with historical water rights off of the San Joaquin River. The Company encompasses approximately 47,000 acres of irrigable land in Merced and Fresno Counties. Under normal hydrology, SLCC receives their water from the Bureau of Reclamation under the agreed upon Exchange Contract. The water originates from Shasta Dam, is conveyed down the Sacramento River into the Northern and South Delta and then pumped at Jones Pumping Plant into the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC). The water is then transported down the DMC, into the Mendota Pool and then down the San Joaquin River and into the Arroyo Canal.

SLCC’s delivery system consists of canals, drains, low lift pumps and regulating reservoirs that incorporate the following water types: (1) USBR surface water (2) tailwater generated within SLCC boundaries (3) Henry Miller Reclamation District (HMRD) #2131 Groundwater wells (4) SLCC Landowner private Groundwater wells

A large portion of SLCC’s acreage is plagued by shallow groundwater which impacts crop growth and can restrict the planting of permanent crops. As a mechanism to mitigate for the impacts associated with this shallow groundwater, SLCC plans to implement a two-tiered program consisting primarily of (1) elimination of seepage losses through infrastructure improvement projects including lining and piping of canals and (2) shallow groundwater pumping. For the shallow groundwater pumping, the groundwater will be pumped from the upper water table through a series of existing shallow wells and conveyed through SLCC’s existing water delivery system for use within the Company’s service area. A like amount of SLCC’s CVP water supply (up to 10,000 acre feet per year [afy]) would be made available to be transferred to San Joaquin Valley Wildlife Refuges, Tulare Lake Basin Wildlife Refuges, and other CVP contractors including but not limited to Friant Division and San Luis Unit CVP contractors, and/or all State Water Project contractors including but not limited to Kern County Water Agency, Valley Water (CVP/SWP Water), East Bay Municipal Utility District, Contra Costa Water District and Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (collectively; Transfer Recipients). All transfers would be consistent with CVP Place of Use requirements.

Note that the conveyance improvement projects will consist of improving existing conveyance facilities and are Categorically Exempt under CEQA (Section 15301(b)).

## PURPOSE & NEED

The State of California has experienced unprecedented water management challenges due to severe drought in recent years. South of Delta CVP contractors, such as the Transfer Recipients, experienced reduced water supply allocations from 2007 to 2022 due to hydrologic conditions and regulatory requirements. In 2020, based on hydrologic conditions, Reclamation declared an initial 20 percent allocation for South of Delta CVP agricultural contractors for the 2020 Contract Year. In both 2021 and 2022, South of Delta CVP contractors received an allocation of 0% percent. As a result, South of Delta water contractors have a need to find alternative sources of water to fulfill demands.

In addition, SLCC has historically had a high groundwater table in parts of the District, creating shallow groundwater issues preventing planting of various crops and crop damage issues. In some areas, shallow groundwater can be as high as two feet below the ground surface.

The Proposed Project would simultaneously help address the shallow groundwater issues within SLCC and help alleviate the water supply strain for south of Delta water users.

### 9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:

San Luis Canal Company is exclusively irrigated agricultural. The city of Los Banos, which has a population of approximately 40,000, is located several miles west of the SLCC boundary. The city of Dos Palos, which has a population of approximately 5,500, is located several miles south of the SLCC boundary. The crops grown within SLCC include nuts, alfalfa, cotton, tomatoes, corn, and winter forage crops.

The Transfer Recipient lands receiving the exchange water are located in the San Joaquin Valley, south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and include agricultural districts composed of irrigated farmland and managed refuges containing a variety of habitat types including wetlands, uplands and grasslands.

### 10. Other public agencies whose approval is required: (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement)

The Proposed Project would involve water exchanges through the Delta Mendota Canal and San Luis Canal, which are USBR facilities. As a result, USBR must approve the project. USBR is preparing an Environmental Assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) concurrent to the preparation of this document.

### 11. Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?

No Native American tribes are affiliated with the project and none have requested consultation.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages. Where checked below, the topic with a potentially significant impact will be addressed in an environmental impact report.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forest Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources               | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geology / Soils             | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hazards / Hazardous Materials      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality   | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use / Planning              | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Population / Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities / Service Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None                  | <input type="checkbox"/> None with Mitigation Incorporated  |

## DETERMINATION (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project could not have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project **COULD** have a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required.
- I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION**, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

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Signature

Date

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Printed Name

Title

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Agency

# 1.1 AESTHETICS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. Aesthetics.</b>				
Except as provided in Public Resources Code section 21099 (where aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant for qualifying residential, mixed-use residential, and employment centers), would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 1.1.1 Environmental Setting

The aesthetic environmental setting for the Proposed Project areas is a combination of irrigated agriculture and managed refuges. The water conservation efforts and shallow groundwater pumping will occur within San Luis Canal Company and is comprised of irrigated agriculture and agricultural support facilities such as farm yards. The Transfer Recipient areas will include irrigated agriculture and agricultural support facilities as well as managed wetland, upland, and grassland habitats.

The Proposed Project will not cause any physical modifications to any of the aesthetic settings.

## 1.1.2 Discussion

### a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The Proposed Project will not require any changes to any vistas. Scenic vistas occur in several locations among the Transfer Recipients, including visitor centers within Grassland Water District and state and federal refuges. The Proposed Project would provide supplemental water to these areas and help preserve the associated vistas.

### b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The Proposed Project will not damage or degrade any scenic resources.

- c) **In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?**

The Proposed Project will not degrade any public views. Public views and scenic vistas occur in several locations among the Transfer Recipients, including visitor centers within Grassland Water District and state and federal refuges. The Proposed Project would provide supplemental water to these areas and help preserve the associated vistas.

- d) **Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

The Proposed Project would not create any new source of light or glare.

## 1.2 AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>II. Agriculture and Forest Resources.</b>				
<p>In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997, as updated) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.</p> <p>In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.</p> <p>Would the project:</p>				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.2.1 Environmental Setting

San Luis Canal Company as well as much of the Transfer Recipient lands are comprised of irrigated agriculture, including substantial areas of prime farmland. Crops throughout the Proposed Project area include tomatoes, cotton, alfalfa, corn, wheat and other grains, rice, as well as fruit and nut trees. Irrigated agriculture throughout the San Joaquin Valley is subject to crippling water supply curtailments during dry and critically dry hydrologic year types.

## 1.2.2 Discussion

- a) **Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?**

The Proposed Project will not convert or cause the conversion of any farmland.

- b) **Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?**

The Proposed Project will not conflict with any zoning or Williamson Act contract.

- c) **Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?**

There are no forest lands or timberlands within the Proposed Project Area.

- d) **Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?**

There are no forest lands or timberlands within the Proposed Project Area.

- e) **Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?**

There are no forest lands or timberlands within the Proposed Project Area. The Proposed Project will contribute to regional water supply security and will not result in the conversion of any farmland to non-agricultural use.



# 1.3 AIR QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>III. Air Quality.</b>				
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied on to make the following determinations.				
Are significance criteria established by the applicable air district available to rely on for significance determinations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 1.3.1 Environmental Setting

Air quality impacts are typically assessed when a proposed project has the potential to either generate new or exacerbate existing sources of air pollutants either from construction or from operation of the project over the long term. A project is consistent with an air quality plan if it will not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of existing air quality violations or cause or contribute to new violations with respect to criteria pollutants or delay timely attainment of air quality standards or emissions reductions in an air quality plan. Since the Proposed Project would involve limited use of existing equipment to convey water throughout both San Luis Canal Company and the Transfer Recipients but not require any new construction, no new point sources would be introduced and existing conditions would not worsen as a result of the Proposed Project.

## 1.3.2 Discussion

### a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Since the Proposed Project would not involve any construction, there would be no conflict with any air quality plan.

- b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?**

There would be no increase in pollutant production compared to existing conditions as a result of the Proposed Project.

- c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?**

The Proposed Project will not generate substantial pollutant concentrations.

- d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?**

There would be no increase in pollutant production compared to existing conditions as a result of the Proposed Project.

# 1.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>IV. Biological Resources.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 1.4.1 Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project is located within San Luis Canal Company, in the San Joaquin Valley approximately 10 miles west of Los Banos and bound on the east by the San Joaquin River. San Luis Canal Company is composed entirely of irrigated agriculture and agriculture support facilities (farmyards, shops, etc.). Managed refuges (both private and public) lie to the north and west of SLCC and provide habitat for a variety of animals and plants, including those listed by State and Federal agencies.

## 1.4.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include any construction component and will not disturb any habitat or impact any special-status species. Water transferred through the Proposed Project will augment water supplies for agriculture and managed refuges and will help sustain habitat.

- a) **Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

The Proposed Project will not cause any habitat modifications or impact any wildlife or special-status species.

- b) **Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

The Proposed Project will not have any impact on riparian habitat or other natural communities.

- c) **Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?**

The proposed project will not have an adverse effect on wetlands. The Proposed Project will improve water supply security to managed refuges.

- d) **Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?**

The Proposed Project does not include any construction and will not affect the movement of animals or impact any migratory corridors.

- e) **Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?**

The Proposed Project does not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.

- f) **Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?**

The Proposed Project does not conflict with any conservation plans.

## 1.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>V. Cultural Resources.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.5.1 Environmental Setting

Cultural resources are defined as prehistoric and historic archeological sites, architectural properties (e.g., buildings, bridges, and structures), and traditional properties with significance to Native Americans or other ethnic groups. For the purposes of the present document, the term "historic properties" are those resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)(36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 60.4). Any property eligible for listing in the NRHP is by default considered eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (Public Resources Code, Section 5024.1). Archeological and historic architectural properties provide scientifically important information about California's history and cultural heritage. The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) includes buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California.

### 1.5.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include any construction component and will not disturb any existing or undiscovered cultural resources.

**a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?**

The Proposed Project will not result in any physical changes and will not impact any historical resources.

**b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?**

The Proposed Project will not result in any physical changes and will not impact any archaeological resources.

**c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?**

The Proposed Project will not result in any physical changes and will not disturb any human remains.

## 1.6 ENERGY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VI. Energy.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.6.1 Environmental Setting

The 2030 Merced County General Plan (2013) includes energy resources and efficiency policies within the Natural Resources Element. This element contains policies that “promote energy conservation practices and focus on renewable energy production within Merced County” (p. NR-4). Policy NR-2.9: Energy Conservation states: “Encourage and maximize energy conservation and identification of alternative energy sources (e.g., wind or solar)” (p. NR-5).

Energy consumption in the region (including both within SLCC and the Transfer Recipients) is primarily in the form of electrical energy (typically transmitted by PG&E) or diesel to power motors to pump water as required for irrigation and conveyance.

### 1.6.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project will transfer groundwater and conserved water supplies through existing facilities and pump stations and will not require the construction of any new facilities. Water supplied by the Proposed Project will supplement existing supplies during periods of curtailment and improve irrigation supply flexibility for the Transfer Recipients. The net water conveyed will not substantially change and the total energy consumption will be similar to pre-project conditions.

**a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and will not substantially change energy use from existing conditions.

**b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency**

The Proposed Project will not substantially change energy use from existing conditions.

## 1.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VII. Geology and Soils.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.7.1 Environmental Setting

The surface soils of the San Joaquin Valley are a heterogeneous assemblage of alluvium consisting of channel gravels, riverbank sand, silt, and clay, derived from granitic and sedimentary sources (University of California Davis 2008; U.S. Department of Agriculture 2019, cited in AECOM 2019). Most of these sediments were deposited in the Pleistocene and Holocene during times of increased precipitation by runoff from the surrounding Sierra Nevada, Tehachapi, and Coastal ranges. The bedrock beneath the alluvium consists of older marine sediments deposited during the mid-Mesozoic to Cenozoic eras. A series of turbidity currents, likely caused by undersea earthquakes, landslides, or volcanic eruptions, moved large amounts of sediments downslope to a rapidly subsiding ocean basin. The variable

and mixed marine sedimentary, volcanic, and metamorphic rock formations found in the San Joaquin Valley, such as mudstone, sandstone, shale, basalt, andesite, and serpentine, are the result of such erosions and depositions (DeCourten 2010, cited in AECOM 2019).

Concerning soil resource protection from erosion, contamination, and other effects that substantially reduce their value or lead to the creation of hazards, see the Natural Resources Element of the 2030 Merced County General Plan (Merced County 2013) section on Soil and Mineral Resources. One policy (NR-3.2) on soil erosion calls for minimal disturbance of vegetation during construction to improve soil stability, reduce erosion, and improve stormwater quality. The Project's construction activities would occur during dry weather in a flat wildlife habitat area, not on steep slopes.

The Project Area in Merced County contains the San Joaquin Fault Zone and is located east of the Ortigalita Fault. (<https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/fam/>)

According to the Fresno County 2040 General Plan, Background Report (Fresno County 2017), Chapter 8, Hazards and Safety (page 8-6):

"The Ortigalita fault zone is approximately 50 miles long, originating near Crow Creek in western Stanislaus County and extending southeast to a few miles north of Panoche in western Fresno County. Most of the fault is considered active due to displacement during Holocene time and is designated an earthquake fault zone under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act of 1994. As illustrated in Figure 4.20, the southernmost extension of the fault lies in Fresno County."

## 1.7.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**iv) Landslides?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.



**b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

**f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component. As a result, there will not be any impact to soils, geology, or public safety.

## 1.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VIII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.8.1 Environmental Setting

Naturally occurring GHGs include water vapor (H<sub>2</sub>O), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>). Several classes of halogenated substances that contain fluorine, chlorine, or bromine are also GHGs, but they are, for the most part, solely a product of industrial activities. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) are halocarbons that contain chlorine, while halocarbons that contain bromine are referred to as bromofluorocarbons (i.e., halons). In the amended CEQA Guidelines Section 15364.5, greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) include, but are not limited to, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. In California, due to stringent air pollution control rules and regulations, natural gas is the only fossil fuel used to fire steam turbine, gas turbine, or combined cycle power plants. The primary concern here is for emissions that would be generated from equipment use (carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide through the burning of fossil fuels) rather than the emissions associated with ongoing agricultural practices (methane and nitrous oxide) and industrial activities (nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride). The GHG of most concern is CO<sub>2</sub>; since it is generated in extremely large quantities by the burning of fossil fuels, can last in the atmosphere for two centuries, and forces climate change more than any other GHG. In California, CO<sub>2</sub> is the major component of power plant GHG emissions, about 99.995 percent.

### 1.8.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project would not result in the construction or expanded operation of any facilities that would generate greenhouse gas emission. Existing rates of greenhouse gas emissions would generally remain consistent with current conditions.

- a) **Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?**

The Proposed Project will not generate or cause an increase in the generation of greenhouse gases.

- b) **Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?**

The Proposed Project does not conflict with any applicable plans.

## 1.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>IX. Hazards and Hazardous Materials.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.9.1 Environmental Setting

According to the California Health and Safety Code Section 25501(o), "hazardous material" means a material that, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, poses a significant present or potential hazard to human health and safety or to the environment if released into the workplace or the environment. Hazardous materials include, but are not limited to, hazardous substances, hazardous waste, and any material which a handler or the administering regulatory agency has a reasonable basis for believing would be injurious to the health and safety of persons or harmful to the environment if released into the workplace or environment. A number of properties may cause a substance to be considered hazardous including toxicity, ignitibility, corrosivity, or reactivity.

The Health and Safety Element of the 2030 Merced County Plan (2013) contains policies governing hazardous materials and waste under the overall Goal HS-5 to protect residents, visitors, and property through providing for the safe use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes. (p. HS-5)

## 1.9.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component that would require or expose any hazardous materials nor generate any wastes. The Proposed Project would not make use of, or expose the public to any hazardous materials, nor would any hazardous materials or wastes be transported or disposed of as a result of the Proposed Project.

**a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?**

The Proposed Project would not make use of, or expose the public to any hazardous materials, nor would any hazardous materials or wastes be transported or disposed of as a result of the Proposed Project.

**b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would not create any conditions that would increase the likelihood of an accident or exposure/release of hazardous materials.

**c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would not emit hazardous emissions or produce a hazardous waste.

**d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and none of the existing facilities utilized by the Proposed Project are located on a listed hazardous site.

**e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and none of the existing facilities are within an airport land use plan or would affect airport safety.

**f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?**

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would not impact emergency response.

**g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?**

The Proposed Project would not increase the risk of wildland fires.

## 1.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>X. Hydrology and Water Quality.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i) Result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.10.1 Environmental Setting

The State of California has experienced unprecedented water management challenges due to severe drought in recent years. South of Delta CVP contractors, such as the Transfer Recipients, experienced reduced water supply allocations from 2007 to 2022 due to hydrologic conditions and regulatory requirements. In 2020, based on hydrologic conditions, Reclamation declared an initial 20 percent allocation for South of Delta CVP agricultural contractors for the 2020 Contract Year 1. In both 2021 and 2022, South of Delta CVP contractors received an allocation of 0% percent. As a result, South of Delta water contractors have a need to find alternative sources of water to fulfill demands.

In addition, A large portion of SLCC's acreage is plagued by shallow groundwater which impacts crop growth and can restrict the planting of permanent crops.

SLCC's delivery system consists of canals, drains, low lift pumps and regulating reservoirs that incorporate the following water types: (1) USBR surface water (2) tailwater generated within SLCC boundaries (3) Henry Miller Reclamation District (HMRD) #2131 Groundwater wells (4) SLCC Landowner private Groundwater wells.

## 1.10.2 Discussion

A key element of the Proposed Project would be to reduce the acreage impacted by shallow groundwater. This would be accomplished through simultaneously pumping groundwater from the shallow water table and reducing the seepage contribution to the shallow water table from unlined canals by lining or piping them. This redirected water would contribute to the Company's water supply and a like-amount of SLCC's CVP supply would be transferred to the Transfer Recipient agencies.

The shallow groundwater pumped into SLCC's irrigation conveyance system would contain elevated levels of salinity compared to the Company's surface irrigation supplies. SLCC will maintain irrigation supply salinity levels through a comprehensive salinity monitoring program and controlled blending to prevent water quality impacts to crops.

**a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?**

Shallow groundwater pumped into SLCC's irrigation system would increase the salinity within the Company's water supply. Company operations will closely monitor salinity levels and blending to prevent any water quality impacts to crops. This is a less than significant impact.

**b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?**

The Proposed Project would enhance sustainable groundwater management through the management of perched, nuisance groundwater and by increasing the water supply security of the Transfer Recipient agencies.

**c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:**

The Proposed Project would not alter any existing drainage patterns either within SLCC or any of the Transfer Recipient agencies. There are no impacts to any of the sub-categories below.

**i) Result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation;**

**ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;**

**iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or**

**iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?**

**d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?**

The Proposed Project has no construction component and will not impact flows through a flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zone.

**e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?**

The Proposed Project would assist in sustainable groundwater management through the management of a perched, nuisance groundwater table. The proposed project would not conflict with any groundwater management plan.

# 1.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XI. Land Use and Planning.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 1.11.1 Environmental Setting

The 2030 Merced County General Plan (2013) contains a Land Use and Community Character Element that focuses on urban and rural development. The policies in this element are not applicable to the Proposed Project as it will not impact any land use or planning.

## 1.11.2 Discussion

### a) Physically divide an established community?

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would not cause any division of a community.

### b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

The Proposed Project does not conflict with any plan, policy, or regulation.



## 1.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XII. Mineral Resources.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.12.1 Environmental Setting

Mineral resources in Merced County are described in the following report: Mineral Land Classification of Merced County, California, Open File Report 99-08, by John P. Clinkenbeard, California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, Sacramento, 1999.

In summary, approximately 38 square miles of Merced County, in ten resource areas, have been classified MRZ-2a or MRZ-2b for concrete aggregate in this study. This represents approximately 2% of the land area of the county. The ten identified resource areas contain an estimated 1.18 billion tons of concrete aggregate resources with approximately 574 million tons in western Merced County and approximately 605 million tons in eastern Merced County. (Due to the cost of transporting aggregate, two distinct market regions exist in Merced County, one in the west and one in the east.) In addition to concrete aggregate, parts of the county have been classified MRZ-3a for lode gold, clay, and diatomite/gypsite. These are areas in which further exploration might uncover significant deposits of the identified commodities. The alluvial deposits of the San Joaquin Valley support almost all of the current mining operations in Merced County and, historically, have supplied the majority of the county's construction aggregate needs. Occurrences of kaolinitic clay are associated with the Lone Formation in eastern Merced County. Most of the construction aggregate mined in the county has come from sand and gravel deposits along Los Banos Creek in western Merced County and the Merced River in eastern Merced County.

The 2030 Merced County General Plan (2013) includes policies covering soil and mineral resources in the Natural Resources Element. Under the overarching goal of facilitating orderly development and extraction of mineral resources while preserving open space, natural resources, and soil resources and avoiding or mitigating significant adverse impacts, there are policies to protect riparian and critical habitat that support threatened, endangered, or otherwise sensitive species. (pp. NR-5,6)

### 1.12.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction element and would make use of existing wells and conveyance infrastructure. As a result, there would be no impact to mineral resources.

- a) **Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?**

The Proposed Project would not impact the availability or access to any mineral resources.

- b) **Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?**

The Proposed Project would not impact the availability or access to any mineral resources.

## 1.13 NOISE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XIII.Noise.</b>				
Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.13.1 Environmental Setting

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound produced by human activities such as the operation of equipment that interfere with communication, work, rest, recreation, or sleep. The Noise section of the Health and Safety Element of the 2030 Merced County General Plan (2013) contains exterior noise standards for noise-sensitive areas affected by traffic, railroad, or airport noise sources in the County, including residential areas, hospitals, nursing homes, office buildings, playgrounds and parks, and others (Table HS-1, p. HS-10). Agriculture is not identified as a noise-sensitive land use.

### 1.13.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction element and any noise generated would be a result of normal operation of wells and conveyance facility infrastructure. All components of the Proposed Project would be located in areas dominated agricultural or managed wetland environments.

- a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?**

The Proposed Project would not generate noise levels above existing, normal background levels for the Proposed Project area.

- b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?**

The Proposed Project would not generate groundborne vibration or noise levels above existing, normal background levels for the Proposed Project area.

- c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would not expose people to excessive noise levels.

## 1.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XIV. Population and Housing.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.14.1 Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project and Transfer Recipient agencies are all located within rural, agricultural, or managed refuge settings and do not include any substantial population groups, communities, or housing developments. The Proposed Project would make use of existing facilities and would not impact or influence population growth or housing.

### 1.14.2 Discussion

- a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

The Proposed Project would not impact or influence population growth or housing.

- b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The Proposed Project would not impact or influence population growth or housing.

## 1.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XV. Public Services.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.15.1 Environmental Setting

Public services in rural areas typically include county sheriff departments for law enforcement, county fire protection districts, and rural county public schools.

### 1.15.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project would make use of existing facilities and wells and would not increase demand on public services nor impact public facilities.

- a) **Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:**

**Fire protection?**

No impact.

**Police protection?**

No impact.

**Schools?**

No impact.

**Parks?**

No impact.

**Other public facilities?**

No impact.

## 1.16 RECREATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVI. Recreation.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.16.1 Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project and Transfer Recipient agencies are all located within rural, agricultural, or managed refuge settings. Recreational areas are limited to refuge visitor centers and public and private hunting areas.

### 1.16.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project would utilize existing facilities and wells and would have no direct impact on recreational facilities. Some of the water transferred through the Proposed Project would be diverted to managed refuges, which may improve their conditions, especially during water critical year types. This is a beneficial impact.

- a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?**

The Proposed Project would not cause an increase of use in recreational areas.

- b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?**

The Proposed Project would not cause or require the construction or expansion of any recreational facilities.

## 1.17 TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVII. Transportation.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.17.1 Environmental Setting

The 2030 Merced County General Plan (2013) contains a Transportation and Circulation Element that provides for the safe and efficient circulation of people, vehicles, and goods throughout the County. Roadways, rail, and air are the three primary travel conduits in Merced County. Policy CIR-1.8: Private Roadway Improvements provides for the following:

"Require private roads and related improvements to be designed and installed to County standards as contained in the Improvement Standards and Specifications Manual (Title 16 of County Code) and Subdivision Code (Title 17), unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the approval authority that alternative improvements will be provided sufficient to fulfill the goals and objectives of this Chapter and the respective Codes." (p. CIR-8)

### 1.17.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component that would require an increased traffic load, cause traffic hazards, or interfere with traffic patterns.

- a) **Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?**  
No impact.
- b) **Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), which pertains to vehicle miles travelled?**  
No impact.
- c) **Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?**  
No impact.
- d) **Result in inadequate emergency access?**  
No impact.



# 1.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVIII. Tribal Cultural Resources.</b>				
Has a California Native American Tribe requested consultation in accordance with Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1(b)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 1.18.1 Environmental Setting

PRC Section 21074 (a)(1)(A) and (B) defines tribal cultural resources as “sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe” and meets either of the following criteria: a. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or b. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1.

## 1.18.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project does not include a construction component and would make use of existing facilities. As a result, there would not be any physical impacts to tribal cultural resources.

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

- a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

No impact.

- b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

No impact.

## 1.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XIX. Utilities and Service Systems.</b>				
Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.19.1 Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project area, including the Transfer Recipient areas, are dominated by rural, agricultural, and managed wetland areas. As a result, available utilities are limited to electrical power, typically provided by PG&E or Merced Irrigation District; irrigation water supplies, typically provided by various water and irrigation districts; and agricultural drainage service, typically provided by various water and drainage districts. Some of the larger rural communities have water and wastewater facilities as well.

### 1.19.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project would utilize existing wells and facilities to convey water. The volume of water deliveries would be consistent with previous delivery flow rates and volumes and not require any modifications or changes to the existing water conveyance systems. The Proposed Project would not produce any waste product require any increase in treatment or waste management facilities.

a) **Require or result in the relocation or construction of construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?**

No impact.

b) **Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?**

No impact.

c) **Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?**

No impact.

d) **Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?**

No impact.

e) **Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?**

No impact.

## 1.20 WILDFIRE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XX. Wildfire.</b>				
Is the project located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as high fire hazard severity zones?				
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Require the installation of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.20.1 Environmental Setting

The 2018 California Strategic Fire Plan "...reflects CAL FIRE's focus on (1) fire prevention and suppression activities to protect lives, property, and ecosystem services, and (2) natural resource management to maintain the state's forests as a resilient carbon sink to meet California's climate change goals and to serve as important habitat for adaptation and mitigation. A vision for a natural environment that is more fire resilient; buildings and infrastructure that are more fire resistant; and a society that is more aware of and responsive to the benefits and threats of wildland fire; all achieved through local, state, federal, tribal, and private partnerships."

CAL FIRE provides maps for the state of California showing zones of moderate, high and very high risk of fire severity.

In western Fresno and Merced County, a moderate fire severity zone has been identified adjacent to and westerly of Interstate 5 (I-5), which transitions to a high fire severity zone further west into the Coastal Mountain range.

### 1.20.2 Discussion

The most westerly component of the Proposed Project would be located on the east side of I-5 and the zone identified as a moderate fire severity zone. None of the Project components would be located within an identified fire hazard severity zone. The Proposed Project does not include any construction component and would not impair emergency response or evacuation.

**a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?**

The Proposed Project does not include any construction component and would not impair emergency response or evacuation.

**b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?**

No impact.

**c) Require the installation of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?**

No impact.

**d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?**

No impact.

## 1.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XXI. Mandatory Findings of Significance.</b>				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.21.1 Environmental Setting

The State of California has experienced unprecedented water management challenges due to severe drought in recent years. South of Delta CVP contractors, such as the Transfer Recipients, experienced reduced water supply allocations from 2007 to 2022 due to hydrologic conditions and regulatory requirements. In 2020, based on hydrologic conditions, Reclamation declared an initial 20 percent allocation for South of Delta CVP agricultural contractors for the 2020 Contract Year. In both 2021 and 2022, South of Delta CVP contractors received an allocation of 0% percent. As a result, South of Delta water contractors, including both refuge managers and agricultural district, have a need to find alternative sources of water to fulfill demands.

SLCC suffers from high groundwater table issues throughout much of the District, creating shallow groundwater issues preventing planting of various crops and causing crop damage.

### 1.21.2 Discussion

The Proposed Project will help address a critical, region-wide water supply shortage and begin to address the shallow groundwater impacts to crop production within SLCC. Existing infrastructure will be utilized for the project and no construction will be required. Water quality impacts will be a small, and regulated, increase in salinity due to the pumping of groundwater into the Company’s irrigation supply system.

- a) **Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?**

The Proposed Project would help stabilize water supplies for the Transfer Recipient agencies, which could include state, federal, and private managed refuges and help sustain habitat in those regions. This is a beneficial impact.

- b) **Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)**

As described in the discussions in the Environmental Checklist Sections 1.1 through 1.20, the Proposed Project would have no impact or a less-than-significant impact with respect to all environmental resource areas. Individually limited impacts are described in the Hydrology resource section. The incremental impacts of the Proposed Project, when viewed in connection with the effects of ongoing activities in the Project vicinity in adjacent agricultural lands, at the wildlife refuge, and along the San Joaquin River, are not cumulatively considerable.

- c) **Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?**

In general, impacts to human beings are associated with air quality, hazards and hazardous materials, traffic hazards, and noise impacts. As detailed in the preceding sections, the Proposed Project would not result, either directly or indirectly, in significant impacts in these resource areas. Further, because the Proposed Project would not encourage employment and population growth, it would not impact public facilities or residential areas, and would not degrade air quality, the Proposed Project has no environmental effects that would cause substantial effects on human beings.