

Table of Contents

3 Environmental Impact Analysis 3-1

Tables

Table 3-1 Humboldt Countywide Cumulative Scenario 3-4

Figures

None.

3 Environmental Impact Analysis

This chapter sets forth the physical and regulatory environmental setting and addresses the environmental impacts of the Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) with respect to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G environmental resource areas. The discussions of the environmental setting in this section of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describe the present physical conditions, or baseline conditions, in the plan area. The baseline used for the analysis of environmental impacts under CEQA and CEQA Guidelines reflects the conditions present at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this EIR, published on August 30, 2024. The potential impacts of the RCAP are compared against the existing baseline conditions for each environmental resource.

Environmental Topics Addressed in this EIR

The RCAP is analyzed in this EIR from the perspective of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological, Agriculture, and Forestry Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy
- Land Use, Population, and Housing
- Noise
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

The RCAP would not have significant environmental effects with regard to the following topics, and no programmatic mitigation is proposed. As such, these topics are addressed in a combined Effects Found Not to Be Significant section following the aforementioned topical sections.

- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Wildfire
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Public Services and Recreation

Format of the Environmental Analysis

Environmental resource areas that are analyzed in individual sections include the subsections summarized below.

Introduction

This subsection summarizes what will be discussed in the respective environmental topic section, states what informational documents are used as the basis for the section, and indicates what related comments, if any, were received during the EIR public scoping period.

Environmental Setting

This subsection describes the existing, baseline physical conditions of the plan area and surroundings (e.g., existing land uses, transportation conditions, noise environment) with respect to the resource topics at the time the NOP was issued. Conditions are described in sufficient detail and breadth to allow a general understanding of the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the RCAP.

Regulatory Framework

This subsection describes the relevant federal, California, regional, and local regulatory requirements that are directly applicable to the environmental topic being analyzed.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This subsection evaluates the potential for the implementation of the RCAP to result in direct and indirect adverse impacts on the existing physical environment, with consideration of both construction and operation impacts. The significance criteria for environmental impact determinations are listed at the beginning of this subsection, followed by discussion of the approach to the analysis and specific thresholds of significance that have been applied to evaluate the impacts of the RCAP.

Indirect impacts are discussed only for those resources for which they have the potential to occur (e.g., cultural resources, air quality, and biological resources). Both plan-level and cumulative-level impacts are analyzed. Plan-level impacts could result from actions related to implementation of the RCAP. Cumulative-level impacts could result from implementation of the RCAP in combination with other identified cumulative projects. As discussed in “Cumulative Scenario Setting” below, anticipated cumulative growth listed in Table 3-1 below, in conjunction with the RCAP, are considered the cumulative scenario for the analysis of cumulative impacts.

Impacts are analyzed and the respective assessment and findings are provided, applying the following levels of significance:

- **No Impact.** A determination of No Impact is reached if no potential exists for impacts or if the environmental resource does not occur in the plan area or the area of potential impacts.
- **Less Than Significant Impact.** This determination applies if the impact does not exceed the defined significance criteria or would be eliminated or reduced to a less than significant level through compliance with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations. No mitigation is required for impacts determined to be less than significant.
- **Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** This determination applies if the RCAP would result in a significant impact, exceeding the established significance criteria, but feasible mitigation is available that would reduce the impact to a less than significant level.
- **Significant and Unavoidable Impact.** This determination applies if the RCAP would result in an adverse impact that exceeds the established significance criteria, and no feasible mitigation is available to reduce the impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, the residual impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Impacts are defined in terms of their context and intensity. Context is related to the uniqueness of a resource; intensity refers to the severity of the impact. Where applicable, best management practices or improvement measures, or both, are incorporated into the RCAP to limit the potential for a significant impact. Where necessary, programmatic mitigation measures are identified for significant impacts to limit the degree or lower the magnitude of the impact; rectify the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; or compensate for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments. These impacts conclude with a finding of Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Where no mitigation measures are necessary, relevant impacts are concluded to be Less than Significant or to have No Impact.

As part of the impact analysis, mitigation measures are identified, where feasible, for impacts considered significant or potentially significant consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4,

which states that an EIR “shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts.” CEQA requires that mitigation measures have an essential nexus and be roughly proportional to the significant impact identified in the EIR. The future project sponsors are required to implement all identified mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR, and the lead agency (in this case, Humboldt County) is responsible for overseeing implementation of such mitigation measures.

Impacts are numbered and shown in bold type. The corresponding mitigation measures, where identified, are numbered and indented, and follow the impact statements. Impacts and mitigation measures are numbered consecutively within each topic and include an abbreviated reference to the impact section (e.g., “LU” for Land Use and Planning). The following abbreviations are used for individual topics:

- Aesthetics (AES)
- Air Quality (AQ)
- Biological, Agriculture, and Forestry Resources (BIO)
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (CR)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy (GHG)
- Land Use Planning, Population, and Housing (LU)
- Noise (NOI)
- Transportation (TRA)
- Utilities and Service Systems (UTL)
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources (GEO)
- Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Wildfire (HAZ)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (HYD)
- Public Services and Recreation (PS)

Cumulative Impacts

This subsection evaluates the potential for the RCAP in conjunction with identified Countywide cumulative growth (see Table 3-1) to result in cumulative impacts. The goal of this analysis is to determine whether the overall long-term impacts of such cumulative growth would be cumulatively significant, and to determine whether the RCAP on its own would cause a “cumulatively considerable” incremental contribution to any such cumulatively significant impacts. To determine whether the overall long-term impacts of such cumulative growth would be cumulatively significant, the analysis generally considers the following:

- The area in which impacts of the RCAP would be experienced;
- The impacts of the RCAP that are expected in the area;
- Other past, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable growth that has had or are expected to have impacts in the same area;
- The impacts or expected impacts of the cumulative growth; and
- The overall impact that can be expected if the individual impacts related to the cumulative growth are allowed to accumulate.

“Cumulative impacts” refers to two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are considerable, or that compound or increase other environmental impacts (CEQA Guidelines Section

15355). Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant impacts taking place over time. If the analysis determines that the potential exists for the RCAP, taken together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future growth, to result in a significant or adverse cumulative impact, the analysis then determines whether the RCAP’s incremental contribution to any significant cumulative impact is itself significant (i.e., “cumulatively considerable”). The cumulative impact analysis for each individual resource topic is presented in each resource section of this chapter immediately after the description of the direct impacts and identified programmatic mitigation measures.

Cumulative Scenario Setting

For purposes of CEQA cumulative impacts analysis of RCAP, the cumulative projects scenario is the population, employment, service population and households growth projected for Humboldt County through 2030. As shown in Table 3-1, the RCAP projects a population of 143,556 persons and a service population of 214,038 persons, with 70,482 employees and 57,467 households by 2030.¹

Table 3-1 Humboldt Countywide Cumulative Scenario

Metric	Data Source	2022	2030
Population	Multiple ¹	136,132	143,556
Employment	Multiple ²	66,837	70,482
Service Population	Calculated ³	202,969	214,038
Households	Multiple ⁴	54,495	57,467
Off-road gasoline usage (gallons)	CARB OFFROAD2021	2,975,135	3,202,801
Off-road diesel usage (gallons)	CARB OFFROAD2021	9,101,978	9,348,454
Off-road natural gas usage (gallons)	CARB OFFROAD2021	410,588	418,808

Notes:

¹ Population forecast estimated based on the 2022 proportion of people per household and the forecasted number of households from 2030-2045.

² Employment forecast estimated based on the 2022 proportion of jobs per person and the forecasted population from 2030-2045.

³ Service population reflects the sum of population and employment in the region.

⁴ Household forecast estimated based on a 0.68% household growth rate compared to baseline year as determined by Humboldt’s 6th cycle RHNA and using U.S. Census 2022 household data as the baseline year. More information regarding Humboldt’s 6th cycle RHNA is available at: https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/docs/Humboldt_County_Regional_Housing_Need_Determination_and_Plan_for_the_Sixth_Housing_Element_Update_1.pdf

¹ Humboldt, County of. 2024. Humboldt Regional CAP Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Forecast, and Targets Report. March 2024.