

## 4.15 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) when certain specified impacts may result from construction or implementation of a project. An EIR has been prepared for the proposed plan, which fully addresses all of the Mandatory Findings of Significance, as described below.

### 4.15.1 Degradation of the Environment

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a) requires a finding of significance if a project “has the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment.” In practice, this is the same standard as a significant effect on the environment, which is defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15382 as “a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.”

This EIR, in its entirety, addresses and discloses all potential environmental effects associated with construction and operation of the proposed plan, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts in the following resource areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Safety/Risk of Upset
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems

As summarized in Table 2-1 (Summary of Environmental Effects and Project Requirements/Mitigation Measures), this EIR discloses all potential environmental impacts, the level of significance, and project requirements that are otherwise required by law or are incorporated as part of the project description.

### 4.15.2 Long-Term Impacts

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(2) states that a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals. Section 5.3 (Significant Irreversible Environmental Effects) of this document addresses the short-term

and irretrievable commitment of natural resources to ensure that the consumption is justified on a long-term basis. In addition, Section 5.2 (Significant Environmental Effects That Cannot Be Avoided if the Proposed Plan Is Implemented) and Table 2-1 identify all significant and unavoidable impacts that could occur, thereby creating a long-term impact on the environment. Lastly, Section 5.4 (Growth-Inducing Impacts) identifies any long-term environmental impacts caused by the proposed plan with respect to economic or population growth.

### **4.15.3 Cumulative Impacts**

A cumulative impact analysis is only provided for those thresholds that result in a less-than-significant impact, potentially significant impact unless mitigated, or significant and unavoidable impact. A cumulative impact analysis is not provided for No Impact, which does not result in project-related impacts.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065 states that a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has potential environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. As defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(3), cumulatively considerable means “that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.” Cumulative impacts are addressed for each of the environmental topics listed above and are provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this EIR.

### **4.15.4 Impacts on Species**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(1) states that a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has the potential to (1) substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; (2) cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; or (3) substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species. Section 4.3 (Biological Resources) of the EIR fully addresses any impacts that might relate to the reduction of the fish or wildlife habitat, the reduction of fish or wildlife populations, and the reduction or restriction of the range of special-status species as a result of project implementation.

### **4.15.5 Impacts on Historical Resources**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(1) states that a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has the potential to eliminate important examples of a major period of California history or prehistory. CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(1) amplifies Public Resources Code Section 21001(c) by requiring preservation of major periods of California history for the benefit of future generations. It also reflects the provisions of Public Resource Code Section 21084.1 in requiring a finding of significance for substantial adverse changes to historical resources. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 establishes standards for determining the significance of impacts to historical resources and archaeological sites that are an historical resource.

Section 4.4 (Cultural Resources) of this EIR fully addresses impacts related to California history and prehistory, historic resources, archaeological resources, and paleontological resources.

### **4.15.6 Impacts on Human Beings**

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(4), a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has the potential to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Under this standard, a change to the physical environment that might otherwise be minor must be treated as significant if people would be significantly affected. This factor relates to adverse changes to the environment of human beings generally, and not to effects on particular individuals. While changes to the environment that could indirectly affect human beings would be represented by all of the designated CEQA issue areas, those that could directly affect human beings include air quality, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities, and climate change, which are addressed in Section 4.2 (Air Quality), Section 4.5 (Geology/Soils and Mineral Resources), Section 4.6 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions), Section 4.7 (Safety/Risk of Upset), Section 4.8 (Hydrology/Water Quality), Section 4.10 (Noise), Section 4.12 (Public Services and Recreation), Section 4.13 (Transportation/Traffic), and Section 4.14 (Utilities/Service Systems).

### **4.15.7 References**

Kostka, Stephan L., and Michael H. Zischke. 2005. *Practice under the California Environmental Quality Act*.

