3 Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

3.0 Introduction

3.0.1 Scope of Analysis

This chapter contains an analysis of the environmental topics identified by the District's scoping process for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (Notice of Preparation [NOP] and Scoping Meetings) described in Chapter 1. Environmental topics addressed in this chapter include:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Socioeconomics, and Wildfire

Sections 3.1 through 3.16 of this chapter describe existing environmental conditions as they relate to each specific topic, identify significant adverse environmental effects (significant impacts) from implementing the project, and present mitigation measures to avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. Growth-inducing and cumulative impacts are discussed in Chapter 4. Alternatives to the project are described and analyzed, and their impacts compared to those of the project in Chapter 5.

3.0.2 Format of Environmental Analysis

Sections 3.1 through 3.16 of this chapter are organized as described below, based on the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Scoping Comments

Scoping comments received during the public scoping period for the EIR are included for each applicable resource section. Each comment, along with the location where each comment is addressed in the respective resource analysis, is summarized in a table. If scoping comments are not applicable to the resource topic, it is stated that no scoping comments apply.

Environmental and Regulatory Setting

Existing conditions are described in the respective "setting" sections for each environmental resource topic. The existing baseline conditions are described as of the date the NOP was published. These descriptions summarize information compiled during the study process to prepare the EIR. In the case of Hydrology, a future condition is also considered because changes to the hydrologic setting would occur prior to project construction and implementation as a result of upstream flood-control projects that have been approved but have not yet been constructed. Future changes in the hydrologic setting would also result from sea level rise. Background materials used in the EIR are referenced at the end of each section. The setting includes both the physical setting and the regulatory setting (that is, applicable local, State, and federal laws and regulations) that pertain to each resource topic.

Impact Assessment Methodology

Significance Criteria

Each resource topic in this EIR includes a definition of the significance criteria used to perform the analysis. This EIR uses the significance criteria adopted from the latest Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The CEQA Guidelines significance criteria are supplemented with local thresholds of significance from Appendices K and N of the Marin County's Environmental Impact Review Guidelines. In each instance, the discussion cites the source of the identified threshold. The significance threshold used in this EIR account for amendments to CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, as adopted by the California Natural Resources Agency on December 28, 2018.

Approach to Analysis

This section describes any methodologies used to prepare the impact assessment, including modeling or standards utilized to assess impacts where specific technical methods were applied.

Impact Discussion

Impacts

The analysis under each impact statement includes an evaluation of the significance of environmental impacts resulting from construction, operation, and maintenance of the project. An impact conclusion is provided for the analysis of each criteria question. The analysis considers both short-term and long-term impacts as well as direct and indirect impacts resulting from the project. Indirect impacts from a project may occur later in time, at a different location, or as the result of a sequence of related interactions (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064[d][2] and [3]).

Levels of Significance and Significance Determination

The following are definitions of the impact determinations used in the impact discussion:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** This determination applies if the project would result in an adverse effect that would exceed the significance criteria and for which

there is no feasible mitigation available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

- **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** This determination applies if there is a potential for the project to result in an adverse effect that would meet or exceed the significance criteria, but feasible mitigation is available that would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Less than Significant.** This determination applies if there is a potential for some limited impact but not a substantial, adverse effect that qualifies under the significance criteria as a significant impact. No mitigation is required for impacts determined to be less than significant.
- **No Impact.** An impact issue is considered not applicable (no impact) if there is no potential for impacts or the environmental resource does not occur within the project area or the area of potential effect.

Mitigation Measures

Each impact subsection identifies mitigation measures for all of the impacts considered significant, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4, which states that an EIR "shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts…." In this EIR, mitigation measures are identified (where feasible) for all of the significant impacts, and residual effects after mitigation are noted. If additional impacts could result from implementation of a mitigation measure, those impacts are identified, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4.[1]

3.0.3 Approach to Cumulative Impact Analysis

Cumulative impacts, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15355, refer to two or more individual effects that, when taken together, are "considerable" or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. A cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that would result from the incremental impact of each project when added to those of other closely related past, present, or probable future projects.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b) presents two approaches for analyzing cumulative impacts:

- A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including those projects outside the control of the agency; or
- A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan or related planning document that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of GHG emissions. A

[1] CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4 states that "if a mitigation measure would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the effects of the mitigation measure shall be discussed but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed."

summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program.

The cumulative impact analysis considers the effects of the project together with those of other past, present, or probable future projects within the geographic scope of cumulative analysis applicable to each resource topic. Refer to Section 4.3 Cumulative Impacts for a more detailed description of the approach to the cumulative impact analysis found in this EIR.