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## **4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

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### 4.0.1 FORMAT OF ISSUE SECTIONS

Sections in this chapter describe, for each environmental issue area, 1) the environmental setting as it relates to the specific issue; 2) the regulatory framework for the issue as applicable to the project; 3) significance criteria and the methodology used to assess impacts; 4) an evaluation of project-specific and cumulative impacts, identification of mitigation measures, and a determination of the level of significance after mitigation measures are implemented. Each section is organized into five parts: Setting, Regulatory Framework, Impacts and Mitigation Measures, Cumulative Setting and References.

The **Existing Setting** subsection describes the existing conditions pertaining to the issue at the regional, local and project site levels, as appropriate.

The **Regulatory Framework** identifies plans, policies, laws and regulations at the federal, state and local levels that are applicable to the particular issue.

The **Impacts and Mitigation Measures** subsection begins with a description of the significance criteria used to evaluate project impacts, followed by a description of the methodology utilized to assess impacts. Next are the individual impact statements, which include explanatory text and technical information necessary to formulate a conclusion. Following is a discussion of potential project-specific impacts. Where necessary, each impact discussed is followed by a description of the proposed mitigation and a statement of the level of impact following mitigation.

The **Cumulative Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures** subsection describes the cumulative setting that is appropriate to that subject area. For example, some air quality impacts are of a regional nature and the cumulative setting includes the entire air basin, while storm water impacts would be specific to the local drainage basin. Next are the individual impact statements, which include explanatory text and technical information necessary to formulate a conclusion. Following is a discussion of potential cumulative impacts. Where necessary, each cumulative impact is discussed, the project's contribution to that cumulative impact is identified, followed by a description of the proposed mitigation and a statement of the level of impact following mitigation.

The **References** subsection lists the documents, personal communications, and other sources of information cited or otherwise used in the preparation of the section.

### 4.0.2 DETERMINING LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Determining the severity of project impacts is fundamental to achieving the objectives of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 requires that decision-makers make findings that significant impacts identified in the final EIR have been mitigated as completely as feasible. If the EIR identifies any significant unmitigated impacts and the agency decides to approve the project, CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 requires decision-makers to adopt a statement of overriding considerations, which explains why the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse environmental consequences identified by the EIR.

The level of significance for each impact examined in this EIR was determined by considering the predicted magnitude of the impact against a threshold. Thresholds were developed using criteria from the CEQA Guidelines; local/regional plans and ordinances; and/or consultation with recognized experts. Thresholds are identified in each chapter under Significance Criteria.

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Four levels of impact significance are recognized by this Revised Draft EIR:

- **Less than Significant** impacts would not cause a substantial change in the environment or are not disruptive enough to require mitigation.
- **Potentially Significant** impacts may cause a significant effect on the environment, but information is lacking regarding the extent of the impact. This designation may be applied to impacts for which information is incomplete or unavailable, or to impacts that are qualitative in nature and cannot be readily quantified. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact. Mitigation measures are identified to reduce potential impacts to a level that is less than significant.
- **Significant** impacts would cause a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of the project effects using specified significance criteria. Mitigation measures are identified to reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant.
- **Significant and Unavoidable** impacts are significant adverse impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level. This designation can be given to impacts for which there is no feasible mitigation, or to impacts for which mitigation measures can be applied but are not sufficient to reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant.

### 4.0.3 IMPACT AND MITIGATION FORMAT

The standard format used to present the evaluation of impacts is as follows:

**Impact 4.0.1** The impact number identifies the section of the report and the sequential order of the impact within that section. Following the impact number is the impact statement, which identifies the potential impact

The identified impact is then discussed in more detail. At the end of the discussion, a level of significance is assigned to the impact. If the impact is identified as **less than significant**, there will be no further evaluation of the impact. If the impact is identified as **potentially significant** or **significant**, proposed mitigation measures will follow. **Significant and unavoidable** impacts may or may not have proposed mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

In some cases, following the impact discussion, reference is made to state and federal regulations and agency policies that would fully or partially mitigate the impact. Also, policies and programs from applicable local land use plans that partially or fully mitigate the impact may be cited. These policies and regulations shall be considered as part of the package of recommended mitigation measures.

Mitigation measures are described in the format presented below:

**MM 4.0.1(a)** Mitigation is identified that would reduce the impact to the lowest degree possible. The mitigation number links the mitigation to the impact; the letter identifies the sequential order of the mitigation for that impact.

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*Timing/Implementation:* Gives the time when the mitigation measure is to be implemented (e.g., upon submission of final map, prior to issuance of building permit).

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Identifies the department or agency with the responsibility for implementing the mitigation measure.

The discussion concludes by describing how the mitigation measures presented above will reduce the impact. It then identifies the resulting level of significance of the impact following mitigation.