

CHAPTER 7

OTHER CEQA/NEPA TOPICS

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Section 21100(b)(5) of CEQA requires that an EIR discuss the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) clarifies this requirement, stating that an EIR must address “the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly in the surrounding environment.” In addition, under authority of NEPA, the CEQ NEPA Regulations require consideration of the potential indirect impacts of a proposed project within an EIS. Indirect impacts of an action include those that occur later in time or farther away in distance but that are still reasonably foreseeable (CEQ NEPA Regulation Section 1508.8[b]).

The CEQA Guidelines and the CEQ NEPA Regulations identify several ways in which a project could have growth-inducing impacts. In addition to the characteristics described above, projects that remove obstacles to population growth and projects that encourage and facilitate other activities that are beyond those proposed as part of the project and that could affect the environment are considered growth-inducing (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2[d]).

Potential inducements to population growth include the availability of adequate water supplies, the availability of sewage treatment facilities, the availability of developable land, the types and availability of employment opportunities, housing costs and availability, commuting distances, cultural amenities, climate, and local government growth policies contained in general plans and zoning ordinances.

Section 1508.8(b) of the CEQ NEPA Regulations notes that indirect effects can include “growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystem.”

Growth inducement may not be considered necessarily detrimental, beneficial, or of significance under CEQA. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, in some other way, significantly affects the environment, i.e., that it requires constructing facilities that would adversely affect the environment.

The growth-inducing impacts analysis discusses the restoration effort in two phases. Phase 1 alternatives have a design life of approximately 30 years and could additionally have a long-term utility with the implementation of Phase 2 alternatives. Implementing Phase 2 actions would extend efforts initiated by Phase 1 actions and would extend the life of the project to at least 100 years. Phase 2 alternatives have been analyzed in less detail than Phase 1 alternatives because of the uncertainties inherent in evaluating actions not scheduled to occur for at least 25 years.

Analyses of environmental effects include a discussion of growth-inducing impacts and other effects related to changes in land use patterns, population density, or growth rate. The location, timing, and magnitude of economic and population growth within a region are determined by many interrelated economic, social, and political factors, including the following:

- Employment opportunities (both direct and indirect);
- Availability and cost of natural resources, including land, water, and energy;
- Availability and cost of housing;
- Adequacy of community infrastructure (such as transportation facilities, fire and police protection, schools, recreational facilities); and
- Local government policy concerning growth issues (such as zoning ordinances and general plans).

Because each of these variables influences growth, it is difficult to determine whether a change in one of them is sufficient to cause a significant change in community growth rates.

As described in Chapter 1, there have been five goals identified for the Salton Sea Restoration Project. Two of these goals would result in growth in the Salton Sea area. Goal 3 is to restore recreational uses at the Sea, and Goal 5 is to identify opportunities for economic development around the Sea. For the purposes of this EIS/EIR the assumption is that the improved condition of the Salton Sea will stimulate economic growth in the area.

Potentially growth-inducing impacts for each phase are summarized in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1
Summary of Growth-Inducing Impacts

Phase/Alternative	Impacts
No Action Alternative	No growth-inducing impacts. Instead, recreational use and related commercial activities and property values would decline.
Alternative 1	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts through life of project. Implementation of export and import alternatives would increase economic and recreational activity in the Salton Sea area. Export alternatives may have negative effects on receiving locations.
Alternative 2	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts to 2050. After 2050, positive economic and recreational impacts. Implementation of import alternatives would increase economic and recreational activity in the Salton Sea area.
Alternative 3	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts to 2050. After 2050, positive economic and recreational impacts. Implementation of import alternatives would increase economic and recreational activity in the Salton Sea area.
Alternative 4	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts to 2050. After 2050, positive economic and recreational impacts. Implementation of import alternatives would increase economic and recreational activity in the Salton Sea area.
Alternative 5	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts through life of project. Implementation of export and import alternatives would increase economic and recreational activity in the Salton Sea area. Export alternatives may have negative effects on receiving locations.
Common Actions	Negligible to slightly positive economic and recreational impacts to 2050 and beyond.

7.1.1 Potentially Significant Impacts

Potentially significant growth-inducing impacts would not occur until after 2050. Construction of any of the Phase 1 alternatives would result in positive short-term economic impacts from increased employment, spending, and business volume related to construction activities. During Phase 1 (30 years), employment and expenditures of the restoration program would have a small positive effect on the local economy. However, these beneficial effects are expected to be minor to negligible during Phase 1 until target levels are achieved for salinity and elevation, after 2050. After 2050, implementation of Phase 2 alternatives in conjunction with Phase 1 would substantially increase the recreational use of the sea and the economic growth in the area. The exact location of the growth is difficult to identify. However, local land use plans and existing environmental regulations and plans in the Salton Sea area will dictate where growth is allowed.

7.1.2 Mitigation Strategies

Because growth-inducing impacts would result primarily from improvements to the Salton Sea, the mitigation measures for potential growth-inducing impacts generally consist of existing laws and policies regulating development. For project alternatives that result in long-term changes in land use and land use patterns, existing planning and land management documents may need to be revised.

7.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Short-term impacts versus long-term productivity for each resource considered in the EIS/EIR is summarized in Table 7-2. In general, adverse short-term impacts are related to construction activities and are identified for most resources. However, restoration of the Salton Sea had long-term benefits for some resources, including water quality, biological resources (including vegetation and wildlife, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and avian resources), socioeconomics, land use, aesthetics, public health and environmental hazards, and Indian Trust Assets.

7.2.1 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Irreversible impacts are those that cause, through direct or indirect effects, use or consumption of resources so that they cannot be restored or returned to the original condition, despite mitigation efforts. If unavoidable, the potentially irreversible impacts are documented in this report. An irretrievable impact or commitment of resources occurs when a resource is removed or consumed. These types of impacts are evaluated to assure that consumption is justified. A summary of potential irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources is presented in Table 7-3.

Table 7-2
Summary of Short-term and Long-term Impacts

Resource	Impact Summary
Surface Water	Without project, salinity of the Sea would continue to increase, thereby continuing to adversely affect surface water quality. Short-term water quality impacts would occur with alternatives requiring dredging or disturbing the Sea. Long-term benefits to water quality would occur.
Ground Water	Without project, salinity of the Sea would continue to increase, thereby potentially continuing to adversely affect ground water quality. Long-term benefits to ground water quality would likely occur.
Geology and Soils	For all alternatives, short- and long-term commitment of resources (loss of soils) would occur during construction.
Air Quality	Short-term but significant emissions during construction periods for all alternatives. Potentially significant salt drift affecting areas immediately downwind of EES system facilities in alternatives 2, 3, and 4. Additional construction emissions and facility operational emissions from fish harvesting programs and wildlife/fisheries programs requiring creation of artificial islands or large pond systems.
Noise	For all alternatives, short-term, localized and intermittent increases in noise levels would occur during construction. Minor operational impacts would occur both short- and long-term.
Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems	Without project, increased salinity and degraded water quality of the Sea would continue to adversely affect resources. Short-term loss of habitat would occur with alternatives disturbing the Sea. Long-term habitat restoration and improvement would occur with all alternatives. Potential impacts associated with long-term export alternatives may affect resources at receiving location.
Avian Resources	Without project, increased salinity and degraded water quality of the Sea would continue to adversely affect resources. Short-term loss of habitat could occur. Long-term habitat restoration and improvement would occur with all alternatives.
Vegetation and Wildlife	Without project, increased salinity and degraded water quality of the Sea would continue to adversely affect resources. Short-term loss of habitat would occur with alternatives disturbing the Sea. Long-term habitat restoration and improvement would occur with all alternatives. Potential impacts associated with long-term export alternatives may affect resources at receiving location.
Socioeconomics	For all alternatives, short-term increases in economic activity would occur during construction. Negligible socioeconomic impacts would occur until 2050, after which all alternatives would have a net positive effect.
Land Use and Planning	Some land use incompatibilities would occur with some Phase 1 alternatives. Potential long-term benefits because of enhanced value of areas designated for residential, urban, and recreational uses. Phase 2 export alternatives and one import alternative would permanently commit land for pipelines in the long-term.
Agricultural Land Resources	No short-term losses. One Phase 2 alternative may result in loss of agricultural productivity in the long-term.
Recreational Resources	Short-term negative effects. Slight positive impacts as Sea elevation and salinity stabilize. Long-term beneficial impacts.

Table 7-2
Summary of Short-term and Long-term Impacts (continued)

Resource	Impact Summary
Aesthetics	Construction of EESs would have short- and long-term impacts. Long-term benefits to aesthetic character of the area.
Public Health and Environmental Hazards	Short-term construction impacts associated with dredging or moving contaminated soils. Long-term beneficial impacts due to decreased contaminant concentrations in the Sea. Potential negative long-term impacts at receiving locations of Phase 2 export alternatives.
Utilities and Public Services	Minor short-term adverse impacts related to the removal and replacement of electric utility lines would occur with construction. Long-term impacts during Phase 1 would be negligible. Adverse long-term impacts could occur during Phase 2 if the demands of economic growth surpass the capacity of utilities and public services.
Cultural, Native American, and Paleontological Resources	Ground-disturbing activities (both short-term and long-term) required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives could result in the permanent loss of important nonrenewable cultural, Native American, and paleontological resources. No long-term benefits would occur.
Indian Trust Assets	Ground-disturbing activities (both short-term and long-term) required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives could result in the permanent loss of important nonrenewable Indian Trust Assets. Potential for long-term benefits from improved economic conditions in the area.
Environmental Justice	For all alternatives, construction activities that disturb the Sea floor (such as dredging) may affect inundated Native American resources. Potential for long-term benefits from improved economic conditions in the area.

Table 7-3
Summary of Potentially Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Resource	Impact Summary
Surface Water	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Ground Water	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Geology and Soils	The use of borrow soil to construct the infrastructure required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives would result in an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of these resources.
Air Quality	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Noise	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems	Some loss or alteration of habitat would occur from facilities construction.
Avian Resources	Some loss or alteration of habitat would occur from facilities construction.
Vegetation and Wildlife	Some loss or alteration of habitat would occur from facilities construction.
Socioeconomics	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Land Use and Planning	Construction of the infrastructure required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives would result in a long-term or permanent conversion of land, which would not be available for other uses.
Agricultural Land Resources	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts for Phase 1 activities and most Phase 2 activities. One Phase 2 alternative (Export to Gulf of California) may result in irretrievable commitment of agriculturally important lands.
Recreational Resources	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Aesthetics	The construction of the infrastructure required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives would result in permanent and irreversible changes to the visual nature of the area.
Public Health and Environmental Hazards	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Utilities and Public Services	No irreversible or irretrievable impacts.
Cultural, Native American, and Paleontological Resources	Ground-disturbing activities required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives could result in the irreversible/irretrievable loss of important cultural, Native American, and paleontological resources.
Indian Trust Assets	Ground-disturbing activities required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives could result in the irreversible/irretrievable loss of important Indian Trust Assets.
Environmental Justice	Ground-disturbing activities required for all Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives could result in the irreversible/irretrievable loss of important Native American resources.