

## 4.5 NEPA/CEQA ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE/SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

NEPA requires that “the alternative of alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable: be identified. Environmentally preferable is defined as the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Policy Act, meaning the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. In addition, it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources” (Council on Environmental Quality 1981). Although Council on Environmental Quality regulations require the identification of the environmentally preferred alternative, it is not required that this alternative be adopted.

Section 101 of NEPA states that

*...it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain wherever possible an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.”*

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(a) and (e)(2)) require that an EIR's analysis of alternatives identify the “environmentally superior alternative” among all of those considered. In addition, if the No Project Alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative, then the EIR must also identify the environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. Under CEQA, the goal of identifying the environmentally superior alternative is to assist decision-makers in considering project approval. CEQA does not require an agency to select the environmentally superior alternative (CEQA Guidelines Section 15042-15043).

The No Project/No Action alternative would result in limited new development but would not implement any resource management plans. The Preferred Alternative would have a

moderate to high level of facility development with limited new facilities in currently undeveloped areas. The Preferred Alternative would provide comprehensive resource management policies for biological, cultural, and visual resources as well as water quality. Alternative 3 would have the greatest long range facility development primarily concentrated in existing developed areas. It would also contain policies for managing resources. Alternative 4 would have minimal new development and would reduce use of some existing facilities. Alternative 4 would include a greater number of areas designated for conservation/preservation of resources and would provide comprehensive resource management policies.

Alternative 4 would have the lowest level of development impacts and would ensure future protection of biological and cultural resources. Alternative 4 would be the Environmentally Preferred/Environmentally Superior Alternative because it would comply with Section 101 of the NEPA and minimize potential effects to biological resources, public services, utilities, water quality, traffic, noise, and cultural resources compared with the other alternatives and would include resource management plans and plan policies to protect all resources in the area.

## 4.6 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Section 15126(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR “describe any significant impacts, including those which can be mitigated, but not reduced to a level of insignificance. Where there are impacts that cannot be alleviated without imposing an alternative design, their implications and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, should be described.” Program-level environmental review indicates that potential impacts from projects proposed in the Plan can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through appropriate facility siting, implementation of resource management guidelines, use of best management practices and implementation of mitigation measures contained in the Plan.

Implementation of the Plan would involve the construction of additional facilities and site improvements that will undergo project-level environmental analysis per CEQA and NEPA guidelines.

## 4.7 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

No significant irreversible changes to the natural environment are anticipated from the adoption and implementation of the Plan. While any facility development, including structures, campsites, and trails, may be considered a long-term commitment of resources, impacts can be reversed through removal of facilities and discontinued use. In areas where impacts have become unacceptable either from excessive use or from a change in environmental conditions, State Parks removes, replaces, or realigns facilities such as trails or campsites or closes areas on a seasonal or temporary basis until conditions can improve. The construction and operation of facilities may require the use of nonrenewable resources. This impact would be minor due to the limited number of facilities planned for development and to the consideration of sustainable practices in site design, construction, maintenance, and operations as proposed in the Plan. Sustainable principles used in design and management emphasize environmental sensitivity in construction, the use of nontoxic materials and renewable resources, resource conservation, recycling, and energy efficiency. The sustainability guidelines proposed by the Plan are listed below.

Many cultural resources are considered unique and nonrenewable. Destruction of any cultural resource may be considered a significant irreversible effect. To avoid this impact, proposed development sites will be surveyed for cultural resources, all site and facilities designs will incorporate methods for protecting and preserving significant cultural resources and human activities will be monitored to protect cultural resources.

The loss of special-status plants and animals could also be a significant irreversible impact. To avoid such impacts, proposed development sites will be surveyed for biological resources; all sites and facility designs will incorporate methods for protecting and preserving significant biological resources; and human activities will be monitored to ensure protection of biological resources.

Guideline SUSTAIN-1: *Sustainable Sites*: Minimize the negative environmental impacts associated with site enhancement, development, maintenance, and operations activities. See Section 4.4.5, Biological Resources, for specific guidelines.

- Guideline SUSTAIN-2: *Safeguarding Water:* Conserve water and protect water quality. See Section 4.4.7, Hydrology and Water Quality, for specific guidelines.
- Guideline SUSTAIN-3: *Energy and Atmosphere:* Design park improvements to enhance energy efficiency and expand the use of renewable resources. See Section 4.4.2.5, Energy Conservation, for specific guidelines.
- Guideline SUSTAIN-4: *Materials and Resources:* Minimize the life-cycle impact of materials by considering the following guidelines when implementing the Plan:
- Reduce material use, reuse, and recycle – in that order of priority.
  - Reduce material requirements through effective site layout.
  - Design and site structures with careful regard to site-specific conditions in order to avoid structural, maintenance, and ecological problems.
  - Specify reused materials where possible.
  - Specify recycled-content materials (e.g., wood substitutes, concrete, asphalt, etc.) for site use, based on life-cycle performance requirements.
  - Consider factors such as renewability (can the material be grown or naturally replenished?), sustainable production (will resources be used up too fast?), and recyclability when selecting materials. Support manufacturers whose product literature includes environmental data.
  - Practice effective waste management (recycling).
  - Limit paved areas to the strict minimum required for their intended purpose.
  - Avoid over-designing paved areas by distinguishing the structural requirements for light-vehicular, heavy-vehicular, and pedestrian paving. For light-duty roads and paths, stabilize without pavement.

Guideline SUSTAIN-5: *Indoor environmental quality*: Enhance the health and comfort of building occupants by considering the following guidelines when implementing the Plan:

- Provide for occupant control of lighting, airflow, or operable windows.
- Maximize the use of daylight and maintain access to the outdoors.
- Use materials with low emissions.

## 4.8 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

An EIR must discuss 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 (State CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(d)). Projects that would remove obstacles to population growth, such as an expansion of a wastewater treatment plant, are also considered when discussing growth inducement. Increases in population may also tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects.

Implementation of the Plan would likely result in an increase in visitation to the project area. The Plan recommends new visitor facilities thereby increasing its capacity for visitors. Providing increased awareness to the project area through improved signage and other infrastructure improvements will attract more visitors to the project area. Improving trail connections between the project area and adjacent and nearby public lands may contribute to the potential for increased overnight use in areas of the project area that currently lack these opportunities.

The increased capacity may result in the need for an increased number of permanent and seasonal staff. The Plan also recommends consideration of additional seasonal staff housing and improvements to existing staff housing. These proposals would result in a very minimal direct population growth impact on the area. Improvements to the project area's utilities including future water supply and sanitary systems will be self-contained for project area-use only and would not encourage population growth in the surrounding areas.

Increased visitation to the project area may create additional tourism and the need for tourist services in the adjacent communities and surrounding region. The Plan could potentially foster economic growth in the region by encouraging an increase in supporting recreation and tourist services, such as recreation equipment, supplies, food, and related facilities.

## 4.9 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

“Cumulative impacts” refers to two or more individual effects that may be significant when considered together, or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. The cumulative impact of several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (State CEQA Guidelines §15355 and 40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts evaluated in this EIS/EIR are cumulative in nature due to the size of the project area and the assessment of impacts on a regional scale.

### 4.9.1 Planned and Current Projects in the Vicinity of the Unit

As described in the land use section (4.4.8), the majority of the development in the immediate vicinity of the park is relatively low-density single-family residential with scattered commercial retail and employment development in the surrounding areas. Today, only the northern and northeastern-most boundaries of the park adjoin truly rural areas. Higher density development is concentrated along the Unit in the City of Folsom, in unincorporated Placer County near Granite Bay, and in El Dorado County adjacent to Brown’s Ravine and the lower El Dorado Shore. Recent large-scale development projects are being constructed in the City of Folsom, and the El Dorado Hills community has recently experienced significant growth. Development is likely to continue in the park vicinity after Plan implementation, particularly in El Dorado County. The proposed Folsom Dam Bridge and road widening projects, including Hazel Avenue from Folsom Boulevard north to Placer County and Greenback Lane along the western shore of Lake Natoma, are responses to the substantial growth in the areas surrounding the Unit.

Numerous measures and projects have been proposed and/or implemented to increase the level of protection provided by the Folsom Dam flood control system. The Folsom Dam Safety and Flood Damage Reduction Joint Federal Project Modification Project would increase the level of flood protection for Sacramento to above the 200-year flood event. A new gated auxiliary spillway around Folsom Dam is the central piece of the flood protection measures in this new joint federal project. This new spillway would run from Observation Point on the south side of the left wing dam down to the river below the existing spillways and outlets. The project may also involve a 3.5 foot raise to the dam and dikes as well. If a



raise is determined necessary to meet flood protection objectives, additional environmental analysis would be conducted for the raise.

Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park (SHP) is a separate designated unit within the State Parks system located within Folsom Lake SRA. The Folsom Powerhouse represents one of the oldest hydroelectric facilities in the world and the nation's first power system to provide high-voltage alternative current over long distance transmission lines. The SHP currently includes the main powerhouse and associated buildings, picnic area, restrooms, and a small parking area. Significant improvements are planned for this day use facility, including seismic upgrades, a larger parking area with room for buses, and a new visitor center to be located at the Powerhouse entrance.

#### 4.9.2 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

The purpose of this cumulative impact analysis is to determine whether potentially significant cumulative environmental impacts would occur from implementation of the Plan in combination with other project or conditions and to indicate the severity of the impacts and their occurrence. Therefore, only those areas for which "moderate" or "high" impacts were identified and mitigation measures were required have been included in this discussion of cumulative impacts.

##### *Geology*

Construction resulting from Plan implementation would potentially result in soil erosion and the exposure of sensitive receptors to airborne NOA. Mitigation specific to individual projects would address erosion and NOA hazards and, in conjunction with similar standard measures required of cumulative projects, would reduce cumulative impacts to less than significant levels. To address health concerns associated with exposure to NOA resulting from earth moving activities, future projects would comply with the Airborne Toxic Control Measures adopted by the California Air Resources Board and any applicable local agency regulations.

##### *Biological Resources*

The Plan contains many guidelines to avoid, minimize, or compensate for impacts to biological resources. All potential locations of new construction or site alteration activities would be pre-screened to determine the potential for special status plants and animals to occur. If sensitive species are determined to occur and cannot be avoided, impacts would be mitigated in accordance with the guidelines of the USFWS, CDFG, and other appropriate agencies. To the degree feasible, park activities that have the potential to adversely impact

riparian, vernal pool, and freshwater marshes, and valley elderberry longhorn beetle, red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, and western pond turtle habitat would be avoided. Prior to the implementation of any proposed project, State Parks and Reclamation would obtain the necessary permits and authorizations from the ACOE, RWQCB, and CDFG to minimize project-specific and cumulative impacts to biological resources.

### *Cultural Resources*

Cumulative impacts to cultural resources that occur as a result of development within and surrounding the Unit could be significant if significant cultural resources are destroyed as a result of the development. Within the area, prehistoric and historical sites are most likely to be located along the original American River channels. The proposed Plan guidelines and the mitigation measures required by State Parks and Reclamation during standard CEQA and NEPA review (Section 4.4.6) provide for avoidance, documentation, and/or recovery of significant cultural resources. As a result, Plan implementation would not contribute to cumulative impacts to cultural resources.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

U.S. Congress has authorized several flood control projects to address the need for improved flood protection for the American River watershed area, including the Folsom Dam Modification Project, the Folsom Dam Mini-Raise, and most recently the ongoing Joint Federal Project (see Section 4.4.8.1.2). While execution of future flood control projects may result in an increased number of recreation facilities that could be inundated during an extreme flood event, the increased flood protection and capacity to release water from the reservoir will reduce the likelihood of these facilities getting inundated. Flood impacts would be addressed in the environmental documents prepared for the specific flood control projects. The Plan contains specific guidelines that would reduce or eliminate potential adverse impacts associated with flooding. Because the current proposed flood protection projects have changed significantly during this Plan development process, these guidelines would serve as a framework for working with the ACOE, SAFCA and other agencies to minimize and fully mitigate the impacts of these projects on recreation and resources within the Unit.

With the implementation of the guidelines and mitigation measures discussed in Section 4.4.7, Hydrology and Water Quality, the construction and operation of new or proposed recreation, interpretive, and administrative facilities would not adversely impact water quality in the project area or contribute to a significant cumulative impact.

### *Traffic*

The traffic analysis contained in Section 4.4.10 is cumulative in nature because it considers local roadway plans outlined in County and City planning documents and utilizes the regional traffic model provided by the SACOG to project future traffic volumes. The impacts analysis for traffic and circulation considered the intersections and road segments to which Plan implementation could contribute a cumulative impact. The program level traffic analysis yielded several roadway segments that could potentially exceed LOS D, resulting in cumulatively significant impacts to local roadways. Fair-share roadway improvements or other mitigating actions identified in Mitigation Measure TRAF 1B, if determined to be necessary by future project-specific traffic studies, would mitigate project-specific and cumulative impacts to a level below significance.

### *Air Quality*

For air quality, the cumulative region of influence is the combined Mountain Counties Air Basin (El Dorado County) and Sacramento Valley Air Basin (Sacramento and Placer Counties). The Plan would contribute short-term increases in air pollutants, such as airborne asbestos fibers, particulate matter, and ozone during project construction. When considered with neighboring projects that may be under construction simultaneously with the proposed project, generation of fugitive dust and pollutant emissions during construction may result in substantial short-term increases in air pollutants. Implementation of the mitigation measures described in Section 4.4.11 to offset construction-related impacts resulting from grading activities and exhaust emissions would reduce contributions to short-term cumulative air quality impacts.

Facility operation and vehicle emissions resulting from Plan implementation would contribute cumulatively to local and regional air quality degradation. Both Basins are in nonattainment for PM<sub>10</sub> and ozone at the present time. Construction of the proposed project, in conjunction with other planned developments within the cumulative study area, would contribute to the existing nonattainment status. Therefore, the proposed project would exacerbate nonattainment of air quality standards within both Basins and contribute to adverse cumulative air quality impacts. Considered apart from other projects, the long-term operation of the Plan would not exceed any air district thresholds and would have less than significant long-term operational air quality impacts related to vehicle emissions.

### *Noise*

The impacts analysis for noise (Section 4.4.12) considered the area surrounding the Unit. The primary short-term noise impacts associated with Plan implementation are related to construction noise and would potentially contribute to short-term cumulative noise impacts

in the region, depending upon the location and nature of concurrent projects. Short-term noise impacts would be lessened through the implementation of standard BMPs prescribed by individual future noise analyses.

Traffic on local streets is the dominant source contributing to area ambient noise levels in the Unit vicinity. In general, noise impacts associated with the majority of cumulative projects are long-term effects related to traffic generated by development. The projected traffic noise levels contained in Section 4.4.12 were based on the data generated by the traffic analysis which was cumulative in nature. There would be little change in the traffic noise levels in the region associated with implementation of any of the alternatives; all areas would increase less than 3 dBA. As changes in noise levels of 3 dBA or less are not perceptible to the human ear in an outdoor environment, these noise level increases would be considered less than significant.

### *Hazardous Materials*

Construction resulting from Plan implementation would potentially result in generation of increased emissions of air pollutants, including airborne NOA particulates. Mitigation specific to individual projects would address NOA hazards and, in conjunction with similar standard measures required of cumulative projects, would reduce cumulative impacts to less than significant levels. To address health concerns associated with exposure to NOA resulting from earth moving activities, future projects would comply with the Airborne Toxic Control Measures adopted by the California Air Resources Board and any applicable local agency regulations.

Construction activities in the vicinity of abandoned chromium mines could result in potential water quality issues or the exposure of construction workers to particulate matter containing hexavalent chromium. Proposed projects in the areas that may contain chromate deposits would be required to undergo a Phase I and/or Phase II Environmental Site Assessment to identify potential impacts. All future projects involving on-site movement of a hazardous material would be subject to California Code of Regulations and require development of appropriate warning and protective methods, thereby reducing potential cumulative impacts to less than significant levels.

### *Utilities and Service Systems*

The impacts analysis for utilities and service systems (Section 4.4.14) considered the area surrounding the Unit. The majority of the existing water supply, wastewater, electricity and gas, and telephone services within the Unit are provided by public utility systems. According to various utility representatives, the existing utility system serving most recreation areas in

the park have the capacity to accommodate additional park facilities. However, proposed development in some specific areas could contribute to cumulative impacts to utilities. To address potential capacity requirements, future projects would be submitted to and reviewed by the applicable Public Works Department in Sacramento County, Placer County, El Dorado County, and/or the City of Folsom to ensure public service is available. All future projects would be subject to such review, thereby reducing potential cumulative impacts to less than significant levels.

## 4.10 REFERENCES

This environmental analysis was based primarily on the *Draft Resource Inventory for the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area* (April 2003) that was prepared for the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the United States Bureau of Reclamation. The Resource Inventory is comprised of the following sections: geology, soils, hydrology, water quality, noise, plant life, animal life, recreation resources, scenic resources, cultural resources, land use, traffic/circulation, and utilities. The primary contributors to the Resource Inventory included Wallace, Roberts, and Todd, LLC (San Francisco, CA); LSA Associates, Inc. (Irvine and Point Richmond, CA); Geotechnical Consultants, Inc. (San Francisco, CA); Psomas (Sacramento, CA); and Concept Marine Associates, Inc. (Oakland, CA). The Resource Inventory may currently be found on the California Department of Parks and Recreation website: <[http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=22741](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22741)>

The following supplemental resources were also consulted during the preparation of the environmental analysis:

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## 4.11 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### ACRONYMS

A-weighted Decibels (dBA)	Central Valley Project (CVP)
Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO)	Clean Water Act (CWA)
Airborne Toxic Control Measures (ATCMs)	Community Noise Equivalent (CNEL)
Ambient Air Quality Standards (AAQS).	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Amended Memorandum of Understanding (AMOU)	Day-night average noise ( $L_{dn}$ )
American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA)	DPR Department of Parks and Recreation
American River Conservancy (ARC)	El Dorado County Air Pollution Control District (EDCAPCD)
American River Water Education Center (ARWEC)	El Dorado Irrigation District (EID)
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR)
Archaeological and Historical Preservation Act of 1974 (AHPA)	Environmental Water Account (EWA).
Archaeological Data Preservation Act of 1974 (ADPA)	Equivalent-Continuous sound level ( $L_{eq}$ )
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA)	Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)
Area of Potential Effect (APE)	Executive Order (EO)
Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)	Federal Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA)
Average Daily Traffic (ADT)	Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)
A-weighted Decibels (dBA)	federally endangered (FE)
Best Management Practices (BMPs)	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
California Air Resources Board (ARB)	Folsom Lake State Recreation Area (the Unit)
California Clean Air Act (CCAA)	Federally Threatened (FT)
California Department of Conservation (DOC)	General Plan (GP)
California Department of Fire and Forestry (CDF)	General Plan/Resource Management Plan (Plan)
California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)	Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District (GDRCD)
California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR)	High efficiency particulate air (HEPA)
California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks)	Level Of Service (LOS)
California Endangered Species Act (CESA)	Magnusen-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA),
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
California Geological Survey (CGS)	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)
California Native Plant Society's (CNPS)	Amended Memorandum of Understanding (AMOU)
California Species of Special Concern (CSC)	Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB)
California Species of Special Concern (CSC)	National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)
California State University Sacramento (CSUS)	National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
California Vehicle Code (CVC)	National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
	National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries)
	National Register of Historic Places (National Register)

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1989 (NAGPRA)	Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD)
Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA)	Sacramento Municipal Water District (SMUD)
Notice of Availability (NOA)	Sacramento Valley Air Basin (SVAB)
Notice of Completion (NOC)	San Juan Water District (SJWD)
Notice of Intent (NOI)	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)
Notice of Preparation (NOP)	State Water Project (SWP)
California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP)	Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE)
Operation and Maintenance (O&M)	State Historic Park (SHP)
Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM)	State Implementation Plan (SIP)
Parkway Corridor Combining (PC)	State listed as Rare (SR)
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)	State Recreation Area (SRA)
Placer County Air Pollution Control District (PCAPCD)	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
Protect American River Canyons (PARC)	U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Reclamation District (RD)	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
River Management Plan (RMP)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Sacramento Area Council Of Governments (SACOG)	Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle (VELB)
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)	Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)
Sacramento Coordinated Monitoring Program (CMP).	Volume-to-Capacity (v/c)
Sacramento County Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)	Water Forum Agreement (WFA)
	Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)
	Western Regional Climate Center (WRCC)

## ABBREVIATIONS

Aquatic (aq)

California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks)

Recreational Vehicle (RV)

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)