

7. OTHER CEQA-REQUIRED SECTIONS

7.1 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15128 provides that: “[a]n EIR shall contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR.” Accordingly, this section summarizes the environmental issue areas that were not discussed in detail.

Water Forum Proposal Effects That Are Less Than Significant

The focus of the EIR is on the broad environmental effects resulting from the water resource decisions and actions associated with the WFP, such as diversion of surface water, operation of dams for the storage and release of water, and extraction of groundwater. Section 4 of this EIR contains a comprehensive evaluation of potential environmental effects related to issues affected by the relevant water resource decisions and actions. Among the effects examined are many that were determined to be less than significant. Please refer to Section 4 for an explanation of these impact conclusions.

Issues Addressed in Subsequent Project-Level Environmental Reviews

The WFP does not include the construction or modification of specific water supply facilities, such as diversion structures, pipelines, dam modifications, or water treatment plants. To implement the WFP some of these facilities will need to be approved and built by individual water purveyors when the demand for water warrants them. At such time, each specific facility will be subject to its own subsequent, project-level environmental review by the proponent water agency. Consequently, site-specific, water facility construction-related environmental impact issues are to be addressed in those project-level reviews and not in the WFP EIR. These issues include impacts of specific projects on geology and soils, air quality, noise, biological, aesthetic, traffic, hazard, utility, and land use impacts.

Issues Addressed in Other EIRs

One of the coequal objectives of the WFP is to provide a reliable and safe water supply for the region’s economic health and planned development. Environmental effects caused by future planned development in the water service study area are acknowledged but not discussed in detail in this EIR, because they have been addressed in the respective General Plan EIRs certified by the County of Sacramento, County of Placer, County of El Dorado, City of Sacramento, City of Folsom, City of Roseville, and City of Galt. These environmental issues include traffic and transportation, local and regional air quality, noise, public services and utilities, population and employment, light and glare, hazards, and mineral resource impacts associated with the development of residential, commercial, industrial, and other urban uses. The topics in the WFP EIR include groundwater, water supply, water quality, fisheries resources

and aquatic habitat, flood control, power supply, vegetation and wildlife, recreation, land use and growth-inducing, aesthetics and cultural resources; however, these discussions do not include indirect effects caused by urban development related to these issues, because they too are addressed in the respective General Plan EIRs.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Section 15126(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to “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.”

Chapter 4 of this EIR provides a description of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and recommends mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, where possible. After implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, however, not all of the significant impacts associated with the proposed project would be reduced with certainty to less-than-significant levels. Significant unavoidable impacts remain in areas of water supply, fisheries, power supply, and aesthetics and are summarized as follows:

Water Supply: Reduced deliveries to SWP and CVP contractors.

Water Quality: Seasonal changes to Sacramento River and Delta water quality.

Fisheries: Reductions in seasonal availability of reservoir littoral habitat for Folsom Reservoir’s warmwater fisheries; flow-related impacts to fall-run chinook salmon; flow and temperature-related impacts to splittail; contribution to cumulative impacts to warmwater fisheries of Shasta and Trinity reservoirs; cumulative temperature-related impacts to Sacramento River fisheries resources; and cumulative flow-related impacts to Delta fish populations.

Power Supply: Contribution to cumulative reduction in average annual average CVP hydropower capacity and generation.

Recreation: Reduced rafting and boating opportunities on the Lower American River; reduced boating opportunities on Folsom Reservoir; and decreased late-season swimming beach opportunities at Folsom Reservoir.

Land Use and Growth-inducing Impacts: Substantial growth-inducement and resultant land use impacts.

Cultural Resources: Increased cycles of inundation and drawdown affecting cultural resources sites around Folsom Reservoir.

7.3 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

Section 15126(f) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss “any significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented.” The following considers the proposed WFP in light of this requirement.

The primary issue regarding commitment of resources related to the WFP would involve its role in providing a plan for the region’s water supply. One of the coequal objectives is to provide a reliable and safe water supply for the region’s economic health and planned development through to the year 2030. Provision of this supply involves plans to divert a greater amount of surface water from the American and Sacramento rivers, and continued reliance on groundwater resources in parts of the region. The adoption of the WFP alone would not make this diversion of additional surface water or extraction of groundwater an irreversible decision. Several implementation steps are necessary before entitlements are revised, permits are granted, facilities are constructed, and the surface water supply is finally committed and used. For groundwater, implementation of the WFP includes establishment of a governance structure to oversee the use and management of that resource. Until the implementation steps are complete, water supply decisions can be substantively modified, or conceivably reversed, although such a reversal is not the intent of the WFP process. Once the implementation steps are complete, the commitment of surface water and groundwater to consumptive use would generally not be subject to reversal through to 2030, although adaptive management principles included in the WFP allow for appropriate modifications of the agreement over time, if conditions warrant.

Surface water and groundwater consumed in the Sacramento region is partially irretrievable. Much of the consumed water is returned to the Sacramento River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta downstream of the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. A small portion of water consumed in the region also returns to the aquifer, such as through irrigation. The rest is removed from the river or aquifer system and cannot be retrieved.

Because adoption of the WFP does not include approval of specific water supply facilities, the normally expected irreversible and irretrievable commitments of natural resources to construction, such as fossil fuels, aggregate, steel, etc., would not be a direct effect of the decision at hand. Indirectly, adoption and implementation of the WFP would lead to the design, approval, and construction of water supply facilities in the Sacramento region. As such, it is reasonable to indicate that the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of construction-related resources could be an indirect consequence of the WFP; however, this will be an issue for consideration in the project-level environmental reviews of the specific facilities when they are proposed.

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