

5. ISSUES UPON WHICH IMPACTS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT OR NONE

CEQA requires that an EIR be prepared when a Lead Agency determines that it can be fairly argued, based on substantial evidence, that a proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment (CEQA Sections 21080[d], 21082.2[d]). Based upon this requirement, and in consultation with appropriate State and federal agencies with jurisdiction over resources affected by the proposed project, CDWR determined that an EIR for the proposed project should be prepared. In making this determination, four environmental issues were initially identified that could be significantly impacted by the proposed project, namely biological resources, cultural and paleontological resources, recreation, and water resources. These four issues were noted as being the key environmental concerns in the proposed project's NOP, dated May 19, 2004 and are discussed in detail in Sections 3 and 4 of this Draft EIR. No other resources or issues that could be significantly impacted were identified during the public scoping meeting held for the proposed project on June 17, 2004 or in written responses to the NOP.

In addition to addressing potentially significant environmental effects, CEQA requires that an EIR briefly explain the reasons why certain effects associated with a proposed project have been determined not to be significant or less than significant, and thus not discussed in detail in the EIR (CEQA Section 21100[c]). Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (the "model" Initial Study checklist) contains the environmental resources and issue that are to be evaluated in a project's environmental review, as well as key items associated with each resource and issue area that should be addressed. In accordance with this CEQA requirement and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, it has been determined that the proposed project would have either no impacts or less than significant impacts on the following resources and issues:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Ground Water, Geology, and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

Brief descriptions of these resources and issues and the reasons why the proposed project would not be anticipated to have significant impacts on them are provided below. As with the impact analyses provided in Section 3, all elements of the proposed project have been considered in this section, including exceptions to the creek's simulated natural flows such as water deliveries of up to 3,150 afy to United and test releases.

5.1 AESTHETICS

Impact Significance Criteria

Aesthetic impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if the project would:

- Adversely affect a scenic vista
- Substantially damage scenic resources
- Substantially degrade existing visual character
- Create substantial new sources of light or glare

Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located along the boundary of Angeles National Forest and Los Padres National Forest along middle Piru Creek as it flows from Pyramid Dam in northwestern Los Angeles County to Lake Piru in eastern Ventura County, California. The area of the proposed project would be visible from Old Highway 99 and other nearby roads, as well as from nearby areas used for camping such as Frenchman's Flat. Due to the project's location in undeveloped portions of the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, much of the project area is rarely seen by the public. Access to middle Piru Creek is limited to Old Highway 99, which is closed to vehicles upstream of Frenchmen's Flat, and hiking trails. Middle Piru Creek can also be accessed by trails, and to a limited degree by unimproved roads, from Lake Piru. The Los Angeles County General Plan has designated Interstate 5 (I-5) north of the town of Castaic as a "second priority scenic highway" (County of Los Angeles, 1980). The northern two miles of the proposed project (immediately south of Pyramid Dam) run parallel to I-5 at a distance of approximately one mile. However, due to the topography of the region, the proposed project is not visible from this section of I-5.

Developed portions of the project area are limited to the Pyramid Dam area, Old Highway 99, the Frenchman's Flat parking area, and the closed Blue Point Campground. The rest of the middle Piru Creek project area is undeveloped open space. The northern half of middle Piru Creek is characterized by steep-sided canyons with the creek twisting and bending its way through stands of willows and other riparian vegetation. The landscape of the southern portion of middle Piru Creek begins to flatten as it comes out of the gorge (south of creek mile 13, Figure 2-2), winding through valleys of grasses and scrub, forming oxbows with sand and gravel bars along their banks.

Impacts

The proposed project would not include construction or modification of any structures and thus would not substantially change the aesthetic environment of the project area. No structures would be constructed or modified that would block or obscure scenic vistas or create sources of light or glare. No impacts would occur to scenic vistas, and no impacts to day- or night-time views of the area would occur due to new sources of light or glare.

Sensitive receptors, such as recreation users, would be able to view portions of the proposed project area from a few nearby roadways, trails, and campgrounds. Private in-holdings exist adjacent to the project site, from which the proposed project is visible. Due to the nature of the proposed project, periodic high water releases would occur, which could result in scouring of the creek and removal of some vegetation. During the dry season, less surface water would flow through the creek and could result in reduced vegetation growth along the riverbanks. It is not expected that any major long-term loss or reduction of vegetation would occur as riparian vegetation re-establishes and re-grows quickly after a disturbance. The aesthetic impact of a loss or reduction in vegetation would be adverse but less than significant.

5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Impact Significance Criteria

Agricultural resources impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland)
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could individually or cumulatively result in the loss of Farmland to a non-agricultural use

Environmental Setting

The proposed project area covers land in the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, including a few small private holdings in unincorporated Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. According to the California Department of Conservation (DOC), no lands in or near the project area are designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (collectively, Farmland) as defined by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)¹ (DOC, 2004). In addition, the DOC does not regularly map lands in National Forests; therefore, the project area is unlikely to ever be mapped as Farmland (DOC, 2004).

The project area is not currently under a Williamson Act contract (DOC, 2004). In unincorporated Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, the project area is designated as Unincorporated and Open Space, respectively (County of Los Angeles, 1980; CLADRP, 2004; VCRMA, 2003).

Impacts

As noted above, the project area contains no lands designated or likely to be designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as defined by the FMMP. In addition, no lands near the proposed project area or potentially impacted by the proposed project are designated as Farmland. Therefore, the proposed project would cause no impacts resulting from the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to a non-agricultural use.

The project area contains no lands subject to a Williamson Act contract. The project area also does not include any lands zoned for agricultural use. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract. No impacts would occur.

The proposed project consists of modifications of stream releases from Pyramid Dam into middle Piru Creek. These changes may result in changes to the riparian habitat along the creek. However, none of these changes would result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural resources. As the proposed project would not change the total amount of water delivered from Pyramid Lake to Lake Piru, and no agricultural lands are known to directly use the water from middle Piru Creek, no agricultural lands downstream of Lake Piru would be affected by the project. The proposed project is unlikely to have effects beyond the riparian area of middle Piru Creek. No impacts on agricultural resources would occur.

¹ The California Department of Conservation (DOC) established the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) in 1982 in response to a critical need for assessing the location and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands to other uses. Following are the procedures by which DOC determines the status of farmlands: DOC updates soil mapping every two years using infrared aerial photos provided by NASA at a scale of 1:130,000; based on these maps, land is evaluated to determine its farmland designation. If a particular piece of land is fallow, it is then flagged; in order to qualify as Prime Farmland, rather than just Prime soil, the land must be irrigated as well as having prime soil attributes; DOC has a minimum mapping unit of 10 acres, with smaller than 10-acre parcels being absorbed into the surrounding classifications (DOC, 1994).

5.3 AIR QUALITY

Impact Significance Criteria

Implementation of a proposed project may have a significant impact on air quality if it would:

- Conflict with or obstruct implementation of an air quality plan
- Violate air quality standards
- Contribute to a cumulatively considerable net increase of a criteria pollutant in a non-attainment area
- Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations
- Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people

Environmental Setting

The climate of northwestern Los Angeles County and eastern Ventura County is characterized by hot, dry summers and mild to cold winters with small amounts of precipitation that occur primarily during the late winter and spring months. Summers typically have clear skies, high temperatures, and low humidity. The surrounding mountain ranges essentially block the region from the relatively cool marine air from the Pacific Ocean during the summer and tend to trap air pollutants generated in the region.

Air pollution is regulated through a combination of ambient air quality standards and emission limits for individual sources and categories of sources of air pollutants. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) establishes National Ambient Air Quality Standards to protect public health and welfare, and California has also adopted more-stringent State versions of these standards (the California Ambient Air Quality Standards). Ambient air quality standards have been established for ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter, the so-called “criteria” air pollutants. A brief summary of the related health effects and principal sources for each criterion pollutant is presented in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Air Pollutants, Health Effects, and Sources

Pollutant	Pollutant Health and Atmospheric Effects	Major Pollutant Sources
Ozone (O ₃)	High concentrations can directly affect lungs, causing irritation. Long-term exposure may cause damage to lung tissue.	Formed when reactive organic gases (ROG) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) react in the presence of sunlight. Major sources include on-road motor vehicles, solvent evaporation, and commercial/ industrial mobile equipment.
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Classified as a chemical asphyxiant, carbon monoxide interferes with the transfer of fresh oxygen to the blood and deprives sensitive tissues of oxygen.	Internal combustion engines, primarily gasoline-powered motor vehicles.
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	Irritating to eyes and respiratory tract. Colors atmosphere reddish-brown.	Motor vehicles, petroleum refining operations, industrial sources, aircraft, ships, and railroads.
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)	Irritates upper respiratory tract; injurious to lung tissue. Can yellow the leaves of plants; destructive to marble, iron, and steel. Limits visibility and reduces sunlight.	Fuel combustion, chemical plants, sulfur recovery plants, and metal processing.
Respirable Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	May irritate eyes and respiratory tract. May also cause decrease in lung capacity and cancer. Produces haze and limits visibility.	Dust and fume-producing industrial and agricultural operations, combustion, atmospheric photochemical reactions, and natural activities (e.g., wind-raised dust and ocean sprays).

Pollutant	Pollutant Health and Atmospheric Effects	Major Pollutant Sources
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	Increases respiratory disease, lung damage, cancer, and premature death. Reduces visibility and results in surface soiling.	Fuel combustion in motor vehicles, equipment, and industrial sources; residential and agricultural burning; also formed from photochemical reactions of other pollutants, including NO _x , sulfur oxides, and organics.

Source: SCAQMD 1993.

The portion of the proposed project area that is located in Los Angeles County is in the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD); the Ventura County portion is in the jurisdiction of the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD). These agencies are responsible for demonstrating that each region attains established air quality standards.

As required by the federal Clean Air Act and California Clean Air Act, the project area is designated as a “nonattainment” area because of persistent violations of the ambient air quality standards for ozone, CO, and PM₁₀. To address these violations, the air quality management agencies must prepare air quality plans to demonstrate the strategies for achieving attainment. Air quality management plans developed to achieve attainment include many programs and source control strategies, including regulation of mobile sources, such as large construction equipment and on-road motor vehicles, and control of stationary emissions sources at industrial facilities (SCAQMD, 2003; VCAPCD, 2004).

Impacts

No air quality impacts are anticipated to occur due to the proposed project. No physical construction would be necessary to alter the flows in middle Piru Creek and no additional operation or maintenance activity would occur. This means that no heavy equipment emissions or dust generating activity would occur. This also means that emissions caused by the motor vehicles of CDWR and USFS workers traveling through the middle Piru Creek area for ongoing operation, maintenance and management of the facilities would not be changed by the proposed project. The proposed project would not introduce new sensitive receptors to substantial concentrations of any air pollutants because the project would not increase employment or population in the area.

The altered flows could affect the quality of recreational resources managed by the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, as addressed in Section 3.4. Visitors using the proposed project area for recreation presently cause emissions from their motor vehicles. These emissions are just one component of the background environmental setting characterized above. Although some visitors may change their plans for recreation upon discovering the creek’s altered flows, they would be anticipated to relocate to another recreational area within the same region (i.e., the same air management basins) as the proposed project and the total change in the number of vehicle trips is likely to be relatively small. Overall, the proposed project is not expected to increase the number of visitors attracted to the project area. Therefore, emissions from recreational visitors’ vehicles would not be changed substantially by the proposed project.

Because there would be no quantifiable change in air pollutant emissions associated with the proposed project, it would not: conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan; contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation; expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or create objectionable odors. Therefore, no direct or indirect significant, adverse impacts would occur.

5.4 GROUNDWATER, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Impact Significance Criteria

Groundwater, geological, and soil impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge
- Expose people or structures to potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from either: (1) earthquake; (2) strong seismic groundshaking; (3) seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; or (4) landslide
- Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil
- Be located on unstable soil or that would become unstable as a result of the project
- Be located on expansive soil
- Involve soils incapable of supporting proposed septic system use or alternative wastewater disposal system

Environmental Setting

The area of the proposed project is located in the Transverse Range Province, southwest of Antelope Valley, and is bounded on the southwest by the San Gabriel Mountains and by the Tehachapi Mountains on the northwest.

The Transverse Range Province trends east to west and lies in a narrow strip from Santa Barbara in the west nearly to Joshua Tree National Monument in the east, where it merges with the Mojave and Colorado Deserts (RCIP, 2003). The Transverse Range Province is approximately 60 miles wide in the project area and is characterized by steep slopes and deeply incised canyons.

Most of the subsurface material in the project area is continental deposits of Tertiary age. The soils in the proposed project area consist primarily of loam. Loam, as defined by the Wetland Training Institute, Inc. (WTI, 2003) has a medium-texture soil, with a relative even mixture of sand, silt and clays. Loam soils in the area of the proposed project range from fine sands and silts to gravel and clay. The soils have a high hydraulic conductivity and low water holding capacity. Bedrock depth varies from approximately 4 to 20 inches (EDR, 2003). Groundwater in the project area is dependent upon local stream flows and is not supported by a significant groundwater aquifer.

The San Andreas Fault, capable of a maximum moment magnitude of 8.0 (Richter Scale), is the closest major fault system in the vicinity of the proposed project; it is approximately nine miles north-northeast of the project area (CDWR, 2002). The next closest fault system is the San Gabriel Fault, approximately 25 miles southeast of the project area (DOC, 1997).

Impacts

The proposed project would not consume groundwater but would restore groundwater recharge to a natural state. The proposed project would increase storm flows in middle Piru Creek during the rainy season (typically from November through April) and would diminish water flow during the dry season (May through October). As such, groundwater recharge would potentially increase during the rainy season, but diminish during the dry season. Although local stream flow in middle Piru Creek would be altered by the proposed project, it would not lower the local groundwater table. Therefore, no impacts would occur to groundwater supplies.

The proposed project would not expose people or structures to potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from either: (1) earthquake; (2) strong seismic groundshaking; (3) seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; or (4) landslide. As described above, the closest fault system to the area of the proposed project is the San Andreas Fault system, which is located more than nine miles to the north. The San Andreas Fault represents the most hazardous fault to the area of the proposed project. According to geologic mapping conducted by the DOC, California Geological Survey (DOC, 2000), a ground rupture associated with this fault is not expected at the ground surface in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would not expose people or structures to potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving an earthquake and/or strong seismic ground shaking.

The proposed project would not expose people or structures to the adverse effects of liquefaction and/or landslides. The susceptibility of a site to liquefaction is a function of the depth, density, and water content of the granular sediments and the magnitude and frequency of earthquakes in the surrounding region. Areas that are susceptible to liquefaction typically have shallow groundwater and Holocene susceptible sediment, including unconsolidated silts, sands, and silty sands (County of Los Angeles, 1993b). As described above, soils of the project area consist of moderately fine sand, silt, gravel, and clay loams (County of Los Angeles, 1993a). The area of the proposed project does not include Holocene susceptible sediment; therefore, the risk for liquefaction in the project area is minimal. The proposed project would increase storm flows during the rainy season in middle Piru Creek, which would result in greater soil saturation. However, the increased water flow would not be considered substantial enough to pose a risk of liquefaction to people or structures. Additionally, according to the Los Angeles County General Plan (Safety Element) Landslide Inventory Map, the proposed project would not fall within this area (County of Los Angeles, 1993c). As discussed in Section 3.2.4, the proposed project would result in an increase of bank erosion, which could potentially cause undermining of the bank channels. The undermining of bank channels and surrounding land could result in slope failure, increasing the risk of landslides particularly between Pyramid Dam and the Frenchman's Flat area where flows are expected to pick up sediment as they leave Pyramid Lake. However, since this impact would be the result of a natural process, the effects would be considered less than significant. In addition, because the proposed project would not directly alter ground surface conditions to make hillsides more unstable, it would not expose people or structures to landslides. No impacts would occur.

The steep slopes and loam soils in the project area are moderately coarse-grained, which would result in some erosion potential under the proposed project from increased storm flows during the rainy season. However, as addressed in Section 3.2.4, since channel degradation is an ongoing process that would occur under natural conditions, impacts associated with erosion would be considered adverse, but less than significant. In the long term, the proposed project would benefit the overall surface hydrology and riparian habitat.

According to the Liquefaction Susceptibility Area Map (County of Los Angeles, 1993b), the proposed project would be not located on an area mapped as susceptible to liquefaction. Therefore, the proposed project would neither be located on unstable soil nor alter soil conditions. No impacts would occur.

The surficial soils of the project area consist primarily of moderately fine sand, silt, gravel, and clay loams (EDR, 2003). Expansive clays are present in the soils in the vicinity of the proposed project. However, the proposed project does not entail construction of buildings or structures and would not change the expansive properties of the soils; thus, it would not pose a significant risk to life or property. No impacts would occur.

The proposed project would not be served by septic tanks or other disposal systems. Therefore, no impacts to septic or alternative wastewater disposal systems would occur.

5.5 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Impact Significance Criteria

Implementation of a proposed project may have potentially significant impacts on hazards and hazardous materials impacts if it would:

- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials
- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset or accident conditions involving the likely release of hazardous materials into the environment
- Emit hazardous emissions or involve the handling of hazardous materials within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school
- Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or environment
- Result in a public safety hazard risk due to a location that is either within: (1) an airport land use plan; or, (2) within two miles of a public airport, public use airport, or private airstrip
- Impair implementation of, or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan
- Expose people or structures to the risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands

Environmental Setting

The proposed project would be located along middle Piru Creek in a generally undeveloped area, with no nearby communities or other sensitive land uses. Existing and past land use activities are used as potential indicators of hazardous material storage and use. Many industrial sites, historic and current, are known or suspected to have soil or ground contamination by hazardous substances. Properties devoted to oil production, including oil fields and processing facilities, are commonly known or suspected to have environmental contamination for petroleum hydrocarbons, heavy metals, or chlorinated solvents. Other hazardous materials sources include leaking underground tanks in commercial and industrial areas, surface runoff from contaminated sites, migration of contaminated groundwater plumes to conduit installation areas, and pesticides and herbicides in the soil of past agricultural lands. Primary concerns related to contamination are (a) worker health and safety and (b) public exposure to hazardous materials during construction and handling of hazardous materials. Contaminated soils may qualify as hazardous waste and thus require handling and disposal according to local, State, and federal regulations.

Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR) provided a Radius Map Report for the area of the proposed project. The search reviewed over 50 databases that identify sites with real or potential environmental issues in a one-mile radius of the study area. The data search of available government records in the search radius indicated that no mapped hazardous, toxic, or radioactive waste (HTRW) sites are located within one mile of middle Piru Creek (EDR, 2004).

An abandoned crude oil pipeline exists within the project area near Old Highway 99. This pipeline, known as the Mobil M-70 Pipeline System, was abandoned in place in the early 1990s. The pipeline was installed in 1916 and extends 92 miles from a pumping station in Lebec, through the Angeles National Forest (within the area of the proposed project), to a refinery in Torrance. Between the Lebec pumping station and another pumping station in Newhall (located south of the project area), the pipeline ranges from 10 inches to 16 inches in diameter. Prior to abandonment the petroleum pipeline was flushed and cleaned of existing crude oil per regulatory and permit requirements. The pipeline's ends were sealed as part of abandonment (Dames & Moore, 1991).

Impacts

The proposed project would not require long-term storage, treatment, disposal, or transport of any hazardous materials. The proposed project would not entail any construction activities and would not require the transportation, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. No impacts resulting from the creation of a significant hazard to the public or the environment because of these activities would occur.

The proposed project would not involve the use of any hazardous materials that would pose a risk to the public. As described above, there are no construction activities associated with the proposed project; therefore, no foreseeable accidental spills are expected to occur. This project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upsets or accidents likely to release hazardous materials into the environment. No impacts would occur.

The proposed project would not emit hazardous emissions or involve the handling of hazardous materials within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. No existing or proposed schools are located within one-quarter of a mile of the proposed project site. The Fillmore Unified School District, which is located in Ventura County, and Gorman Joint and William Hart Union School District, located in the northwest portion of Los Angeles County do not have either existing or proposed school campuses within one-quarter of a mile of the project area. Therefore, no impacts would occur.

The project is not located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and so would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment. A database list search was performed in a one-mile buffer zone of the project area. According to EDR, Inc (EDR, 2004) the database search concluded that there are no hazardous materials sites located in the project area. In its abandoned state the Mobil M-70 pipeline does not contain substantial hazardous (petroleum-related) materials and would not be directly affected by the project. Therefore, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment. No impacts would occur.

The proposed project would not result in a public safety hazard due to its location in an airport land use plan or in close proximity (within two miles) to a public airport, public use, airport, or private airstrip. The nearest airport to the proposed project site is the Santa Paula Airport, located approximately 26 miles southwest of the project area. In addition, Agua Dulce Airpark Airport is located approximately 40 miles to the southeast, and Palmdale Regional Airport is approximately 60 miles from the project area. Due to the project's distance from these facilities, no impacts would occur.

As addressed in Section 3.2.4, the proposed project would increase the creek's "high danger" flood flows from approximately four days per year to eight days per year (Impact H-8). The additional four days of "high danger" flood flows represents a potentially significant adverse impact to recreationists in

the immediate vicinity of the creek and to vehicles trying to cross the creek. Implementation of Mitigation Measure H-8 (development of a flood warning system; see Section 3.2.4) would reduce the impact to a level of less than significant.

No existing emergency response or excavation plans for potential flooding of the proposed project area were identified. Therefore no impairment or interference with an existing plan would occur.

As described above, the proposed project would allow greater volumes of water to pass through middle Piru Creek during storms and would diminish the amount of water during the dry season due to progressively smaller volumes of natural surface water flows entering Pyramid Lake. Although lower summer flows could result in drier conditions along the banks of middle Piru Creek, the change in flows would not substantially increase the risk of wildland fires. The proposed project would not expose people or structures to significantly increased risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Impacts would therefore be considered adverse, but less than significant.

5.6 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Impact Significance Criteria

Land use impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Physically divide an established community
- Conflict with land use plans, policies or regulations
- Conflict with Habitat Conservation Plans or other types of approved biological habitat management plans

Environmental Setting

The project area consists of mainly public lands devoted to open space and recreational and conservation uses along middle Piru Creek. The proposed project area covers land in the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, including a few small private holdings in unincorporated Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The Angeles and Los Padres Land Management Plans, respectively, govern land use in the National Forests. In addition, the General Plans and Zoning Codes of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties govern private lands in the project area. In unincorporated Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, the project area is designated as Unincorporated and Open Space, respectively (County of Los Angeles, 1980; CLADRP, 2004; VCRMA, 2003). While Draft Land Management Plans are available for the four southern California National Forests (Angeles, Los Padres, Cleveland, and San Bernardino), the plans still currently in effect for the project area are the 1987 Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan and the 1988 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan. Specific policies associated with these plans are presented in Table 5-2.

As demonstrated in Table 5-2 the proposed project would not conflict with adopted land use plans, policies or regulations.

Table 5-2 Land Use Policy Consistency

Policy	Project Consistent	Consistency Determination
Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan		
Identify and acquire key parcels of land which are needed to: Improve public access and use of National Forest lands; or Protect or enhance watershed and other resource management needs; consolidate ownership for improved management and administration	√	The proposed project would not affect public access or use of the National Forest, nor preclude acquisition of additional non-Forest lands. The proposed project would return the biology and hydrology of the creek corridor to more natural conditions.
Establish and maintain an active right-of-way program for roads and trails to improve public access to National Forest lands.	√	The proposed project would not impede any rights-of-way or preclude access to National Forest lands.
Resolve unauthorized occupancies in the Forest	√	The proposed project would diminish the existing fishery in middle Piru Creek, reducing trespassing.
Management plans will be developed for heavily used riparian areas. These plans will establish human capacity and development capability based upon critical environmental factors specific to the area. Current high use areas...[include] Piru Creek.	√	With this policy, ANF recognizes that human impacts exceed the carrying capacities of some over-used riparian areas. The proposed project would reduce recreational impacts to Piru Creek during the summer months.
Seasonal closures may be required to minimize sensitive wildlife disturbance/loss during critical breeding seasons where relocation is not possible.	√	With this policy, ANF establishes as a priority the recovery of sensitive species. The proposed project would both assist the recovery of the arroyo toad and reduce the recreational demand during the summer months.
Los Padres Land Management Plan		
15-1. Provide direction for updating the Forest's plan for land adjustments including establishing the suitability of lands to be acquired or exchanged.	√	The proposed project would not affect the acquisition or exchange of National Forest property.
15-2. Determine the locations of road, trail and other easements which should be acquired to provide public access or to support management activities on Forest lands.	√	The proposed project would not affect National Forest access.
County of Los Angeles General Plan²		
LU-1. Non-urban residential development shall be limited to a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per five acres except within established residential communities where higher densities presently exist. Within these established residential communities, future development may occur at non-urban and, in some instances, low urban densities consistent with the existing character of the area...In all cases, development proposals will be subject to applicable Rural Community and Special Management Area performance standards and criteria.	√	The proposed project does not include any development.

² Private inholdings within the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests are subject to specific conditions and standards within the Land Use Element.

SIMULATION OF NATURAL FLOWS IN MIDDLE PIRU CREEK
5. Issues Upon Which Impacts Would be Less Than Significant

Policy	Project Consistent	Consistency Determination
LU-2. All proposed private and public development projects within the National Forests will be reviewed by both the Regional Planning Commission and the U.S. Forestry Service for compliance with applicable land use and resource management plans.	√	The proposed project does not include any development.
OS-30. Provide low intensity outdoor recreation in areas of scenic and ecological value compatible with protection of these natural resources.	√	The proposed project would maintain some recreational opportunities while improving the ecological value of the area.
County of Ventura General Plan		
<p>Open Space may include:</p> <p>Open space for the preservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes, rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands.</p> <p>Open space used for the managed production of resources, including but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands not designated agricultural; areas required for recharge of groundwater basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.</p> <p>Open space for outdoor recreation, including but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historical and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors.</p> <p>Open space for public health and safety, including but not limited to, areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, flood plains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.</p> <p>Open space to promote the formation and continuation of cohesive communities by defining the boundaries and by helping to prevent urban sprawl.</p> <p>Open space to promote efficient municipal services and facilities by confining urban development to defined development areas.</p>	√	While not conflicting with any allowable use for lands designated as Open Space, the proposed project specifically includes the goals of the first intention of Open Space lands.

Impacts

There are no established communities in the project area. Therefore, the proposed project would not physically divide an established community. In addition the proposed project would not physically affect communities outside the project area. No impact would occur.

As discussed above, the Angeles and Los Padres Land Management Plans and the General Plans and Zoning Codes of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties govern land use in the project area. Applicable land use policies for both the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests largely consist of the maintenance of public access to and protection of National Forest lands and resources. As the project would require no construction and help restore middle Piru Creek to a more natural state, it would be consistent with these National Forest policies. Applicable County of Los Angeles and County of Ventura land use policies consist of restricting development in non-urban areas and the maintenance and preservation of open space and recreation areas. No development of any structures would be included as part of the project. As discussed for the National Forest land use policies, the intent of the proposed project is to return middle Piru Creek to a more natural state to provide a sustainable habitat for the endangered arroyo toad. The proposed project would not conflict with land use plans, policies, or regulations. No impacts would occur.

As discussed in Section 3.1, Biological Resources, there are no Habitat Conservation Plans or other types of approved biological habitat management plans applicable to the project area. No impacts resulting from conflicts with Habitat Conservation Plans or other biological habitat management plans would therefore occur.

5.7 MINERAL RESOURCES

Impact Significance Criteria

Mineral resources impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State
- Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site as delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan

Environmental Setting

The proposed project would be located along middle Piru Creek in a generally undeveloped region with no identified nearby mineral resource areas. The California Geological Survey classifies lands according to the presence or absence of significant sand, gravel, or stone deposits that are suitable as sources of aggregate. These areas, called Mineral Resource Zones (MRZ) are defined as follows (DOC, 1983):

- **SRZ:** Scientific Resources Zone containing unique or rare occurrences of rocks, minerals, or fossils that are of outstanding scientific significance.
- **MRZ-1:** Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present or likely to be present.
- **MRZ-2:** Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or there is a high likelihood for their presence and development should be controlled.

- **MRZ-3:** Mineral Resource Zone where the significance of mineral deposits cannot be determined from the available data.
- **MRZ-4:** Mineral Resource Zone where there is insufficient data to assign any other MRZ designation.

According to the State Geologist for the California Geologic Survey and the designations described above, the proposed project would not be located in an area where either significant mineral deposits are present or there is a high likelihood for their presence (DOC, 2004).

A paleontological assessment for the proposed project area has been completed. As described in Section 3.3.4, the proposed project area is considered to be sensitive for paleontological resources. Such resources have been identified in the area of Pyramid Lake (the Piru Gorge area [creek mile 1]), and other specimens are likely to be present.

Impacts

As discussed above, the proposed project would not be located in an area containing rare or unique rocks or minerals, or where there is an indication that significant mineral deposits are present. Additionally, as the proposed project would neither include construction of any new structures nor substantially alter the flow of the creek such that certain areas would be permanently precluded from access, it would not change the availability of any mineral resources. The proposed project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State. No impacts would occur.

The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site as delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. According to the Los Angeles County General Plan, Special Management Area Map, the proposed project is not located in an area designated as containing locally important mineral resources (County of Los Angeles, 1993). No impacts would occur.

As addressed in Section 3.3.4, the proposed project would result in an increase in the potential for erosion of the creek bed, overbank floodplain and creek banks. The potential exposure rate of fossil resources due to erosion would thus increase as a result of the proposed project. However, a change in the rate of fossil exposure would not be considered a significant adverse impact in itself. Additionally, no physical impacts to such resources would be caused by direct human disturbance; physical impacts to fossils would be anticipated to occur under the creek's natural hydrology. Therefore, impacts are considered adverse but less than significant.

5.8 NOISE

Impact Significance Criteria

Implementation of a proposed project may have a significant impact on noise if it would:

- Expose persons to noise levels exceeding established standards
- Expose persons to excessive groundborne vibration
- Substantially increase ambient noise levels temporarily, periodically or permanently
- Expose persons to excessive noise near a public airport or private airstrip

Environmental Setting

Sound is mechanical energy transmitted by pressure waves in a compressible medium such as air. Noise can be defined as unwanted sound. Sound is characterized by various parameters that include the rate of oscillation of sound waves (frequency), the speed of propagation, and the pressure level or energy content (amplitude). Noise that is experienced at any receptor can be attenuated by distance or the presence of noise barriers or intervening terrain.

The proposed project is primarily located in a generally undeveloped area in the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests. The primary noise source in the project area is I-5, which is approximately one mile east of Pyramid Lake and the northern portion of middle Piru Creek. The traffic on I-5 includes many heavy trucks, which means that substantial traffic noise occurs for any location with an unobstructed line-of-sight within roughly one-quarter mile of this highway. Secondary sound also results from flowing water in middle Piru Creek and other natural sources (e.g., wind and birds), airplanes passing overhead, and traffic on access and service roads in the area.

There are no nearby full-time rural residences or other land uses that would be considered sensitive to noise, except for recreational facilities. Places where people are meant to sleep or places where quiet is necessary for the function of the land use are normally considered sensitive. For instance, quiet natural recreational areas and campgrounds are more sensitive to noise than active recreational areas or commercial uses. Camping areas are located along some access roads and the southern portion of middle Piru Creek.

Impacts

No noise impacts are anticipated to occur due to implementation of the proposed project. The proposed project would not create any new sources of noise. No physical construction activity would be necessary, and no additional operation or maintenance activity would occur. This means that the project would not cause any noise from construction equipment or CDWR and USFS traffic. The proposed project would not expose persons to excessive noise or groundborne vibration because no new employment or population growth would occur, and the flows in middle Piru Creek do not currently cause excessive noise or vibration.

Altering the flows in middle Piru Creek would alter the timing of the flowing water sound near the creek. This would not be a change from the existing setting, which presently experiences sound from flowing water. The sound would occur according to a changed schedule. For example, during the dry season, recreational visitors could notice an absence of, or reduction in sound caused by a lack or decrease of flowing water. This could detract from the recreational experience of those seeking the sound of flowing water, but it would not adversely affect noise levels near the creek. Altering the flows in the creek would not substantially increase ambient noise levels.

Regarding noise from aircraft, the proposed project is not located within an airport land use plan area or within two miles of an airport or airstrip (Section 5.5). Therefore, the project would not have the potential to expose people to excessive aircraft noise.

5.9 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Impact Significance Criteria

Population and housing impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Induce substantial growth in an area either directly or indirectly
- Displace substantial numbers of either people or existing housing, thereby necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere

Environmental Setting

The direct physical effects of the proposed project would be limited to middle Piru Creek, Lake Piru, and riparian areas immediately adjacent to the creek. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the “project area” has been extended to include the two U.S. Census Bureau Census tracts surrounding middle Piru Creek, defined as Census Tract 1 in Ventura County and Census Tract 9201.04 in Los Angeles County. This allows for a basic depiction of the human populations near the area of the proposed project. Table 5-3 shows the general demographic profile of the project area using Census 2000 data.

Table 5-3 General Demographic Profile of the Project Area

Total Population	1,791	100%
Male	944	53%
Female	847	47%
White	1571	88%
Black or African-American	21	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	15	1%
Asian	72	4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	0%
Other race	71	4%
Two or more races	40	2%
Total Housing Units	583	100%
Occupied	569	98%
Vacant	14	2%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	0.6%	
Rental Vacancy Rate	2.7%	
Source: U.S. Census, 2000.		

Impacts

The proposed project would not generate employment or result in a need for additional housing units. The proposed project would require no construction or other short-term personnel, and current CDWR employees would implement the proposed flow regime. Employees who currently operate the releases from Pyramid Dam would implement the proposed project. The proposed project would not require the hiring of additional CDWR employees or an increase in USFS employees. As such, the project would not generate a direct or indirect increase in area population. There would be no impacts resulting from project-induced population growth.

The proposed project includes the delivery of 3,150 afy of State Water Project Table A water to United. Operation of the dam has always included the availability of this delivery to United. The proposed project would not increase the volume of this delivery and therefore would not trigger population growth due to increased water availability. No impacts would occur.

Because the proposed flows would not be sufficiently different from existing flows to preclude the use of existing housing in the area, the proposed project would not have the potential to displace people or housing units.

5.10 PUBLIC SERVICES

Impact Significance Criteria

Implementation of a proposed project may have potentially significant impacts on public services if it would:

- Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or create the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the following public services: (1) fire protection; (2) police protection; (3) schools; (4) parks; or (5) other public facilities

Environmental Setting

Fire Protection. Fire protection is provided to the proposed project area by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (Division III) (Los Angeles County Fire Department, 2004), Ventura County Fire Department (Ventura County Fire Department, 2004), and the U.S. Forest Service Department of Fire and Aviation Management (USFS Department of Fire and Aviation Management, 2004).

Police Protection. Police protection is provided to the proposed project area by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Ventura County Sheriff's Department, and the U.S. Forest Service's Department of Law Enforcement and Investigations (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, 2004; Ventura County Sheriff's Department, 2004; USFS Law Enforcement and Investigations, 2004). The California Highway Patrol also provides police services along I-5 and other unincorporated portions of Ventura and Los Angeles Counties.

Schools. No schools are located in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. The Fillmore Unified School District includes the Ventura County portion of the project area (Fillmore Unified School District, 2004), while the Gorman Joint and William S. Hart Union School Districts include the Los Angeles County portion of the project area (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2004).

Parks. The proposed project would be located in Angeles and Los Padres National Forests. Section 3.4, Recreation, provides a full description of recreation areas in the vicinity of the proposed project area.

Other Public Facilities. No other public facilities occur in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Impacts

Long-term impacts to public services are usually associated with population growth in an area, which increases the demand for a particular service and necessitates the expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities. However, the proposed project would not result in a population increase, as discussed in Section 5.9, Population and Housing. As discussed in Section 3.4, Recreation, the proposed project could potentially decrease the recreational value of middle Piru Creek during the summer. If fewer people visit the proposed project area, the project could result in temporary local reductions in demand for public services, including fire and police protection. Schools would not be affected by the possible fluctuation in recreational use of middle Piru Creek or the other recreation facilities in the area. Although recreation users could choose to visit other recreation facilities in the area instead of middle Piru Creek, it is unlikely that the capacities of public services attending these

other facilities would be exceeded by the new users. Impacts could potentially be adverse, but would be less than significant.

5.11 TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

Impact Significance Criteria

Implementation of a proposed project may have a significant impact on transportation and traffic if it would:

- Substantially increase traffic relative to existing load and capacity
- Exceed an established level of service standard
- Result in a change in air traffic patterns
- Substantially increase hazards due to design or incompatible uses
- Result in inadequate emergency access
- Result in inadequate parking capacity
- Conflict with adopted alternative transportation policies, plans or policies

Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located near I-5 in the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests. The primary transportation corridor near the project area is I-5, and the northern portion of middle Piru Creek is next to a portion of Old Highway 99 closed to public vehicular traffic. Old Highway 99 is accessible only to CDWR and USFS personnel for operations and maintenance of existing facilities. Other USFS access roads are adjacent to the southern portions of middle Piru Creek and provide public access to the temporarily closed Blue Point campground and other recreational areas near Lake Piru.

Impacts

The proposed project is not expected to cause any impact to transportation or traffic. No physical change to the transportation facilities in the project area would be caused by altering flows in middle Piru Creek. No physical construction would be necessary, which means that no construction materials or equipment would need to be brought to the project area, and road surfaces and structures (e.g., drainage features) would remain unchanged. Traffic in the proposed project area, which is caused by the current CDWR and USFS workforce and recreational visitors, would not increase because the workforce would not need to be expanded, no additional operation or maintenance activity would occur, and no new recreational facilities are proposed as part of the project.

The altered flows could affect the quality of recreational resources managed by the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, as addressed in Section 3.4. Although some visitors may change their plans for recreation upon discovering the creek's altered flows, the proposed project is not expected to increase the number of visitors to the project area. This means that the traffic caused by recreational visitors would not increase due to implementation of the proposed project.

Because there would be no increase in traffic or the transportation facilities associated with the proposed project, it would not have the potential to affect the level of service of any transportation facility, increase transportation hazards, affect emergency access or parking access, conflict with transportation policies, or affect air traffic.

5.12 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Impact Significance Criteria

Utilities and service systems impacts associated with a proposed project may be potentially significant if it would:

- Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects
- Result in the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects
- Require new or expanded water supply entitlements
- Exceed existing wastewater capacities supplied by the project area's wastewater treatment provider(s)
- Exceed existing, permitted landfill capacity due to construction or operation
- Conflict with federal, State, or local statutes and regulations related to solid waste

Environmental Setting

Utility and service system facilities associated with electricity, domestic (potable) water, stormwater, solid waste, and natural gas are typically provided and maintained by a variety of local purveyors, including cities, counties, special districts, water agencies, and private companies. Some of these utilities, such as domestic water, wastewater and storm water sewers, and natural gas are usually transmitted via underground pipelines or conduits. Increasingly, electricity is also installed underground in urban areas.

Utility alignments such as water and gas pipelines, fiber optic lines, and transmission lines are located within the proposed project area, located along or under paved roads such as Old Highway 99 as well as other access roads (CDWR, 2003).

Impacts

While the proposed project has the potential to redistribute recreation users among Pyramid Lake, middle Piru Creek, Castaic Lake, or other area recreation facilities (see Section 3.4, Recreation), it is not expected to increase the total number of recreation users accessing the area; therefore the wastewater generated by these users would not be expected to increase. If the proposed project shifted recreational demand from middle Piru Creek to facilities at Pyramid Lake or Castaic Lake, the proposed project could result in a beneficial impact to middle Piru Creek. As detailed in Section 3.4, creel census survey monitors have received complaints by Frenchman's Flat and middle Piru Creek recreational users that the portable restroom facilities are insufficient for the number of visitors to the area and that not all the visitors to the area use the portable restrooms. According to Cid Morgan, District Ranger for the Santa Clara and Mojave Rivers Ranger District, which manages the Frenchman's Flat recreation area, it is not uncommon after holiday weekends for portions of Frenchman's Flat to be impassable due to the presence of human waste (USFS, 2004). By shifting wastewater to the plumbed facilities at Pyramid Lake or Lake Piru, the proposed project could reduce the total amount of waste entering middle Piru Creek and downstream areas. Because it would not generate additional wastewater, the proposed project would not result in impacts from exceeding the wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board or the

capacities of area wastewater treatment facilities. The proposed project also would not require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.

The proposed project includes no construction or other activity that could change the amount of storm water on or off site; thus, there would be no need for either new stormwater drainage facilities or an expansion of existing facilities. The proposed project would have no impact on stormwater drainage facilities.

Because the proposed project would not create any demand for potable water, it would not require new or expanded water supply entitlements. In addition, as discussed in Section 2, Project Description, the proposed flow modifications would continue to meet all of CDWR's current water delivery commitments.

The proposed project would not result in the generation of solid waste. Therefore, it would have no impact on landfill capacity and it would not conflict with federal, State, or local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Reduced numbers of summer visitors to the Frenchman's Flat area may result in decreased litter removal requirements.