
7. OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

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7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Pursuant to Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must address whether a proposed project would directly or indirectly foster growth. This section analyzes whether the proposed project would directly or indirectly induce economic, population, or housing growth in the surrounding area.

The growth-inducing potential of a project would be significant if it were to foster growth or a concentration of population above what is assumed in local and regional land use plans. Significant growth-inducing impacts also could occur if a project were to provide infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth levels beyond those permitted by local or regional plans and policies.

The proposed project would be the implementation of modified water operations guidelines of Pyramid Dam to simulate the natural hydrology of middle Piru Creek to the extent operationally feasible and consistent with safety considerations. The primary objective of simulating the natural hydrological regime of middle Piru Creek is to avoid the incidental “take” of the arroyo toad by State Water Project operations. The direct physical effects of the proposed project would be limited to middle Piru Creek and Lake Piru. The proposed project would not generate employment or housing units. The proposed project would not require any construction or other short-term personnel, and the proposed flow regimes would be implemented by current CDWR employees. It would not increase existing State Water Project water deliveries to United (3,150 afy) and thus would not encourage growth of existing downstream communities in United’s service area. As such, implementation of the project would not generate a direct or indirect increase in area population. There would be no impacts resulting from project-induced population growth.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2[c]) require an evaluation of the significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by a project if implemented, as described below:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse there after unlikely. Primary impacts, and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

In general, the CEQA Guidelines refer to the need to evaluate and justify the consumption of nonrenewable resources and the extent to which the project commits future generations to similar uses of nonrenewable resources. In addition, CEQA requires that irreversible damage resulting from an environmental accident associated with the project be evaluated.

Determining whether the project may result in significant irreversible effects requires a determination of whether key resources would be degraded or destroyed, such that there is a small possibility of restoring them. The proposed project would not result in the consumption of nonrenewable resources to the extent to which the project commits future generations to similar uses of nonrenewable resources. No such degradation or destruction of resources would result due to implementation of the proposed project.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in greater volumes of water flowing through middle Piru Creek when storms occur during the “rainy season” (which typically extends from November through April). Between May and October (generally considered the “dry season”), the volume and rate of flows into middle Piru Creek would diminish as natural surface water flows into Pyramid Lake diminish. During the dry season it is possible that at times there would be no surface water flow in middle Piru Creek. The proposed project would not result in substantial resource depletion.

7.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. “Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects. When an incremental effect is not “cumulatively considerable,” a lead agency need not consider that effect significant. The CEQA Guidelines require the discussion to reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of their occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as much detail as the discussion of impacts attributed solely to the proposed project. If the project’s cumulative environmental impacts are not found to be significant, the discussion is required to briefly support these findings.

Also required in Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines is the use of one of the following methods for adequately evaluating the cumulative impacts of a proposed project:

- A summary of growth projections in an adopted general plan or in a prior certified environmental document; or
- A compiled list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts.

For the purposes of this Draft EIR, a list of past, present, and future projects has been used to evaluate cumulative impacts.

The cumulative project list includes projects that are either reasonably foreseeable or are expected to be constructed or operated during the life of the proposed project. This list was developed in consultation with the following entities:

- Los Angeles County Planning Department (LA County Planning, 2004)
- United Water Conservation District (UWCD, 2004)
- Los Angeles National Forest (Los Angeles, 2004)
- Los Padres National Forest (Los Padres, 2004)
- Hungry Valley State Recreational Area (HVSRA, 2004)
- United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS, 2004).

These entities were requested to provide information on all projects that are being considered in their planning processes. Any current or future project identified by one of the entities and expected to occur within approximately 20 miles of the proposed project is listed in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1 Related Projects

Name	Type	Description	Location	Status
Pyramid Lake Repairs and Improvements Project	Public Works	Would refurbish multiple boat-in recreational sites.	Within the immediate vicinity of the proposed project.	Has already undergone CEQA review and is currently in permitting process. Construction expected to begin 2004-2007.
Piru Creek Erosion Repairs and Bridge Seismic Retrofit Project	Public Works	Erosion repairs and seismic retrofitting along four sites downstream of Pyramid Dam along middle Piru Creek, and a proposed access road to the North Adit of the Angeles Tunnel.	Within the immediate vicinity of the proposed project between Pyramid Dam and Frenchman's Flat.	Has already undergone CEQA review, but implementation has been postponed; may require CEQA recirculation if proposed project changes.
United Water Conservation District Sensitive Species Surveys	Resource Monitoring associated with Santa Felicia Dam re-licensing	Monitor arroyo toads as part of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) re-licensing of Santa Felicia Dam.	Santa Felicia Dam forms the impoundment of Piru Lake. Monitoring within the vicinity of Lower Piru Creek and the Santa Clara River.	Dam is currently in re-licensing process. Monitoring is currently underway.
Alamo Mountain Prescribed Fire Project	Fire Control	Would apply prescribed fire to treat 12,700 acres.	Within the Mt. Pinos Ranger District, Los Padres NF. Located about 10 miles south of Frazier Park, within the upper Piru Watershed.	Expected implementation October 2004.
Piru OHV Trail Reroute	Resource Monitoring	Would relocate 1.25 miles of Piru Creek Trail to reduce resource disturbance.	Within the Mt. Pinos Ranger District, Los Padres NF. Located approximately one mile west of Gold Hill Campground.	Decision anticipated in Summer 2004.
Piru Allotments Grazing Permit	Resource Monitoring	Would analyze grazing on the Piru, Temescal, and Potholes allotments on the Ojai Ranger District.	Within the Ojai Ranger District, Los Padres NF. Located west and north of Lake Piru.	Decision anticipated in November 2004, with expected implementation January 2005.
Southern California Land and Resource Management Plan Revisions	Land and Resource Management Plans	Would revise the Land and Resource Management Plans for the southern California National Forests.	Angeles National Forest, Cleveland National Forest, Los Padres National Forest, and San Bernardino National Forest	In May 2004 the four southern California National Forests published their Draft Land and Resource Management Plans and associated Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The 90-day public comment period ended August 11, 2004. The Final EIS is anticipated in late spring 2005.
Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United ¹	Resource Allocation	Would provide for water deliveries from the State Water Project of up to 20,000 afy to United from Pyramid Lake to Lake Piru via middle Piru Creek.	Within the immediate vicinity of the proposed project.	CEQA review and approval would be required prior to any proposed increase in State Water Project deliveries to United that exceed its current allocation of 3,150 afy. United would need to negotiate with the Ventura County Watershed Protection District and Casitas Water District for the increased allocation since CDWR's contract (for an annual

Name	Type	Description	Location	Status
				allotment of 20,000 acre feet) is currently with the Ventura County Watershed Protection District. Resource-specific feasibility studies and the acquisition of applicable regulatory permits/approvals would also need to be completed.

1 No formal applications or negotiations to increase United’s existing State Water Project water deliveries have been initiated by United. The possibility of an increase in State Water Project water deliveries of up 20,000 afy to United was suggested in a comment letter to CDWR by United on June 24, 2004 in response to the proposed project’s Notice of Preparation (NOP). A potential increase of up to 20,000 afy of State Water Project water deliveries to United would require separate evaluation and approval under CEQA; however, its possible cumulative effects are included in this analysis to the extent that they can be identified without evaluation of a formal proposal. For the purposes of this cumulative impact evaluation the focus of this potential project is on water deliveries to United via middle Piru Creek; it is noted, however, that these deliveries could also be made via Castaic Creek.

Cumulative impacts associated with operation of the proposed project are discussed below for each issue area.

Aesthetics. Substantial short-term changes in visual conditions in the area may occur as a result of those projects located near to the proposed project that require construction activities. However, as discussed in Section 5.1, the project consists of changing the rates of flow from Pyramid Dam to simulate natural flows and would not include construction or modification of any structures. Consequently, the proposed project itself would not substantially change the aesthetic character of the project area. No structures would be constructed or modified which 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. The proposed project would not contribute substantially to cumulative impacts for aesthetic resources.

Agricultural Resources. The proposed project would not induce or facilitate future growth that would lead to the conversion of additional farmland to a non-agricultural use (Section 5.2). With the exception of the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project, other projects considered for this cumulative impact evaluation (Table 7-1) are focused on public works, FERC re-licensing of Santa Felicia Dam, resource monitoring, land and resource management plans, and fire control; these projects would not be anticipated to impact existing or foreseeable agricultural activities. Consequently, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative impacts on active farmland and would not induce growth that may cause future impacts to active farmland.

Of the cumulative projects listed in Table 7-1, the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would allow for a net increase of up to 16,850 afy of State Water Project water deliveries to United. The additional water could induce growth within United’s service area. This growth could cause future impacts to active farmland, most notably within the context of conversions of farmland to urban development. However, establishing the potential magnitude (or significance) of such conversions due to the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project is difficult to forecast, either individually or cumulatively, without a specific implementation plan to evaluate. Predicting the potential impacts is considered speculative, which is discouraged under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15145). It is noted, however, that if United formally proposed the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project a separate environmental review under CEQA would be required to address the project’s specific operational details. This review would include consideration of the project’s cumulative impacts on growth and agricultural resources with greater specificity than can be achieved in this cumulative analysis.

Consideration of these potential cumulative impacts would be required as part of that project's approval process.

Air Quality. Since there is no construction associated with the proposed project, no direct air quality impacts would occur. Other projects being constructed or operated in close proximity to the proposed project could have cumulative air quality impacts on nearby receptors during construction. Additionally, projects that contribute emissions within the same air basin could cause cumulatively significant air quality impacts within the region.

The proposed project would be located in the South Central Coast Air Basin, as would the other projects listed in Table 7-1. However, since the proposed project would not result in emissions, it would not contribute to cumulative air quality impacts in the project area (see Section 5.3).

Biological Resources. Cumulative impacts to biological resources could affect both vegetation and wildlife resources. Cumulative impacts include impacts from existing projects or from projects that are planned to be built during the life of the proposed project. Projects were considered in the cumulative analysis if their potential impacts, together with the impacts of the proposed project, would be either additive or compound the assessed impacts to vegetation or wildlife. Current and future projects that were identified to contribute to cumulative biological impacts in the project area include the United Water Conservation District's Sensitive Species Surveys associated with the FERC re-licensing of Santa Felicia Dam, the Alamo Mountain Prescribed Fire Project, the Piru OHV Trail Reroute, the Piru Allotments Grazing Permit, and the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project (Table 7-1). According to Jim Kentosh of United, the proposed project would not affect ongoing arroyo toad surveys (United, 2004). Additionally, the USFS has indicated that the three projects under its jurisdiction would not be affected by the proposed project (USFS, 2004).

Although the above projects would not impact plants and animals in the same manner, wildlife and vegetative habitat may be cumulatively degraded or lost as a result of these projects. Although the proposed project would result in some potentially adverse biological impacts, these impacts are considered less than significant (see Section 3.1.4). Additionally, as the primary purpose of the project is to protect the arroyo toad and its habitat by simulating the natural hydrology of middle Piru Creek, the overall effects of the project would be beneficial. Each of the projects referenced in Table 7-1, with the exception of the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project, would either result in impacts to biological resources that are considered less than significant or include mitigation measures that would reduce potentially adverse impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, cumulative impacts to biological resources associated with these projects are considered adverse but less than significant.

The Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would have the potential to result in significant adverse cumulative impacts to biological resources. If water deliveries of up to 20,000 afy were to follow the proposed project's recommended schedule (November 1st through the end of February), negative impacts to biological resources would be expected to occur. Additional water releases during large flood events would increase the potential for scouring above natural conditions and could lead to a change in riparian structure. Additionally, water releases of 20,000 afy under CDWR's proposed schedule would result in average creek flows approximately 70 to 71 cfs above the natural conditions simulated by the proposed project (predicted creek flows of 26, 42, 105 and 253 cfs for November, December, January and February, respectively, would increase to 97, 113, 176, and 323 cfs, respectively). This unnaturally high flow would have the potential to substantially alter the composition and structure of habitat on middle Piru Creek through submersion of aquatic vegetation and increased water velocities. If additional flows were to be released outside of CDWR's proposed schedule, the increase in water flows would potentially increase water surface elevations during key breeding periods for the arroyo toad, thereby resulting in the incidental

take of the arroyo toad. This scenario could also create conditions favorable to exotic aquatic predators, which would ultimately result in the loss of arroyo toad and its habitat.

The cumulative impacts to biological resources due to the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would therefore be considered adverse and potentially significant. It would also conflict with the overall purpose of the proposed project to protect the arroyo toad and its habitat. It is noted, however, that the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project has not been formally proposed. If United formally proposes this project, a separate environmental review under CEQA would be required, and potentially significant adverse cumulative impacts to biological resources due to its implementation would need to be addressed as part of its approval process.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources. Cumulative impacts from existing and proposed projects may occur in areas containing sensitive prehistoric or historic cultural resources. According to previous and current resource surveys (Section 3.3.2), no cultural resources have been recorded in the immediate project area, but resources have been identified in the surrounding vicinity of the project area. While potential cultural and paleontological resources could be uncovered due to increased flows and erosion under the proposed project, it is anticipated that these resources would be uncovered by flows and erosion without the project. Consequently, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative cultural and paleontological resources impacts.

Geology and Soils. Potential cumulative geologic impacts typically are limited to the loss of unique geologic features, substantial alterations to the local topography, or the triggering or acceleration of slope failures from the proposed project and one or more future projects. Geologic impacts would generally be related to seismic activity and its effects on the proposed project, and would not be cumulatively considerable.

Because the proposed project would not result in the loss of any unique geologic features or mineral or energy resources, nor substantially alter topography or contribute to slope failures, cumulative geologic impacts would not occur (see Section 5.4).

Hazards and Hazardous Materials. The proposed project does not involve transport, storage, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. The proposed project would not contribute to any cumulative hazardous material impacts (see Section 5.5). Cumulative impacts associated with increased flood hazard risks are discussed below under Water Resources.

Water Resources. Implementation of the proposed project would not cause any discharge of waste or use of pollutants that could violate water quality standards. The project area is not used for groundwater production, and the effect of the proposed project would be to return groundwater recharge rates to their natural condition. The proposed project would, however, increase stormwater flows in middle Piru Creek and would result in a substantial increase in the potential for erosion of the channel bed, overbank floodplain, and channel banks. Mitigation measures (see Section 3.2.4) have been developed to reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Implementation of the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would also have the potential to increase erosion and flooding along middle Piru Creek, resulting in potentially significant and cumulatively considerable impacts to water resources. Based on Pyramid Lake inflow data from 1989 to 2002 as an indicator of simulated natural conditions, the natural flows released from Pyramid Dam under the proposed project would average 13, 29, 92 and 240 cfs for the months of November, December, January and February, respectively. Assuming the existing 3,150 acre feet of flow that currently goes to United is all delivered within those months per the proposed project's delivery schedule, the average discharge would be increased to 26, 42, 105 and 253 cfs for November, December, January and February,

respectively. Adding an additional 16,850 acre feet to make total deliveries of 20,000 acre feet, delivered during the same period, would increase average monthly discharges for November, December, January and February to 97, 113, 176, and 323 cfs, respectively, for an overall monthly increase of approximately 70 to 71 cfs.

Discharges of 97 to 323 cfs and higher are common during the period between November 1st and February 28th; however, adding 16,850 acre feet to the Pyramid Lake discharge would represent a substantial increase in total flow, ranging from 1.4 to 7 times the simulated natural flows. The effect of this in comparison to the proposed project would be an increase in the potential for the flows to move sediment, particularly during the months of November, December and January. The adverse effects of channel degradation and erosion would also be increased. There would also be an increase in flood hazard. For example, a discharge of 50 cfs or more is hazardous for children. Delivery of an additional 16,850 acre feet of water would make flows hazardous for children every day during the four-month period (120 days) as compared to an average of 66 days for the entire year under the proposed project.

Alternatively, spreading the 16,850 acre feet evenly throughout the year would result in a constant flow increase of approximately 23 cfs which would, in the summertime, restore flows to approximately the without-project condition and negate the intent of the proposed project. Spreading the 16,850 acre feet delivery over the August 1st to March 15th period would result in a constant flow increase of approximately 37 cfs for that period. The effect would be similar to but less than the November through February scenario. The erosion potential of flows would be increased, with potentially positive as well as negative effects. The flood hazard would be higher than for the proposed project, but less than for the November through February scenario. As such, the erosion and flood hazards associated with the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would have the potential to result in significant adverse cumulative impacts to water resources. It is noted, however, that prior to approval of the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project, United would be responsible for completion of this project's CEQA review and other feasibility studies to further evaluate its specific direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

Land Use and Planning. The intent of the proposed project is to return middle Piru Creek to a more natural state to provide a sustainable habitat for arroyo toad and other native species. The proposed project and the other projects located in the same vicinity would not conflict with land use plans, policies, or regulations. No communities would be divided. As a result no impacts would occur. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute in any way to cumulative adverse land use and planning impacts (see Section 5.6).

Mineral Resources. No cumulative impacts to mineral resources would occur as a result of the proposed project. The proposed project would not be located in an area with a high likelihood of containing substantial, rare, or unique mineral deposits. Consequently, the proposed project, in conjunction with the related projects identified in Table 7-1, would not contribute to cumulative mineral resource impacts (see Section 5.7).

Noise. Cumulative noise impacts would occur if operation and maintenance of existing or planned projects occurred simultaneously with the proposed project.

No noise impacts are anticipated to occur with implementation of the proposed project. The proposed project would not create any new sources of noise. No construction would be necessary, and no additional operation or maintenance activity would occur. The only noise sources associated with the proposed project are water flow, other natural sounds, and whatever noise visitors to the area make. Altering the flows in the creek would not substantially increase ambient noise levels. The proposed project would not contribute

appreciably to the area's overall noise; consequently, no cumulative noise impacts would occur (see Section 5.8).

Population and Housing. Potential cumulative population and housing impacts can result from induced population growth, displacement of existing housing, or displacement of a segment of the population. The proposed project would not increase existing water supplies or deliveries, nor would it develop housing or any related services. With the exception the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project, no other project's listed in Table 7-1 would foster population growth or displace existing housing or populations. As such, the proposed project would not contribute substantially to cumulative impacts on population and housing (see Section 5.9).

The Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project would have the potential to induce population growth through the provision of additional water deliveries to United's service area. The additional population growth that may be caused by this project could trigger the development additional housing or otherwise foster urban development. As with the discussion for Agricultural Resources, the potential impact significance on housing and population due to the Increased State Water Project Deliveries to United Project is difficult to forecast, either individually or cumulatively, without a specific implementation plan to evaluate. Considerable speculation would be required to evaluate the overall significance (magnitude) of these impacts, which is discouraged under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15145). However, potential impacts could be cumulatively considerable and significant when combined with the proposed project and other development projects downstream and outside of the proposed project's immediate area. If proposed, this project would require environmental review under CEQA, and its direct and cumulative effects on housing and population would be addressed with greater specificity as part of that project's review and approval process.

Public Services. The proposed project has the potential to redistribute the recreational users of middle Piru Creek. However, it is not expected to increase the total number of recreational users in the area or alter the requirements for public services such as fire and police protection, schools, or parks. Although recreation users could choose to visit other recreational 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. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute substantially to significant cumulative impacts related to public services (see Sections 3.4 and 5.10).

Recreation. Cumulative adverse impacts to recreation would occur if construction of other planned area projects occurred simultaneously and in close proximity to the proposed project. Such impacts are primarily related to the generation of noise and dust but can also include temporarily blocked access or other interference with normal use of an area. According to District Ranger Cid Morgan of the Angeles National Forest, middle Piru Creek is currently used for dispersed recreational activities, primarily water play. However, changes in stream flows resulting from the proposed project would not be anticipated to significantly impact these recreational activities (USFS, 2004). Dana Robertson, Regional Park Superintendent II, Castaic Lake State Recreation Area, indicated that "there are no projects currently ongoing at Castaic. Any future projects that may be planned are not currently funded, so no time tables exist. Of the planned projects, none would eliminate any public recreational access." Additional recreational projects include the Pyramid Lake Repairs and Improvements Project, which is not anticipated to be adversely affected by the proposed project. Although the proposed project would result in impacts to recreational anglers, mitigation (see Section 3.4.4) is recommended to reduce these impacts to less than significant levels. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute substantially to cumulative impacts to recreation.

Transportation and Traffic. There would be no change in traffic or the transportation facilities with the proposed project. The proposed project 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. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative impacts related to transportation and traffic (see Section 5.11).

Utilities and Service Systems. While the proposed project has the potential to redistribute recreation users associated with middle Piru Creek, it is not expected to increase either the total number of area recreational users or the need for the utilities and service systems that they require. The proposed project would not generate additional wastewater and 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. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to significant cumulative impacts related to utilities and service systems (see Section 5.12).

7.4 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(b) requires an EIR to identify the significant environmental effects of a proposed project that cannot be mitigated to a level of less than significant if the proposed project is implemented. The proposed project would not result in any significant environmental effects that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant impact.