

CHAPTER 6

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

6.1 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

The goal of the growth inducing impacts section of the EIR is to address the effects the proposed project may have on surrounding facilities and activities by assessing the ways in which a project could encourage population or economic growth, increase employment opportunities or employment growth in support of an industry, or the construction of new housing or service facilities, either directly or indirectly.

CEQA Guidelines state that in the preparation of an EIR, growth inducing impacts that need to be addressed are ones that "...foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing...remove obstacles to population growth...encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment either individually or cumulatively" (Section 15126.2 (d)). An example given is the expansion of a wastewater treatment plant allowing for increased construction in service areas.

Based on the CEQA guidelines outlined above, the proposed project was evaluated in order to determine if any part of the project demonstrates the potential for growth inducing impacts. There are a number of constraints to urban growth in the immediate project area. These include the local land use categories (zoning) and policies, the successful agricultural economy, limited urban infrastructure, and the high potential for flooding. The presence of the Oceano Airport also affects the growth potential in the lower valley. The proposed project would reduce the flooding constraint for some properties located adjacent to the channels and lower Arroyo Grande Valley. Generally speaking, as a result of the project, the recurrence interval for flooding in this area would be reduced from once every five years to once every twenty years. This could potentially be seen as reducing an obstacle to growth. The proposed project would not affect the other constraints.

Policies in County planning documents discourage development in the 100-year flood zones as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The project area and much of the lower Arroyo Grande Valley are located within the 100-year flood zone and still would be despite implementation of the proposed project. Given this significant constraint, as well as County policies discouraging development of agricultural land, the lack of community water and sewer service, and the presence of the Oceano Airport, potential future development would still be highly constrained. It is not likely that the reduction of flood potential would be enough of a change to induce growth in the lower Arroyo Grande Valley.

The proposed project would include short-term construction and long-term maintenance. The short-term construction activities would require typical equipment and limited construction crews, as work would most likely progress slowly given the environmental constraints discussed in this EIR. It is unlikely this activity would require a permanent increase in construction-related jobs. Long-term maintenance would also be done with limited personnel, and is currently ongoing for portions of the creek. Long-term maintenance would also not require increases in construction-related jobs. *Potential growth-inducing impacts are less than significant.*

6.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states that use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a proposed project may be irreversible if a large commitment of these resources makes their removal, indirect removal, or non-use thereafter unlikely. This section of the EIR evaluates whether the project would result in the irretrievable commitment of resources, or would cause irreversible changes in the environment. Also, in accordance with Section 15126.2 of the CEQA Guidelines, this section identifies any irreversible damage that could result from environmental accidents associated with the proposed project.

The proposed project was evaluated based on the above stated conditions and was found to have the following irreversible significant environmental changes: irreversible commitment of resources, and loss of agricultural resources.

6.2.1 Irreversible Commitment of Non-Renewable Resources

Non-renewable resources, such as natural gas, petroleum products, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel, copper and other metals, and sand and gravel are considered to be commodities which are available in a finite supply. The processes that created these resources occur over a long period of time. Therefore, the replacement of these resources would not occur over the life of the project. To varying degrees, the aforementioned materials are all readily available and some materials, such as asphalt or sand and gravel, are abundant. Other commodities, such as metals, natural gas, and petroleum products, are also readily available, but they are finite in supply given the length of time required by the natural process to create them.

The demand for all such resources is expected to increase regardless of whether or not the project is developed. Increases in population will directly result in the need for resources. And they would likely be committed to other projects in the region intended to meet this anticipated growth. Resources necessary for implementation of the proposed project include sand and gravel for levee improvements and other components and the petroleum products consumed during construction. The majority of the resources would be used during short-term project construction; the long-term commitment of resources associated with maintenance of the project is limited.