

1 **3.13 LAND USE**

2 **3.13.1 Introduction**

3 This section addresses potential conflicts of the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project with existing  
 4 and future planned land uses and relevant land use plans and policies. Impacts associated with the  
 5 potential for conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use and conflicts with agricultural zoning  
 6 are addressed in Section 3.2, Agricultural Resources. Impacts on recreational land uses are addressed in  
 7 Section 3.18, Recreation. The study area includes the land at the mouths of the New and Alamo rivers that  
 8 could be restored as part of the SCH Project, as well as adjacent areas that could be affected by  
 9 construction, operations, or maintenance.

10 Table 3.13-1 summarizes the impacts of the six Project alternatives on land use, compared to both the  
 11 existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

<b>Table 3.13-1 Summary of Impacts on Land Use</b>								
Impact	Basis of Comparison	Project Alternative						Mitigation Measures
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other applicable land use plans or policies.	Existing Condition	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
	No Action	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses.	Existing Condition	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
	No Action	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses.	Existing Condition	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
	No Action	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
Note: O = No Impact L = Less-than-Significant Impact S = Significant Impact, but Mitigable to Less than Significant U = Significant Unavoidable Impact B = Beneficial Impact								

12

13 **3.13.2 Regulatory Requirements**

14 **3.13.2.1 State Programs and Regulations**

15 The California State Lands Commission (SLC) manages State-owned lands that underlie California's  
 16 navigable and tidal waterways. The State holds these lands, known as "sovereign lands," for the benefit of  
 17 all the people of the state, subject to the Public Trust for water-related commerce, navigation, fisheries,  
 18 recreation, open space and other recognized Public Trust uses." The SLC has determined that one parcel  
 19 (010-020-030, shown on Figure 1-2) is included as part of Alternatives 4 and 6 and would be subject to a  
 20 lease for the use of sovereign lands.

1    **3.13.2.2   Regional Land Use Plans and Policies**

2    ***Southern California Association of Governments – Regional Comprehensive Plan***

3    The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) functions as the Metropolitan Planning  
4    Organization for six counties, including Imperial County. In 2008, SCAG adopted the Regional  
5    Comprehensive Plan (RCP) to provide a regional framework for decisions regarding growth in Southern  
6    California. The RCP identifies regional issues of importance, such as housing, traffic/transportation, and  
7    water and air quality, and incorporates information from other relevant plans. It also contains a number of  
8    goals and policies applicable to regional development and identifies methods for their implementation.  
9    The RCP identifies the Salton Sea Basin as an area of concern for air quality, and mentions that it is one  
10   of the water bodies in the region where water quality needs to be protected. Use of the information  
11   contained in the RCP in local planning decisions is voluntary (SCAG 2008).

12   **3.13.2.3   Local Land Use Plans and Policies**

13   ***Imperial County General Plan***

14   The Imperial County General Plan consists of ten elements: Land Use (2008); Housing (2008);  
15   Circulation and Scenic Highways (1993); Noise (1997); Seismic and Public Safety (1993); Agricultural,  
16   Conservation and Open Space, Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission, Parks and Recreation,  
17   and Water. The Imperial County General Plan was updated in 2008. The General Plan Land Use Map  
18   designates land use categories and identifies locations appropriate for each use, as well as describes the  
19   anticipated maximum allowable buildout for the county (County of Imperial 2008a).

20   The Land Use Element of the General Plan is the primary policy statement for implementing development  
21   policies in the county’s unincorporated portions. The goals and policies in the Land Use Element (listed  
22   in Table 3.13-2 below) promote the economic prominence of agricultural enterprises, determine  
23   appropriate urban development centers and encourage their economic development, protect the existing  
24   character of rural and recreational communities and areas, and preserve the unique natural and cultural  
25   resources of the Imperial Valley. The Land Use Element identifies the Salton Sea as a potential additional  
26   recreational site.

27   The General Plan includes provisions to maintain the Salton Sea for the disposal of agricultural and  
28   natural drainage, fish and wildlife habitat, and water-based recreation. The General Plan also includes a  
29   provision to maintain the salinity in the Salton Sea at 40,000 milligrams per liter or less to support habitat  
30   and recreational uses.

31   The Imperial County General Plan includes the Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission  
32   Element as an optional element, as permitted by California Government Code section 65303, because of  
33   the importance of geothermal energy in the county. The purpose of the element is to provide a  
34   comprehensive document that contains the latest knowledge about the resource, workable development  
35   technology, legal requirements, policy, and implementation measures. The element provides a framework  
36   for the review and approval of geothermal projects in the county. This element encourages the  
37   development of geothermal resources in a manner compatible with the protection of agricultural and  
38   environmental resources.

39   Other sections of the General Plan also include objectives that support the viability of agricultural lands  
40   and water quality improvement in polluted water bodies including the Salton Sea.

41

1 ***Imperial County Land Use Ordinance***

2 Division 5, *Zoning Areas Established*, of the Land Use Ordinance was adopted November 24, 1998, and  
3 last amended in 2008 (County of Imperial 2008b). The purposes of this ordinance are to protect the public  
4 health, safety, and welfare; to provide for the orderly development, classification, regulation and, where  
5 applicable, segregation of land uses; to regulate the height and size of buildings; to regulate the area of  
6 yards and other open spaces around buildings; to regulate the density of population; and to provide the  
7 economic and social advantages resulting from orderly planned land uses and resources. These purposes  
8 are accomplished through the classification of every lot or parcel of land within county's unincorporated  
9 area in one of the base zoning areas established in section 90501.

10 Zones classifying land that could be included in the SCH Project include:

11 **S-1 (Open Space/Recreational) Zone** – The purpose of the S-1 zone is to designate areas that recognize  
12 the unique Open Space and Recreational character of Imperial County including the deserts, mountains,  
13 and water front areas. Primarily the S-1 Zone is characterized by low-intensity human utilization and  
14 small-scale recreation-related uses.

15 **A-2 (General Agriculture) Zone** – The purpose of the A-2 Zone is to designate areas that are suitable  
16 and intended primarily for agricultural uses (limited) and agriculture-related compatible uses. Forty acres  
17 is the minimum lot size.

18 **A-3 (Heavy Agriculture) Zone** – The purpose of the A-3 Zone is to designate areas that are suitable for  
19 agricultural land uses, to prevent the encroachment of incompatible uses onto and within agricultural  
20 lands, and to prohibit the premature conversion of such lands to nonagricultural uses. It is a land use that  
21 is to promote the heaviest of agricultural uses in the county's most suitable land areas. Uses in the A-3  
22 zoning designation are limited primarily to agriculture-related uses and agricultural activities that are  
23 compatible with agricultural uses.

24 **M-2 (Medium Industrial) Zone** – The purpose of the M-2 Zone is to designate areas for wholesale  
25 commercial, storage, trucking, assembly type manufacturing, general manufacturing, research and  
26 development, medium-intensity fabrication, and other similar medium-intensity processing facilities. The  
27 processing or fabrication within any of these facilities is to be limited to activities conducted either  
28 entirely within a building or within securely fenced (or obscured fencing) areas. Provided further that  
29 such facilities do not omit fumes, odor, dust, smoke, or gas beyond the confines of the property line  
30 within which their activity occurs, or produce significant levels of noise or vibration beyond the perimeter  
31 of the site.

32 Overlay zoning area boundaries are established in some places to further refine, classify, regulate, restrict,  
33 and segregate the use of land and buildings. Those applicable to the study area are:

- 34 • **G (Geothermal Overlay)**. The County Land Use Ordinance (section 91701.09) includes the  
35 Geothermal Overlay ("G") Zone, which permits minor geothermal projects and wells; and, by  
36 Conditional Use Permit, allows major and intermediate geothermal projects, geothermal test facilities,  
37 and major geothermal exploratory wells. The definitions of such projects follow:
- 38 • Minor project: maximum of one production and one injection well; maximum resource flow of  
39 100 gallons per minute (gpm) (or 50,000 pounds per hour).
  - 40 • Intermediate project: more than one production well and fewer than six wells; more than 100  
41 gpm, but less than 2,000 gpm.

- 1 • Major project: more than six wells (production or injection in any combination); resource flow of  
2 more than 2,000 gpm, or 1 million pounds per hour.
- 3 • **PE (Pre-Existing Allowed/Restricted).** Land classified in the “PE” (Pre-Existing  
4 Allowed/Restricted) zone is also classified in another zone. The intent of the “PE” designation  
5 following the base use designation is to allow an existing base zoned use to continue with its current  
6 use, even though through the strict interpretation of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinances, such  
7 use is a Pre-Existing, nonconforming use. The intent is to allow the owner/operator of such an  
8 identified use to continue to operate such use, maintain and modify the structural facilities as required  
9 under the Health and Safety Codes to enlarge the facilities by no more than 30 percent of its current  
10 assessed value, and to replace such a facility should it be destroyed by fire, flood, or act of God.

11 The New River pond areas are zoned S-1 and S-1G (Figure 3.13-1). The area in which the brackish water  
12 pipeline leading from the New River to the pond sites would be located under Alternative 1 is zoned S-1,  
13 A-3, and A-3G. The area where the distribution line providing electrical power to the SCH Project would  
14 be located under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 is zoned A-3 (the location of existing and proposed power lines  
15 is shown on Figure 2-5). The Alamo River pond areas are zoned S-1G (Figure 3.13-2). The area in which  
16 the brackish water pipeline leading from the Alamo River to the pond sites would be located under  
17 Alternative 4 is zoned S-1G in the northwestern corner, M-2G and M-2G-PE in the north-central portion,  
18 and A-2G and A-3G in the southern portion (County of Imperial 2008b). The area where the distribution  
19 line providing electrical power to the SCH Project would be located for Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 is zoned  
20 S-1G.

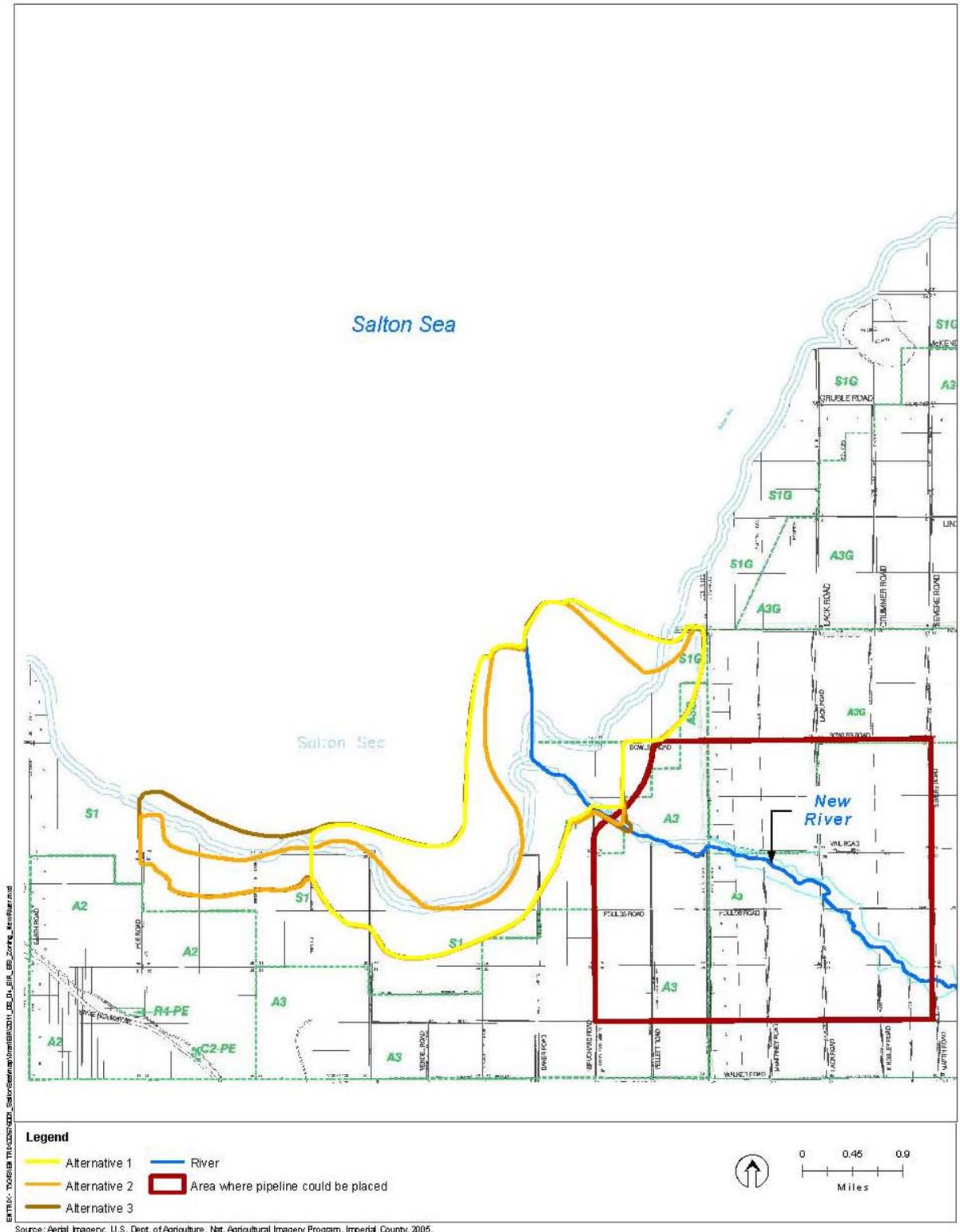
### 21 **3.13.3 Affected Environment**

22 Primary land uses within the study area include agriculture, energy production, recreation, and wildlife  
23 management areas. These uses are described in further detail below and are shown on Figure 3.13-3.  
24 Calipatria, Westmorland, and Niland are the closest urban areas to the SCH area and each is  
25 approximately 5 to 6 miles from the Project site(s). The pond sites are owned by IID, although portions of  
26 them are leased to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which manages the NWR. The  
27 land in the area where brackish water pipelines could be constructed generally is under private ownership,  
28 although portions are owned by IID. Approximately 79,000 acres of land under and immediately adjacent  
29 to the Salton Sea are withdrawn from the public domain by the United States Bureau of Reclamation.

#### 30 **3.13.3.1 Salton Sea**

31 The Salton Sea covers approximately 7.2 percent of the Imperial County land area (County of Imperial  
32 2008a) and is California’s largest lake with approximately 360 square miles of water surface and 105  
33 miles of shoreline. The Sea’s surface elevation lies approximately 232 feet below sea level, its maximum  
34 depth is 51 feet, and the total volume is about 7.5 million acre-feet (State Water Resources Control Board  
35 2010; SSA 2010). The Sea occupies a desert basin known as the Salton Sink, which has flooded and  
36 receded periodically over geologic history as the Colorado River has shifted course. The current body of  
37 water formed between 1905 and 1907 when repeated flooding from the Colorado River caused levee  
38 breaks and flows to settle into the Salton Sink. Since its formation in 1905, the Sea has been sustained  
39 predominantly by drainage flows from the nearly 600,000 acres of irrigated farmland in the Coachella and  
40 Imperial valleys. The Sea also receives urban runoff and wastewater flows from the Mexicali and  
41 Imperial valleys via the New and Alamo rivers.

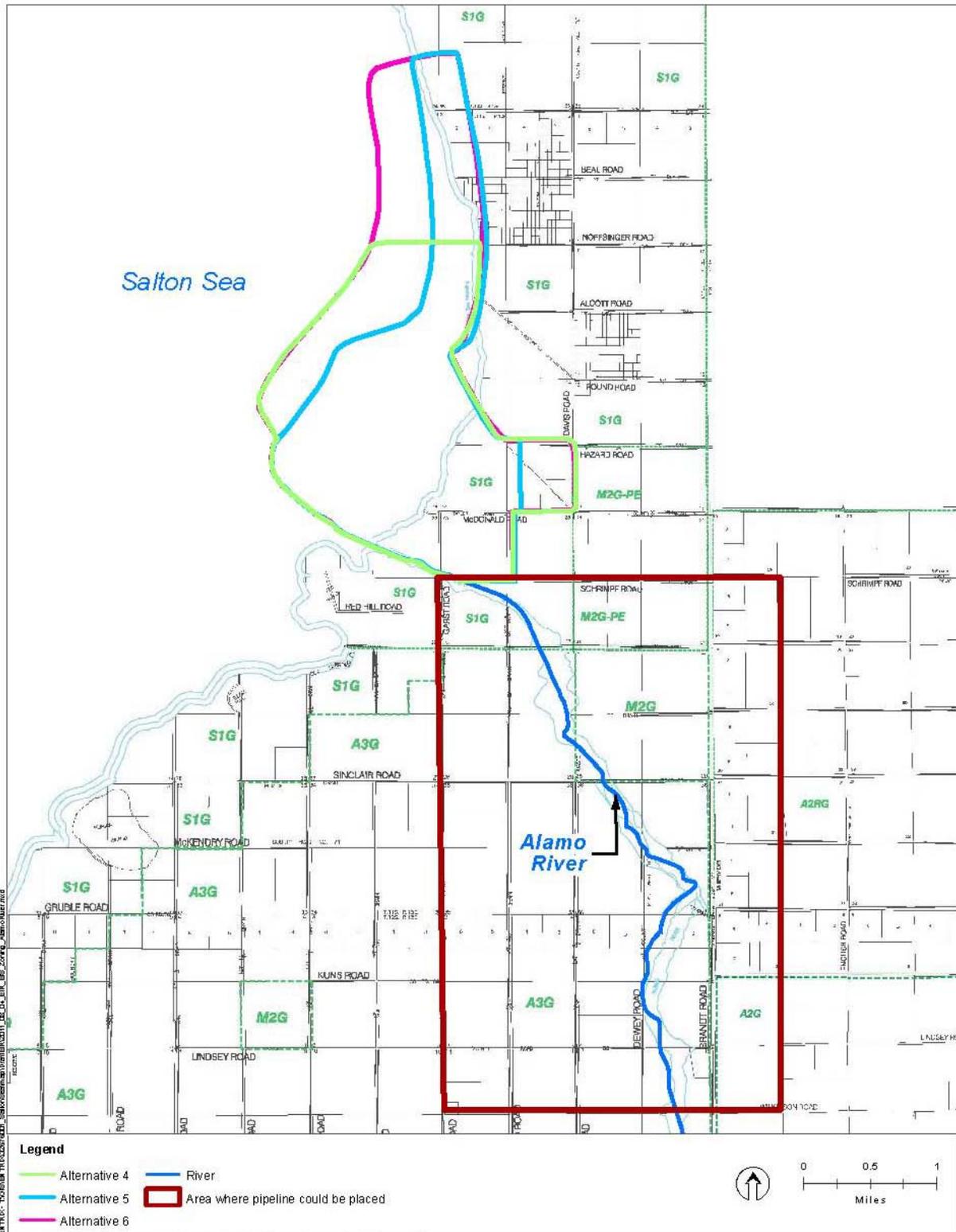
42 The Salton Sea and adjacent areas support diverse wildlife habitats for over 400 bird species. The Sea  
43 serves as important stop and wintering area for birds that migrate within the 5,000-mile international  
44 Pacific Flyway. The Sea is also a regional recreational resource for camping, fishing, boating, hunting,  
45 and bird watching. However, increasing salinity over the years and other water quality problems have  
46 been curtailing recreational use in the area.



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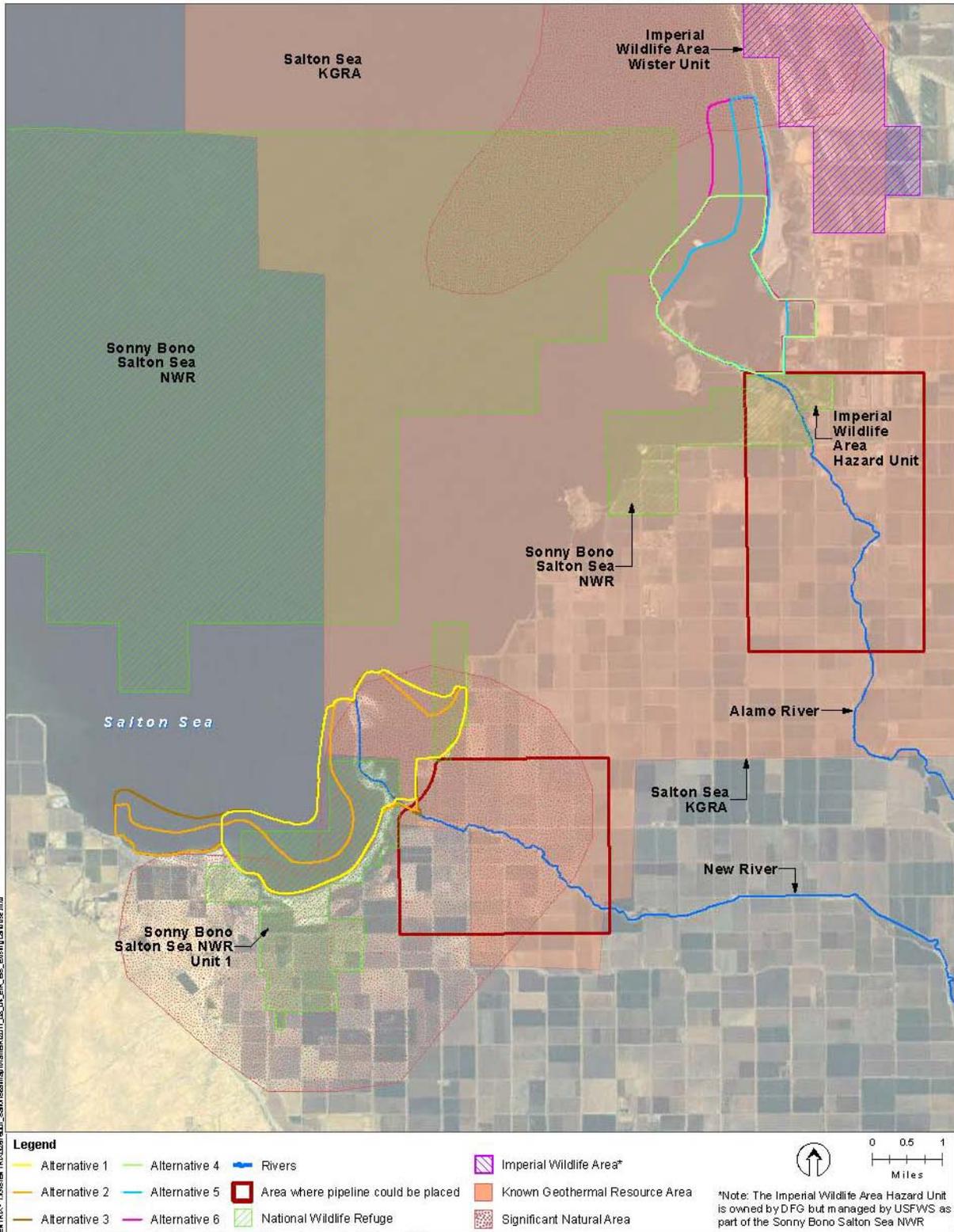
2 **Figure 3.13-1 Zoning Designations near the New River**

**SECTION 3.0**  
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1

2 **Figure 3.13-2 Zoning Designations near the Alamo River**



1

2

**Figure 3.13-3 Existing Land Uses near the New and Alamo Rivers**

1    **3.13.3.2    Agricultural Lands**

2    Agricultural lands are adjacent to the proposed pond sites at the New River, except for a portion that is a  
3    wetland managed for wildlife at the NWR. The area where the brackish water pipeline leading from the  
4    New River to the pond sites could be located is primarily agricultural land (Alternative 1 only). The  
5    Alamo River ponds would not be immediately adjacent to agricultural uses, but the potential brackish  
6    water pipeline area (Alternative 4 only) is composed primarily of agricultural land, except in the  
7    northwestern corner.

8    **3.13.3.3    Natural Resource Areas**

9    ***Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge***

10   The NWR is located on the Salton Sea’s southern end and was established in 1930 as a 32,766-acre  
11   sanctuary and breeding ground for birds and other wildlife. The NWR is intended as “...a refuge and  
12   breeding ground for birds and wild animals...” (Executive Order 5498, dated November 25, 1930, as cited  
13   in USFWS 2010); “... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for  
14   migratory birds” (16 United States Code[USC] section 715d, Migratory Bird Conservation Act, as cited  
15   in USFWS 2010); and “... for the management and control of migratory waterfowl and other wildlife...”  
16   (16 USC section 695, Lea Act, as cited in USFWS 2010).

17   Over time, agricultural runoff into the Salton Sea increased, gradually inundating the land that had been  
18   set aside for the NWR. Today, most of the NWR is submerged beneath the lake, and only 2,500 acres are  
19   managed as part of the NWR. Of the 2,500 acres, 920 acres are managed as wetlands to support resident  
20   shorebirds, seabirds, and other water-dependent bird species; the remaining acreage is included in dikes,  
21   shoreline, nesting islands, and saltflats. The managed areas are split into two units approximately 18 miles  
22   apart. Each unit contains managed wetland habitat to support shorebirds, seabirds, and other water-  
23   dependent bird species, as well as areas of intensely managed crop fields (USFWS 2010).

24   Public uses include waterfowl hunting, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education,  
25   interpretation, and research. Photo blinds and elevated observation platforms provide opportunities for  
26   wildlife observation and photography, and interpretive trails provide information about the existing  
27   habitats and associated species (USFWS 2010).

28   ***Imperial Wildlife Area***

29   Owned by the DFG, Imperial Wildlife Area is composed of three units: Wister Unit, Hazard Unit, and  
30   Finney-Ramer Unit, covering 7,929 acres (DFG 2010). Finney-Ramer Unit and Hazard Unit are both  
31   traversed by the Alamo River, and Hazard Unit is a unit of the NWR (USFWS 2009). Although it is  
32   owned by DFG, the NWR has maintained management and administrative authority of these lands for  
33   decades by agreement with DFG. Recreational uses of Imperial Wildlife Area include boating, fishing,  
34   waterfowl and quail hunting, and overnight camping (DFG 2010).

35   ***Significant Natural Areas***

36   The Imperial County Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan (2008) identifies  
37   Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) within the county. The New River SNA covers much of the area where  
38   the East New and West New ponds would be located, as well as most of a portion of the adjoining area  
39   near the New River proposed pond sites. The Mullet Island SNA encompasses Mullet Island and Wister  
40   Unit, and includes a portion of the Wister Beach ponds that would be part of Alternatives 5 and 6. The  
41   Conservation and Open Space Element includes a program to identify such areas and rezone them to limit  
42   development to low-intensity uses that are compatible with resource conservation. All projects within or

1 in the vicinity of an SNA should be designed to minimize adverse impacts on the biological resources it  
2 was created to protect.

### 3 3.13.3.4 Geothermal Energy Production

4 The Project area east of the New River is located in the Salton Sea Known Geothermal Resource Area  
5 (KGRA) (County of Imperial 2006). A KGRA is defined as:

6 An area in which the geology, nearby discoveries, competitive interests, or other indicia  
7 would, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Interior, engender a belief in those who are  
8 experienced in the subject matter that the prospects for extraction of geothermal steam or  
9 associated geothermal resources are good enough to warrant expenditures of money for  
10 that purpose (30 USC 1001).

11 Geothermal production wells tap into water reservoirs thousands of feet beneath the earth's surface,  
12 releasing superheated water, which drives turbines to generate electricity.

13 Imperial County, through the Planning and Development Services Department, regulates the use of land  
14 for geothermal purposes through zoning and conditional use permits. The County Land Use Ordinance  
15 includes the Geothermal Overlay Zone, which is applied by ordinance of the Board of Supervisors,  
16 following a recommendation by the County Planning Commission, as shown on Figures 3.13-1 and 3.13-  
17 2 and discussed above, portions of the Project area are included in a Geothermal Overlay Zone.

18 A number of energy companies maintain geothermal plants, wells, and other facilities throughout the  
19 study area, including several CalEnergy facilities near the Alamo River.

### 20 3.13.3.5 Future Land Uses in the Study Area

#### 21 *Geothermal Energy Production*

22 As noted above, the proposed pond sites are located in an area that contains important geothermal  
23 resources, and IID has granted mineral rights to various geothermal companies that would allow them to  
24 develop geothermal facilities in this area (subject to the appropriate environmental compliance and  
25 approval processes) (personal communication, B. Wilcox 2010). Future geothermal power plants may be  
26 located in areas that are currently submerged by the Salton Sea. Future facilities on land owned by IID  
27 could include one 10-acre well pad in each quarter section in unspecified locations within the Project's  
28 boundaries, pipelines to convey geothermal water, roads that can support heavy loads, and electric  
29 transmission lines. Pipelines, roads, and electric transmission lines may require easements up to 600 feet  
30 wide for construction, access, and maintenance. Geothermal power generation plants typically require  
31 sites up to 50 acres. At this time, it is not known whether such facilities would be constructed and where  
32 they would be located. Their siting, construction, and operation would require permits and independent  
33 environmental analysis.

#### 34 *Environmental Management*

35 IID manages several experimental air quality management plots near the New River. Operation of these  
36 plots involves flooding part of the exposed playa. IID plans to construct more air quality management  
37 plots in the future, although IID indicated ample land is available around the Salton Sea and does not have  
38 to be in the immediate Project area (personal communication, B. Wilcox 2010).

39 The USFWS has indicated interest in developing approximately 700 acres of shallow water habitat in Red  
40 Hill Bay in an effort to maintain recent historic wetland values on this part of the NWR. This site was  
41 originally considered as a location for the SCH Project, but this area was removed from the SCH Project

1 alternatives based on the USFWS' plans for the area. This project would be adjacent to, but outside the  
2 area where the proposed SCH ponds at the Alamo River would be located. The USFWS is also planning  
3 to develop a restoration project at Bruchard Bay. This area is adjacent to, but outside of, the area proposed  
4 for the SCH Project. The Unit 1 A/B Ponds Reclamation Project is planned for a separate portion of the  
5 NWR at the southern tip of the Salton Sea. This area is within the current footprint of the proposed SCH  
6 alternatives at the New River. The SCH agencies would coordinate with the USFWS to maximize the  
7 constructability of both projects; however, the USFWS considers the SCH Project a priority in this area  
8 and if reclamation of part or all of the old Unit 1 A/B Ponds is not possible, the USFWS prefers to seek  
9 reclamation alternatives elsewhere (personal communication, C. Schoneman 2011).

#### 10 **3.13.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

##### 11 **3.13.4.1 Impact Analysis Methodology**

12 The analysis considered the impacts of the SCH Project when evaluating whether the Project would  
13 conflict with any applicable plans, policies, or regulations or with any existing or planned land uses.

##### 14 **3.13.4.2 Thresholds of Significance**

###### 15 *Significance Criteria*

16 Impacts on land use would be significant if the SCH Project would:

- 17 • Physically divide an established community;
- 18 • Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over  
19 the Project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or  
20 zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact.
- 21 • Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.
- 22 • Conflict with existing or planned land uses.

###### 23 *Application of Significance Criteria*

24 A summary of the overall methodology used in applying the significance criteria to the Project  
25 alternatives follows:

- 26 • **Physically divide an established community** – SCH facilities would be located either within the  
27 seabed, along the shoreline downgradient from existing communities, or in agricultural areas. The  
28 brackish water pipeline that would be required to convey water from the New and/or Alamo rivers  
29 under Alternatives 1 and 4 would be buried and would not divide agricultural fields once construction  
30 was completed and the area restored. Therefore, the alternatives would not divide communities, and  
31 this criterion is not considered further.
- 32 • **Conflict with land use plans** – The analysis addresses conflicts with the Imperial County General  
33 Plan and other land use plans.
- 34 • **Conflict with an applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan**  
35 – The IID Water Conservation and Transfer Project Habitat Conservation Plan applies to the Project  
36 area. The Project's relationship to this plan and potential conflicts are discussed further in Section 3.4,  
37 Biological Resources; therefore, this criterion is not considered further in this section.

- 1 • **Conflict with existing or planned land uses** – The potential for conflicts with existing and planned  
2 land uses is discussed below.

### 3 3.13.4.3 No Action Alternative

4 As described in the *Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program Final Programmatic Environmental*  
5 *Impact Report* (California Department of Water Resources and DFG 2007), the No Action Alternative  
6 would involve construction and maintenance activities for desert pupfish habitat channels. Additionally,  
7 the IID, as mitigation for the IID Water Conservation and Transfer Project, is required to relocate  
8 campgrounds, roads, and trails that are currently located adjacent to the Salton Sea at the Salton Sea State  
9 Recreation Area, as well as boat launches along the shoreline. Construction would be located within the  
10 current seabed.

11 Salinity in the Salton Sea is currently higher than 40,000 milligrams per liter and would continue to be  
12 higher in the No Action Alternative, and would not provide compliance with the Imperial County General  
13 Plan to support a wide range of marine fish and wildlife habitat or recreational uses.

14 By 2078, the Salton Sea's water surface elevation would decline to -248 feet mean sea level under the No  
15 Action Alternative. The reduction in water surface elevation would allow for development of a portion of  
16 the currently inundated lands in accordance with the Torres Martinez Land Use, Zoning and Development  
17 Plan. However, all of the tribal lands in the seabed would not be exposed.

18 If no action is taken, declining inflows in future years from various factors will result in collapse of the  
19 Salton Sea ecosystem due to increasing salinity and other water quality issues, such as temperature,  
20 eutrophication and related anoxia, and algal productivity. Taking no action would conflict with the  
21 Imperial County General Plan, which contains goals and objectives related to the natural resources  
22 associated with the Salton Sea, including maintenance of salinity levels and preservation of habitat that  
23 supports native and migrating birds. In addition to the General Plan, the No Action Alternative would  
24 conflict with other Federal, state, and regional land use plans and policies aimed at the restoration of the  
25 Salton Sea, including the Federal Salton Sea Restoration Act of 1998, SB 277, SB 317, SB 654, SB 1214,  
26 and the Salton Sea Revitalization & Restoration: Salton Sea Authority Plan for Multi-Purpose Project.

27 Declining water levels will also expose Salton Sea shoreline areas as playa; this exposed land area will  
28 become available for potential future economic development. This land would likely be designated for  
29 specific land uses by the appropriate land use agency, such as Imperial County, for residential,  
30 commercial, industrial, or open space development. Extensive geothermal resources exist in the vicinity  
31 of the New and Alamo rivers. These areas are planned for geothermal production and are expected to be  
32 developed with pads to locate drilling and well facilities. Additionally, IID plans to construct  
33 experimental air quality management plots in the Project vicinity. The No Action Alternative would not  
34 restore habitat along the existing shoreline or convert exposed playa to open water, and would not,  
35 therefore, have the potential to conflict with future planned land uses for the exposed playa areas.

### 36 3.13.4.4 Alternative 1 – New River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Ponds

37 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
38 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
39 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The SCH Project would be  
40 compatible with the Federal, state, and regional plans described under Section 3.3.2, Regulatory Setting,  
41 because it would restore habitat for fish and wildlife dependent on the Salton Sea and would reduce air  
42 emissions from what would otherwise become exposed playa. The Imperial County General Plan contains  
43 a number of goals and objectives that are applicable to the SCH Project, and the Project's consistency  
44 with each is discussed in Table 3.13-2. The discussion is applicable to all Project alternatives. For

**SECTION 3.0**  
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- 1 purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that mitigation measures included in other resource sections would
- 2 be implemented and, therefore, any conflicts would be less than significant when compared to both the
- 3 existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

<b>Table 3.13-2 Project Consistency with Applicable County of Imperial General Plan Goals and Objectives</b>		
<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>Summary of Policy</b>	<b>Alternative 1-Alternative 6</b>
	<b>Land Use Element</b>	
Objective 1.2	Discourage the location of incompatible development adjacent to or within productive agricultural lands.	The SCH Project would restore habitat in an area that currently supports and historically supported many birds and would not be incompatible with surrounding agricultural uses.
Goal 3	Achieve balanced economic and residential growth while preserving the unique natural, scenic, and agricultural resources of Imperial County.	The SCH Project would not conflict with any planned economic or residential growth and would restore the county's unique natural resources.
Objective 3.10	Identify and pursue funding sources for cleanup of the New and Alamo rivers and the Salton Sea.	The SCH Project would provide funding for the restoration of portions of the Salton Sea; funding for cleanup of the rivers is not part of the Project.
Objective 6.3	Protect industrial zoned areas from incompatible adjacent land uses and from under-utilization by non-industrial uses.	The New River sites are not located in an area zoned for industrial uses. The Alamo River brackish water pipeline and sedimentation basins could be located in an industrial zone, but would not be incompatible with industrial uses.
Goal 9	Identify and preserve significant natural, cultural, and community character resources and the county's air and water quality.	The Project would restore habitat to protect the county's natural resources and would also improve air quality by covering otherwise exposed playa, which could cause dust emissions, with open water ponds.
Objective 9.1	Preserve as open space those lands containing watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, floodplains, important natural resources, sensitive vegetation, wildlife habitats, historic and prehistoric sites, or lands that are subject to seismic hazards and establish compatible minimum lot sizes.	The Project would preserve a portion of the Salton Sea shoreline areas as natural habitat areas to support birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea.
Objective 9.5	Establish policies and programs for maintaining salinity levels in the Salton Sea that enable it to remain a viable fish and wildlife habitat.	The Project would result in a slight increase in salinity, but this increase would not be the cause of the decline of the Salton Sea ecosystem. Rather, the purpose of the Project is to restore habitat that would be lost due to increasing salinity levels.

<b>Table 3.13-2 Project Consistency with Applicable County of Imperial General Plan Goals and Objectives</b>		
<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>Summary of Policy</b>	<b>Alternative 1-Alternative 6</b>
	<b>Circulation &amp; Scenic Highways Element</b>	
Objective 1.12	Review new development proposals to ensure that the proposed development provides adequate parking and would not increase traffic on existing roadways and intersection to a level of service (LOS) worse than "C" without providing appropriate mitigations to existing infrastructure. This provision can include fair share contributions on the part of developers to mitigate traffic impacts caused by such proposed developments.	The Project would cause minimal temporary disruption to infrequently traveled county roads and would not reduce the level of service below LOS C.
Objective 1.17	Assure that road systems are adequate to accommodate emergency situations and evacuation plans.	The Project would not impede emergency access or evacuation plans.
Objective 3.8	Attempt to reduce motor vehicle air pollution. Require all major projects to perform an air quality analysis to determine the amount of pollution, as well as the alternative reduction options.	An air quality analysis was performed, and the results have been included in Section 3.3, Air Quality, along with mitigation measures that would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.
Objective 4.3	Protect areas of outstanding scenic beauty along any scenic highways and protect the aesthetics of those areas.	No scenic highways are within the Project vicinity. The Project would enhance the aesthetic qualities of the Salton Sea's southern shoreline by restoring exposed playa to open water ponds.
	<b>Water Element</b>	
Goal 2	Long-term viability of the Salton Sea, Colorado River, and other surface waters in the county will be protected for sustaining wildlife and a broad range of ecological communities.	The Project would restore habitat to enhance the Salton Sea's long-term viability as habitat for birds.
Objective 2.1	The continued viability of the agricultural sector as an important source of surface water for the maintenance of valuable wildlife and recreational resources in the county.	The Project would not affect the viability of agricultural lands as a source of surface water.
	<b>Conservation and Open Space Element</b>	
Goal 1	Environmental resources will be conserved for future generations by minimizing environmental impacts in all land use decisions.	The analysis and mitigation measures contained in this EIS/EIR are intended to minimize environmental impacts from Project implementation.
Objective 1.2	Encourage only those uses and activities that are compatible with the fragile desert, aquatic, and marshland environment.	The Project would restore sensitive aquatic resources and all allowed uses would be compatible with the restored environment.
Objective 1.5	Provide for the most beneficial use of land based upon recognition of natural constraints.	The Project would not preclude geothermal development and would be a beneficial use of land.
Goal 2	The County will preserve the integrity, function, productivity, and long-term viability of environmentally sensitive habitats, and plant and animal species.	The Project would restore a portion of the habitat being lost for fish and wildlife dependent on the Salton Sea and serve as a proof of concept for future development.

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**Table 3.13-2 Project Consistency with Applicable County of Imperial General Plan Goals and Objectives**

Goal/Objective	Summary of Policy	Alternative 1-Alternative 6
Objective 2.1	Conserve wetlands, freshwater marshes, and riparian vegetation.	Project construction would result in temporary disturbance of Federal Waters of the U.S. and would have only minimal effects on wetlands.
Objective 2.2	Protect significant fish, wildlife, plant species, and their habitats.	The Project would restore aquatic habitat to enhance the long-term viability of the Salton Sea area as habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea.
Goal 7	The aesthetic character of the region will be protected and enhanced to provide a pleasing environment for residential, commercial, recreational, and tourist activity.	The Project would enhance the aesthetic qualities of the Salton Sea's southern shoreline by creating open water ponds on otherwise exposed playa.
Goal 8	The County will conserve, protect, and enhance the water resources in the planning area.	The Project would restore habitat to enhance the long-term viability of the Salton Sea as habitat for birds that are dependent on the Sea.
Objective 8.1	Protect all bodies of water, e.g., Salton Sea, and water courses for their continued use and development.	The Project would restore habitat to enhance the long-term viability of the Salton Sea as habitat for birds that are dependent on the Sea.
Objective 8.2	Maintain the salinity of the Salton Sea at 40,000 parts per million salinity and encourage the advantageous usage of the Salton Sea for agricultural and natural drainage, recreation, and development.	The salinity of the Salton Sea already exceeds this target. The Project would slightly increase the Salton Sea's salinity, but would not affect the use of the Sea for drainage or development. It would provide recreational opportunities to the extent that they are consistent with the management objectives.
Objective 8.3	Regulate development in or adjacent to water bodies and courses, protect water bodies and minimize property damage. Zone the areas around the Salton Sea below elevation -220 feet as open space to minimize property damage from fluctuating sea elevations.	The Project area, which is below -220 feet, would be maintained as open space.

**Table 3.13-2 Project Consistency with Applicable County of Imperial General Plan Goals and Objectives**

Goal/Objective	Summary of Policy	Alternative 1-Alternative 6
Objective 8.5	Protect and improve water quality and quantity for all water bodies in Imperial County.	Construction would result water quality impacts at the Salton Sea. Generally, these potential impacts would be short-term and limited to the duration of construction. The Project would include an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan and a Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan for construction and maintenance activities. These plans would address the potential for erosion and incorporate appropriate protections into the design. Pesticide residues are present in the sediments at the pond sites. Although DDT residues could remain in the surface sediments beyond the 2-year construction period, concentrations would likely be similar to elevated concentrations already present in several other nearby habitats. Project operations would cause changes in Salton Sea water quality but would not violate established standards. The Project would result in a minor increase in the salinity and decrease in the elevation of the Salton Sea, but the Sea will get smaller, shallower, and saltier regardless of whether the SCH Project is implemented or not.
Objective 8.8	Ensure protection of water bodies that are important for recreational fishing.	The Project would not limit recreational fishing opportunities at the Salton Sea or other areas and may provide opportunities for anglers.
<b>Seismic &amp; Public Safety Element</b>		
Goal 2	Minimize potential hazards to public health, safety, and welfare and prevent the loss of life and damage to health and property resulting from both natural and human-related phenomena.	Section 3.10, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, includes mitigation measures that would reduce potential hazards to public health and safety to less-than-significant levels.
Objective 2.3	Identify potential risk and damage due to inundation from dam failure and/or water releases.	The Project would not result in significant risks from dam failure or water releases, including those resulting from berm failure.
<b>Geothermal &amp; Transmission Element</b>		
Goal 1	The County of Imperial supports and encourages the full, orderly, and efficient development of geothermal/alternative energy resources while at the same time preserving and enhancing where possible agricultural, biological, human, and recreational resources.	The Project would restore and protect biological resources and would not preclude future development of geothermal energy.
Objective 1.1	Design for the co-location of energy facilities through the designation of "energy park" zones to increase certainty and facilitate power generation development and to provide for efficient use of land resources.	The Project would not preclude geothermal facilities, thus allowing for the co-location of energy facilities and restored bird habitat.

1 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
2 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** Land  
3 uses adjacent to or within the Project footprint at the New River include agricultural fields and portions of  
4 the NWR. The Project would be consistent with the NWR's objectives, which include preserving natural  
5 resource areas to provide a refuge and breeding ground for birds and other wildlife; DFG and the USFWS  
6 would continue to coordinate throughout operations to manage any potential conflicts.

7 The Project would be located in an area that historically has been used by large numbers of birds and  
8 would restore a portion of the habitat that is being lost as the salinity of the Salton Sea increases and as  
9 the Sea recedes. Birds can cause a loss of leafy green crops through depredation and by exposing those  
10 crops to fecal matter, which may require the destruction of the affected portion of the field. As discussed  
11 in Section 3.19, Socioeconomics, however, the Project would not result in a substantial difference in  
12 impacts on agricultural uses than those occurring at present. Over time, fewer birds will be present at the  
13 Salton Sea as a whole, reducing the overall potential for impacts on nearby agricultural lands. Therefore,  
14 impacts would be less than significant when compared to both the existing environmental setting and the  
15 No Action Alternative.

16 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
17 **(less-than-significant impact).** Future planned land uses in the general area include geothermal  
18 development, experimental air quality management plots, and NWR habitat restoration projects. While  
19 the KGRA is largely west of the New River, it is conservatively assumed that geothermal development  
20 could occur at all of the proposed pond sites. Geothermal development companies were consulted while  
21 the SCH Project alternatives were being developed, and the Project is based on information that is  
22 currently available regarding their requirements, and how the ponds and berms could be adapted, as  
23 needed, to accommodate future geothermal facilities such as well pads and access roads. Although this  
24 accommodation could incrementally reduce the amount of habitat restored as part of the SCH Project, this  
25 loss would not affect the overall viability of the Project and the benefits it provides. Modifications to the  
26 SCH Project to accommodate this future development would be the responsibility of the geothermal  
27 developers and the impacts of such development are outside the scope of this EIS/EIR.

28 IID also has a requirement to develop air quality management plots near the Salton Sea, but as noted  
29 above, IID has indicated that they have sufficient land elsewhere, and the SCH Project would not conflict  
30 with this requirement (personal communication, B. Wilcox 2010).

31 The SCH Project would be fully compatible with planned restoration projects near the New River. It  
32 would be outside the boundaries of the Bruchard Bay project, and would not conflict with its construction  
33 or operation. The SCH agencies would coordinate with the USFWS to maximize the constructability of  
34 the SCH Project and the Unit 1 A/B Ponds; however, the USFWS considers the SCH Project a priority in  
35 this area and if reclamation of part or all of the old Unit 1 A/B Ponds is not possible as a result of the  
36 SCH Project, the USFWS prefers to seek reclamation alternatives elsewhere (personal communication, C.  
37 Schoneman 2011).

38 Any conflicts with future planned land uses would be less than significant when compared to both the  
39 existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

#### 40 3.13.4.5 Alternative 2 – New River, Pumped Diversion

41 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
42 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
43 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1  
44 is applicable to this alternative.

1 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
2 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** The  
3 discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

4 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
5 **(less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

#### 6 3.13.4.6 Alternative 3 – New River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds

7 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
8 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
9 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1  
10 is applicable to this alternative.

11 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
12 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** The  
13 discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

14 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
15 **(less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

#### 16 3.13.4.7 Alternative 4 – Alamo River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Pond

17 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
18 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
19 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1  
20 is applicable to this alternative.

21 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
22 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** The  
23 discussion under Alternative 1 is generally applicable to this alternative. The Alternative 4 ponds would  
24 be located near the mouth of the Alamo River within or adjacent to Sonny Bono NWR, agricultural fields,  
25 geothermal production plants, and Red Hill Park. Impacts on the NWR and agricultural fields would be  
26 similar to those discussed above, and the Project would not conflict with existing geothermal  
27 development. Once the Project was constructed, Red Hill Park would benefit from the Project because  
28 both the recreational and aesthetic value of the surrounding area would be enhanced. Construction would  
29 result in short-term disruptions to those staying at the park from noise and visual degradation and night  
30 lighting (refer to Sections 3.1, Aesthetics and 3.14, Noise), but these impacts would be temporary and  
31 would not result in a permanent land use conflict. Moreover, mitigation measures included in other  
32 sections of this EIS/EIR would minimize the potential for land use conflicts. Impacts would be less than  
33 significant when compared to both the existing environmental setting and No Action Alternative.

34 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
35 **(less-than-significant impact).** Future planned land uses in the general area include geothermal  
36 development (this site is in a KGRA) experimental air quality management plots, and development of  
37 shallow water habitat at Red Hill Bay by USFWS. The discussion under Alternative 1 related to  
38 geothermal development and the experimental air quality management plots is applicable to this  
39 alternative. The SCH Project would be fully compatible with the development of habitat at Red Hill Bay  
40 because both projects would restore habitat for birds that use the Salton Sea.

1 3.13.4.8 Alternative 5 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion

2 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
3 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
4 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1  
5 is applicable to this alternative.

6 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
7 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** The  
8 discussions under Alternatives 1 and 4 are applicable to this alternative.

9 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
10 **(less-than-significant impact).** The discussions under Alternatives 1 and 4 are applicable to this  
11 alternative.

12 3.13.4.9 Alternative 6 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds

13 **Impact LU-1: Given the implementation of mitigation measures identified in other sections of this**  
14 **EIS/EIR, the SCH Project would be compatible with the Imperial County General Plan and other**  
15 **applicable land use plans or policies (less-than-significant impact).** The discussion under Alternative 1  
16 is applicable to this alternative.

17 **Impact LU-2: Restoration of habitat for birds that are dependent on the Salton Sea would not**  
18 **result in substantive conflicts with existing adjacent land uses (less-than-significant impact).** The  
19 discussions under Alternatives 1 and 4 are applicable to this alternative.

20 **Impact LU-3: The Project would be designed to minimize conflicts with future planned land uses**  
21 **(less-than-significant impact).** The discussions under Alternatives 1 and 4 are applicable to this  
22 alternative.

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**SECTION 3.0**  
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