

1 **3.16 POPULATION AND HOUSING**

2 **3.16.1 Introduction**

3 This section discusses the potential for the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project to result in  
 4 temporary and long-term increases in population and increased demand for housing. The study area for  
 5 population and housing is Imperial County, including both the unincorporated communities as well as the  
 6 cities of Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmorland. This study area  
 7 was selected because the Project would be located in Imperial County and most workers would be likely  
 8 to reside here.

9 Table 3.16-1 summarizes the impacts of each of the six Project alternatives on population and housing in  
 10 comparison to both the existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

Table 3.16-1 Summary of Impacts on Population and Housing								
Impact	Basis of Comparison	Project Alternative						Mitigation Measures
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in Imperial County population.	Existing Condition	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
	No Action	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
Impact POP-2: Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days.	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								

11  
 12 **3.16.2 Regulatory Requirements**

13 No state or Federal regulatory requirements regarding population and housing are applicable to the SCH  
 14 Project. The Housing Use and Land elements of the Imperial County General Plan (County of Imperial  
 15 2008a and 2008b) include a number of goals, objectives, and policies that focus on providing adequate  
 16 housing to meet the needs of county residents.

17 **3.16.3 Affected Environment**

18 **3.16.3.1 Population**

19 Imperial County has been a predominantly rural, agricultural region for more than 100 years, but its  
 20 population has been growing over the past 30 years. In 1980, the population was 92,110 (Southern  
 21 California Association of Governments [SCAG] 2010). The last official census in 2000 showed a  
 22 population of 142,361, while more recent estimates calculated the 2010 population at 183,029 (United  
 23 States Census Bureau 2010a; California Department of Finance 2010a). The largest population centers are  
 24 found in Brawley, El Centro and Calexico, with almost 40 percent of the county’s population in these

1 three cities. Approximately 21 percent of Imperial County’s population is located in unincorporated areas  
2 (SCAG 2010). Population in unincorporated areas of the county tends to concentrate in agricultural areas  
3 and in recreation/retirement communities. Communities located on the shores of the Salton Sea, including  
4 Salton City, Salton Sea Beach, and Bombay Beach are primarily recreation-based communities, although  
5 their populations increasingly are becoming more diversified. These communities experience a notable  
6 increase in population during the winter months when visitors converge to avoid cold/wet winters in other  
7 parts of the country (County of Imperial 2008).

### 8 **3.16.3.2 Housing**

9 In 2009, Imperial County had approximately 54,900 housing units, of which nearly 21 percent were in  
10 multi-unit structures (United States Census Bureau 2010b; California Department of Finance 2010b).  
11 Approximately 46 percent of the housing units are occupied by renters. In 2008, the most current year for  
12 which information is available, nearly 14 percent of the housing units were vacant. About 14,700 housing  
13 units, or 27 percent of the county’s total, are located in El Centro, and 10,000 housing units, or 18 percent  
14 of the county’s total, are located in Calexico. Similar to the county as a whole, 46 to 47 percent of these  
15 units are occupied by renters. Imperial has a vacancy rate of nearly 14 percent, which is also similar to the  
16 entire county, although Calexico has only a 7 percent vacancy rate (United States Census Bureau 2010a).

17 Temporary housing areas are located throughout the county, including recreational vehicle (RV) parks,  
18 mobile home parks, and campgrounds. Red Hill Park is located immediately adjacent to the Alamo River  
19 mouth and includes RV hookups in addition to a camping area, restrooms, ramadas and picnic tables. The  
20 park is the most accessible temporary housing area to the proposed Project sites (County of Imperial  
21 2010a). The Fountain of Youth Spa, located in Niland, is the largest temporary housing area in the  
22 county, with 212 mobile homes and 785 RV spaces. The Oasis Mobile Village, also in Niland, has 73  
23 mobile homes and the Del Yermo RV Park in Calipatria has 45 RV spaces. Brawley has more than 85 RV  
24 spaces and 188 mobile homes spread across the Brawley RV Park and mobile home park, Tangerine  
25 Gardens mobile home park, Palm Lane RV park, and Smyth mobile home park (County of Imperial  
26 2010b). Finally, camping opportunities are present on state and Federal lands and through private  
27 recreational resources. Campgrounds include the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, Salt Creek  
28 Campground, and Glamis North KOA Campground.

## 29 **3.16.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

### 30 **3.16.4.1 Impact Analysis Methodology**

31 Impacts on population and housing were assessed by comparing the numbers of temporary and permanent  
32 workers required to construct and operate the SCH Project to the available labor pool and housing  
33 resources in the study area and also by considering whether the Project could indirectly affect population  
34 and housing by attracting more residents. Most of the heavy equipment and the operators of this  
35 equipment would likely be brought in from the San Diego area, although specialized equipment such as a  
36 clamshell derrick and tractor scraper units and excavators could come from the San Francisco Bay Area  
37 and/or the Sacramento area. Truck drivers and most other construction workers would likely be from the  
38 local area in Imperial County. Impacts of each of the Project alternatives were compared to both the  
39 existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

### 40 **3.16.4.2 Thresholds of Significance**

#### 41 *Significance Criteria*

42 Impacts would be significant if the Project alternatives would:

- 43 • Induce population growth either directly or indirectly;

- 1 • Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement  
2 housing elsewhere; or
- 3 • Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing  
4 elsewhere.

### 5 *Application of Significance Criteria*

6 The following summarizes the overall methodology used in applying the significance criteria to the  
7 Project alternatives:

- 8 • **Induce Population Growth** – The analysis considers whether the need for construction workers  
9 would generate substantial population growth in Imperial County. The equivalent of two jobs would  
10 be created during the operational phase, which would have an imperceptible effect on population  
11 levels; therefore, operational impacts are not discussed further. The analysis also considers whether  
12 the Project could indirectly cause an increase in population through increased recreational  
13 opportunities.
- 14 • **Displace Substantial Populations or Housing** – The proposed facilities would be located in  
15 currently submerged or recently exposed areas of the Salton Sea or in agricultural areas where there  
16 are no housing units; therefore, the Project would not displace any existing housing. There is a  
17 potential for encampments to be present near the riverbanks, but these would most likely be  
18 temporary given the harsh weather conditions (i.e., intense heat and flash flooding) and occupied by  
19 only a few individuals. Although construction activity would likely discourage any individuals from  
20 settling within the area near or in the Project site, implementation of the SCH Project would not  
21 displace substantial numbers of existing housing nor displace substantial numbers of people and  
22 would not necessitate the construction of housing elsewhere. Therefore, this impact is not considered  
23 further.

#### 24 3.16.4.3 No Action Alternative

25 At the time of Project construction (expected to begin in late 2012), population and housing conditions  
26 would likely be substantially similar to those described under the Affected Environment above, although  
27 some fluctuations would be expected; as noted above, population levels have been increasing, and it is  
28 possible that housing may increase as well. Declining inflows in future years from various factors would  
29 result in collapse of the Salton Sea ecosystem due to increasing salinity and other water quality issues,  
30 such as temperature, eutrophication and related anoxia, and algal productivity. This collapse is unlikely to  
31 have a substantive impact on population and housing in Imperial County as a whole, most of which is not  
32 present in the immediate vicinity of the Salton Sea. The declining water elevation and loss of the fish and  
33 birds at the Sea would likely make living near the Sea less desirable and could result in a population  
34 decline in communities such as Bombay Beach and Salton City that are located on the existing shores of  
35 the Salton Sea. Recreational opportunities at the Salton Sea would be reduced, which could affect  
36 employment opportunities near the Sea and affect further reduce population in the vicinity.

#### 37 3.16.4.4 Alternative 1 – New River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Ponds

38 **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
39 **Imperial County population (less than significant impact).** Construction of the SCH Project would last  
40 approximately 2 years, during which time it is estimated that approximately 97 construction workers  
41 would be required. Of these, it is estimated that approximately 50 would be truck drivers, 6 would be  
42 laborers, 3 would be foremen, and 2 would be managers. It is assumed that these construction workers  
43 would be drawn from the local population and would not affect population levels. As shown in Table  
44 3.19-2, a pool of nearly 4,700 construction and transportation workers is available in Imperial County to

1 help meet the needs of the Project, and the current unemployment rate in Imperial County is  
2 approximately 29.2 percent (California Economic Development Department 2010). Therefore, an  
3 adequate number of workers would be available locally to satisfy labor requirements during Project  
4 construction.

5 In addition to the local workforce, it is assumed that heavy equipment and the operators of that equipment  
6 would be brought in from other major metropolitan areas (e.g., San Diego, Sacramento, or San  
7 Francisco). Given the estimated 2-year construction period, these heavy equipment operators could  
8 temporarily relocate their families. It is estimated that about 36 equipment operators would be required  
9 during construction and adequate temporary housing is available in Imperial County. This temporary and  
10 minor increase in local population would be less than significant when compared to both the existing  
11 environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

12 **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
13 **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less-than-**  
14 **significant impact).** Implementation of Alternative 1 would restore approximately 3,130 acres of habitat  
15 to provide for the long-term viability of a portion of the fish-eating bird populations at the Salton Sea.  
16 Implementation of Alternative 1 would continue, and potentially enhance, recreational opportunities such  
17 as birding, hiking and photography (that would likely diminish and eventually be eliminated under the No  
18 Action Alternative). The newly restored habitat would be concentrated in a relatively small area,  
19 however, and would not result in any long-term changes in population in the surrounding areas. When  
20 compared to both the existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative, impacts would be less  
21 than significant.

#### 22 3.16.4.5 Alternative 2 – New River, Pumped Diversion

23 **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
24 **Imperial County population (less-than-significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 2,  
25 although it is estimated that this alternative would only require up to 77 construction workers, of which  
26 27 would be heavy equipment operators.

27 **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
28 **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less-than-**  
29 **significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 2, although less habitat would be restored  
30 (2,670 acres as opposed to 3,130 acres).

#### 31 3.16.4.6 Alternative 3 – New River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds

32 **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
33 **Imperial County population (less-than-significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 3,  
34 although 115 construction workers would be required, of which 44 would be heavy equipment operators.  
35 This short term increase would still be relatively small compared to the overall population and impacts  
36 would remain less than significant.

37 **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
38 **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less-than-**  
39 **significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 3, although more habitat would be restored  
40 (3,770 acres as opposed to 3,130 acres).

1    **3.16.4.7    Alternative 4 – Alamo River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Pond**

2    **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
3    **Imperial County population (less-than-significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 4,  
4    although it is estimated that only 47 construction workers would be required, of which 17 would be heavy  
5    equipment operators.

6    **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
7    **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less-than-**  
8    **significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 4, although less habitat would be restored  
9    (2,290 acres as opposed to 3,130 acres).

10   **3.16.4.8    Alternative 5 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion**

11   **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
12   **Imperial County population (less-than-significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 5,  
13    although it is estimated that only 43 construction workers would be required over a 2-year period, of  
14    which 15 would be heavy equipment operators.

15   **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
16   **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less than**  
17   **significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 5, although less habitat would be restored  
18    (2,080 acres as opposed to 3,130 acres).

19   **3.16.4.9    Alternative 6 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds**

20   **Impact POP-1: Out-of-town construction workers would cause a temporary, slight increase in**  
21   **Imperial County population (less-than-significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 6,  
22    although only 58 construction workers would be required over a 2-year period, of which 24 would be  
23    heavy equipment operators.

24   **Impact POP-2: The Project operation would increase opportunities for passive recreational activity**  
25   **and research due at the SCH ponds, which could result in increased visitor days (less-than-**  
26   **significant impact).** This impact is applicable to Alternative 6, although less habitat would be restored  
27    (2,940 acres as opposed to 3,130 acres).

28   **3.16.5        References**

29    County of Imperial 2008. Imperial County General Plan. Website (<http://www.icpds.com/?pid=571>).

30    County of Imperial 2010a. *Regional parks: Red Hill Marina Park*. Website  
31        (<http://www.icpds.com/?pid=1083>) accessed December 2, 2010.

32    County of Imperial 2010b. *Mobile homes*. Website ([www.icpds.com/?pid=1066](http://www.icpds.com/?pid=1066)) accessed December 2,  
33        2010.

34    California Department of Finance (DOF). 2010a. *E-4 Population estimates for cities, counties and state,*  
35        *2001-2010, with 2000 Benchmark*. Website  
36        (<http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-4/2001-10/view.php>)  
37        accessed October 1, 2010.

38    California Department of Finance (DOF). 2010b. *E-8 population and housing estimates for cities,*  
39        *counties, and state, 1990 – 2000*. Website

**SECTION 3.0**  
**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

---

1                   (<http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-8/>) accessed October 1,  
2                   2010.

3                   California Economic Development Department. 2010. *Monthly labor force data for cities and Census*  
4                   *Designated Places (CDP)*. Website  
5                   (<http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/?pageid=164#400C>) accessed October 13, 2010.

6                   Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). 2010. *Population growth by city for SCAG*  
7                   *region 1980-1990, 1990-2000*. Website (<http://www.scag.ca.gov/census/index.htm>) accessed  
8                   October 1, 2010.

9                   U.S. Census Bureau. 2010a. *American FactFinder*. Website (<http://factfinder.census.gov/>) accessed  
10                   October 12 and November 30, 2010.

11                   U.S. Census Bureau. 2010b. *State and county QuickFacts, Imperial County*. Website  
12                   (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06025.html>) accessed December 7, 2010.

13