

## CHAPTER 4 Environmental Analysis

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

This chapter of the Draft EIR presents an analysis of environmental factors that may be directly or indirectly affected by the Proposed Project. This chapter describes comments received during the scoping period and how they have been incorporated into the Draft EIR, defines the scope of the Draft EIR pursuant to CEQA guidelines, and outlines the organizational content of the document.

#### 4.0.1 Comments Received on the Notice of Preparation

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this Draft EIR was published on November 27, 2006, for a 30-day public review period that concluded on December 26, 2006. Seventeen comments on the NOP were provided by sixteen commenters, including public agencies, organizations, and private citizens. In addition, three individuals provided comments at the December 16, 2006, Scoping Meeting. The comments received in response to the NOP or at Scoping Meeting are provided in Appendix B of this EIR and have been incorporated into this EIR, where appropriate.

#### 4.0.2 Scope of the EIR

##### ■ CEQA Methodological Requirements

Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines describes standards for the preparation of an adequate EIR. Specifically, the standards under Section 15151 are listed below.

- An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information that enables them to make a decision that intelligently takes into account environmental consequences
- An evaluation of the environmental impacts of a project need not be exhaustive; rather, the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible
- Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts

In practice, the above points indicate that EIR preparers should adopt a reasonable methodology upon which to estimate impacts. This approach means making reasonable assumptions using the best information available. In some cases, typically when information is limited or where there are possible variations in project characteristics, EIR preparers will employ a reasonable “worst-expected-case analysis” in order to capture the largest expected potential change from existing baseline conditions that may result from implementation of a project.

## ■ Economic and Social Impacts

Under CEQA, economic and social effects of a proposed project are not required to be evaluated. However, if the social or economic effects would lead to physical environmental effects, only then would such effects need to be analyzed and addressed in the EIR. Section 15131 of the CEQA Guidelines states the following specific ways that economic or fiscal effects may be considered as part of the EIR:

- Economic or social effects of a proposed project shall not be treated as significant effects on the environment. An EIR may trace a chain of cause and effect from a proposed decision on a proposed project through anticipated economic or social changes resulting from the proposed project to physical changes caused in turn by the economic or social changes. The intermediate economic or social changes need not be analyzed in any detail greater than necessary to trace the chain of cause and effect. The focus of the analysis shall be on the physical changes.
- Economic or social effects of a proposed project may be used to determine the significance of physical changes caused by the proposed project.
- Economic, social, and particularly housing factors shall be considered by public agencies together with technological and environmental factors in deciding whether changes in a proposed project are feasible to reduce or avoid the significant effects on the environment identified in the EIR.

### 4.0.3 Format of the Environmental Analysis

Each environmental resource section in Chapter 4 contains the following headings and related discussions.

#### ■ Environmental Setting

An EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project to provide the “baseline condition” against which project-related impacts are compared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15125). The baseline condition is generally the physical condition that exists when the NOP is published. For purposes of this EIR analysis, the baseline condition is generally November 2006, which is the date of issuance of the NOP.

An EIR must describe the physical conditions and environmental resources within the Project Site and in the Project Vicinity, and evaluate all potential effects on those physical conditions and resources (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15125):

An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, from both a local and regional perspective. This environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant.

Furthermore, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a) explains that:

In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist

at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

The Project Site has never been developed, except for a small ranch building and a few other small structures associated with farming activities. The site has been used for the last century for agricultural uses. Therefore, the environmental setting used for purposes of this EIR considers the current state of the property as a baseline for comparison of new conditions that would result from implementation of the Proposed Project, including, but not necessarily limited to: increased vehicle trip generation (and related noise and air quality impacts), demand for services and utilities, removal of agricultural operations, a change in the visual quality or character of the area, and other potential environmental effects. As measured against the existing environmental setting, impacts from the Proposed Project include the net new effects of development, as well as the temporary impacts associated with construction activities.

The only exception to the use of existing conditions as the environmental baseline is the traffic analysis. The traffic analysis considers cumulative (year 2025) without project conditions and compares it to cumulative (year 2025) with project conditions. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Project Description), the year 2025 represents the buildout year. In addition, the traffic study includes approximately 263 residential units associated with the Jamison property and 1,500,000 square feet of industrial uses associated with the Morgan property based on the RMAP. With respect to the environmental analysis for the Proposed Project, only the traffic analysis included the Morgan and Jamison properties as part of the Proposed Project's impact analysis. Initially, the Morgan and Jamison properties were included in the traffic analysis because collectively, those properties and the Proposed Project comprise the Rio Mesa Village, which is one of the three villages in the Rio Mesa Area Plan. While there are no development applications on file with the County for the Morgan and Jamison properties, and there are none anticipated in the near term, the County felt that it would be appropriate to determine the Rio Mesa Village transportation infrastructure considering all potential development in the village. At the conclusion of the traffic study, it was determined that the vast majority of the impacts were attributed to the Tesoro Viejo project. A detailed assessment of the percent contribution attributable to each of the projects is provided in Tables 16A, 16B, 16C, and 17 of the Traffic Impact Analysis Report, which itself is provided as Appendix H of this EIR. In summary, the Tesoro Viejo project accounts for approximately 90 percent of the traffic impacts in the Rio Mesa Village.

## ■ Regulatory Framework

The Regulatory Framework provides a summary of regulations, plans, policies, and laws that are relevant to each environmental issue area.

## ■ Project Impacts and Mitigation

This section is further divided into the following subsections, as described below.

## ***Analytic Method***

This subsection identifies the methodology used to analyze potential environmental impacts.

## ***Thresholds of Significance***

Thresholds of significance are criteria used to determine whether potential environmental effects are significant. The thresholds of significance used in this EIR are primarily based upon Appendix G of the 2007 CEQA Guidelines. This subsection defines the type, amount, and/or extent of impact that would be considered a significant adverse change in the environment. Some thresholds (such as air quality, traffic, and noise) are quantitative, while others, such as visual quality, are qualitative. The thresholds are intended to assist the reader in understanding how and why the EIR reaches a conclusion that an impact is significant or less than significant.

Thresholds of significance are provided both in the “Thresholds of Significance” section and immediately before the relevant impact analysis for ease of correlation.

## ***Effects Not Found to Be Significant***

Certain impacts are determined to be “Effects Not Found to Be Significant” under Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines. This section of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain a brief statement indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and, therefore, were not discussed in detail in the EIR. For purposes of this EIR, Effects Not Found to Be Significant are those that result in no impacts. Impacts that are either less than significant or significant and unavoidable are addressed in “Impacts and Mitigation Measures,” which follows this section.

## ***Impacts and Mitigation Measures***

This subsection describes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and, based on the thresholds of significance, determines whether the environmental impacts would be considered significant and unavoidable or less than significant. Each impact is summarized in an “impact statement” that is separately numbered, followed by a more detailed discussion of the potential impacts and the significance of each impact before mitigation. This format is designed to assist the reader in quickly identifying the subject of the impact analyses, as well as for use in Table 2-1 (Summary of Environmental Effects and Mitigation Measures), which forms the basis of the Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP). Impact numbers and statements are not provided for Effects Not Found to Be Significant. This subsection also discusses feasible mitigation measures (MMs) that may be implemented to reduce significant environmental impacts.

The MMP for the Proposed Project, which includes the MMs, would obligate the City to monitor implementation of the MMs. The MMP would be reviewed by the County in conjunction with their consideration of the proposed project and certification of the Final EIR. Following the description of MMs, the subsection concludes with a statement regarding whether the impact, after implementation of

the MMs and/or compliance with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations would remain significant or be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

The Draft EIR uses the following terms to describe the level of significance of impacts identified during the course of the environmental analysis:

- **Significant and Unavoidable Impact (SU)**—Impact that exceeds the defined threshold(s) of significance and cannot be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through compliance with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations and/or implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- **Potentially Significant Impact (PS)**—Impact that exceeds the defined threshold(s) of significance, but either can be eliminated to a less-than-significant level through implementation of feasible mitigation measures or, where no feasible mitigation measures exist, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.
- **Less-Than-Significant Impact (LTS)**—Impact that does not exceed the defined threshold(s) of significance or can be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through compliance with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations and/or implementation of feasible mitigation measures.

A “significant effect” is defined by Section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment ... [but] may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

The analysis of environmental impacts considers both the construction and operational phases associated with implementation of the proposed project. As required by Section 15126.2(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, on-site and/or off-site impacts are addressed, as appropriate, for each environmental issue analyzed.

## ■ Cumulative Impacts

A cumulative impact analysis is only provided for those thresholds that result in a less-than-significant or significant and unavoidable impact. A cumulative impact analysis is not provided for Effects Found Not to Be Significant, which result in no project-related impacts.

CEQA requires that an EIR discuss cumulative impacts to determine whether they are significant. If the cumulative impact is significant, or if the project impact is significant, the project’s incremental effect must be analyzed to determine if the effects are cumulatively considerable. According to Section 15065(a)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, this determination is based on an assessment of the project’s incremental effects viewed in combination with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects. The discussion of cumulative impacts must reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of their occurrence; however, the discussion need not be as detailed as the discussion of environmental impacts attributable to the project alone. Further, the discussion is guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.

A significant cumulative impact does not necessarily mean that the project-related contribution to that impact is also significant. Instead, under CEQA, a project-related contribution to a significant cumulative impact is only significant if the contribution is cumulatively considerable.

The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis can vary depending upon the specific environmental issue area analyzed. For each issue area addressed in this EIR, the geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis is explicitly identified.

## ■ References

This section includes, but is not limited to, those sources relied upon for each environmental topic area analyzed in this document (Sections 4.1 through 4.15), as well as other sections of the EIR. Reference materials also include the appendices to this EIR.