

SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE IMPACTS

9.1 Introduction

Pursuant to Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must consider any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed Project should it be implemented. Section 15126.2(c) states:

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

9.2 Analysis of Irreversible Changes

The proposed Project would require the use of non-renewable resources, such as waterfront, fossil fuels, and non-renewable construction materials. Operation of individual facilities proposed under the proposed Project would result in an irreversible commitment of non-renewable resources, including fossil fuels and natural gas. Use of these resources, however, would not substantially deplete existing supplies.

Fossil fuels and energy would be consumed during construction and operation activities. Fossil fuels in the form of diesel oil and gasoline would be used for construction equipment and vehicles. During operations, diesel oil and gasoline would be used by ships, port terminal equipment (e.g., cargo handling), and vehicles. Electrical energy and natural gas would also be consumed during construction and operation. These energy resources would be irretrievable and irreversible.

1 Non-recoverable materials and energy would be used during construction and
2 operational activities, but the amounts needed would be accommodated by existing
3 supplies. Although the increase in the amount of materials and energy used would be
4 limited, they would nevertheless be unavailable for other uses.

5 Construction activities that result in physical changes to the environment have the
6 most potential to result in irreversible changes. However, none of the proposed
7 project elements would result in irreversible environmental damage. For example,
8 the proposed Project would not have a significant impact on sensitive biological
9 species or communities, demolish significant historical resources, or result in water
10 quality impacts that could not be mitigated to less-than-significant levels. The
11 excavation of three harbors would change the shape of the shoreline and result in an
12 increase of approximately 7 acres in water surface area; however, the new harbors
13 would only increase the size of the Main Channel by 4%. The area is already
14 developed for port use and the land use would not significantly change. The creation
15 of these new harbors would not result in the loss of significant environmental
16 resources, or result in irreversible changes that could not be returned to pre-project
17 conditions. The proposed Project would also not result in a permanent, adverse
18 change to the movement of surface water sufficient to produce a substantial change in
19 the current or direction of water flow.

20 Impacts associated with operation of the proposed Project would occur as described
21 in Chapter 3, "Environmental Analysis." However, such impacts would cease to
22 exist or change in some fashion should the proposed Project, or portions thereof,
23 cease to operate, change operations, or otherwise be redeveloped and reused. For
24 example, impacts related to aesthetics would change should the area be demolished
25 and/or redeveloped in the future; impacts to geology are related to existing hazards
26 that would be reduced or eliminated should the area not be occupied in the future;
27 impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would generally be improved by
28 the proposed Project, but could be further reduced should hazardous facilities be
29 decommissioned, removed, cleaned, and redeveloped with cleaner uses; impacts
30 related to noise would be reduced or eliminated should cruise operations or
31 commercial activities be reduced or eliminated; and similarly, traffic impacts would
32 be eliminated or reduced with operational changes or physical changes that may
33 occur in the future.

34 Thus, the proposed Project and alternatives could result in significant irreversible
35 changes due to the use of energy resources and fossil fuels during construction and
36 operation. However, construction and operation of the proposed Project would not
37 result in significant irreversible impacts to other environmental resources, as
38 described above.

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