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## ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the terminology used in this document and the NEPA and CEQA requirements related to the alternatives analysis. The sections following Section 3.0 contain a discussion of the possible effects of the proposed Project and alternatives for the specific environmental issue (or resource) areas identified by the USACE and LAHD. Sections 3.1 through 3.13 discuss both environmental issues found to be potentially significant and those found not to be significant.

To assist the reader in comparing information about the various environmental issues, Sections 3.1 through 3.13 each present the following information for their specific resource area:

- Environmental Setting (the environmental setting or baseline for this Draft EIS/EIR is the physical condition that existed in December 2003 [when the review and comment period of the NOI/NOP ended for this project])
- Significance Criteria (i.e., the criteria against which the significance of impacts is judged)
- Impact Assessment Methodology
- Impacts and Mitigation Measures of the proposed Project and Alternatives
- Mitigation Monitoring
- Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Significant cumulative impacts for the proposed Project and alternatives for each environmental resource area are summarized in Chapter 4.0 of this Draft EIS/EIR. A comparison of the results of impact analyses is presented in Chapter 6.0: The Project alternatives are compared to the proposed Project and CEQA and No Federal Action/NEPA Baselines, and ranked relative to each other based on anticipated impacts for each resource area to determine the environmentally preferred and environmentally superior alternative. The CEQA and No Federal Action/NEPA Baselines and their application to analysis of potential impacts from the proposed Project and alternatives is explained in detail in Section 1.5.5 and Section 2.6 in this Draft EIS/EIR.

## 3.01 Terminology Used in this Environmental Analysis

In evaluating the potential impacts of the proposed Project and the Project alternatives, the level of significance is determined by applying the threshold of significance (significance criteria) presented for each resource evaluation area. The following terms are used to describe each impact:

- *No Impact*: A designation of no impact is given when no adverse changes in the environment are expected.
- *Less Than Significant Impact*: A less-than-significant impact would be identified when the proposed Project or alternatives would cause no substantial adverse change in the environment, i.e., the impact would not reach the threshold of significance.
- *Significant Impact*: A significant (but mitigable, or avoidable) impact would create a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the proposed Project or alternatives. Such an impact would exceed the applicable significance threshold established by NEPA and CEQA, but would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by application of a mitigation measure.
- *Significant Unavoidable Impact*: As required by Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, this is used when a residual impact that would cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment – which may or may not be reduced somewhat – could not be reduced to a less-than-significant level through any feasible mitigation measure(s).
- *Beneficial Effect*: The proposed Project or alternatives would create a positive change in any of the physical conditions in the affected resource area.
- *Mitigation*: This refers to measures that would be implemented to avoid or lessen potentially significant impacts. Mitigation includes:
  - Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
  - Minimizing the impact by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;
  - Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
  - Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
  - Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The mitigation measures would be proposed as a condition of project approval and would be monitored to ensure compliance and implementation.

- *Residual Impacts*: This is the level of impact after the implementation of mitigation measures.

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## 3.02 Requirements to Evaluate Alternatives

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2 NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14[a]) and CEQA Guidelines 15126.6 require that an EIS and  
3 an EIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the Project, or to the location of  
4 the Project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project but  
5 would avoid or substantially lessen any significant environmental impacts. The EIR  
6 should compare merits of the alternatives and determine an environmentally superior  
7 alternative. Section 2.5 of this Draft EIS/EIR sets forth potential alternatives to the  
8 Project and evaluates their suitability, as required by CEQA Guidelines (Section  
9 15126.6). Section 1.5.7 and Sections 6.2 and 6.3 of this Draft EIS/EIR describe the  
10 detailed requirements to evaluate alternatives.

11 The information presented in this Draft EIS/EIR specific to impacts to the aquatic  
12 environment would be used by the USACE as part of any proposed permit action  
13 subject to jurisdiction on Section 404 of the CWA.

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