

SECTION 5: OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 - Growth Inducing Impacts

Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR evaluate the growth inducing impacts of a proposed action:

Discuss the way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a wastewater treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

Growth inducing impacts can occur when development of a project imposes new burdens on a community by directly inducing population growth, or by leading to the construction of additional development in the project area. Also included in this category are projects that would remove physical obstacles to population growth, such as the construction of a new road into an undeveloped area or a wastewater treatment plant with excess capacity to serve additional new development. Construction of these types of infrastructure projects cannot be considered isolated from the immediate development that they facilitate and serve. Projects that physically remove obstacles to growth, or projects that indirectly induce growth, are those that may provide a catalyst for future unrelated development in the area (such as a new residential community that requires additional commercial uses to support residents). The growth inducing potential of a project could also be considered significant if it fosters growth in excess of what is assumed in the local master plans and land use plans, or in projections made by regional planning agencies.

The basic objective of the proposed project is to increase groundwater recharge capabilities within the Beaumont Basin with the delivery of State Water Project (SWP) water, as well as other supplemental water sources. The increased delivery capacity of the SWP is required for the SGPWA to obtain its full Table A amount (i.e., amount of SWP water that SGPWA has contracted for). This increase delivery capacity of the SWP was evaluated in the Final EIR for Phase II of SWP's East Branch Extension (EBX) (SCH No. 2007041017). This increase in raw water storage capacity would allow SGPWA to increase the replenishment of the groundwater in the region. The proposed project would provide the current population residing within the SGPWA service area with a more reliable source of potable water while replenishing a local groundwater table that has historically experienced dramatic

reductions in supply. Presently, the Beaumont Basin, which underlies the planned recharge facility site, is experiencing a severe overdraft condition, which means that the average amount of water withdrawn by pumping exceeds the average amount of water that naturally recharges the groundwater basin on an annual basis. The estimated hydrologic safe yield, which is the amount of groundwater that can be continuously withdrawn from the Beaumont Basin without adverse impact, is estimated at 6,100 acre-feet per year (AFY). In 2007 and 2009, the annual precipitation was among the driest on record in Beaumont while 2010 was one of the wettest (SGPWA 2012). In 2011, the annual precipitation was below normal (SGPWA 2012). In 2010, the total production within the Beaumont Basin was 13,469 while in 2011, the total production was 13,908 (SGPWA 2012), which means that the estimated exceedance of the hydrologic safe yield for 2010 was approximately 7,369 and for 2011 was approximately 7,808 AFY. The cumulative overdraft of the Beaumont Basin since development of the Basin began in the 1920s is over 100,000 af.

The proposed recharge basin has been designed for an infiltration rate of two feet per day and to accommodate a maximum flow rate of 20 cubic feet per second (cfs). With a capacity of 20 cfs, the normal operation of the facility would allow recharge of 3,000 AFY to 4,000 AFY because the existing Beaumont Cherry Valley Water District's recharge basins located northeast of the proposed recharge basin has a current capacity of approximately 14,000 AFY. The proposed recharge basin would be operating during wet periods of the year when the SGPWA can take advantage of surplus water, and when it needs to import its full Table A amount. However, in a very wet year when surplus water is available through the California Department of Water Resources Article 21 Program and exchanges, the proposed recharge facility could have a capacity up to a maximum of 14,500 AFY.

An evaluation of the potential inducement of growth resulting from SWP water being delivered to the SGPWA service area was prepared within the Final EIR for Phase II of SWP's East Branch Extension (EBX), which was prepared by the California Department of Water Resources and certified in 2009. The Final EIR for the Phase II EBX project acknowledged that the proposed EBX facilities would result in growth inducing impacts. These potential growth-inducing impacts were adequately addressed in the Phase II EBX Final EIR. The proposed project is a separate project than the Phase II EBX Final EIR, and the facilities that are part of the proposed project would accommodate the projected growth in the area regardless if the proposed project is implemented. This projected growth is identified in the general plans and associated EIRs for the City of Banning, City of Beaumont, City of Calimesa, and the County of Riverside.

5.2 - Significant Irreversible Changes

As mandated by the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must address any significant irreversible environmental change that would result from project implementation. According to Section

15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, such a change would occur if one of the following scenarios is involved:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources;
- Irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project; and
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project would result in the wasteful use of energy).

The environmental effects of the proposed project are thoroughly discussed in Section 3, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR and summarized in the Executive Summary. Implementation of the project would require the long-term commitment of natural resources and land, as discussed below.

Approval and implementation of actions related to the proposed project would result in an irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources such as energy and construction materials. Energy resources would be used for construction, maintenance, and operation of the proposed project, including the recharge facility and service connection facility. Although project operation would require a permanent commitment of energy resources, the proposed project would increase the amounts of water entering the local groundwater supply. Since the proposed project would improve the future reliability of the local groundwater supply, operation of the project would result in an overall reduction in energy demand when compared with the energy resources that would be required to develop new potable water sources in the future. This reduction in overall energy demand would result in a corresponding reduction in the overall intensity of the environmental effects associated with these changes.

The consumption of nonrenewable or slowly renewable resources would result from project implementation. These resources include, but are not limited to, lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt and concrete, steel, copper, lead, and water.

In addition, the proposed project is located in a moderately urbanized area containing several undeveloped parcels in the project area. Development of the project is responding to the existing needs of the existing population for water and would not directly contribute to the creation of additional housing or jobs within the region. Thus, the proposed project would not directly contribute to the conversion of currently undeveloped land to residential, commercial, industrial, or other land uses required as a result of future growth. Although project implementation would develop a presently undeveloped property, the proposed project would not result in the conversion of other vacant or undeveloped lands.

5.3 - Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

The environmental effects of the proposed project, along with recommended mitigation measures, are discussed in detail in Section 3, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR and summarized in the Executive Summary. The following environmental issues were determined to be less than significant, or can be reduced to less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation measures:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic

Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to less than significant levels, as a result of implementation of the project. As addressed in Section 3, Environmental Impact Analysis, none of the proposed project's environmental impacts would result in significant and unavoidable impacts.