

6 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

CEQA §21100(b)(2) provides that an EIR shall include a detailed statement setting forth “[i]n a separate section...[a]ny significant effect on the environment that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented.” Accordingly, this chapter provides a summary of significant environmental impacts of the proposed project that cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant levels. Significant unavoidable environmental impacts of the proposed project and cumulative development, as identified in Chapter 4 of this EIR, are summarized in this section.

Impact 4.1-3: Growth-Inducing Impacts. Implementation of the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP would result in the removal of one obstacle to growth (water supply) in the 2030 Study Area. Growth would result in the conversion of undeveloped areas in the 2030 Study Area to urban land uses resulting in impacts on biological resources, scenic resources, air quality, noise, traffic, and other effects of increased urbanization. Land use decisions would continue to be made by city and county government decision-makers with guidance provided by adopted General Plans. However, because the project would remove one obstacle to growth and accommodate substantial development in the 2030 Study Area, the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP would be growth-inducing, and the resulting growth-inducing impacts would lead to significant environmental effects. Because mitigation of growth-related effects is in the purview of the County and the cities of Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova through their existing land use authority, and because SCWA itself has no such authority, the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP cannot feasibly provide for additional mitigation of growth-related environmental impacts. This is a significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 4.1-4: Conversion of Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The 2030 Study Area includes Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Although specific locations of conveyance pipelines and groundwater facilities are not known at this time, construction of these facilities on designated farmland could result in an incremental loss of this resource. Also, as an indirect impact, farmland conversion could occur as a result of unknown development supported by the water supply plan. Although the precise amount or location cannot be known, it is reasonable to expect that some farmland conversion would occur from facility construction and/or future urban development. No feasible mitigation is available that would replace lost farmland. This would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 4.2-3: Visual Impact of Project Facilities. Depending on the size, location, and design of new facilities, significant visual impacts may occur with implementation of the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP. Once additional information becomes available, and specific projects are proposed, additional environmental analysis would be required to determine the magnitude of impacts, if any, that would result. Because the visual impacts of the proposed project cannot be determined at this time and project facilities could result in significant visual changes in the environment for which no feasible mitigation is available, aesthetic impacts associated with facilities recommended in the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP would be significant and unavoidable.

Impact 4.3-1: Short Term Construction-Related Emissions. Short term construction generated emissions could potentially exceed SMAQMD daily emission thresholds of 85 ppd for NO_x and 275 ppd for fugitive dust (PM₁₀). As a result, short term construction generated air quality impacts would be potentially significant. Because it is unknown whether construction contractors would be able to comply with the mitigation requirements, this impact would remain a potentially significant and unavoidable impact.

Impact 4.4-1: Short-Term Construction-Generated Noise. Construction activities associated with development of project facilities could exceed County noise thresholds at nearby noise-sensitive land uses. This would be a potentially significant noise impact. Because it is unknown whether construction contractors could comply with the above mitigation, this impact would be potentially significant and unavoidable.

Impact 4.4-4: Stationary Source Noise. Operation of proposed stationary noise sources could result in noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive receptors which could exceed County noise ordinance standards. Mitigation would include project-specific CEQA review and design elements to minimize noise impacts and meet Sacramento County noise standards. Design elements could include shielding and enclosures. Implementation of these mitigation measures are expected to reduce potential impacts to levels at or below standards. However, because of the uncertainty associated with facilities that have not yet been designed, this impact is considered potentially significant and unavoidable.

Impact 4.6-1: Special-Status Species. A total of 8 special-status plants and 26 special-status wildlife species have been recorded, or have the potential to occur, in the vicinity of the 2030 Study Area. Construction and maintenance of project facilities could result in loss and/or disturbance of special-status plants and animals and their habitat. Additional impacts could result from development facilitated by adoption of the WSMP. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Because of the uncertainty of environmental effects associated with facilities that have not yet been designed or sited, impacts on special-status species are potentially significant.

Impact 4.6-2: Sensitive Habitats. The 2030 Study Area and nearby locations support a number of several sensitive habitats. Construction and maintenance of project facilities could result in loss, alteration, and/or temporary disturbance of sensitive habitats. Additional impacts could result from development facilitated by adoption of the WSMP. This would be considered a potentially significant impact. Because of the uncertainty of environmental effects associated with facilities that have not yet been designed or sited, impacts on sensitive habitat are potentially significant.

Impact 4.6-4: Potential Impact on the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan. Construction of 2002 WSMP water facilities would facilitate development that could, in turn, result in the potential loss of important habitat areas inside the USB that are potentially critical components of the SSHCP. It is anticipated that the area in the UPA would be developed and thus that little or no habitat mitigation associated with the SSHCP would occur in the UPA. In

addition, the 8,400 acres of land inside the 2030 Study Area (as analyzed in this EIR) but outside the UPA contains no resources critical to the success of the SSHCP. If land use authorities direct development of these 8,400 acres consistent with the 2030 Study Area, implementation of the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP would not significantly affect the SSHCP. However, at this point, it is unknown if land use authorities would direct development in the aforementioned 8,400-acre study area or would direct development elsewhere within the USB, which could potentially affect the viability of the SSHCP. As mitigation, SCWA will provide funding to facilitate and expedite completion of the SSHCP. However, because of the uncertainty of future land use decisions that could result in development of land outside the 2030 Study Area, this impact is potentially significant and unavoidable.