

# 4 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

### Scope of the EIR

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2), this Draft EIR identifies and focuses on the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the proposed multi-use trail project, giving due consideration to both its short-term and its long-term effects. Short-term effects are generally those associated with construction, and long-term effects are generally those associated with use of the trail project. Resource topics that would not be affected by the proposed project are addressed in Chapter 2, "Summary," of this Draft EIR, including agriculture and forest resources, mineral resources, and population and housing.

This chapter addresses the following resource topics:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Air Quality
- 4.3 Biological Resources
- 4.4 Cultural Resources (which includes tribal cultural resources)
- 4.5 Geology and Soils
- 4.6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
- 4.7 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.9 Land Use and Planning
- 4.10 Noise
- 4.11 Public Services
- 4.12 Recreation
- 4.13 Transportation and Circulation
- 4.14 Utilities

### Terminology Used In the EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe environmental effects of the project:

**Less-than-Significant Impact:** A project impact is considered less than significant if it would not exceed the threshold of significance and therefore would not cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. No mitigation is required for a less-than-significant impact.

**Potentially Significant Impact:** A potentially significant impact is an environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; however, additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact.

**Significant Impact:** A project impact is considered significant if it results in a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects in the context of specified thresholds of significance. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce these effects to the environment, where feasible.

**Significant and Unavoidable Impact:** A project impact is considered significant and unavoidable if it would result in a substantial adverse change in the environment that cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level if the project is implemented. If a lead agency proposes to approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, it must adopt a statement of overriding considerations to explain its actions (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093[b]).

**Cumulative Impacts:** According to CEQA, “cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the “project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable... [or] ... provide a basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 [a]).”

**Mitigation Measures:** Mitigation measures are identified, where feasible, to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant or potentially significant impacts of the project, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.4).

## Format of the Environmental Analysis

Each section in Chapter 4 begins with a description of the project environmental setting and regulatory setting as it pertains to the particular resource topic. The environmental setting serves as the baseline, which provides a point of reference for assessing the environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives and determining the significance of those impacts. The setting description in each section is followed by an impacts and mitigation discussion. The impact and mitigation portion of each section includes impact statements, which are prefaced by a number in bold-faced type. An explanation of each impact and an analysis of its significance follow each impact statement. All mitigation measures pertinent to each individual impact follow after the impact statement and discussion. The degree to which the identified mitigation measure(s) would reduce the impact is also described.

**Environmental Setting:** This subsection describes the existing environmental conditions on the proposed project site and surrounding area, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. The discussions of the environmental setting focus on information relevant to the resource topic under evaluation. The extent of the environmental setting area (the project study area) may differ among resources, depending on the nature of the impacts. For example, air quality impacts are assessed for the air basin, whereas cultural resource impacts are assessed for the project site only.

**Regulatory Setting:** This subsection presents information on the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that relate to the resource topic. Regulations originating from the local, state, and federal levels are each discussed as appropriate.

**Impacts:** This subsection identifies the thresholds of significance used to determine the level of significance of the environmental impacts for each resource topic, describes environmental impacts, where significant or potentially significant impacts would occur, and presents feasible mitigation measures. Key methods and assumptions used to frame and conduct the impact analysis, as well as issues or potential impacts not discussed further (such issues for which the project would have no impact), are also described.

Project impacts are organized numerically in each subsection (e.g., Impact 4.4-1, Impact 4.4-2, Impact 4.4-3, etc.). Impacts are summarized with bold-font impact title, a list of applicable policies and regulations, and the impact's level of significance. When a significant impact is identified, the levels of significance both before and after mitigation measures precede the discussion of each impact. An example of the format is shown below.

During preparation of feasibility studies beginning in 2009, alignment options were identified for two segments of the trail. In addition to the proposed project alignment, these optional alignments, identified as 1A, 1C, and 5A, are described in Chapter 3, "Project Description" and are analyzed in the Impacts portion of each resource section in Chapter 4.

Impact 4.4-X	Impact title.
Applicable Policies and Regulations	List of applicable policy names
Significance with Policies and Regulations	Proposed Project: Potentially significant Alignment Option 1A: Potentially significant Alignment Option 1C: Potentially significant Alignment Option 5A: Potentially significant
Mitigation Measures	Mitigation Measure 4.4-X (Proposed Project, Option 1A, Option 1C, Option 5A)
Significance after Mitigation	Less than significant (Proposed Project, Option 1A, Option 1C, Option 5A)

The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact analysis and significance conclusion. If necessary, mitigation measures are then recommended to reduce potentially significant or significant impacts to less-than-significant levels, as feasible, and the significance of the impact after implementation of mitigation is described. Mitigation measures are organized numerically to correspond to the impact they address. For example, Impact 4.4-1 would be mitigated with Mitigation Measure 4.4-1.

### **Proposed Trail Alignment**

The most detailed impact discussion is presented first for the proposed alignment for each impact in Chapter 4. Then, the alignment options are explained in as much detail as needed to understand impacts. Each impact includes a discussion of the substantial evidence supporting the significance conclusion.

#### **Alignment Option 1A**

Discussion of substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion for alignment option 1A.

#### **Alignment Option 1C**

Discussion of substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion for alignment option 1C.

#### **Alignment Option 5A**

Discussion of substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion for alignment option 5A.

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