

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.1 Introduction and Summary of Analysis

This introduction provides an overview of the environmental consequences section of the EIR/EIS, its organization and content, as well as how it addresses the requirements of NEPA and CEQA for impact analysis, mitigation, standards of significance, and level of significance after mitigation. This section analyzes those impact areas set forth in the CEQA Initial Study and the NEPA Compliance (Environmental Factors) Checklist. It also responds to issues raised during the public scoping meetings and in comments received on the NOP and the NOI.

Section 4 analyzes all aspects of the MSHCP (Proposed Action and Preferred Alternative) and the alternatives except for trails. This EIR/EIS is the NEPA document for the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountain Trails Plan (“Trails Plan”) proposed for adoption by BLM as an activity level plan that implements the trails related portion of the 2002 CDCA Plan Amendment, as well as the CEQA/NEPA document for the proposed Permits and MSHCP. For this reason, the Trails Plan is analyzed separately in Section 5. The Trails Plan Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative is, however, a part of the MSHCP Proposed Action and Preferred Alternative. The analysis of the proposed MSHCP in Section 4 together with the analysis of the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative for the Trails Plan in Section 5, and the analysis of the various alternatives, constitutes the complete CEQA/NEPA analysis of the MSHCP.

Compliance with NEPA and CEQA

Both CEQA and NEPA provide for the preparation of a joint EIR/EIS document (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15170 and 15220; and NEPA Section 1506.2). The analysis in this section of the EIR/EIS addresses the requirements of both State Natural Community Conservation Plan Act and the Federal Endangered Species Act, and also complies with the Federal NEPA guidelines. It provides the scientific and analytic basis for a comparative analysis of the alternatives to the proposed Permits and MSHCP. Section 5 provides the scientific and analytic basis for a comparative analysis of the alternatives for the Trails Plan. Alternatives have been given equal consideration in the following discussions. The discussion of environmental consequences identifies potential direct and indirect effects and their level of significance. The discussion of significance is a mandatory CEQA analysis and the significance determination is made based on CEQA definitions and does not apply to the NEPA analysis.

Mitigation Integrated into Plan Design

Both NEPA and CEQA direct early and close consultation between project proponents/designers and environmental analysts (NEPA 1502.25; State CEQA Guidelines Section 15006). The definitions of “mitigation” set forth in Section 1508.20 of NEPA include mitigation as “avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action” and “minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.”

CEQA also directs early consultation, “urging applicants, either before or after filing of an application, to revise projects to eliminate possible significant effects on the environment...” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15006). State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060.5 also directs preapplication consultation between the applicant and the lead agency and responsible agencies.

Since the inception of the Plan, there has been close and coordinated review and consultation on the Plan and its possible effects on a wide range of environmental conditions and resources. A wide range of Conservation Alternatives and their effects were considered, and adjustments have been made to the Plan throughout this process that have resulted in the avoidance or minimization of impacts through the integration of mitigation measures into the Plan. Therefore, in certain discussions that follow, the mitigation of potential impacts are determined to be mitigated by relevant design components of the Plan.