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ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the terminology used in this document and the NEPA and CEQA requirements related to the alternatives analysis. The sections following Chapter 3 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 3.14 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 3.14 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 2006 [when the review and comment period of the NOI/NOP ended]),
- applicable regulations,
- 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, and
- residual impacts.

Significant cumulative impacts for the proposed Project and alternatives for each environmental resource area are summarized in Chapter 4 of this draft EIS/EIR. A comparison of the results of impact analyses is presented in Chapter 6. The project alternatives are compared to the proposed Project and CEQA and NEPA baselines. They are then ranked relative to each other based on anticipated impacts for each resource area to determine the environmentally preferred and environmentally superior alternatives. The CEQA and NEPA baselines and their application to

1 analysis of potential impacts from the proposed Project and alternatives are explained
2 in detail in Section 1.5.5 and Section 2.6 in this draft EIS/EIR.

3 **3.2 Terminology Used in This Environmental** 4 **Analysis**

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

- 9 ■ *No Impact*: A designation of no impact is given when no adverse changes in the
10 environment are expected.
- 11 ■ *Less-Than-Significant Impact*: A less-than-significant impact would be identified
12 when the proposed Project or alternatives would cause no substantial adverse
13 change in the environment (i.e., the impact would not reach the threshold of
14 significance).
- 15 ■ *Significant Impact*: A significant (but mitigable, or avoidable) impact would
16 create a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in any of the
17 physical conditions within the area affected by the proposed Project or
18 alternatives. Such an impact would exceed the applicable significance threshold
19 established by NEPA and CEQA but would be reduced to a less-than-significant
20 level by application of a mitigation measure.
- 21 ■ *Significant Unavoidable Impact*: As required by Section 15126.2(b) of the
22 CEQA Guidelines, this is used when a residual impact that would cause a
23 substantial adverse effect on the environment—which may or may not be
24 reduced somewhat—could not be reduced to a less-than-significant level through
25 any feasible mitigation measure(s).
- 26 ■ *Beneficial Effect*: The proposed Project or alternatives would have a beneficial
27 effect if it would create a positive change in any of the physical conditions in the
28 affected resource area.
- 29 ■ *Mitigation*: Mitigation refers to measures that would be implemented to avoid or
30 lessen potentially significant impacts. Mitigation includes:
 - 31 □ avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an
32 action;
 - 33 □ minimizing the impact by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and
34 its implementation;
 - 35 □ rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected
36 environment;
 - 37 □ reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and
38 maintenance operations during the life of the action; and

- 1 □ compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or
2 environments.
- 3 The mitigation measures would be proposed as a condition of project approval
4 and would be monitored to ensure compliance and implementation.
- 5 ■ *Residual Impacts:* This is the level of impact after the implementation of
6 mitigation measures.

7 **3.3 Requirements to Evaluate Alternatives**

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

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