

4.16.5.1 Loss of Natural Vegetation

The HCLE Corridor alternatives would represent an incremental contribution to the projected loss of natural vegetation within western Riverside County. As shown in Table 4.16.I, each of the alternatives would impact less than one-half of one percent of the total area of all natural habitats affected by the proposed General Plan.

4.16.5.2 Habitat Fragmentation

Build out of the General Plan would substantially fragment habitat within western Riverside County. The HCLE Alternatives would primarily traverse urbanized and rural settings. Thus, the potential for the HCLE alternatives to fragment or isolate habitat(s) beyond that caused by the General Plan build out would be limited to those few areas where preserves would exist under the proposed General Plan and where the alternatives would cross major streams or rivers that function as habitat linkages.

Alternatives 1a, 1b, H1, and H3 would all cross the San Jacinto River along the route of existing roadways. The enlarged crossings would further fragment the linkage that joins Lake Perris and the San Jacinto Valley Wildlife Area with preserved lands in the vicinity of Kabian Park.

Alternatives 4a, 4c, and 4d would all require a new crossing of the San Jacinto River, creating a new barrier to the already fragmented linkage along the river between Lake Perris/San Jacinto Valley Wildlife Area and preserved lands in the vicinity of Kabian Park. In addition, Alternative 4d would traverse an area immediately west of Canyon Lake through parcels of land designated for habitat conservation. Alternatives 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, and 5e would, west of I-215, follow similar routes to the Alternative 4 series and would all require a new crossing of the San Jacinto River, creating a new barrier to the already fragmented linkage along the river between Lake Perris/San Jacinto Valley Wildlife Area and preserved lands in the vicinity of Kabian Park. In addition, Alternatives 5d and 5e would traverse an area immediately west of Canyon Lake through parcels of land designated for habitat conservation. Alternatives 6a and 6b would pass through largely developed areas and would not fragment habitat areas or impair linkages joining habitat areas.

Although the percentage of contribution of impacts from the HCLE alternatives seems small compared to the overall impacts of the build out of the western Riverside County portion of the General Plan, habitats such as waters of the U.S. and affiliated riparian and wetland habitats, and sage scrub are considered sensitive due to the amount of disturbance and take that has occurred historically. As such, the alternatives' cumulative contribution to further reduction of these sensitive habitats is considered substantial at the Tier 1 level of analysis. It is noted, however, that the County of Riverside's MSHCP will be implemented concurrent with the General Plan build out and the circulation system improvement projects that will support the land use planning. The MSHCP will provide additional mitigating effects on the cumulative impacts to biological habitats, particularly the sensitive habitats that require replacement.

Table 4.16.1 - HCLE Contribution to Cumulative Impacts on Vegetation Types in Western Riverside County

Existing Habitat Type (hectares/ acres)		General Plan		CETAP HCLE ALTERNATIVES (hectares/acres impacted)													
		Impacts	Retained	1a	1b	4a	4c	4d	5a	5b	5c	5d	5e	6a	6b	H 1	H 3
WATER	22,876/ 56,484	473/ 1,169	22,403/ 55,315	0/0	2/6									4/11	4/11	0/0	7/18
COASTAL SAGE SCRUB	72,154/ 178,158	46,161/ 113,978	25,993/ 64,180	311/ 767	289/ 713	187/ 462	239/ 590	413/ 1,019	89/ 219	357/ 882	141/ 348	318/ 786	239/ 591	202/ 498	216/ 534	310/ 765	151/ 373
CHAPARRAL	211,200/ 521,482	75,751/ 187,040	135,449/ 334,442			0/0	.8/2	0/0		109/ 270	.4/1		.4/1	2/4	10/24		
GRASSLAND	50,788/ 125,403	37,871/ 93,509	12,917/ 31,894	190/ 469	215/ 530	252/ 622	252/ 622	188/ 464	157/ 388	88/ 218	158/ 389	94/ 231	153/ 377	12/ 29	23/ 57	177/ 438	173/ 427
PLAYA AND VERNAL POOL	11,530/ 28,469	1,374/ 3,393	10,155/ 25,076	22/ 53	22/ 53	11/ 27	11/ 27	11/ 27									
MEADOW AND MARSH	934/ 2,305	583/ 1,440	350/ 865	.4/1	.4/1	1/3	1/3	1/3	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4			2/4	2/4
Riparian & Bottomland	6,079/ 15,011	1,930/ 4,765	4,150/ 10,246	49/ 120	40/ 99	4/9	9/ 22	5/ 12	4/9	27/ 67	9/ 22	5/ 12	11/ 27	5/ 12	5/ 12	45/ 111	
OAK WOODLAND/ FOREST	15,905/ 39,271	4,299/ 10,616	11,605/ 28,655											3/7	7/17		
TOTAL	445,828/ 1,100,811	168,443/ 415,910	223,023/ 550,673	571/ 1,410	568/ 1,402	455/ 1,123	513/ 1,266	618/ 1,525	251/ 620	584/ 1,441	309/ 764	418/ 1,033	405/ 1,000	227/ 561	265/ 655	534/ 1,318	333/ 822
Percentage		100%		0.34%	0.34%	0.27%	0.30%	0.37%	0.15%	0.35%	0.18%	0.25%	0.24%	0.13%	0.16%	0.32%	0.20%