

4.16 Cumulative Effects

Federal regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require that the cumulative impacts of the proposed action be assessed. Cumulative impact is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality as an "impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions" (40 CFR 1508.7).

Cumulative impacts were identified by comparing the potential impacts of the proposed project and other past, current, or proposed actions in the area to establish whether, in the aggregate, they could result in cumulative environmental impacts. Both direct and indirect impacts are assessed. Past actions that have most affected resources and land uses in western Riverside County are its transformation from rural to urban/suburban communities; public works projects such as flood control; and the development of the State and Interstate highway systems, as well as a network of County and City roads to support the developing communities.

As stated in the NEPA Guidance Regarding Cumulative Effects (Council on Environmental Quality, January, 1997), specific geographic boundaries for cumulative effects are determined for each environmental topic analyzed and may vary accordingly. In most cases, the cumulative study area for the HCLE Corridor encompasses the western portion of Riverside County; however, some topics have larger areas of assessment due to the sensitivity and/or limited availability of the resource.

The cumulative effects analysis focuses on those issues and resources that would potentially be affected by the aggregation of stress factors on the environment, and does not address those topics that would not have additional environmental effects from the cumulative condition. For this analysis, the following topics are addressed in terms of the potential for the proposed CETAP project to have a substantial contribution to the cumulative condition: land use, farmlands, recreational areas and Section 4(f) resources, biological resources, surface water hydrology, floodplain encroachment and water quality, hazardous waste, cultural resources, and transportation and circulation.

Topics that are not assessed in the cumulative condition include socioeconomic, geology, air quality, noise, public services and utilities, and visual resources. Either these issues have been addressed in the cumulative condition as part of regional analysis contained in Chapter 4.0, or the proposed project is not expected to have any substantial contribution towards cumulative effects. In Tier 2, the potential cumulative effects to these resources of specific CETAP facility alternatives will be analyzed.

The development of the various roadway systems continues today as facilities are extended and expanded with ongoing population growth. Future actions anticipated to occur include the further growth within the County and the incorporated city areas and conversion from rural or open space to urban and suburban developed conditions. The growth will require continued expansion of supporting infrastructure such as roadways, commercial uses, public services and utilities.

Near-term roadway improvement projects include improvements to interstate highways, including the following:

- C SR-79 as a six-lane freeway from the SR-79/Sanderson Ave. junction to SR-79/Domenigoni Parkway generally following the alignment of Warren Road.

A sensitivity test is also conducted assuming that the SR-79 alignment in this area is a four lane arterial highway along the Warren Road alignment. (Scheduled for construction completion 01/2007, source: Caltrans District 8 Projects List)

- C Widening of I-215 to three lanes from I-15 in Temecula to Moreno Valley
- C Widening of I-15 to four lanes from Temecula to Corona
- C Extension of Newport Road eastward as a four-lane arterial to connect with Domenigoni Parkway (Scheduled for construction completion 2004, source: Riverside County Transportation Improvement Program, TIP)
- C Construction of SR-74 as a four-lane divided arterial highway from I-15 to Perris (Scheduled for construction completion 09/2003, source: Caltrans District 8 Projects List)

There are numerous other transportation improvement and other infrastructural projects planned within the cities and unincorporated County of Riverside. Appendix A of the Preliminary Draft MSHCP (March, 2002) contains a list of public improvement projects that was gathered for consideration as part of the MSHCP process. To the extent that some of these activities are addressed in the MSHCP, future permitting processes for these projects should be streamlined with respect to the effects of these projects on species addressed in the MSHCP (Appendix A, Preliminary Draft MSHCP). Project information in varying levels of detail was provided to the County of Riverside, Transportation and Land Management Agency by 14 cities and various utility and special districts.

In addition to numerous city and County roadway improvement projects, the MSHCP Covered Activities Summary lists other major public projects that will contribute to the cumulative condition, including flood control, utilities, recreational areas, and special projects. A sampling of these current and planned projects in the HCLE Corridor area is listed below. Refer to the Preliminary Draft MSHCP Appendix A for the complete list gathered for that document.

- C Extension of Metrolink to Perris along the San Jacinto Branch line (part of the regional commuter rail plan maintained by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority)
- C San Jacinto River Improvement Project Alternative F (City of Perris)
- C Multiple municipal drainage lines throughout the County
- C Future projects (locations and details not specified) by Metropolitan Water District (MWD) pertaining to drinking water and storage reservoirs, water conveyance and distribution pipelines, water treatment plants, and groundwater storage and recharge basins
- C MWD San Diego Pipeline No. 6 from Lake Skinner to diversion structure in Twin Oaks Valley
- C MWD San Diego Pipeline No. 3 Bypass (Skinner Finished Water Reservoir to SD Pipeline No. 3)
- C Installation of master drainage plan facilities for Perris Valley Drainage Plan and San Jacinto River Area Drainage Plan
- C March Air Force Base Water Treatment Plant and Reuse Project (Western Municipal Water District)
- C Development of Wildomar Regional Park, Clinton Keith Road, Murrieta

- C Lake Skinner Recreation Area, Warren Road, Winchester
- C French Valley Airport Project, French Valley

Future changes in land use will occur in accordance with the County's proposed new General Plan, as well as the General Plans of the cities of Hemet, San Jacinto, Perris, Riverside, Corona, Canyon Lake, and Lake Elsinore. In addition, the Pechanga Reservation in the southern portion of the study area is undergoing extensive commercial recreation development (hotels, casino, etc.). The new County General Plan, concurrently being developed as a component of the RCIP, will determine land uses in unincorporated Riverside County. Figure 4.16.1 illustrates the existing land uses within western Riverside County, and Figure 4.16.2 illustrates the planned land uses in both unincorporated County areas and incorporated city areas in western Riverside County.

The proposed CETAP alternatives would facilitate the conversion of some currently undeveloped lands to developed conditions in western Riverside County (refer to Chapter 7, Section 7.1, Growth Inducing Impacts). Access to more rural portions of the CETAP study area may hasten land conversion in more remote areas of the County where market pressures exist for development.

4.16.1 Land Use

The cumulative study area for land use impacts is western Riverside County. Past actions that have affected the land use character of western Riverside County in its transformation from rural to urban/suburban communities include the development of the freeway system including I-15, I-215, and SR-91/SR-60, that both served and encouraged land development in this historically relatively inexpensive area within the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Western Riverside County has seen continued growth in the past several decades, especially in the Temecula/Murrieta area, the Corona/Riverside area, Chino and Chino Hills, and Moreno Valley. The existing land use character in the study area is generalized on Figure 4.16.1.

The proposed County General Plan represents a current action that will guide and direct future development in Riverside County, including the more developed western portion of the County. The new General Plan focuses growth in and near designated community centers, increases the number of acres designated for open space, decreases the acreage designated for residential uses (a reduction of over 86,600 ha [214,000 ac] county wide), increases the amount of land designated for commercial, and decreases the amount of land planned for industrial use. The General Plan policies are intended to concentrate growth near or within existing urban and suburban areas, in order to maintain other areas as either open space or at a rural level of intensity. The planned land uses in the study area as proposed in the new County General Plan, as well as incorporated areas,¹ are depicted in Figure 4.16.2.

¹ Planned land use information for incorporated areas provided by Western Riverside Council of Governments, 1999.