

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This document has been prepared as a joint EIR/EIS as a result of the combined local, State, and federal actions associated with the approval of the proposed MSHCP. As stated in the Purpose and Need (Section 1.0), the co-lead agencies are the County of Riverside, pursuant to CEQA, and the USFWS, pursuant to NEPA. A consistent format was used to assist the reader in understanding the implications of the proposed MSHCP and alternatives. This section provides a narrative of how the analysis was undertaken and presents the organization of the environmental consequences section of the document.

This section of the EIR/EIS forms the scientific and analytical basis for the evaluation of the proposed MSHCP and alternatives. Topics analyzed include biological resources; land use and planning; population, housing and employment; public services (fire protection and parks); and transportation and circulation. Sections are presented in the following format.

Thresholds of Significance/Criteria for Determining Significance

The criteria for determining significance provide a threshold at which a significant impact will occur. Criteria will differ among issues.

Impact Analysis per Issue Statement

This section of the document provides an evaluation of project-specific and alternatives impacts and determines significance based on documented thresholds levels. The Proposed Project/Action is the MSHCP as described in Section 2.3 of this EIR/EIS, to include the whole of the action (policy statements, issuance of incidental take authorizations, and the implementing agreement).

According to NEPA, each of the alternatives to the Proposed Action must be analyzed in equal detail as the Proposed Action. In this Section of the EIR/EIS, each environmental issue described in Section 3.0 of this document is analyzed with regard to potential effects related to the proposed MSHCP (Proposed Action) and to each of the four alternatives as well (Listed, Proposed, and Strong Candidate Species Alternative; Listed and Proposed Species Alternative; Existing Reserves Alternative; and the No Project/No MSHCP Alternative).

The Proposed Action and the alternatives are analyzed for direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts/effects.

Mitigation Measures

For those impacts that were determined to be significant, mitigation is provided in this section of the impact analysis.

Level of Significance after Mitigation

An analysis of the significance of an effect after mitigation is applied is discussed in this section of the impact analysis. The outcome of the analysis is to determine whether there is a significant effect caused by the proposed project or its alternatives that cannot be mitigated to below a level of significance.

4.1 Biological Resources

4.1.1 Introduction

This analysis for biological resources applies the applicable threshold of significance to the potential effects for the Project and each alternative (with the exception of the No Project Alternative) for each of the following biological issues:

- Vegetation Communities
- Listed, Covered Species
- Non-Listed, Covered Species
- Non-Covered Species
- Cores and Linkages
- Relationship to Adopted or Approved HCPs and NCCPs
- Edge Effects

Subheadings for each of these issues appear in the analysis section for the project and alternatives. The No Project Alternative discussion is structured differently, since that alternative does not involve issuance of take authorization. The No Project Alternative discussion is formatted to address existing local, State and federal regulations, and the effects of the application of these regulations to future growth in the MSHCP Area.

Impact Analysis Considerations

Consideration in evaluating impacts to sensitive vegetation communities is based on the vegetation data base developed by Pacific Southwest Biological Services (PSBS, 1995) which is based on 1992-1993 aerial photographs. It is important to distinguish between “vegetation communities” and “habitats.” The terms often are used interchangeably, but a vegetation community precisely refers to definable and consistent assemblages of plant species, whereas habitat is the native environment of a plant or animal species.

The vegetation map as incorporated into the MSHCP database is depicted in Figure 4.1.1. This map was created by PSBS and mapped by KTU+A in 1995. As stated in the February 1995 PSBS/KTU+A *Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan Phase I Information Collection and Evaluation Report*, this map was created by compiling all known vegetation information within the Plan Area. These data sources include biological survey reports, Weislander vegetation maps, satellite imagery and the Dangermond/RECON data set. Methods used to create and