

CHAPTER 3

Affected Environment / Environmental Setting, Environmental Consequences / Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This chapter provides the affected environment or environmental setting for different environmental resources and the applicable regulations on the federal, state, and local level that would apply to the North Bay Water Recycling Program (NBWRP). This chapter describes the environmental consequences or impacts that could result from the implementation of the NBWRP. A discussion is provided for the individual Member Agencies (i.e., LGVSD, Novato SD, SVCSD, and Napa SD).

The impacts are analyzed for construction and operation of the NBRWP for the individual member agencies in compliance with both CEQA and NEPA. Phase 1 impacts are discussed at project level and impacts from the Action Alternatives are discussed at program level. A generic impact discussion is followed by specific impacts discussed in the following format:

No Project Alternative: The No Project Alternative assumes that the proposed project is not implemented, and reviews two scenarios: 1) consideration of existing conditions without the project, a “no build scenario”; and 2) consideration of “reasonably foreseeable” future conditions without the project. This second scenario is equivalent to the No Action Alternative, identified below, and throughout this EIR/EIS, will be examined under that heading.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would review a future without the project scenario, and would include implementation of a subset of the recycled water projects proposed under the NBWRP. The No Action Alternative represents the NEPA baseline, against which the impacts of the Action Alternatives identified below will be compared.

Phase 1 (Project level): Phase I includes projects that each Member Agency has defined to a level of detail that allows for project-level environmental review.

Alternative 1: Basic System (Program level) – Alternative 1 would involve projects that would be implemented under Phase 1 and additional components proposed by each Member Agency. These additional components will be analyzed at a program level.

Alternative 2: Partially Connected System (Program level) – Alternative 2 would involve projects that would be implemented under Alternative 1 and additional components proposed by each Member Agency. These additional components will be analyzed at a program level.

Alternative 3: Fully Connected System (Program level) – Alternative 3 would involve projects that would be implemented under Alternative 2 and additional components proposed by each Member Agency. These additional components will be analyzed at a program level.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Introduction, the level of significance is provided for each impact as applicable under CEQA. In case of any potentially significant impact, mitigation measures are identified that would minimize the impact to less-than-significant level. Determinations of significant made in this EIR/EIS apply only to CEQA, not to NEPA, which does not require such determinations. While CEQA requires a determination of impact significance for each impact discussed in an EIR based on the significance criteria, NEPA does not require this for an EIS. Under NEPA preparation of an EIS is triggered if a federal action has the potential to “significantly affect the quality of the human environment,” which is based on the context and intensity for each potential impact. The significance thresholds used in this EIS/EIR also encompass the factors taken into account under NEPA to evaluate the context and the intensity of the effects of an action.

NEPA and CEQA Baselines

As a joint EIR/EIS, the impact analysis considers two baselines; the CEQA baseline standard, which requires a project to review its impacts relative to “change from existing conditions,” as well as the NEPA baseline standard, which requires a comparison of project impacts relative to future conditions without the project. Typically, the CEQA impact analysis will include the NEPA increment of impact, as the CEQA analysis requires a broader comparison between existing conditions and post-project conditions. Where appropriate, the NEPA increment of impact between the No Action Alternative and the Project Alternatives will be identified.

As noted above and in Chapter 2, Project Description, under the No Project Alternative, none of the project components would be implemented under current or future conditions. The CEQA impact discussion considers the difference between existing conditions (CEQA Baseline) and implementation of each Action Alternative. For the purposes of CEQA, for example, the analysis of Alternative 1 would disclose the impact difference between the existing conditions and construction of 83 miles of pipeline.

The No Action Alternative includes a subset of the recycled water projects that are contained in the Action Alternatives. For the purposes of NEPA, project impacts are defined as the difference between the No Action Alternative and an Action Alternative. As noted above and in Chapter 2, Project Description, it is likely that the Member Agencies would implement some portions of recycled water projects independently, even without the benefit of federal funding. In particular, it is estimated that under the No Action Alternative, 18 miles of recycled pipeline would be constructed. Under NEPA, the impacts from the Action Alternatives would be slightly reduced when compared to the identified CEQA impact, as the NEPA impact discussion would consider the difference between the No Action Alternative (18 miles of recycled water pipeline) and the Action Alternative (83 miles of recycled water pipeline). This would result in a discussion of the impacts associated with 65 miles of recycled water pipeline.

Because the impacts under NEPA are within the range of project impacts identified in the CEQA analysis, and would not exceed those impacts or result in additional mitigation measures beyond those already identified under CEQA, they have not been quantified or specifically called out in the majority of impact discussions. Where warranted, the NEPA impact increment is separately defined and discussed.

