
7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

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This section discusses the additional topics statutorily required by CEQA. The topics discussed include significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, and irretrievable commitment of resources.

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an EIR evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A "growth-inducing" impact is defined by the State CEQA Guidelines as follows:

...the way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...It is not assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development such as removing a constraint on a required public service. For example, a project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth-inducing.

The State CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation of loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion or urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service. A project that would induce "disorderly" growth (growth that conflicts with local land use plans) could indirectly cause additional adverse environmental impacts and other public services impacts. Thus, to assess whether a growth-inducing project would result in adverse secondary effects, it is important to assess the degree to which the growth accommodated by a project would or would not be consistent with applicable land use plans.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type, and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the proposed General Plan Update is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the unincorporated area of the county. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the county that would result in direct and indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would generally retain existing land use patterns in the county, establish new policy provisions that guide and manage future development and land uses in the unincorporated areas of the county. The specific environmental effects resulting from the direct growth effects of proposed land use patterns and related policy provisions by the year 2030 are discussed in Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this DEIR. The following is a discussion of the growth-inducing effects of the project.

Population Growth

In order to anticipate the number of housing units and population in the unincorporated county in the year 2030, a growth rate calculation was completed. This calculation used a 1.0 percent annual growth rate using the existing 2008 housing unit and population by census tract as the baseline. **Table 4.11-12** shows the projected 2030 population and housing unit count using this 1.0 percent annual growth rate. This table also shows the existing population and housing units.

There were 27,725 housing units in the unincorporated county in early 2008 and a population of 61,990. As depicted in **Table 4.11-12**, using the expected increasing proportional growth scenario discussed in Section 4.0, implementation of the proposed Mendocino County General Plan Update is realistically expected to result in the construction of 6,785 new residential dwellings during the 2030 planning horizon to arrive at a total of 34,510 housing units and a population of 77,160. This addition growth would not contribute to the significant generation of growth that would exceed any established growth projections. Given that the proposed General Plan Update does not include any specific restrictions on the rate of growth (e.g., annual restriction on number of building permits for residential uses), it is not expected that it would result in the displacement of growth into other adjoining communities that would result in physical effects on the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan Update is considered to be growth-inducing because of projected population. The environmental effects of growth within the unincorporated county are addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this DEIR, and the project's cumulative impacts are addressed in Section 5.0. The following additional environmental effects could be experienced due to growth in the region:

- Air Quality – Increases in air pollutant emissions associated with particulate matter.

- Biological Resources – Loss of special-status plant and animal species habitats, degradation of habitats, and loss of special-status species.
- Hydrology and Water Quality – Further demand on groundwater resources and potential overdraft issues.
- Noise – Increased transportation noise levels from increased traffic volumes.
- Traffic – Increased traffic volumes on the region's highways.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES/IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) and Public Resources Code Sections 21000(b)(2) and 21000.1(a) require that an EIR include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented. Irreversible environmental effects would occur if:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources;
- The primary and secondary impacts of a project would generally commit future generations of similar uses (e.g., a highway provides access to previously remote areas);
- The project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project; or
- The phasing of the proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

Determining whether the proposed project would result in significant irreversible effects requires a determination of whether key resources would be degraded or destroyed such that there would be little possibility of restoring them. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

ANALYSIS

Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would result in the conversion of some forest land, range land, agricultural land, and residential uses to residential uses with higher potential densities and agricultural land. Future development under the General Plan Update would constitute a long-term commitment to these uses. It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would justify the return of the land to its original condition.

Development of the unincorporated areas of Mendocino County would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and associated infrastructure. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that may likely be consumed as part of development would include oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and other similar materials. Many of these materials would be consumed during development activities and therefore cannot be reused or recycled. It is possible that some building materials could be recycled or salvaged, such as glass and aluminum. Currently, the County has requirements for the recycling or reuse of building materials.

7.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an environmental impact report (EIR) to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine if the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The County can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment. A list of unavoidable adverse impacts identified in this EIR is provided below.

AIR QUALITY

Short-Term Emissions from Grading and Construction

Impact 4.3.2 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan may result in short-term emissions generated by construction and demolition activities that would affect local air quality and could result in health and nuisance-type impacts in the immediate vicinity of individual construction sites as well as contribute to particulate matter and regional ozone impacts. This is considered a **significant** impact to air quality.

Operational Air Pollutants

Impact 4.3.3 Negative air quality impacts associated with long-term emissions from projected growth over the planning horizon of the General Plan Update may result in violations of ambient air quality standards or create significant nuisance impacts (e.g., wood smoke). This is considered a **significant** impact.

Exposure to Toxic Air Contaminants

Impact 4.3.4 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update may result in projects that would include sources of toxic air contaminants which may affect surrounding land uses and/or place sensitive land uses near existing sources toxic air contaminants. This impact is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Regional Air Quality Impacts

Impact 5.0.3 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan along with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the county would contribute to regional air quality impacts. The proposed General Plan Update's contribution to these conditions is **cumulatively considerable**.

Regional GHG Emissions Impacts

Impact 5.0.4 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the county, would result in the cumulative increase of greenhouse gases including CO₂ emitted

into the atmosphere. The proposed General Plan Update's contribution to this impact would be **cumulatively considerable**.

Regional Impacts of Global Climate Change

Impact 5.0.5 The impacts of global climate change would cumulatively result in the potential decrease in water supply, increase in air pollutants, and increase in health hazards. The contribution of the proposed General Plan Update to this impact is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Impacts to Sensitive Biotic Communities

Impact 4.4.2 Subsequent land use activities and growth under the proposed General Plan Update could have a substantial adverse effect on wetlands, riparian, or other sensitive biotic community or native habitat within the county. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Cumulative Biological Resource Impacts

Impact 5.0.6 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development, would substantially contribute to cumulative impacts associated with significant effects to special-status plant and wildlife species, sensitive natural communities, and movement corridors. The impact to sensitive biotic communities would be **cumulatively considerable**.

HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Groundwater Level Overdraft

Impact 4.8.4 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update may increase the demand for water from groundwater sources and could thus result in overdraft. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Cumulative Groundwater Decline and Recharge Impacts

Impact 5.0.13 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the region, would contribute to the drawdown of underlying aquifers and decreased recharge in the North Coastal Basin. This impact is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

Section 4.5, Cultural Resources, evaluates the project's potential impacts to cultural resources. During archaeological and historical investigations, there were 4,520 resources identified. However, they were all located in the Coastal Zone or in the incorporated cities. In addition, most of the paleontological resources that were identified were also found in the Coastal Zone. General Plan policies, action items, and mitigation measures have been identified to reduce any potentially significant impacts to any undiscovered cultural and paleontological resources.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(2) further identifies a potential significant effect if:

The project has the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.

The proposed project does not include any land uses or design features that would achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals. As noted in Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this DEIR and as discussed in subsection 7.1 above, the project would result in some significant and unavoidable impacts, which would have long-term environmental effects. As feasible, mitigation measures are required to reduce impacts to less than significant levels. Appropriate General Plan policies, action items, and mitigation measures (where necessary) have been identified for both the construction (short-term) and operation (long-term) of the project, in order to address the short-term and long-term effects of the project. None of the General Plan policies, action items, or mitigation measures are anticipated to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(3) further identifies a potential significant effect if:

The project has possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

The cumulative effect of subsequent land use activities occurring that are associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update along with other development anticipated to occur in the cumulative area is addressed in Section 5.0, Cumulative Impacts. This Draft EIR evaluates cumulative environmental impacts associated with the General Plan Update and determines whether the proposed General Plan Update's contribution is cumulative considerable. General Plan policies, action items, mitigation measures (where necessary), and project alternatives are identified to reduce the General Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts.

Lastly, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(4) identifies a potential significant effect if:

The environmental effects of a project will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

Section 4.1, Aesthetics/Light and Glare, evaluates direct and indirect adverse effects on humans that may result from light and glare. Section 4.3, Air Quality, identifies emissions of air pollutants to which subsequent land use activities would subject people, both directly and indirectly. Section 4.7, Hazards/Hazardous Materials, discusses the potential for human beings to be exposed to hazardous materials or conditions, both directly and indirectly. Section 4.10, Noise, addresses the potential for human beings to be exposed to unacceptable noise levels,

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

both directly and indirectly. General Plan policies, action items, and mitigation measures (where necessary) are identified to reduce identified significant impacts to these resource areas.

