

5.0 ADDITIONAL TOPICS REQUIRED BY NEPA

This section addresses additional impacts relating to the irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources and significant irreversible changes to the environment.

5.1 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT RESULTING FROM THE PROPOSED MSHCP

As required under NEPA (42 U.S.C. §4321 et seq., CEQ Section 102, 40 CFR 1502.16), the environmental document for the proposed Tehachapi Upland MSHCP must include a discussion of any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would result should the Proposed MSHCP be implemented. Categories required to be evaluated under this analysis include the following:

- Adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1502.1);
- The relationship between short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity (40 CFR 1502.16);
- Irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources (40 CFR 1502.16);
- Energy requirements and conservation potential (40 CFR 1502.16);
- Natural or depletable resource requirements and conservation potential (40 CFR 1502.16(f));
- Economic and social effects (40 CFR 1508.8(b)); and
- Effects on urban quality, historical and cultural resources, and the design of the built environment, including the reuse and conservation potential (40 CFR 1502.16(g)).

These categories generally overlap with the impact issues previously analyzed in Sections 3 and 4 of this EIS, and are briefly summarized again here:

Adverse Effects That Cannot Be Avoided. There are no adverse effects that cannot be avoided under any alternative, although there are materially different effects under various alternatives. For example, the Proposed MSHCP would permanently conserve at least 116,523 acres (82%) and as much as 129,318 acres (91%) if all options are fully exercised of the Covered Lands owned by TRC; there would be no such permanent conservation under any of the other alternatives. Similarly, residential and commercial development would occur on only a small portion of the Covered Lands, resulting in permanent ground disturbance of only about 5,533 (4%) of Covered Lands under the Proposed MSHCP. Substantially greater development areas, and substantially greater associated development disturbance areas, would occur under the other three alternatives evaluated.

Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity. The MSHCP provides for the permanent preservation of the open space and habitat values of as much as 91% of the Covered Lands, while preserving the agricultural productivity of this land for a managed grazing program. Other alternatives involve creating privately-owned parcels on areas ranging from 56,922 to 92,645 acres (40% to 65%) of the Covered Lands. It is anticipated that grazing productivity would be substantially lower under the other alternatives.

Energy and Natural or Depletable Resource Requirements, and Conservation Potential. The MSHCP has the lowest level of development and lowest future population levels in relation to other

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alternatives and has commensurately lower energy consumption requirements. The integrated specific plan communities allowed under the Proposed MSHCP Alternative would also be subject to more stringent environmental review and compliance requirements under applicable state and local laws and must also include specified sustainable community planning requirements pursuant to the Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement (TRC et al. 2008), which would result in greater energy conservation than would be required by applicable law for the large-lot parcel development included in the other alternatives.

Economic and Social Effects. As discussed in Section 3.7.2, none of the alternatives is expected to cause any adverse economic or social effects.

Effects on Urban Quality, Historical and Cultural Resources, and the Design of the Built Environment, including Reuse and Conservation Potential. There are no urban areas within the Covered Lands, and none of the alternatives would affect urban quality. Historical and cultural resources are addressed in Sections 3.5 and 4.5, and none of the alternatives is expected to adversely affect historical and cultural resources. As discussed above, the Proposed MSHCP Alternative includes permanent preservation of as much as 91% of the Covered Lands and a comprehensive, integrated specific plan development review and approval process for almost all of the development areas, comprising 4% of Covered Lands. The Proposed MSHCP Alternative limits permanent disturbance acreage amounts to only approximately 5,533 acres of the Covered Lands, in contrast with other alternatives that range from disturbance footprints of 10,618 to 13,764 acres. The Proposed MSHCP Alternative has the most significant conservation elements in relation to the other alternatives.

5.2 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

Based on the preceding analyses in Chapters 3, 4, and Section 5.1, the Proposed MSHCP Alternative is considered the Environmentally Preferable Alternative.