

## CHAPTER 5 GROWTH INDUCEMENT AND IRREVERSIBLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

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### 5.1 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

CEQA requires that an EIR discuss the ways in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth. Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d), this discussion should include ways in which the project could directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth or construction of new housing in the surrounding area. The discussion should include projects which could remove obstacles to population growth such as major public service expansion that allow for more construction in applicable service areas and characteristics of projects that may encourage and facilitate other activities that could result in significant impacts. According to the CEQA Guidelines, it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental or of little significance to the environment.

As discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**, the Proposed Project consists of two components: the Pure Water Monterey Groundwater Replenishment improvements and operations (GWR Features) that will develop high quality replacement water for existing urban supplies; and an enhanced agricultural irrigation (Crop Irrigation) component that will increase the amount of recycled water available to the existing Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) in northern Monterey County, which will help reduce groundwater pumping in that area. The Proposed Project does not include the construction of new homes or businesses in the area. Thus, the Proposed Project would not directly induce population or economic growth.

Once construction is completed, the Proposed Project could employ up to nine additional employees at all facilities, including up to five additional employees at the MRWPCA Regional Treatment Plant, which is not a significant increase in jobs in the area. The new jobs are likely to be operations and maintenance, and given the nature of these jobs, it is expected that new employees would be drawn from the local area and would not require recruitment of workers from out of the area. Thus, the Proposed Project would not indirectly foster population growth as a result of creation of new jobs.

Because the GWR Facilities would replace existing municipal water supplies, the GWR Facilities would not directly foster economic growth, although construction would result in additional construction-related jobs during the construction period. The Crop Irrigation component would replace use of existing groundwater supplies; however, this component also could increase water available to local growers, especially during drought conditions. In this manner, the Crop Irrigation component could foster economic growth by enhancing crop productivity in an existing agricultural area, but that economic growth is not expected to facilitate other activities that would have significant environmental effects.

As discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**, the Proposed Project is an infrastructure project to provide replacement potable water for a portion of CalAm's withdrawals from the Carmel River system, as explained in **Chapter 2, Section 2.3.6** and to provide recycled water for agricultural irrigation in northern Monterey County as explained in **Chapter 2**. The Proposed Project would not extend roads or public services into an unserved area. As explained in **Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4**, CalAm is under State Orders issued in 1995 and 2009 by the State Water Resources Control Board to secure replacement water supplies for its Monterey District service area by January 2017 and reduce its Carmel River diversions to 3,376 AFY by 2016-2017. A 2012 adjudication of the Seaside Groundwater Basin also requires CalAm to decrease its operating yield from the Basin by 10% triennially until it reaches its allotted portion of the court-defined "natural safe yield" of 1,494 AFY beginning in 2012. In its recent submittals to the California Public Utilities Commission, CalAm estimates that it needs 9,752 acre feet per year (AFY) of additional water supplies for its Monterey District service area to reduce its Carmel River diversions to the degree required by the State Water Resources Control Board, and to reduce its pumping in the Seaside Groundwater Basin in accordance with the adjudication pumping mandates.

As explained in **Chapter 2**, the Proposed Project does not propose to produce all of the replacement water that CalAm would need to comply with the State Water Board's order and the Seaside Basin adjudication. The primary objective of the Proposed Project is to replenish the Seaside Groundwater Basin to produce 3,500 AFY of high quality water that would replace a portion of CalAm's water supply as required by the state orders. CalAm can then extract the same amount and also reduce its Carmel River system diversions by that same amount. As a result, the Proposed Project represents a portion of the replacement water needed for existing demand and would not result in creation of an excess supply that could indirectly foster or induce new development or growth.

CalAm's forecasted total customer demand in its Monterey District is 15,296 acre-feet per year, as described by the California Public Utilities Commission in the Plant Size and Operation Agreement for CalAm's Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project (California Public Utilities Commission, July 31, 2013). A portion of CalAm's forecasted total customer demand (approximately 2,000 AFY) is identified for Pebble Beach buildout, tourism bounceback, and development of legal lots of record (see **Chapter 2, Section 2.5.6**). The California Public Utilities Commission may decide to approve construction of a desalination plant that could accommodate CalAm's forecasted total customer demand in its Monterey District; therefore the CalAm Water Supply Project may accommodate the growth included in that forecast. The Proposed Project, by contrast, is not designed or intended to accommodate this growth. Further, the Proposed Project is not additive to the CalAm Water Supply Project. If the Proposed Project is timely approved and implemented, CalAm's proposed desalination plant would be reduced in size from a 9.6 mgd plant to a 6.4 mgd plant.

The Crop Irrigation component of the Proposed Project would increase the amount of recycled water available to the existing Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project in northern Monterey County, which would help reduce groundwater pumping in that area. The existing Salinas Valley Reclamation Project tertiary treatment plant located at the Regional Treatment Plant was constructed in 1998 for the purpose of producing agricultural irrigation water for approximately 12,000 acres of farmland in the northern Salinas Valley via the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project. The Proposed Project would provide approximately 4,500 to 4,750 AFY in source water on average to the Salinas Valley Reclamation Plant to produce additional recycled water for Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project and up to 5,900 AFY in drought years. Since the SVWP came on-line in 2010, CSIP groundwater use has ranged from 2,700 to 6,500 AFY (averaging 3,870 AFY). The Proposed Project would be able to decrease CSIP pumping to zero in most

years and to a small fraction of existing pumping in the remaining years. The use of recycled water for irrigation would reduce regional dependence on and use of local groundwater, which, in turn would reduce groundwater pumping-related seawater intrusion into the Salinas Valley aquifers. In addition to reducing groundwater pumping, the Crop Irrigation component could produce additional recycled water to growers beyond the amount that presently pumped from groundwater. This additional amount could enable higher productivity of existing farmland by supporting a wider variety of crop types, and by providing sufficient supplies during drought conditions. Because distribution of additional recycled water for crop irrigation would be through the existing Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project distribution system, the irrigation water would be used on existing lands in agricultural production. Therefore, this component of the Proposed Project would not induce the type of economic growth that would facilitate other activities that would have significant environmental effects.

In conclusion, the Proposed Project would not directly result in population or economic growth through development of new residential or commercial uses, and would not induce substantial population growth due to new permanent employees or extension of roads or public services to unserved locations. Although the Proposed Project would provide a new source of drinking water, the water provided by the Proposed Project would replace other existing sources of municipal water supplies that must be curtailed. Implementation of the Proposed Project would provide replacement water for CalAm's withdrawals from the Carmel River system, but would not provide new water to serve growth. The provision of additional recycled water for crop irrigation to existing lands in agricultural production would not increase population nor cause economic growth that would facilitate other activities that would have significant environmental effects. Therefore, the project would not directly or indirectly result in growth inducing impacts.

## 5.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE IMPACTS

Section 21100(b)(2)(B) of CEQA (Public Resources Code) and Section 15126(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines require an EIR to identify any significant effect on the environment that would be irreversible if the project is implemented. The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2(c)) indicate that use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Irreversible damage can also result from environmental accidents associated with a project. Section 15227 of the State CEQA Guidelines states that the information required by Guidelines section 15126.6(c) concerning irreversible changes need be included only in EIRs prepared in connection with adoption of a plan, policy or ordinance by a public agency; the adoption by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of a resolution making determinations; and projects which require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Proposed Project is not adoption of a plan, policy or ordinance, it does not require a LAFCO resolution, and is not considered to require an EIS under NEPA.

The Proposed Project will not extend roads or public services into an unserved area. Project construction and operation would result in the permanent and continued consumption of electricity, natural gas and fossil fuels. As discussed in **Section 4.7, Energy and Mineral Resources**, although energy consumed during the construction period would be a one-time use, it would represent irreversible consumption of finite natural energy resources. Energy consumption during construction is assessed in **Section 4.7**, and the project is not anticipated to use energy unnecessarily, wastefully, nor inefficiently. Construction-related fuel consumption

would be temporary, would cease at the end of the construction, would not result in long-term depletion of non-renewable energy resources, and would not permanently increase reliance on energy resources that are not renewable.

The operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would necessitate the on-going consumption of electricity, some of which would be produced from non-renewable resources. The total new electricity demand for Proposed Project operations would be approximately 10,900 megawatt hours per year as discussed in **Section 2.8.1** in **Chapter 2, Project Description**. Although, Project operations would commit future generations to energy use for Project operations, the Project is designed to be energy efficient, and as a whole would not involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources during initial and continued phases of the project or result in wasteful use of energy.

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials associated with construction activities. However, environmental accidents would be minimized through adherence to federal, state and local regulations as discussed in **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials**. Operations that involve use of chemical and hazardous materials would be required to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding, transportation, storage, use and disposal of hazardous materials, which would reduce the likelihood and severity of accidents that could result in irreversible environmental damage. Compliance with state and federal hazardous materials regulations would reduce the potential for accidental release of hazardous materials to a less-than-significant level.

No other significant irreversible changes are expected to result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Project.

## 5.3 REFERENCES

California Public Utilities Commission, 2013. *Testimony by Rich Svindland regarding Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project Desalination Plant Sizing*, July 31, 2013.