

22.0 Growth-Inducing Impacts

22.1 Introduction

Section 21100(b)(5) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discuss the growth-inducing impact of a proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(g) clarifies this requirement, stating that an EIR must address "the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment." In addition, under authority from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA Regulations require consideration of the potential indirect impacts of a proposed project within an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Indirect effects of an action include those that occur later in time or farther away in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable (CEQ NEPA Regulations Section 1508.8(b)).

The CEQA Guidelines and the CEQ NEPA Regulations identify several ways in which a project could have growth-inducing impacts. In addition to the characteristics described above, projects that remove obstacles to population growth, and projects that encourage and facilitate other activities that are beyond those proposed as a part of the project and that could affect the environment are considered growth-inducing (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(g)).

The availability of adequate supplies of water is one of several potential obstacles to population growth, along with such things as: the availability of sewage treatment facilities; the availability of developable land; the types and availability of employment opportunities; housing costs and availability; commuting distances; cultural amenities; climate; and local government growth policies contained in general plans and zoning ordinances. Resource planners have long debated the role of water in population growth.

Section 1508.8(b) of the CEQ NEPA Regulations notes that indirect effects can include "growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems."

Growth inducement may not be considered necessarily detrimental, beneficial, or of insignificant consequence under CEQA. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it directly (or indirectly) affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, in some other way, significantly affects the environment.

22.2 Environmental Consequences

Project Area. One of the project objectives of the ISDP is to improve water levels and circulation in south Delta channels for local agricultural diversions. Consequently, implementation of the ISDP could lead to increased water availability to south Delta farmers, which in turn could bring about increased agricultural production and a small increase in

economic activity. The resulting changes are not expected to be substantial and would not cause any significant growth-inducing effects.

The south Delta is a rapidly developing portion of California, with limited water supplies, infrastructure, and employment opportunities providing the greatest obstacles to growth. Most of the region's development is accommodated in and adjacent to the incorporated cities; rural communities are also experiencing a substantial amount of growth. Implementation of the ISDP would slightly increase the seasonal availability of water to south Delta farmers who pump directly from the waterways. However, no additional supplies are expected to be available to nearby communities or other users. As noted in Chapter 18.0, Public Services and Utilities, the ISDP would not extend infrastructure to any areas that are not currently served. Furthermore, the ISDP's limited operational effects and minimal personnel requirements would preclude any long-term changes in south Delta employment or economic activity. Consequently, the ISDP would not remove obstacles to population growth, either by increasing the availability of water or other infrastructure to south Delta communities and their environs, or by significantly stimulating employment or economic activity in the region. Therefore, the ISDP is not expected to have any significant growth-inducing effects on the project area.

SWP Service Areas. Implementation of the ISDP would increase water deliveries to some of the SWP service areas. As water shortages often constrain urban growth in some areas of California, the ISDP has greater potential to affect the SWP service areas than the project area. Areas such as the Central Coast region have historically suffered from inadequate water supplies, and some communities have restricted growth as a consequence. The North Bay service area would receive an additional 2,000 af of water, and the Central Coast and South Bay service areas would acquire minimal increases of one and six thousand acre feet per year (afy), respectively. By far the greatest annual increase in water deliveries would occur in the San Joaquin and Southern California service areas, which would receive an extra 29,000 and 87,000 afy, respectively. Although it is likely that ISDP-related water would be used to address existing needs, the delivery of extra SWP water to constrained areas could theoretically induce growth by removing that obstacle. The following calculations are provided for the purposes of full disclosure, since they assume a worst case scenario in which water availability is the only factor limiting growth in the service areas.

As noted above, the Central Coast service area continually experiences localized severe water shortages, and some communities have restricted growth accordingly. The region's population is expected to grow by 162,700 people by the year 2010. Based on the area's average 1990 applied per capita water use of 0.211 afy (DWR, 1993), an additional 1,000 af would only support 4,739 people in the Central Coast region. This increase is far below the area's adopted growth projections. Furthermore, this water would be delivered through the Coastal Branch of the California Aqueduct, the impacts of which have already been discussed in final EIRs prepared by DWR and local agencies. This represents a less-than-significant growth-inducing impact.

Development in the South Bay region is presently constrained by inadequate infrastructure, including limited water supplies. Consequently, it is expected that any additional SWP water would be used to help alleviate existing shortages. However, the possibility exists that this additional water could stimulate additional housing and population growth. The population of the South Bay service area is expected to increase by 457,700 people by the year 2010. Using

the 1990 South Bay applied per capita average water consumption of 0.216 afy (DWR, 1993), the additional 6,000 afy would only support 27,777 residents. As this increase is substantially lower than the planned population growth for the area, no significant growth-inducing impacts would occur. Also, it is expected that much of the additional water would replace water shortages experienced in the region due to the Delta Accord, as discribed in Chapter 1.4.3.

The additional 29,000 afy of water for the San Joaquin service area is anticipated to go largely to agricultural uses and to help reduce groundwater overdraft, as discussed in Chapter 15.0. Only six percent of this amount of water, about 1,740 afy, is expected to be available for urban uses. This would support a population of 5,163. The average 1990 applied per capita rate of urban water use in the region is approximately 0.337 afy (DWR, 1993). At that rate, the increased urban water supply of 1,740 afy could support about 5,163 new people; this represents approximately one percent of the area's projected population increase of 468,000 by 2010. Consequently, no significant growth-inducing effects would result.

Additional water supplies in the Southern California service area are likely to be dedicated to urban use and to replacing current water shortages. SWP deliveries may partially offset losses of Colorado River and Mono-Owens Basin water. However, it is possible that all additional water would contribute to new population growth. As noted in Chapter 15.0, the additional 87,000 afy of SWP water could sustain a maximum of 368,644 new residents in the Southern California service area. This population increase represents about 3.6 percent of the adopted projections for 6.8 million new people in the region by 2010. As this increase would fall within the region's projected 2010 population, it does not represent a significant growth-inducing effect.