



City Of Merced Wastewater Collection System Master Plan

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

CHAPTER 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

September 2020



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3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2, this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) identifies and focuses on the potentially significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the Program compared to baseline conditions, considering both its potential short-term and long-term effects. Short-term effects are generally those associated with construction of the Program, while long-term effects are generally those associated with operation of Program components. Each resource area requires the following:

Organization of Resource Area Assessment

Each environmental issue analyzed in Chapter 3.0 contains the following components:

Basis for Analysis presents the thresholds of significance used in this Draft EIR that were developed using criteria from the 2019 CEQA Guidelines' Appendix G Checklist; state, federal, and local regulatory schemes; local and regional plans and ordinances; accepted practices; consultation with recognized experts; and other professional opinions.

Regulatory Framework presents the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that are relevant to each issue area. Regulations originating from the Federal, State, and/or Local levels are each discussed as appropriate. The majority of the Program falls within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan/Sphere of Influence (SUDP/SOI); however, there are a few portions that fall within Merced County, and therefore, where applicable, County plans, policies, and ordinances were also considered in the analysis.

Environmental Setting presents the existing environmental conditions within the Program Study Area and surrounding geographic area appropriate to establish baseline conditions for a particular resource, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the Program Study Area) differs among resources, depending on the locations where impacts would be expected. For example, air quality impacts are assessed for the air basin (macro-scale), as well as the site vicinity (micro-scale), whereas aesthetic impacts are only assessed for the general vicinity.

Environmental Impacts includes two subheadings: Methodology for Analysis and Impact Analysis. The Methodology for Analysis Sections include any resource-specific procedures for assessing impacts. The Impact Analysis Sections include an analysis of the Program's potential to cause a significant environmental impact as well as the potential of the identified proposed Project's potential to cause a significant environmental impact. Potential impacts are assessed by evaluating the Program's potential to result in a substantial adverse change from the baseline conditions established in the Environmental Setting and determined by a comparison with the thresholds of significance set forth in the Basis for Analysis section. Where a potentially significant impact is identified, mitigation, is identified and described for how it reduces potential impacts, where feasible.

The potential impacts are organized numerically in each subsection with a discussion of the Program Impacts (e.g., Impact AES-1, Impact AES-2, Impact AES-3, etc.). A bold-font environmental impact statement precedes the

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discussion of each impact, while its level of significance follows the discussion of each impact. The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion.

Required Mitigation includes specific details of the mitigation identified in the Environmental Impacts with performance standards, timing, and responsible parties identified.

Format Used for Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

The format adopted in this Draft EIR to present the evaluation of potential environmental impacts is described and illustrated below.

Summary Heading of Impact (Example)

Impact AIR-1: An impact summary heading appears immediately preceding the impact description (Summary Heading of Impact in this example). The impact abbreviation identifies the Section of the report (AIR for Air Quality in this example) and the sequential order of the impact (1 in this example) within that Section. To the right of the impact number is the impact statement, which identifies the potential impact.

Impact [AIR-1] Analysis

A narrative analysis follows the impact statement assessing the baseline condition of the Program and proposed Projects compared to the established thresholds of significance. This analysis identifies the level of significance of a potential impact before mitigation and if potentially significant, any potential mitigation that would be required. It also includes an explanation of how the mitigation would affect the potential impact and a conclusion of the level of significance post-application of mitigation. The analysis concludes with the level of significance with all factors considered.

Level of Significance: Less than Significant with Mitigation (The evaluated Level of Significance concluded in the analysis after mitigation is considered is included here, such as Less than Significant with Mitigation in this example)

This Section describes the determination of the severity of project impacts. This is fundamental to achieving the objectives of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 requires that decision-makers mitigate, as completely as is feasible, the significant impacts identified in the Draft and Final EIRs. If the EIR identifies any significant unmitigated impacts, CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 requires decision-makers to adopt a statement of overriding considerations that explains why the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse environmental consequences identified in the EIR.

Mitigation Required: [MM AIR-1] This finding lists all mitigation required to make the finding listed above for a specific impact.

Mitigation Required lists any feasible measures that could avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant adverse impacts, with measures having to be fully enforceable through incorporation into the project (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21081.6[b]) as discussed under the impact analysis.

Mitigation measures are not required for environmental impacts that are found to be less than significant. Where feasible mitigation for a significant environmental impact is available, it is described following the impact analysis of

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the section. If sufficient feasible mitigation was not available to reduce environmental impacts to a less than significant level, or where the Lead Agency lacked the authority to ensure that the mitigation would be implemented when needed, the impacts would be identified as significant and unavoidable. None of the impacts identified for the Program have been identified as significant and unavoidable.

In some cases, following the impact discussion, reference is made to state and federal regulations and agency policies that would fully or partially mitigate the impact. In addition, policies and programs from applicable local land use plans that would partially or fully mitigate the impact may be cited.

Mitigation measures, beyond those contained in other documents, are identified with a summary heading, and described using the format presented below:

Mitigation Measure AIR-1 [Title]: [Description] indicates mitigation that is identified that would reduce the impact to the lowest degree feasible.

ABBREVIATIONS

CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
PRC	Public Resources Code
SUDP/SOI	Specific Urban Development Plan/Sphere of Influence

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