

Appendix H: Baseline Conditions Assumptions

Analysis Assumptions Used to Evaluate the Impacts of Minor Subdivision No. MS07-027 and Administrative Permit No. AA08-033, George Simmons Minor Subdivision and Don Chapin Company Concrete Batch Plant Project, Volta, County of Merced, California.

Baseline Environmental Conditions Assumed in the Draft EIR

Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and the environmental analysis is begun. The State CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to normally serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant. The NOP for the proposed project was published on March 26, 2012 and the project's environmental analysis commenced. At that time, the County's Year 2000 General Plan was the applicable and governing land use and policy document. The environmental setting conditions of the proposed project are described in detail in the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR (see Sections 3.1 through 3.9). In general, these sections describe the setting of Merced County, the proposed project site, and surrounding area as it existed when the NOP for the proposed project was released.

Given the County's recent adoption of the 2030 Merced County General Plan on December 10, 2013, the County, as the lead agency for the environmental review, found it prudent to provide the public, and trustee and responsible agencies, with a brief narrative to document the fact that no major thresholds for evaluating environmental impacts were revised from the 2000 General Plan to the 2030 General Plan (Fugelsang, pers. comm.), that would affect the environmental analyses contained in the proposed project's Draft EIR. In accordance with Section 15125(a): "The environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant"; as such, none of the updated or added policies would result in a conflict between the 2000 General Plan and the 2030 General Plan that would affect or change the baseline, analysis, or mitigation conclusions of the Draft EIR.

Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Section 4, Cumulative Effects of the Draft EIR considers whether the proposed project effect's on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Cumulative impacts in the Draft EIR are based on the recently approved 2030 General Plan and its assumptions and contributions in connection with the proposed project as well as activities identified in Table 4-2, Cumulative Projects and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions. The recently approved 2030 General Plan was used to support the cumulative considerations identified in the Draft EIR for the proposed project because the previous 2000 General Plan was approved on

the basis of an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, thereby providing minimal analysis related to cumulatively considerable effects of the 2000 General Plan. Accordingly, the best available information to determine cumulative effects from the proposed project was the County's recently approved 2030 General Plan's EIR. The 2030 General Plan's impact on cumulative conditions is based on a number of factors, including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies, and expert opinion.

References:

Fugelsang, Jeff. Planner III. Merced County. Personal communication: telephone conversation with Trevor Macenski. January 24, 2013.