

VI. SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Section 15126.2(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discuss significant impacts. When such impacts cannot be reduced to a less than significant level, the EIR must describe their implications and the justification for proposing the project in spite of the impacts. The majority of the potential impacts resulting from the proposed project can be reduced to less than significant levels through mitigation (see Chapter V). The proposed project would, however, result in several unavoidable, significant impacts as summarized below.

VI.A. LONG-TERM NOISE AT SEVEN RECEPTOR LOCATIONS

Traffic noise created by vehicles that will use the proposed system of roadways in the project area will potentially cause long-term noise impacts (see Section V.C). At ten receptor locations, increased traffic on the proposed Willow Road extension will cause noise levels to exceed the County's exterior noise standard. Sound barriers can feasibly reduce these noise levels to below the County exterior noise standard at three receptor sites.

The other seven receptor locations will experience significant and unavoidable adverse noise impacts. These seven receptor sites occur on parcels that lie adjacent to the proposed extension of Willow Road, which is the source of the traffic noise. The only access to the local road network from these parcels is via Willow Road and a sound barrier with openings for driveway access would not mitigate the noise impact. Therefore, these seven receptor sites cannot feasibly be screened from noise generated from traffic on Willow Road.

VI.B. LONG-TERM IMPACTS TO AGRICULTURE

The proposed project represents a contributing step in the long-range development of the cumulative projects listed in Section IV Cumulative Projects of this SEIR. This indirect or growth-inducing action is likely to hasten the conversion of agricultural lands to development. Therefore, the proposed project will significantly contribute to cumulative impacts to agricultural lands and operations.

Between US 101 and Thompson Road, the proposed project passes through two agricultural preserves (parcel numbers 091-251-017 and 091-301-019). Impacts to these preserves cannot be mitigated. Therefore, the proposed project would have a significant and unavoidable adverse impact on these agricultural preserves.

VI.C. IMPACT TO OAK WOODLAND HABITAT AND OAK TREES

The proposed project would directly impact 28.8 acres of oak woodland habitat, including various subtypes and mixtures of oak habitats. Included in the impacted oak woodland are 938 oak trees, 810 of which are greater than six inches dbh. These data do not include the portion of the project site on the property at 750 Willow Road, which the property owner did not allow to be surveyed for this SEIR. Preparation of an Oak Tree Replacement Plan is prescribed in Mitigation Measure F-15 and Oak Woodland Habitat Creation, Conservation and Enhancement is prescribed in Mitigation Measure F-16. Project impacts to oak woodland and oak trees are nevertheless considered significant adverse impacts until the replacement trees and restored/enhanced habitat is fully ecologically functional.

VI.D. INDIRECT OR GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS UPON THE POPULATION AND HOUSING

The proposed project could indirectly lead to an increase in Nipomo's population and housing by facilitating such growth. The proposed project provides facilities that remove an impediment to growth and may change land values, hastening the development of agricultural lands or open space. The proposed project may thus also add to the overall growth of the project area. The indirect or growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project facilities upon the population and housing inventory of the Nipomo area are considered to be potentially significant unavoidable adverse impacts. Such growth in population and housing has nevertheless been anticipated in the County General Plan (see Section V.A), which allows a variety of commercial, residential, and agricultural development on the Nipomo Mesa.