

VII. SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Section 15126.2(c) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discuss significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the construction of the proposed project. Use of resources such as agricultural lands or construction materials during the construction of the project is irreversible, since these resources can not be recovered once they have been committed for the project. The proposed project will cause several significant irreversible changes. These changes are justifiable given the project objectives.

VII.A. DIRECT CHANGES

Construction of the proposed project would directly result in some irreversible environmental changes. In particular, this project would permanently alter existing land uses and thus change the aesthetic environment (see Section V.I). The mitigation measures proposed in Section V.I., however, reduce such impacts to less than significant levels. The project would develop land which currently is used for agriculture or is undeveloped open space. These impacts are discussed at length in Sections V.A and V.H. Because the amount of agricultural and open space land developed for this project is small, impacts to these resources are not considered to be significant. Construction of the project would also consume non-renewable and slowly renewable resources including sand and gravel, asphalt, metals, and water. This environmental change is significant and irreversible.

VII.B. INDIRECT CHANGES

Besides direct impacts, the proposed project would indirectly contribute to irreversible environmental changes. Construction of the proposed project would facilitate other development near the project site (see Chapter IX). By facilitating such development, the proposed project indirectly contributes to the consumption of other non-renewable resources. Development would further reduce the amount of agricultural land and open space that exists in the region. This development will create additional demands on energy resources. Development will result in the construction of homes and other land uses that require energy to operate and maintain. People will also need to be transported to and from these developments. Such activities require energy. Since fossil fuels are currently the principal sources of energy, the proposed project would indirectly reduce existing supplies of these fuels, including natural gas, fuel oil, and gasoline. The construction of additional homes and businesses near the project area will also increase local consumption of water, a potentially renewable resource. These environmental changes are significant, but development around the project area is consistent with the County General Plan (see Section V.A), which allows for a wide range of development on the Nipomo Mesa.