

Long-Term Operation – Final Environmental Impact Statement

Chapter 19 – Hazards and Hazardous Materials

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Chapter 19 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

This chapter is based on the background information and technical analysis documented in Appendix V, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials Technical Appendix*, which includes additional information on hazards and hazardous materials conditions and technical analysis of the effects of each alternative.

19.1 Affected Environment

The Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) reservoirs are managed to store water supplies for local and regional uses as well as export. Stored water in water supply reservoirs, including water stored in CVP and SWP reservoirs, may be used for fighting wildfires in the California foothills and mountains. Firefighting actions in wildland areas frequently involve collection and transport of water from reservoirs located close to wildfires, including CVP and SWP reservoirs. Other ongoing activities in the study area introduce hazardous materials (e.g., pesticides, fertilizers, industrial waste) and potential hazards (e.g., creating conditions for the spread of vector-borne diseases from mosquitos such as seasonal wetlands). Some surface water bodies within the study area (e.g., lakes and reservoirs) have the potential to grow cyanobacteria harmful algal blooms (CHABs) at certain times of year.

19.2 Effects of the Alternatives

The impact analysis considers changes in hazards related to changes in CVP and SWP operation under the alternatives as compared with the No Action Alternative.

The No Action Alternative is based on 2040 conditions. The changes to hazards and hazardous materials that are assumed to occur by 2040 under the No Action Alternative conditions would be different than existing conditions because of the following factors:

- Climate change and sea-level rise
- General plan development throughout California, including increased water demands in portions of the Sacramento Valley

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would continue with the current operation of the CVP, as described in the 2020 Record of Decision and subject to the 2019 Biological Opinions. The 2020 Record of Decision for the CVP and the 2020 Incidental Take Permit for the SWP represent current management direction or intensity pursuant to 43 CFR Section 46.30.

Although the No Action Alternative included habitat restoration projects at a programmatic level, the 2020 ROD did not provide environmental coverage for these projects, and all of the habitat

projects considered under the No Action required or will require additional environmental documentation. Thus, ground disturbance for habitat restoration projects did not materialize as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative. For the purpose of the analysis, these habitat restoration projects are considered independent projects that will be considered under cumulative effects.

The No Action Alternative is expected to result in potential changes to hazards. These changes were described and considered in the 2020 LTO Record of Decision and associated documents.

19.2.1 Expose People or Structures to a Substantial Risk of Loss, Injury, or Death Involving Wildfires

Under the No Action Alternative, construction activities could involve the use of heavy equipment and entail activities that have the potential to ignite wildfires (e.g., use of flammable and combustible materials). Increase in human presence in a wildland urban interface also has the potential to increase fire risks (e.g., smoking, handling of combustible chemicals). Climate change would likely increase the potential for wildfires. The potential for adverse effects related to wildfires due to operations of the CVP and SWP would likely be similar as under existing conditions because projects would generally occur in the same geographic area and present a similar risk. Additionally, projects would be required to comply with all pertinent fire prevention laws and regulations and best practices, including those taking effect in the future that are refined for climate change conditions.

Under the No Action Alternative, water elevations in reservoirs would maintain their current patterns of seasonal variation and availability of water. Lower reservoir storage would not entirely prevent access to reservoir water for fighting wildfires, and there are multiple methods used to suppress wildfires. Therefore, implementation of the No Action Alternative would not substantially impair the ability to fight wildfires relative to existing conditions, and people or structures would not be exposed to a substantial risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildfires.

As discussed in Appendix S, *Recreation Technical Appendix*, reservoir levels in the study area under the Alternatives 1 through 4 would not be substantially different from the No Action Alternative. None of the alternatives would change the availability of water stored in reservoirs for firefighting purposes; therefore, implementation of Alternatives 1 through 4 would not substantially impair the ability to fight wildfires, and there would be no adverse effect. Most of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys are outside of an area designated as a Very High or High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. There are multiple methods that are used in suppressing wildfires aside from drawing water from reservoirs.

19.2.2 Increase the Potential for Creating a Public or Environmental Hazard through the Use or Accidental Release of Hazardous Materials

Under the No Action Alternative, programmatic construction and specified maintenance planned or currently under way may require the use of hazardous materials, which could create a hazard to the public and environment through the accidental release of those hazardous materials or by disruption of existing oil or gas pipelines where deep excavation may be required. As such, relative to existing conditions, the No Action Alternative would not result in adverse effects related to the use or accidental release of hazardous materials.

There would not be new construction under Alternatives 1 through 4 that would use hazardous materials. Mechanical and chemical aquatic weed removal and algae treatments would be implemented on an as-needed basis at Clifton Court Forebay as part of Alternatives 1 through 4 as well as the No Action Alternative. The use of herbicides and algaecides would be done pursuant to applicable regulatory requirements. Therefore, Alternatives 1 through 4 would not result in an adverse effect.

19.3 Mitigation Measures

No avoidance and minimization measures or mitigation measures have been identified for hazards and hazardous materials.

19.4 Cumulative Impacts

The No Action Alternative would continue with the current operation of the CVP and would not be expected to result in potential changes in exposure of people or structures to substantial risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildfires and use and accidental release of hazardous materials. The action alternatives will not result in changes in exposure of people or structures to substantial risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildfires and use and accidental release of hazardous materials. Therefore, the No Action Alternative and action alternatives are not expected to contribute to cumulative changes to hazards and hazardous materials as described in Appendix V, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* and Appendix Y, *Cumulative Impacts Technical Appendix*.