

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) contains individual sections that describe the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project described in **Section 3.0, Project Description**. Each topical section describes the environmental setting and background information necessary to help the reader understand the conditions that would cause an impact to occur. In addition, each section includes a description of how an impact is determined to be significant or not significant. Finally, the individual sections recommend mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts. The following issue areas are addressed in this section:

- Section 4.1** – Aesthetics
- Section 4.2** – Air Quality
- Section 4.3** – Biological Resources
- Section 4.4** – Cultural Resources
- Section 4.5** – Geology and Soils
- Section 4.6** – Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change
- Section 4.7** – Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Section 4.8** – Hydrology and Water Quality
- Section 4.9** – Land Use
- Section 4.10** – Noise and Vibration
- Section 4.11** – Transportation and Circulation
- Section 4.12** – Utilities
- Section 4.13** – Energy

This EIR evaluates impacts resulting from all modifications undertaken and proposed by Crystal Geyser Water Company (CGWC) to operate the Plant; therefore, the environmental impacts of construction activities occurring prior to the publication of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) in June 2016, proposed future construction activities, and operation of the Plant are evaluated in **Section 4.0**. By including environmental impacts from construction activities occurring prior to publication of the NOP, this evaluation goes beyond what is legally required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This more conservative evaluation is done at the request of the public and with the applicant's agreement.

Approach to Evaluation of Options for Wastewater Treatment

As noted in **Section 3.5.8**, there are four options under consideration for the treatment and disposal of wastewater. In many instances, the nature and significance of environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project would be identical under the various options for wastewater treatment. Where the nature and significance of impacts is identical, the EIR draws no distinction between the wastewater options in the text when describing the impacts of the Proposed Project. If the significance of the environmental impact under discussion differs between the various wastewater options, then the differences are described in the text. For the purposes of modeling operational impacts associated with noise and air quality, Wastewater Treatment Option 4 was chosen because this option would result in the greatest amount of noise and air quality emissions. Additionally, the evaluation of construction impacts is

analyzed based on the level of construction activities that would occur under Wastewater Treatment Option 4, as that option would result in the greatest amount of construction activities within the project site. While Wastewater Treatment Options 1 through 3 would result in fewer construction activities within the project site that could proportionately reduce associated construction impacts, if the nature and significance of impacts and recommended mitigations would be the same as those occurring under Option 4, no distinction is drawn in the text.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND DEFINITION OF BASELINE

The CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15125[a]) state that: An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the NOP is published, or if no NOP is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, from both a local and regional perspective. This environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant.

As described in **Section 1.2, EIR Process**, the County issued a NOP for the Proposed Project on June 24, 2016, and subsequently initiated the preparation of technical studies and the CEQA environmental review process. Thus, each of the environmental topical sections in **Section 4.0** includes a discussion of physical conditions in the vicinity of the study area on or around June 2016. This environmental setting constitutes the baseline from which the operational impacts of the Proposed Project, as well as the impacts of future proposed construction activities, are measured and evaluated.

In addition, as discussed in **Section 3.5.12**, to provide a conservative analysis, this EIR goes beyond what is legally required under CEQA and describes the environmental impacts of construction activities and modifications to the project site previously undertaken by CGWC since purchase of the property in 2013. A description of prior construction activities undertaken by CGWC is provided in **Section 3.5.12**, and facilities previously installed by CGWC (as well as proposed facilities) are shown in **Figure 3-4**. The CEQA Guidelines recognize that the date for establishing an environmental baseline cannot be rigid. The use of environmental baselines that differ from the date of the NOP is reasonable and appropriate in certain circumstances when doing so results in a more accurate or conservative environmental analysis. Therefore, the environmental setting within the project site as it existed in 2013, when CGWC purchased the property, forms the baseline from which impacts associated with prior construction activities are measured and evaluated. Because the facilities previously installed by CGWC were installed within paved, graveled, or landscaped areas of the project site, and little to no growth has occurred in the project area, the environmental setting for most resource areas has not changed appreciably between 2013 and June 2016. Each technical subsection of **Section 4.0** defines the environmental setting and baseline for the impacts being analyzed.

The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the project 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 (macroscale) as well as the site vicinity (microscale), whereas aesthetic impacts are assessed for the project site vicinity only.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

According to the CEQA *Guidelines* Section 15355, “cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable (*Guidelines* Section 15130[a]). These impacts are discussed when appropriate in the relevant issue area sub-section within **Section 4.0** and summarized in **Section 5.2**.

When evaluating cumulative impacts, CEQA allows the use of either a list of past, present, or reasonably foreseeable probable future projects, including projects outside the control of the Lead Agency, or a summary of the projections in an adopted planning document, such as a Community Plan, or some thoughtful combination of the two.

The context for the cumulative impact analysis within this EIR includes all past, present, and probable future development as identified in CEQA Guidelines §15130(a)(3)(b), and is based on long-term development levels projected in the Siskiyou County General Plan and City of Mt. Shasta General Plan, as well as reasonably foreseeable development projects in the County and region of the project site. Reasonably foreseeable development projects considered within this EIR consist of the proposed Lassen Substation Project, City of Mt. Shasta State-Mandated Wastewater Treatment and Outfall Improvement Project, DeGray Zone Change and Vesting Tentative Parcel Map Project, and McCloud Artesian Spring Water Company Bottling Plant. The cumulative context, including a description of the reasonably foreseeable projects listed above, is included in **Section 5.2.1**.