

SUPPLEMENT TO THE DECISION DOCUMENT FOR NATIONWIDE PERMIT 44

This document is a supplement to the national decision document for Nationwide Permit (NWP) 44, and addresses the regional modifications and conditions for this NWP. The South Pacific Division Engineer has considered the potential cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment that could result from the use of this NWP, including the need for additional modifications of this NWP by the establishment of regional conditions to ensure that those cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment are minimal. The Division Engineer has also considered the exclusion of this NWP from certain geographic areas or specific waterbodies. These regional conditions are necessary to address important regional issues relating to the aquatic environment. These regional issues are identified in this document. These regional conditions are being required to ensure that this NWP authorizes activities that result in no more than minimal individual or cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment. This document also identifies regionally important high-value waters and other geographic areas in which this NWP should be regionally conditioned or excluded from NWP eligibility, as described below, to further ensure that the NWP does not authorize activities that may exceed the minimal adverse effects threshold.

Text of NWP 44:

Mining Activities. Discharges of dredged or fill materials into non-tidal waters of the United States for mining activities, except for coal mining activities. The discharge must not cause the loss of greater than ½ acre of non-tidal waters of the United States. Including the loss of no more than 300 linear feet of stream bed, unless for intermittent and ephemeral stream beds the district engineer waives the 300 linear foot limit by making a written determination concluding that the discharge will result in minimal adverse effects. This NWP does not authorize discharges into non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters.

Notification: The permittee must submit a pre-construction notification to the district engineer prior to commencing the activity. (See general condition 31). If reclamation is required by other statutes, then a copy of the reclamation plan must be submitted with the pre-construction notification. (Sections 10 and 404).

Summary of changes to NWP 44 from 2007:

The terms and conditions of NWP 44 now include a 300 linear foot limit for the loss of stream bed, which for intermittent and ephemeral stream beds that can be waived by the district engineer if he or she makes a written determination concluding that the discharge will result in minimal adverse effects.

1.0 Background

In the February 16, 2011, issue of the Federal Register (76 FR 9174), the Corps of Engineers (Corps) published its proposal to reissue 48 existing NWPs and issue two new NWPs. To solicit

comments on its proposed regional conditions for these NWP's, the Los Angeles District issued a public notice on February 25, 2011. The issuance of the NWP's was announced in the February 21, 2012, Federal Register notice (77 FR 10184). After the publication of the final NWP's, the Los Angeles District considered the need for regional conditions for this NWP. The Los Angeles District's findings are discussed below.

2.0 Consideration of Public Comments

2.1 General Comments

Please See the attached response to comments document (Section III)

2.2 Comments on Proposed Regional Conditions

2.2.1 Proposed Regional Condition 1

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.2 Proposed Regional Condition 2

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.3 Proposed Regional Condition 3

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.4 Proposed Regional Condition 4

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.5 Proposed Regional Condition 5

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.6 Proposed Regional Condition 6

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.7 Proposed Regional Condition 7

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.8 Proposed Regional Condition 8

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.9 Proposed Regional Condition 9

Please see the attached response to comments document.

2.2.10 Proposed Regional Condition 10

Please see the attached response to comments document.

3.0 Waters Excluded from NWP or Subject to Additional Pre-Construction Notification Requirements

3.1 Waters excluded from use of this NWP

3.1.1 Special Aquatic Sites in Arizona and Mojave and Sonoran Deserts of California (Regional Condition 2)

Reason for Exclusion: With this regional condition, NWPs 3, 7, 12-15, 17-19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 35, 36, 39-46, and 48-52 may **not** be used to authorize the discharge of dredged or fill material into a jurisdictional special aquatic site in the State of Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran desert regions in California, including wetlands, mudflats, vegetated shallows, and sanctuaries and refuges as defined in 40 CFR Part 230.40-45. The regional condition would require applicants to submit an application for a Standard Individual Permit subject to authorization under section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, section 103 of the Marine Protection, Resource and Sanctuaries Act, and/or section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Special aquatic sites in the desert regions of the Los Angeles District support substantial aquatic resources that exhibit relatively high physical and biological functions. Furthermore, these aquatic areas can provide important and unique habitat for endangered species, neotropical migratory birds, and other indigenous wildlife. Past construction activities in and adjacent to these special aquatic sites have degraded portions of these high value systems. Regional Condition 2 would ensure compliance with the 404(b)(1) guidelines and evaluation and mitigation, if warranted, of activities that may have an adverse effect on special aquatic sites in the otherwise arid regions of the Los Angeles District.

In the Los Angeles District, the semi-arid climate limits the extent and number of special aquatic sites. This scarcity of special aquatic sites is especially evident in Arizona and in the desert regions of California. In these areas, annual precipitation is usually below 10 inches, which precludes the development of wetlands in the majority of these desert regions. Furthermore, approximately 90 percent of wetlands in California have been affected by historic conversion to agricultural uses, grading, and filling activities. As a result, wetland areas are rare in the Los Angeles District and warrant more rigorous protection. Regional Condition 2 would serve to better protect special aquatic sites in desert regions of the Los Angeles District by requiring the additional scrutiny inherent in the Standard Individual Permit (SIP) process for most permanent discharges of dredged or fill material in these areas. The permit applicant would have to perform a 404(b)(1) alternatives analysis that would include careful examination of the purpose and need for the project and alternatives that avoid or reduce impacts to special aquatic sites. Regional Condition 2 would help ensure that discharges of dredged or fill material that would otherwise be

authorized by NWP's would have minimal impacts, both individually cumulatively, to special aquatic sites in the Los Angeles District.

This regional condition has been amended from that included with the 2007 NWP's (Regional Condition 4) to clarify the definition of *desert regions of California* to include specific watersheds as defined by USGS Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) accounting units. These include Lower Colorado (150301), Northern Mojave (180902), Southern Mojave (181001) and Salton Sea (181002). In addition, coral reefs and sanctuaries and refuges were removed from the list of special aquatic sites for which this regional condition would apply. Coral reefs were removed as they do not exist within the subject geographic area. Sanctuaries and refuges were removed as there are circumstances where a predominantly upland sanctuary or refuge may contain aquatic resources that exhibit relatively low physical and biological functions (such as a disturbed ephemeral drainage) yet nevertheless would be considered a special aquatic site. In those cases, mandatory notification (per regional condition 4a) would be sufficient to ensure a given project would have no more than minimal impacts by ensuring Corps review.

For additional information please see the supplemental decision document for Regional Condition 2.

3.1.2 Jurisdictional Vernal Pools (Regional Condition 5)

Reason for Exclusion: This regional condition would require any project proposing to discharge dredged or fill material into a jurisdictional vernal pool to be reviewed under the standard individual permit (SIP) process, which requires a more rigorous alternatives review. This regional condition has been amended from the 2007 version to include an exception for discharges associated with restoration, enhancement, management, or scientific study activities that qualify for NWP's 5, 6, and 27. NWP's 5 and 6 authorize temporary activities and structures that could be used to further the understanding of vernal pool functions and services or for monitoring the effectiveness of enhancement, restoration, and establishment projects. NWP 27 authorizes only activities that result in net increases in aquatic resource functions and services. Per this regional condition, authorization under other NWP's cannot be considered and a PCN must be submitted in accordance with General Condition 31 and Regional Condition 3. In discussions with local land managers, Regional Condition 5 has increased project costs and timelines in order to obtain an SIP for voluntary restoration and enhancement projects. This has also limited their ability to compete for grant and other public funding with restrictions on costs and timelines. Therefore, the Los Angeles District believes that by allowing the use of these three NWP's, the scientific community and open space land managers would benefit from the streamlined process and there may ultimately be a net increase in functions and services in vernal pool ecosystems through the implementation of restoration, enhancement, and management activities.

The Los Angeles District Regulatory Branch previously determined that the 0.5-acre SIP threshold for vernal pool impacts (established by the District in 1997) would not adequately protect remaining vernal pool resources in the region. It is estimated that 95 to more than 97 percent of the vernal pools that historically existed in the region have been lost through

urbanization or agricultural practices (USFWS 1998); in some counties the loss is virtually total. Under the new and modified NWP, a single and complete project could impact up to 0.5 acre of vernal pool habitat and be considered for NWP authorization. The District had previously been using a 0.5-acre SIP threshold for vernal pool impacts since 25 November 1997 (previous District Regional Condition 1). Despite the establishment of this earlier regional condition, the District experienced additional losses of vernal pool habitat, requiring the establishment of Regional Condition 5 as part of the 2000, 2002 and 2007 NWP Programs. Within the boundaries of the Los Angeles District, the sizes of jurisdictional vernal pools generally range from approximately 200 to 4,900 square feet (e.g. 0.00459 to 0.11248 acre). Therefore, 0.5 acre of vernal pools could include a large vernal pool complex or individual pools made up of 5 to 100 pools. Compounding this situation, mitigation for vernal pool impacts is not well developed, and often takes the form of preservation and enhancement of remaining pools, resulting in a continued net loss of vernal pool acreage, functions and services. The SIP review process includes an analysis of the propriety of the proposed fill in a special aquatic site pursuant to the 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

Vernal pools in the region comprise a severely diminished class of aquatic habitats and are fragile, easily disturbed ecosystems. Due to the decline of vernal pool habitat in the region, the District determined future impacts to vernal pools in the region would result in more than minimal adverse environmental effects both individually and cumulatively. With the proposed regional condition, any quantity of dredged or fill material discharged into a jurisdictional vernal pool that is not temporary in accordance with NWP 5 or 6 or does not result in a net increase in aquatic resources functions and services in accordance with NWP 27 would be subject to an SIP review. By requiring an SIP, the remaining jurisdictional vernal pools in the region would be afforded the maximum level of protection under the Regulatory Program which includes a 404(b)(1) analysis (i.e., under this more rigorous process, the Corps can only authorize the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative for a given project).

With the modification of Regional Condition 5, the District recognizes certain regulated activities involving restoration, enhancement, management, and scientific study of vernal pools would not contribute to the overall loss of vernal pool habitat and in such cases (with few exceptions) SIP review would not provide any additional protection or benefit to vernal pools. Therefore, this regional condition has been modified since the 2007 NWPs to include language excluding these four categories of activities from this requirement. If the success of a proposed restoration or enhancement activity is uncertain, or the subject vernal pool is of particularly high ecological value, the District would still retain the ability to review any such action as an SIP through our discretionary authority. In addition, the Corps has determined that issuance of Regional Condition 5 would not be contrary to the public interest. Overall, the implementation of Regional Condition 5, which requires an SIP for discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools (with the exception of activities associated with the restoration, enhancement, management or scientific study), would provide additional assurances that the activities permitted under the NWPs would result in minimal impacts on both an individual and cumulative basis in the Los Angeles District.

For additional information please see the supplemental decision document for Regional Condition 5.

3.1.3 San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMPs (Regional Condition 8).

Reason for Exclusion: Regional Condition 8 would exclude the use of selected NWP authorizations within all jurisdictional waters of the San Diego Creek, San Juan Creek, and western San Mateo Creek and their tributaries within three watersheds. This decision to revoke selected NWPs was made in accordance with two Special Area Management Plans (SAMPs) the Corps conducted in Orange County, and pursuant to the South Pacific Division (SPD) Commander's authority at 33 C.F.R. § 330.5(c).

Concurrent with establishing watershed-specific permitting frameworks, the following 24 NWPs are being revoked for use in these watersheds covered by the two SAMPs in Orange County: 03, 07, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, and 50. The remaining 26 NWPs would be retained for use in the watersheds covered by the two SAMPs in Orange County: 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 08, 09, 10, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 48, 51 and 52.

The decision to revoke selected NWPs within these SAMP Watersheds involved establishing alternative permitting procedures determined to be more appropriate for the given aquatic resources in the watersheds, and promoting long-term aquatic resource conservation. This exclusion would require any project that involved a regulated activity within these particular watersheds to receive the level of permit review and evaluation in consideration of the applicable SAMP framework.

Specifically, the San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek Watersheds SAMP incorporated alternative permitting procedures consisting of the establishment of a Regional General Permit (RGP) 74 for maintenance activities for use outside the targeted aquatic resource conservation areas, new LOP procedures, and a long-term Standard Individual Permit (SIP) and LOP procedures for the SAMP participants. Similarly, the San Diego Creek Watershed SAMP incorporated alternative permitting procedures consisting of new LOP procedures and RGP 74. Regulated activities ineligible for retained NWPs or the SAMPs' alternative permitting procedures would be reviewed under the SIP process, which would include a 404(b)(1) alternatives analysis.

The Corps conducted extensive analyses in its environmental impact statement (EIS) for the San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek Watersheds SAMP and its joint EIS/environmental impact report (EIR) with the California Department of Fish and Game Habitat Conservation Branch, South Coast Region for the San Diego Creek Watershed SAMP/Watershed Streambed Alteration Agreement (WSAA) Process. The final decision to revoke selected NWPs was made by the SPD Commander in his record of decision signed July 19, 2010.

For additional information please see the supplemental decision document for Regional Condition 8.

3.2 Waters subjected to additional pre-construction notification requirements

All Waters are subjected to the same pre-construction notification requirements under NWP 44. A pre-construction notification is required for all actions in all Waters, therefore this section and regional condition that impose additional pre-construction notification requirement, do not apply.

4.0 Alternatives

4.1 No Regional Conditions

Without regional conditions requiring pre-construction notification in the Santa Monica Mountains watersheds and Santa Clara River watershed, perennial waters and special aquatic sites in desert areas, and essential fish habitat (EFH), there could be more than minimal impacts to waters of the U.S. that exhibit both high physical and biological functions, as well as contributing to substantial cumulative impacts in some portions of these areas. In the case of NWP 44, however, submittal of a pre-construction notification to the district engineer is always required prior to commencing activity; so the specific regional condition pre-construction notification requirements simply provide additional assurances that mandatory notification to the district engineer occurs before regulated mining activities occur. With no regional conditions, such as Regional Condition 5, NWP 44 would have more than minimal impacts on jurisdictional vernal pools in the Los Angeles District. Historically, there has been a 95 to more than 99 percent loss of vernal pool habitat in the southern California area. Further losses would have more than minimal impacts on the aquatic environment, both individually and cumulatively. Similarly, additional losses of special aquatic sites in the State of Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California would have more than minimal adverse effect on these resources, which is the basis for Regional Condition 2's exclusion of using several NWPs, including NWP 44, in these areas. Therefore, the "No Regional Conditions" alternative has been eliminated from further consideration.

4.2 Alternative Regional Limits or Pre-Construction Notification Thresholds

The pre-construction threshold for NWP 44 is the national requirement that all project proponents must submit a pre-construction notification. The Los Angeles District has no discretion to reduce this requirement or threshold and since all project proponents must submit a pre-construction notification there is no way to increase the notification requirement. To further ensure NWP 44 would have minimal impacts to aquatic resources, both individually and cumulatively, the Los Angeles District could prohibit the use of NWP 44 in all special aquatic sites in the Los Angeles District. The loss of approximately 90 percent of wetland resources in southern California and the general scarcity of special aquatic sites in this semi-arid region indicates there could be a need for the review of any project that would discharge dredged or fill material in a special aquatic site under the 404(b)(1) Guidelines and the public interest factors to ensure no adverse impacts to special aquatic sites.

However, as notification is always required for NWP 44, and the District Engineer has the ability to assert discretionary authority to require an individual permit in areas with high value aquatic resources including special aquatic sites. When considering the inclusion of the constraints on NWP 44 from the General Conditions, a regional condition that precluded all discharges in special aquatic sites would unnecessarily increase our workload to review small-scale, temporary impacts. As a result, this proposed modification would not be practicable and would result in relatively minor environmental benefits to the aquatic ecosystem.

4.3 Alternative Regional Nationwide Permit Conditions

The Los Angeles District will apply 10 regional conditions to ensure that all project impacts authorized under NWP 44 are individually and cumulatively minor. These 10 regional conditions will either prohibit the use of NWP 44 in certain waters of the United States or will increase notification procedures to ensure that no project with minor impacts is authorized under NWP 44.

To further ensure NWP 44 would have minimal impacts to aquatic resources, both individually and cumulatively, the Los Angeles District could require agency coordination prior to issuing any NWP 44 verification to solicit comments from other resource agencies such as EPA, USFWS, and NMFS. Requiring notification to the Los Angeles District and resource agencies for all projects authorized under NWP 44 could substantially increase the workload for the Los Angeles District without any commensurate benefits to aquatic resources, particularly in light of the fact that agency coordination would be required for any NWP 44 project that proposes to impact greater than 300 linear feet of intermittent or ephemeral streambed. As a result, the Los Angeles District has determined the above alternative notification requirement would not be practicable and would result in only minor additional benefits to aquatic resources. With the pre-construction notification requirements and the proposed regional conditions, the Los Angeles District would ensure that NWP 44 has minimal impacts on both sensitive resources and watersheds without a resulting in a substantial increase in workload or an unnecessary imposition on the regulated public.

5.0 Endangered Species Act

5.1 General Considerations

NWP 44 requires that all project proponents submit a pre-construction notification to the Los Angeles District prior to beginning any work. Therefore, for all work authorized under this nationwide permit the Corps of Engineers will be able to review the pre-construction information and ensure that all Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements are satisfied. General condition 18 explains the procedures that will be followed to ensure that any work authorized under NWP 44 is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

In southern California, the large number of listed species has made the public more aware of the need to contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries

Service (NMFS) for many proposed projects. In addition, General Condition 18 requires the applicant to contact the Corps if their proposed project may affect a threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. The Los Angeles District has substantial information, including maps, previous studies and survey data that document areas that support endangered species. The Los Angeles District is also very careful to inform all prospective applicants of the need to comply with the ESA. If the Los Angeles District has no available data for a proposed project, the applicant may be referred to the USFWS or NMFS for additional information. When the Los Angeles District receives an application within the range of a listed species and/or the project area otherwise supports suitable habitat, the USFWS or NMFS is contacted early in the review process. To facilitate compliance with the ESA, the Los Angeles District has coordinated with the USFWS to complete programmatic consultations for several threatened and endangered species in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties.

5.2 Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species

Standard local operating procedures for endangered species (SLOPES) formalize additional procedures between agencies to enable the agencies to ensure better compliance with the ESA. With the implementation of SLOPES, these procedures could be formally documented, facilitating the compliance the NWP's with the ESA. It is anticipated there will be many situations that will not be addressed by SLOPES and a case-by-case determination will be made regarding consultation with the USFWS or NMFS pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA. In January 2003, the Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, Regulatory Branch and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Office finalized SLOPES for informal and formal ESA consultations. In addition, some the activities authorized by the NWP's that may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat have been addressed by the General Concurrence dated August 5, 2003 and a Programmatic Consultation that was completed by the Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, Regulatory Branch and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

6.0 National Historic Preservation Act

6.1 General Considerations

The Los Angeles District would ensure that activities authorized by NWP 14 would comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The District would review the latest version of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) to make an effect determination that activities verified under NWP 14 would have on Historic Properties. Once an effects determination has been made the District will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), recognized Tribes, and, if necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as appropriate. The District has considered the requirement of pre-construction notification for NWP activities in geographic areas of high site potential, or known locations of cultural resources including prehistoric sites, historic sites, tribal lands, traditional cultural properties, state landmarks or National Historic Landmarks. In areas where there is a high likelihood of cultural resources within the Corps' area of potential effect (APE), the district engineer may: (1) consult with SHPO, THPO, or Tribes during the NWP review process or (2) the district engineer may assert its discretionary authority to require an

individual permit for the proposed activity and initiate consultation through the individual permit process. Option 2 would only be used if there is value added that compensates for the increase in workload due to processing more SIPs. If the consultation would be conducted under the NWP process without the district asserting discretionary authority to require an SIP, then the applicant would be notified that the activity could not be verified under the NWP until all Section 106 requirements have been satisfied.

6.2 Local Operating Procedures for National Historic Preservation Act

The district engineer would ensure that NWP 14 complies with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulation 36 C.F.R. Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties (amended August 5, 2004), and Appendix C (33 U.S.C. 325): Procedures of Historic Properties. Under section 106, federal agencies are prohibited from approving any federal “undertaking” (e.g., the issuance of any license, permit, or approval) without taking into account the effects of the undertaking on the historic properties, and affording the ACHP a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking. In order to comply with section 106, the Corps, if evaluating an undertaking, must go through the process outlined in the ACHP’s regulations at 36 C.F.R. Part 800 and Appendix C. Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.4, 800.5, and 800.6, the Los Angeles District is required to consult with the SHPO, or tribal equivalent, THPO, if the undertaking would result in a “No Effect”, “No Adverse Effect”, or “Adverse Effect” to Historic Properties. The district engineer must (a) determine the permit area/APE; (b) identify historic properties within the permit area/APE; and (c) determine whether those properties are listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP. If the district engineer determines that NWP 14 would have no potential to cause effects to Historic Properties a memorandum for the record would be prepared and no further consultation with the SHPO/THPO or recognized tribes would need to occur.

7.0 Government-to-Government Consultation with Indian Tribes

7.1 Summary of the Consultation Process

Prior to the issuance of the Los Angeles District’s public notice announcing the proposed rule for the 2012 NWPs and our proposed regional conditions, all federally recognized tribes within LAD were contacted via letter dated December 13, 2010 to provide advance notification of the Corps’ intent to issue the 2012 NWPs and upcoming opportunity to engage in government-to-government consultation. Follow-up letters were sent to the same set of federally recognized tribes February 11, 2011 announcing the issuance of the proposed rule and formally requesting government-to-government consultation. An advance copy of the proposed rule was also included. One tribe provided a response, indicating they did not foresee a need to utilize the NWPs. No requests for government-to-government consultation were received.

7.2 Local Operating Procedures for Protecting Tribal Resources

The Los Angeles District will avoid or minimize adverse effects to tribal lands, historic properties, sacred sites, or trust resources. This may involve identifying categories of activities

that require a PCN and/or conducting consultation with Tribes for specific activities in a particular geographic area. If coordination with recognized tribes is required the District Engineer will obtain a list of recognized tribes from the Native American Heritage Commission. From that list provided the District Engineer will initiate a 30-day coordination period to obtain comments on the project. The District Engineer will review comments and address as appropriate.

8.0 Essential Fish Habitat

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act, Federal agencies are required to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for actions that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH). The marine and estuarine waters within the Los Angeles District contain designated EFH, which are administered by four fishery management plans (FMP): the Pacific Groundfish FMP, the Coastal Pelagic Species FMP, the Highly Migratory Species FMP and the Pacific Coast Salmon FMP, all of which occur within tidally influenced waters. As the terms and conditions of NWP 44 do not authorize its use within tidally influenced waters, its implementation would have no effect on EFH in the Los Angeles District.

9.0 Supplement to National Impact Analysis

9.1 Public interest review factors (33 CFR 320.4(a)(1))

In addition to the discussion in the national decision document for this NWP, the Los Angeles District has considered the local impacts expected to result from the activities authorized by this NWP, including the reasonably foreseeable cumulative effects of those activities.

(a) Conservation: NWP 44 would authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Pre-construction notification would be required for all projects authorized by NWP 44, allowing the district engineer to require the more rigorous SIP review process if aquatic ecosystem impacts would be more than minimal, individually or cumulatively. The general conditions, such as General Condition 22 (Designated Critical Resource Waters) would provide further limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. Due to the above constraints, NWP 44 would result in minimal impacts to conservation, both individually and cumulatively, in the majority of the Los Angeles District.

Regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools, the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and discharges resulting in a loss of most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. With the above exclusions of using NWP 44 along with the road crossing design requirements to protect federally listed fish species, and the various requirements and limitations imposed by NWP 44 and the general conditions, conservation impacts associated with NWP 44 are expected to be minimal, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(b) Economics: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(c) Aesthetics: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(d) General environmental concerns: In the Los Angeles District, numerous threatened or endangered species require extensive coordination with USFWS and NMFS. The semi-arid environment limits the extent of aquatic resources in the southern California/Arizona area. Regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools throughout the LAD, in the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and discharges resulting in a loss of most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. With the exclusions of using NWP 44 to discharge dredged or fill material in vernal pools throughout the LAD and in special aquatic sites in the State of Arizona and desert regions of southern California and the various requirements and limitations imposed by NWP 44 and the general conditions, general environmental concerns associated with NWP 44 are expected to be minimal, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(e) Wetlands: In the Los Angeles District, the semi-arid climate limits the extent and number of wetland resources. This scarcity of wetlands is especially evident in Arizona and in the desert regions of California. In these areas, annual precipitation is usually below 10 inches, which often precludes the development of wetlands. As a result, special aquatic sites, such as wetlands, are relatively rare in the Los Angeles District and warrant more substantial protection. To ensure minimal impacts to wetland resources, the Los Angeles District would require pre-construction notification for any activity discharging dredged or fill material in any special aquatic site, including wetlands. In the case of NWP 44, which requires pre-construction notification to the district engineer for every proposed use, this would simply provide additional assurance that the district engineer is notified prior to commencing activities. Notification would give the district engineer the opportunity to evaluate each proposal to determine whether it would have more than minimal adverse effect on wetlands, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. In addition, the Los Angeles District would preclude the use of NWP 44, in most types of special aquatic sites, including wetlands, within the State of Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions in California. Moreover, all discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools would have to be evaluated under the more rigorous SIP process. With the pre-construction notification requirements and requirements and limits imposed by the general and regional conditions and NWP 44 itself, NWP 44 would have no more than minimal adverse effects to wetlands, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(f) Historic properties: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(g) Fish and wildlife values: NWP 44 would only authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Pre-construction notification would be required for all projects authorized by NWP 44. In addition, the general conditions, such as General Condition 22 (Designated Critical Resource Waters), would provide further limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. Due to the above constraints, NWP 44 would result in minimal impacts to fish and wildlife values, both individually and

cumulatively, in the majority of the Los Angeles District.

Regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools throughout the Los Angeles District, in the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and discharges resulting in a loss of most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. With the above-listed exclusions of NWP 44 and the requirements and limitations imposed by the general conditions and NWP 44 itself, it is expected that NWP 44 would not have more than minimal adverse effect on fish and wildlife values, individually or cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(h) Flood hazards: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(i) Floodplain values: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(j) Land use: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(k) Navigation: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(l) Shore erosion and accretion: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(m) Recreation: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(n) Water supply and conservation: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(o) Water quality: In the heavily populated areas of southern California and Arizona, existing water quality in most rivers is impaired by runoff from upland agricultural, residential, and industrial sources. NWP 44 would only authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Pre-construction notification would be required for all projects authorized by NWP 44. Furthermore, the general conditions, such as General Condition 22 (Designated Critical Resource Waters), would provide limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. Due to the above constraints, NWP 44 would result in minimal adverse impacts to water quality, both individually and cumulatively, in the majority of the Los Angeles District.

Regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools, in the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and discharges resulting in a loss of most special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. In addition, the required 401 water quality certification would address short-term and long-term minimal impacts to water quality of the aquatic resources in the Los Angeles District. With the exclusions of NWP 44 for discharges of dredged or fill material as described above and the requirements and limitations imposed by the general conditions (including obtaining a 401 water quality certification) and NWP 44 itself, it is expected that NWP 44 would not have more than minimal adverse effect on

water quality, individually or cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(p) Energy needs: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(q) Safety: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(r) Food and fiber production: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(s) Mineral needs: NWP 44 provides a stream-lined process for mineral extraction involving smaller-scale impacts to waters of the U.S., allowing miners to operate without going through the lengthier SIP review process. The terms and conditions of NWP 44 provide adequate protection for the aquatic environment, while allowing some mining operations to proceed with a relatively short review time. NWP 44 could have beneficial effects on the mineral needs of certain areas by allowing projects with minimal impacts on the aquatic ecosystem to proceed in a comparably short period of time.

(t) Considerations of property ownership: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

9.2 National Environmental Policy Act Cumulative Effects Analysis (40 CFR 1508.7)

Please see the attached supplemental analysis (Section I), and the 404(b)(1) guidelines cumulative effects analysis (Section 9.4), below.

9.3 Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines Impact Analysis (Subparts C-F)

(a) Substrate: With NWP 44, there would be short-term adverse impacts to channel substrate in the immediate vicinity of the mining activities. NWP 44 would authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Notification is required for all projects authorized by NWP 44. Furthermore, the General Conditions have additional limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. Due to the above constraints, NWP 44 would result in minimal adverse impacts to substrate, both individually and cumulatively, in the majority of the Los Angeles District.

With no regional conditions for NWP 44, there could be more than minimal impacts in specific geographic areas and certain habitat types that exhibit relatively high physical and biological functions. The regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools throughout the Los Angeles District, in the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and discharges resulting in a loss of most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. With these exclusions and the requirements and limitations of the general and regional conditions and NWP 44 itself, NWP 44 would not be expected to have more than minimal adverse effects on substrate in the Los Angeles District.

(b) Suspended particulates/turbidity: In heavily populated areas of southern California and Arizona, existing turbidity levels in most rivers has been exacerbated by runoff from upland agricultural, residential, and industrial sources. Short-term construction activities often augment turbidity levels in waters of the U.S. However, these activities would generally only result in short-term minor changes in turbidity levels. NWP 44 would only authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Pre-construction notification would be required for all projects authorized by NWP 44, which would allow the district engineer to determine whether water quality impacts would be more than minimal, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. Furthermore, the general conditions have additional limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. General Condition 25 requires that projects resulting in a Section 404 discharge obtain a Section 401 water quality certification or waiver from the responsible agency. General Condition 12 requires permittees to stabilize exposed soil and other fills, which would reduce turbidity. Due to the above requirements, it is expected that NWP 44 would have no more than minimal adverse effect on turbidity levels, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(c) Water: Same as discussed in the national document.

(d) Current patterns and water circulation: Mining activities often occur directly within a particular watercourse. This can have direct and tangible effects on stream hydraulics by altering the geomorphology of the stream. General Condition 9 would require that projects be designed to withstand high flows and to protect the course, condition, capacity, and location of open waters to the maximum extent practicable. General Condition 10 would require projects to comply with FEMA-approved local or state floodplain management plans, which would reduce adverse effects to surface flows. General Condition 22 would prohibit the use of NWP 44 within or in areas affecting designated critical resource waters. Furthermore, pre-construction notification would be required for all uses of NWP 44, which would provide the district engineer the opportunity to determine whether a given use would have more than minimal adverse effect, individually or cumulatively, on aquatic resources in the Los Angeles District. With the requirements and limitations imposed by the general and regional conditions, it is expected that NWP 44 would have no more than a minimal adverse effect on current patterns and water circulation, individually or cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(e) Normal water level fluctuations: Same as discussed in the national document.

(f) Salinity gradients: Same as discussed in the national document.

(g) Threatened and endangered species: NWP 44 would only authorize discharges of dredged or fill material into a maximum of 0.5 acre of non-tidal waters of the U.S., excluding non-tidal wetlands adjacent to tidal waters and no more than 300 linear feet of streambed. Pre-construction notification would be required for all projects authorized by NWP 44. Furthermore, the general conditions would impose additional limitations on the use of NWP 44 in waters of the U.S. With the above requirements and constraints, NWP 44 would result in minimal adverse

impacts to threatened and endangered species, both individually and cumulatively, in the majority of the Los Angeles District.

With no regional conditions for NWP 44, there could be more than minimal impacts in specific geographic areas and certain habitat types that exhibit relatively high physical and biological functions, which may in turn support federally listed threatened and endangered species. The regional conditions for NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools in the Los Angeles District, in the San Diego Creek and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek SAMP areas, and in most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. In addition, given the large number of listed species in Los Angeles District, continued coordination with USFWS and NMFS is required to ensure minimal impacts to threatened and endangered species. With the continuation of the existing coordination procedures, the development and implementation of Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species (SLOPES), and the inclusion of pre-construction notification requirements and various constraints, the use of NWP 44 would have minimal impacts, both individually and cumulatively, to threatened and endangered species in the Los Angeles District.

(h) Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, and other aquatic organisms in the food web: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(i) Other wildlife: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(j) Special aquatic sites: The potential impacts to specific special aquatic sites are discussed below:

(1) Sanctuaries and refuges: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(2) Wetlands: In the Los Angeles District, the semi-arid climate limits the extent and number of wetland resources. This scarcity of wetlands is especially evident in Arizona and in the desert regions of California. In these areas, annual precipitation is usually below 10 inches, which precludes the development of wetlands in the majority of these desert regions. Furthermore, approximately 90 percent of wetlands in California have been affected by historic conversion to agricultural uses, grading, and filling activities. As a result, wetland areas are rare in the Los Angeles District and warrant more rigorous protection. To ensure minimal impacts to wetland resources, the Los Angeles District would require pre-construction notification for any activity discharging dredged or fill material in any special aquatic site, including wetlands. This is in addition to the mandatory pre-construction notification requirement for all uses of NWP 44. Pre-construction notification would allow the district engineer to determine whether adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem would be more than minimal, individually or cumulatively, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. In most cases, the district engineer would require compensatory mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts. The regional conditions with respect to NWP 44 would preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in jurisdictional vernal

pools (a type of wetland) throughout the Los Angeles District and in most types of special aquatic sites, including all wetlands, in Arizona and the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. Based on a review of permit actions over the previous three years, NWP 44 was used only once, with no corresponding impacts to wetlands. With the pre-construction notification requirements and various constraints imposed by the general and regional conditions, NWP 44 would not be expected to have more than minimal adverse effects on wetlands, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(3) Mud flats: In the Los Angeles District, historic coastal development activities have greatly reduced the extent and number of mudflat resources. Approximately 90 percent of wetlands, including coastal wetlands and mud flats, in California have been affected by historic conversion to agricultural uses, grading, and filling activities. As a result, mud flats are especially rare in the Los Angeles District and warrant more rigorous protection. To ensure minimal impacts to mudflats, the Los Angeles District would preclude use of NWP 44 in any special aquatic site, including mud flats, in the State of Arizona and desert regions of California. In addition, the Los Angeles District would require notification for any discharge of dredged or fill material in essential fish habitat, such as within coastal estuaries. This is in addition to the mandatory pre-construction notification requirement for all uses of NWP 44. Pre-construction notification would allow the district engineer to determine whether adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem would be more than minimal, individually or cumulatively, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. In most cases, the district engineer would require compensatory mitigation for unavoidable mud flat impacts. With the limitations and pre-construction notification requirements and various constraints imposed by the general and regional conditions, NWP 44 would not be expected to have more than minimal adverse effects on mud flats in the Los Angeles District, both individually and cumulatively.

(4) Vegetated shallows: In the Los Angeles District, historic agricultural and construction activities have reduced the extent and number of vegetated shallows. Approximately 90 percent of wetlands in California, including some vegetated shallows, have been affected by historic conversion to agricultural uses, grading, and filling activities, such as marina construction. As a result, vegetated shallows are especially rare in the Los Angeles District and warrant more rigorous protection. To ensure minimal impacts to mudflats, the Los Angeles District would preclude use of NWP 44 in any special aquatic site, including vegetated shallows, in the State of Arizona and desert regions of California. This is in addition to the mandatory pre-construction notification requirement for all uses of NWP 44. Pre-construction notification would allow the district engineer to determine whether adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem would be more than minimal, individually or cumulatively, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. In most cases, the district engineer would require compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to vegetated shallows. With the pre-construction notification requirements and various constraints imposed by the general and regional conditions, NWP 44 would not be expected to have more than

minimal impacts on vegetated shallows, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(5) Coral reefs: There are no coral reefs as defined at 40 CFR Part 230.40-45 within the geographical areas administered by the Los Angeles District. Therefore, activities authorized under NWP 44 would have no effect on any coral reefs.

(6) Riffle and pool complexes:

In the semi-arid southern California and Arizona areas, limited water resources and the need for flood control have led to the construction of numerous dams in the mountains of southern California and Arizona, and on the Colorado River. With the construction of these large dams, many riffle-and-pool complexes have been eliminated by the large reservoirs. Furthermore, construction of the dams also modifies the hydrologic regime of the river, which can also degrade downstream riffle-and-pool complexes. As a result, riffle-and-pool complexes in the Los Angeles District are essentially confined to montane and foothill regions. They warrant more rigorous protection due to their relatively high production of invertebrate fauna and other contributions to riparian aquatic resources such as aeration of the water, provision of substrate for decomposers, and other factors.

To ensure minimal impacts to riffle-and-pool complexes, the Los Angeles District would require pre-construction notification for any activity discharging dredged or fill material in any special aquatic site, including riffle-and-pool complexes. This is in addition to the mandatory pre-construction notification requirement for all uses of NWP 44. Pre-construction notification would allow the district engineer to determine whether adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem would be more than minimal, individually or cumulatively, and if so, take discretionary authority and require the more rigorous SIP review process. In most cases, the district engineer would require compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to riffle-and-pool complexes. In addition, a regional condition for NWP 44 would also preclude discharges of dredged or fill material in most types of special aquatic sites in Arizona and the desert regions of California, which would include riffle-and-pool complexes in these areas. With the pre-construction notification requirements and various constraints imposed by the general and regional conditions, NWP 44 would not be expected to have more than minimal impacts on riffle-and-pool complexes, both individually and cumulatively, in the Los Angeles District.

(k) Municipal and private water supplies: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(l) Recreational and commercial fisheries: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(m) Water-related recreation: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(n) Aesthetics: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

(o) Parks, national and historical monuments, national seashores, wilderness areas, research sites, and similar areas: Same as discussed in the national decision document.

9.4 Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines Cumulative Effects Analysis (40 CFR 230.7(b)(3))

The cumulative effects of this NWP on the aquatic environment are dependent upon the number of times the NWP is used and the quantity and quality of waters of the United States lost due to the activities authorized by this NWP. Impacts to aquatic resources authorized by the Los Angeles District's permit actions are tracked using the ORM (OMBIL Regulatory Module) database. This includes both temporary and permanent impacts, as well as any compensatory mitigation required. Impact and mitigation data was collected for the period of Fiscal Year 2009 through 2011 to provide a reasonable basis to examine the cumulative effects of each NWP as well as the NWP Program as a whole within the Los Angeles District.

Based on an analysis of the types of activities authorized by the Los Angeles District during previous three years, the Los Angeles District issued one NWP 44 verification during that time, which authorized 0.24 acre of temporary impact and 0.02 acre of permanent impact to non-wetland waters. It is therefore difficult to estimate the impacts of this NWP based on such a limited use, however it is expected NWP 44 will continue to be used less than one time per year, resulting negligible individual and cumulative impacts to waters of the United States on an annual basis. Generally, compensatory mitigation would not be required to offset the temporary impacts. However, mitigation will be considered based on the aquatic resources impacted and compensatory mitigation will be required to offset the authorized losses of waters of the United States and ensure that the NWP authorizes only activities with minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

10.0 List of Final Corps Regional Conditions for NWP 44

10.1 Regional condition 1

For all activities in waters of the U.S. that are suitable habitat for federally-listed fish species, the permittee shall design all road crossings to ensure that the passage and/or spawning of fish is not hindered. In these areas, the permittee shall employ bridge designs that span the stream or river, including pier- or pile-supported spans, or designs that use a bottomless arch culvert with a natural stream bed, unless determined to be impracticable by the Corps.

10.2 Regional condition 2

Nationwide Permits (NWP) 3, 7, 12-15, 17-19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 35, 36, or 39-46, 48-52 cannot be used to authorize structures, work, and/or the discharge of dredged or fill material that would result in the "loss" of wetlands, mudflats, vegetated shallows or riffle and pool complexes as defined at 40 CFR Part 230.40-45. The definition of "loss" for this regional condition is the same as the definition of "loss of waters of the United States" used for the Nationwide Permit Program. Furthermore, this regional condition applies only within the State of Arizona and within the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert regions of California. The desert regions in California are limited to four USGS Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) accounting units (Lower Colorado -150301, Northern Mojave-180902, Southern Mojave-181001, and Salton Sea-181002).

10.3 Regional condition 3

When a pre-construction notification (PCN) is required, the appropriate U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) District shall be notified in accordance with General Condition 31 using either the South Pacific Division PCN Checklist or a signed application form (ENG Form 4345) with an attachment providing information on compliance with all of the General and Regional Conditions. The PCN Checklist and application form are available at: <http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/regulatory>. In addition, the PCN shall include:

- a. A written statement describing how the activity has been designed to avoid and minimize adverse effects, both temporary and permanent, to waters of the United States;
- b. Drawings, including plan and cross-section views, clearly depicting the location, size and dimensions of the proposed activity as well as the location of delineated waters of the U.S. on the project site. The drawings shall contain a title block, legend and scale, amount (in cubic yards) and area (in acres) of fill in Corps jurisdiction, including both permanent and temporary fills/structures. The ordinary high water mark or, if tidal waters, the mean high water mark and high tide line, should be shown (in feet), based on National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) or other appropriate referenced elevation. All drawings for projects located within the boundaries of the Los Angeles District shall comply with the most current version of the *Map and Drawing Standards for the Los Angeles District Regulatory Division* (available on the Los Angeles District Regulatory Division website at: www.spl.usace.army.mil/regulatory/); and
- c. Numbered and dated pre-project color photographs showing all waters proposed to be impacted on the project site. The compass angle and position of each photograph shall be documented on the plan-view drawing required in subpart b of this regional condition.

10.4 Regional condition 5

Individual Permits shall be required for all discharges of fill material in jurisdictional vernal pools, with the exception that discharges for the purpose of restoration, enhancement, management or scientific study of vernal pools may be authorized under NWPs 5, 6, and 27 with the submission of a PCN in accordance with General Condition 31 and Regional Condition 3.

10.5 Regional condition 8

In conjunction with the Los Angeles District's Special Area Management Plans (SAMPs) for the San Diego Creek Watershed and San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek Watersheds in Orange County, California, the Corps' Division Engineer, through his discretionary authority has revoked the use of the following 24 selected NWPs within these SAMP watersheds: 03, 07, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49 and 50. Consequently, these NWPs are no longer available in those watersheds to authorize impacts to waters of the United States from discharges of dredged or fill material under the Corps' Clean Water Act section 404 authority.

10.6 Regional condition 9

Any requests to waive the 300 linear foot limitation for intermittent and ephemeral streams for NWP 29, 39, 40 and 42, 43, 44, 51 and 52 or to waive the 500 linear foot limitation along the bank for NWP 13, must include the following:

- a. A narrative description of the stream. This should include known information on: volume and duration of flow; the approximate length, width, and depth of the waterbody and characters observed associated with an Ordinary High Water Mark (e.g. bed and bank, wrack line, or scour marks); a description of the adjacent vegetation community and a statement regarding the wetland status of the associated vegetation community (i.e. wetland, non-wetland); surrounding land use; water quality; issues related to cumulative impacts in the watershed, and; any other relevant information.
- b. An analysis of the proposed impacts to the waterbody in accordance with General Condition 31 and Regional Condition 3;
- c. Measures taken to avoid and minimize losses, including other methods of constructing the proposed project; and
- d. A compensatory mitigation plan describing how the unavoidable losses are proposed to be compensated, in accordance with 33 CFR Part 332.

10.7 Regional condition 10

Any compensatory mitigation required by special conditions of the NWP verification shall be completed before or concurrent with commencement of construction of the authorized activity, except when specifically determined to be impracticable by the Corps. When mitigation involves use of a mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program, proof of payment shall be submitted to the appropriate Corps district prior to commencement of construction of the authorized activity.

11.0 Water Quality Certification and Coastal Zone Management Act consistency determinations

Pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), tribal or state Water Quality Certification, or waiver thereof, is required for activities authorized by NWPs that may result in a discharge of fill material into waters of the U.S. In addition, any state with a federally-approved Coastal Zone Management (CZM) plan must concur with the Corps determination that activities authorized by NWPs that are either within the state's coastal zone, or will affect any land or water uses, or natural resources within the state's coastal zone, are consistent with the CZM plan. In accordance with Corps regulations at 33 CFR 330.5 (c) and (d), any state 401/CZM conditions for a particular NWP become regional conditions for that NWP. The Corps recognizes that in some tribes or states there will be a need to add regional conditions, or for individual tribal or state review for some activities to ensure compliance with water quality standards or consistency with CZM plans.

The Los Angeles District announced the proposal to reissue the Nationwide Permits and our proposed regional conditions in a Special Public Notice dated February 25, 2011. The Los Angeles District also send letters dated March 9, 2011 to the seven federally recognized tribes within the Los Angeles District (Big Pine Tribe, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Navajo Nation, White Mountain Apache Tribe, and Twenty-nine Palms Band of Mission Indians) and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality announcing the proposed rule and our proposed regional conditions, and requesting the State of Arizona and each tribe review the information for purposes of providing water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Similarly, acting on behalf of the three Corps Districts in California the Sacramento District provided the same letter on February 23, 2011 to the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and EPA requesting 401 certification in the State of California and tribal lands within EPA Region 9, respectively (excluding those tribes with delegated 401 authority). The San Francisco District provided a letter to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) on behalf of both coastal districts in California on March 3, 2011, requesting Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) consistency certification. Additional discussions were held among the three Corps Districts in California and the SWRCB in an effort to strategize options for certifying a broader range of NWP or NWP-eligible activities than under the 2007 NWPs.

Upon publication of the final rule in the February 21, 2012, issue of the Federal Register (77 FR 10184), the Los Angeles District again provided letters to each of the seven tribes with 401 authority, and the State of Arizona requesting final 401 certification of the 2012 NWPs within their respective geographic areas of responsibility. Copies of the final regional conditions for the Los Angeles District were also provided. Similarly, the Los Angeles District provided a letter to the CCC on behalf of both coastal districts in California requesting final CZMA consistency certification of the 2012 NWPs and the respective regional conditions (copies of the letters are provided in Section IV). Each tribe and the State of Arizona have 60 days to issue, waive or deny certification for any or all of the 2012 NWPs. The CCC has 90 days to make their final determination. Due to the fact that the final rule was published on February 21, 2012, there is not sufficient time to allow the full 60- or 90-day review period before the 2012 NWPs are scheduled to go into effect on March 19, 2012. Therefore, the final outcome of 401 and CZMA certification within in the Los Angeles District is uncertain. Individual certifications will be required for any action authorized under the 2012 NWPs where applicable (i.e. projects within or affecting the Coastal Zone and/or projects that may affect water quality) until final determinations are provided by the respective state/tribal authorities.

The Los Angeles District believes, in general, that these NWPs and our regional conditions comply with State Water Quality Certification standards and are consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Plans.

12.0 Measures to Ensure Minimal Adverse Environmental Effects

The terms and conditions of the NWP, including the pre-construction notification requirements and the regional conditions listed in Section 10.0 of this document, will ensure that this NWP authorizes only activities with minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic

environment. High value waters will be protected by the restrictions in general condition 22, the regional conditions discussed in this document, and the pre-construction notification requirements of the NWP. Through the pre-construction notification process, the Los Angeles District will review certain activities on a case-by-case basis to ensure that those activities result in minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment, individually and cumulatively. As a result of this review, the district engineer can add special conditions to an NWP authorization to ensure that the activity results in minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment, individually and cumulatively. During the pre-construction notification process, the district engineer will exercise discretionary authority and require an individual permit for those activities that result in more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

Based on past use, the Los Angeles District estimates NWP 44 would be used less than one time per year, resulting in negligible individual and cumulative impacts to waters of the United States on an annual basis. Generally, compensatory mitigation would not be required to offset the temporary impacts. However, mitigation will be considered based on the aquatic resources impacted and compensatory mitigation will be required to offset the authorized losses of waters of the United States and ensure that the NWP authorizes only activities with minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

If, at a later time, there is clear, unequivocal evidence that use of the NWP would result in more than minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment, individually or cumulatively, the modification, suspension, or revocation procedures at 33 CFR 330.4(e) or 33 CFR 330.5 will be used.

13.0 Final Determination

Based on the considerations discussed above, and in accordance with 33 CFR 330.4(e)(1) and 330.5(c), I have determined that this NWP, including its terms and conditions, all regional conditions, and limitations, will authorize only those activities with minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment, individually or cumulatively.