

7.0 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

7.1 CEQA AND NEPA REQUIREMENTS

This section assesses the growth-inducing impacts that would result from implementation of the SAMP/WSAA Process. NEPA guidelines at 40 CFR Section 1508.8(b) and CEQA Guidelines at Section 15126.2(d) require a general discussion of growth inducement issues. A project is considered growth inducing if it directly or indirectly results in four scenarios (i.e., criteria) as defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d):

“Growth-Inducing Impacts of the Proposed Project discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a waste water treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.”

7.2 POTENTIAL GROWTH-INDUCING EFFECTS

The proposed SAMP/WSAA Process is a permitting and mitigation program that will help achieve a balance between aquatic resource protection and economic development and will promote the resolution of conflicts between aquatic resource conservation and those development and infrastructure projects affecting aquatic resources in a coordinated process with federal, state, and local agencies, and local stakeholders. The broad goals of the SAMP/WSAA Process are to allow for comprehensive management of aquatic resources and to increase regulatory predictability for development and infrastructure projects that would impact aquatic resources.

The SAMP/WSAA Process is based on an evaluation of the extent and condition of existing aquatic resources and an analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the aquatic ecosystem from seven categories of regulated activities that are projected to occur in the Watershed. The SAMP/WSAA Process provides opportunities for greater avoidance of aquatic resource integrity areas and a strategic and coordinated mitigation program for the long term restoration and enhancement of aquatic ecosystem function, while allowing economic activities and development within the Watershed. Finally, the SAMP/WSAA Process provides a platform for the tiering of future NEPA and CEQA compliance on specific actions within the Watershed.

Although a number of development and infrastructure projects could be permitted under the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process, the SAMP/WSAA Process is not a land use planning document that designates areas for certain land uses. Rather, the SAMP/WSAA Process establishes a watershed-specific regulatory program to approve discharges of dredged and fill material into waters of the U.S. pursuant to CWA Section 404 as well as alterations to lakes and streambeds pursuant to FGC Section 1600 *et seq.* Unlike

the Corps and the Department's existing permitting processes, the SAMP/WSAA Process proposes new permits (RGPs, LOPs and a WSAA Process) for regulated activities such as development and infrastructure construction and maintenance projects. The type of Corps permit is based on the activity type, impact acreage, and location in the Watershed with respect to aquatic resource integrity areas.

Regulated activities would occur in the Watershed with or without the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process. Without the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process, activities affecting jurisdictional resources would be regulated under the Corps existing Section 404 permit program and Department's existing Section 1600 *et seq.* streambed alteration agreement procedures. The proposed SAMP/WSAA Process as an alternative permitting program for the Watershed would not *directly* induce growth in housing or population. The proposed permitting program (as with existing case-by-case permitting) allows for discharges of dredged and fill in jurisdictional areas, necessary for certain land development projects, as well as road and utility construction projects, which ultimately may induce growth. Therefore, in so far as the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process authorizes these regulated activities in jurisdictional areas, the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process could be considered *indirectly* growth-inducing, but not to any greater extent than under existing case-by-case permitting.

In some cases, if a proposed regulatory program were to restrict development in some areas (e.g. environmentally sensitive areas), then the result could be a redistribution or intensification of development elsewhere. The SAMP/WSAA Process is not expected to reduce the potential for development and economic opportunities in the Watershed. As the Watershed is almost built-out, the available land designated per the applicable county and municipal general plans is the limiting factor, not the proposed SAMP/WSAA Process regulatory process. More growth is projected for other watersheds within Orange County, such as the San Juan Creek Watershed; this growth is not a product of a redistribution of development from the San Diego Creek Watershed.

If a proposed regulated activity served to accommodate and streamline approval of remaining development in the Watershed, the effect may be considered indirectly growth inducing. As indicated above, the SAMP/WSAA Process would serve to facilitate projects that were consistent with the terms and conditions of the SAMP/WSAA Process. Projects meeting these terms and conditions would be considered to have minimal impacts due to the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation procedures designated in the SAMP/WSAA Process. Thus, increased growth (i.e., indirect growth per permit authorizations) would generally occur in areas where a minimal potential for impacts is expected (e.g., low quality aquatic resource areas).

Another aspect of growth inducement involves projects that overly tax existing public facilities. This element of growth inducement is not expected because the Watershed is almost built-out, and all future development either already contains or will contain the necessary public facilities for accommodating planned growth. No overburden on public facilities is expected.

The growth inducing potential of a given project is also evaluated by analyzing any potentially significant environmental impacts resulting from related projects “induced” by the SAMP/WSAA Process. Sections 4, 5, and 6 describe the potential impacts that may result from implementation of the SAMP/WSAA Process, alternatives, and future build-out of the Watershed (cumulative effects), respectively. These sections describe the geographic extent and magnitude of potential impacts, most of which are not considered significant. Many proposed activities would be neutral or beneficial to the environment. For example, many maintenance projects include only temporary impacts, and proposed restoration projects would allow for an increase in acreage and integrity of riparian ecosystems.

Because the SAMP/WSAA Process would only result in an indirect inducement of growth and due to the mostly built-out nature of the Watershed, any potential environmental impacts due to build-out (growth inducing impacts) is not considered significant. If any future project were projected to result in significant growth inducing impacts, such a project would usually not meet the terms and conditions of the SAMP/WSAA Process and would proceed via a SIP process, individual SAA, and the preparation of separate EIS and/or EIR.