

I-292 Pam Nelson

- I-292-1** The commenter explains that they support the submittals by the Endangered Habitats League, Sierra Club, California Native Plant Society, and Golden Door.

The County acknowledges the comment and notes it expresses the opinions of the commentator, and does not raise an issue related to the adequacy of any specific section or analysis of the Draft EIR. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project. No further response is required or necessary.

- I-292-2** The comment states that the Draft EIR analysis should be revised and recirculated to address fatal flaws.

This comment is general in nature and does not raise any specific issue regarding any particular analysis in the Draft EIR. Therefore, no specific response can be provided or is required. (*Paulek v. California Dept. Water Resources* (2014) 231 Cal.App.4th 35, 47 [a general response is all that is required to a general comment]). This comment is included in the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

- I-292-3** The comment states that the Draft EIR grossly misrepresents the content and impacts of the Existing General Plan alternative.

This comment is general in nature and does not raise any specific issue regarding any particular analysis in the Draft EIR. Therefore, no specific response can be provided or is required. (*Paulek v. California Dept. Water Resources* (2014) 231 Cal.App.4th 35, 47 [a general response is all that is required to a general comment]). This comment is included in the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

- I-292-4** The comment states that the Draft EIR does not recommend the most environmentally appropriate alternative.

The comment addresses alternatives which received extensive analysis in the Draft EIR, specifically in Chapter 4 Alternatives. The comment does not raise any specific issue regarding that analysis and, therefore, no more specific response can be provided or is required. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

- I-292-5** The comment states that the Draft EIR fails to include all reasonable foreseeable projects in the cumulative impacts analysis.

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The comment addresses cumulative projects which were listed in Table 1-10. The comment does not provide any cumulative projects that were missing from this table. The comment does not raise any specific issue regarding that analysis and, therefore, no more specific response can be provided or is required. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

- I-292-6** The comment states that the Draft EIR and project consideration are premature and violate the conditions required under the planning agreement with the natural resources agencies and is not consistent with the NCMSCP.

As detailed in the Draft EIR, the project has been identified as a proposed hardline area in the draft North County MSCP, which means both the project's development areas and biological open space areas have been incorporated into the overall conservation strategy of the draft plan. (Draft EIR, p. 2.4-82, 2.4-6.) The County acknowledges that the Draft NC MSCP is currently in draft form and has not yet been approved. See **Topical Response BIO-1**. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project. No further response is required or necessary.

- I-292-7** The comment states that there are several impacts to wildlife that are not acknowledged or mitigated such as connectivity and edge effects.

The County does not concur with this comment. Relative to the comment that impact to wildlife are not acknowledged, Section 2.4 of the Draft EIR analyzes impacts to Biological Resources. Please refer to Section 2.4.14, which identifies 37 potentially significant impacts, including impacts WM-3 (impacts to movement of large mammals from loss of wildlife corridors), WM-4 (impacts to habitat connectivity for larger wildlife species), and several indirect (edge) effects. Regarding the crossing under I-15, please see **Response to Comment O-1.5-2**. Regarding the comment that feasible mitigation to increase culvert undercrossings should be included, the County directs the reader to Section 2.4.16, Conclusion, which finds that the proposed project would mitigate all impacts to a less than significant level and therefore is not required to implement any further mitigation.

- I-292-8** The comment states that the reliance on a gnatcatcher habitat mitigation site located over 20 miles away, that does not have gnatcatchers is inappropriate as mitigation.

The County acknowledges the comment and refers the reader to **Topical Response BIO-1** regarding the proposed project's consistency with the Draft NC MSCP. As described in the Newland Sierra Off-Site Mitigation Memorandum (Appendix K to Appendix H of the Draft EIR), the mitigation site is comparable to or better than the

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habitat that is being impacted on the Newland Sierra site. The mitigation site includes a variety of topographic relief, a comparable suite of vegetation communities, and rock resources. Therefore, it contributes to the vegetation community mitigation requirements described in Table 2.4-27, pgs. 2.4-172 and 2.4-173 of the Draft EIR. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project. No further response is required or necessary.

- I-292-9** The comment states that the Draft EIR attempts to piecemeal the analysis by failing to include the interchange and roadway improvements in the analysis.

The Draft EIR clearly states that interchange is a separate project under the lead jurisdiction of a separate agency (Caltrans) and will follow applicable process when the interchange design is complete. As noted in the introduction to Chapter 2 of the Draft EIR:

“Analysis of I-15 Interchange Improvements (Mitigation Measure M-TR-1)

Caltrans is the lead agency for the I-15 interchange improvements project. Accordingly, in a separate environmental review and approval process under CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Caltrans will analyze the I-15 interchange improvements, and whether the existing park-and-ride lots should be expanded, reconfigured, and/or enhanced to support transportation alternatives (e.g., ride-share, car-share, and transit). This EIR identifies the I-15 interchange improvements as a mitigation measure (See EIR Section 2.13, Transportation and Traffic, Mitigation Measure M-TR-1). Because the interchange improvements are a mitigation measure, this EIR discusses the potential environmental effects of the interchange improvements as required by CEQA (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(D)).

In addition, evaluating the Caltrans interchange improvements in terms of the project’s mitigation is appropriate because information concerning the interchange improvements is still under review and scoping through the Caltrans process, including an assessment of alternatives to the interchange improvements, which affect the intersection size, configuration, disturbance zones, and other features that are needed for an overall environmental analysis. Nonetheless, this EIR endeavors to disclose all it reasonably can at this time regarding environmental effects associated with the interchange improvements.

Second, CEQA does not require project’s to analyze impacts of mitigation measure to same level as project. As noted in Chapter 2.0, “Because the

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interchange improvements are a mitigation measure, this EIR discusses the potential environmental effects of the interchange improvements as required by CEQA (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(D)).” Thus, the Draft EIR complies with CEQA requirements regarding potential environmental effects of mitigation measures.

I-292-10 The comment states that the project would place multi-family housing and a school in a known unhealthful location near a freeway, which would put people’s health at risk.

In response, the County directs the commenter to Draft EIR page 2.3-27 which describes that the project residences and school are located more than 500 feet from I-15. Specifically:

I-15 ... is located approximately 570 feet east of the nearest point of the proposed project’s Town Center residences and school site. CARB’s *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective* (CARB Handbook) encourages consideration of the health impacts of freeways and high-volume roadways on sensitive receptors sited within 500 feet from the source in the land use decision-making process (CARB 2005). Although the residences located within the Town Center are located slightly more than 500 feet from I-15, impacts to these residences were analyzed....

An operational health risk assessment was prepared as part of the Draft EIR to analyze the health risks associated with the operation of the I-15 Freeway, Deer Springs Road, and the ARCO gas station, to new residents and schools introduced to the project site as part of the project (Appendix C Health Risk Assessment) of the Air Quality Technical Report (Appendix G of the Draft EIR).

As stated in the Air Quality Technical Report, Appendix G of the Draft EIR, page 138-139:

Regarding operational health risk, students attending the school on Site would be exposed to a maximum cancer risk of approximately 4.2 in 1 million. Project residents located in the north-east corner of the Town Center residential area would be exposed to a maximum cancer risk of approximately 9.1 in 1 million following implementation of mitigation measures M-HR-1, M-HR-2, M-HR-3, M-HR-4, and M-HR-5. The cancer risks on the project Site would not exceed the SDAPCD threshold of 10 in 1 million for cancer impacts after mitigation. The project residents would be exposed to a maximum chronic hazard index of approximately 0.02. The project residents would be exposed to a maximum acute hazard index of approximately 0.1. Therefore, the resulting maximum chronic and acute hazard indices are less

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than the SDAPCD threshold of 1.0 for chronic and acute non-cancer health impacts. With implementation of mitigation measures, the health impacts to residents and students attending the school on Site would be **less than significant**.

I-292-11 The comment states that the Draft EIR fails to include a blasting plan.

The Draft EIR's Air Quality chapter, and particularly Section 2.3.5, Impact Analysis therein, comprehensively evaluates the project's construction-related air quality impacts, including those attributable to blasting as well as operational impacts. Please refer to **Topical Response AQ-1**.

Please refer to **Topical Response AQ-2**. The comment addresses general subject areas, which received extensive analysis in the Draft EIR, specifically in Section 2.3, Air Quality. The comment does not raise any specific issue regarding that analysis and, therefore, no more specific response can be provided or is required. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

I-292-12 The comment states that the requisite findings for a habitat loss permit cannot be made. The comment states that the project should be redesigned so necessary findings can be made if a habitat loss permit is to be issued.

Section 2.4-10, Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors, in the Draft EIR provides detailed discussions of habitat connections and potential movement corridors under existing and post-development conditions on the project Site and in the project vicinity, including across Deer Springs Road and I-15. Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 of the Draft EIR Technical Appendix H, Biological Resources Technical Report, pages 6-4 through 6-10, further detail anticipated project effects to connectivity between blocks of habitat and the creation of non-natural movement corridors.

To reduce the project's significant impacts to less-than-significant level relative to wildlife movement, the Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures M-BIO-8A through M-BIO-8E, which would provide for habitat management and conservation of open space areas that would allow for wildlife movement and use (Draft EIR, p. 2.4-106 to 2.1-119). See **Topical Response BIO-2**. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project. No further response is required or necessary.

I-292-13 The comment states that the project would add increased emissions due to resulting traffic impacts during rush hour periods. The commenter asks how GHG emissions have been addressed.

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GHG emissions associated with Project construction were analyzed and quantified in Section 2.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, of the Draft EIR. The comment does not raise any specific issue regarding that analysis and, therefore, no more specific response can be provided or is required. The County will include the comment as part of the Final EIR for review and consideration by the decision-makers prior to a final decision on the project.

- I-292-14** The comment states that the commenter is interested in the fragmentation of Southern California habitat and wildlife is finding less open areas to travel and cross the I-15. The comment states that from Escondido north, wildlife need crossings for their east/west travel to keep genetic diversity intact and find open space in public lands to survive.

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- I-292-15** The comment states that any proposed development along the I-15 must contribute mitigation funding for wildlife crossing plans and that funds could go to Caltrans, non-profits, or County agency accounts. The commenter explains that they are partnering with a wildlife crossing team which are developing strategies to understand how to resolve that issue.

Please refer to **Response to Comment I-292-14**.