3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES[18]

3.1 GENERAL SETTING

The majority of the hydroelectric facilities of the proposed project would be located within the San Jacinto River Basin with other associated structures and transmission lines in adjacent watersheds. The San Jacinto River Basin is located in southern California, about 20 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and covers more than 780 square miles of widely varying terrain. The river basin is bounded by north-south mountains: the Santa Ana Mountains (including the Elsinore Mountains, Santa Margarita, and the Santa Rosa Plateau) to the west and the more distant San Jacinto to the east. Lake Elsinore is easily accessible via Interstate 15. The Ortega Highway connects San Juan Capistrano to Interstate 15 on the east side of the Santa Ana and Elsinore mountains.

The proposed project location typically experiences warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The general climate is characterized as Mediterranean, with a mean annual temperature of 64 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). Most precipitation occurs during winter months with a mean annual precipitation of 11.7 inches. Precipitation increases sharply with rising elevations in the Santa Ana Mountains, such that the seasonal mean precipitation is about 25 inches only 1.5 miles from the shore of Lake Elsinore. Air quality in the area is good, and the area experiences a generally moderate eastward wind and weather pattern flow.

Lake Elsinore is a natural low point in the San Jacinto River Basin; it does not connect with the Santa Ana River in normal rainfall conditions. In high precipitation and runoff years, the San Jacinto River flows through Lake Elsinore to the Santa Ana River via Temescal Wash, a natural drainage system that extends about 28 miles from Lake Elsinore to the Santa Ana River, which eventually drains to the Pacific Ocean. Most of the river basin comprises chaparral vegetation and farming/ranching type land uses with increasing urban/residential and commercial land uses close to Lake Elsinore. Most of the mountain ranges are forested with major land uses including recreation, conservation, and residential housing. As one travels west toward the coast, land uses are predominately urban.

The transmission lines would be located in portions of the San Jacinto River Basin north of Lake Elsinore and would travel southwardly along the eastern side of the Santa Ana Mountains connecting to existing transmission lines near Camp Pendleton Marine Corp Base. Climate and topography along this route are similar to the Lake Elsinore/San Jacinto River Basin area as described above. Vegetation along this route largely consists of oak woodland-sage brush/chaparral, common in southern California coastal

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[18] Unless otherwise indicated, all information is from Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2004).

mountains. Primary land uses for this area are related to recreation, residential, conservation, and U.S. Department of Defense property.

3.2 CUMULATIVELY AFFECTED RESOURCES

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (§1508.7), a cumulative effect is the effect on the environment that results from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time to include hydropower and other land and water development activities.

Based on the information contained in the license application, agency comments, other filings, comments from the scoping process, and preliminary staff analysis, we[19] identified water quantity, water quality, fisheries, federally listed plants and wildlife, wetlands, and riparian habitat as resources that could be cumulatively affected by the construction and operation of the LEAPS Project in combination with other activities in the San Juan Creek River Basin. We used the resource area to determine the geographical and temporal scope of the draft EIS analysis.

3.2.1 Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of the analysis defines the physical limits or boundaries of the proposed action's effect on the resources. Because the proposed action would affect the resources differently, the geographic scope for each resource may vary.

For water resources, we consider cumulative effects in the San Juan Creek River Basin from the location of the upper reservoir to the downstream influence of project releases.

For fisheries, we consider the cumulative effects on Lake Elsinore relative to the programs of the city of Lake Elsinore to remove carp populations and restructure the fish community in Lake Elsinore to provide a sport fishery.

For federally listed plants and wildlife, we consider cumulative effects within their range in southern California. For wetlands and riparian habitat, we would consider cumulative effects in the San Juan Creek Watershed as well as in the San Mateo Creek Watershed for the southern portions of the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments.

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[19] Throughout section 3, "we" refers to both the "Commission and FS staff."

3.2.2 Temporal Scope

The temporal scope of our cumulative analysis in the draft EIS includes past, present, and future actions and their possible cumulative effects on each resource. Based on the license term, the temporal scope will look 30 to 50 years into the future, concentrating on the effects on the resources from reasonably foreseeable future actions. The historical discussion will, by necessity, be limited by the amount of available information for each resource.

3.3 PROPOSED ACTION AND ACTION ALTERNATIVES

3.3.1 Geology and Soils

3.3.1.1 Affected Environment

Regional Geology

The proposed project area spans the boundary between two geologic environments—an actively subsiding fault-bounded basin containing Lake Elsinore and a more stable mountain block underlain by minor metamorphic rocks and undivided granitic rocks of the Peninsular Ranges Batholith. Both geologic environments are a part of the Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province of Southern California.

Elsinore Basin

The Elsinore Basin is located in the southeast part of the Los Angeles Basin. The Los Angeles Basin is a region of alluvial outwash, encompassing most of Los Angeles and Orange counties, as well as western Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The Los Angeles Basin is considered part of the Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province of Southern California. This province is a well-defined geologic and physiographic unit, characterized by elongated ranges and fault-formed and alluvial-filled valleys with a general northwesterly trend.

The Elsinore Basin is a down-faulted (trough) portion of the earth's crust about 8 miles long and between 2 and 3 miles wide. The long axis of the valley parallels the northwesterly regional structural trend, and rugged hills and mountains border the basin on all but the southeastern side. The lowest portion of the basin floor is a broad, relatively flat area known as "La Laguna," which is partially occupied by Lake Elsinore. La Laguna forms the terminus for the San Jacinto River, which flows into the Elsinore Basin from the northeast. To the southwest, are the steep slopes of the Elsinore Mountains. The northeastern edge of the basin is bordered by the Sedco and Cleveland Hills, part of the Temescal Mountain range. The Glen Ivy fault parallels the base of the Cleveland Hills and marks the structural edge of the basin in this area. The southeastern end of the basin is formed by a low alluvial divide built up by streams draining the Elsinore Mountains.

The geology of the Elsinore Valley comprises essentially three major units. At the surface lies alluvium from a variety of sources. Underneath the surface alluvium is the sedimentary Pauba Formation, and under that lies the "basement rocks" of the Peninsular Ranges Batholith. The alluvial formation covers the lower portions of the valley and can be divided into alluvial fan deposits, floodplain deposits, and recent lacustrine deposits.

Santa Ana Mountains/Elsinore Mountains

The Elsinore Mountains are a portion of the Santa Ana Mountain Range, which form the northernmost range of the Peninsular Ranges Province. The proposed transmission lines—both to the north and to the south—would pass through the Santa Ana Mountains, and the conduit and reservoir would be constructed within this geologic environment. The Peninsular Ranges Province is characterized by a northwest-striking geologic fabric (faulting and folding) influenced by the San Andreas tectonic regime. The northern Peninsular Ranges Province is divided (in terms of physiography) into three major fault-bounded blocks: the Santa Ana, Perris, and San Jacinto. The westernmost of the three, the Santa Ana block, extends eastward from the coast to the Elsinore fault zone. Tertiary sedimentary rocks (Paleocene through Pliocene in age) lie under the western portion of the Santa Ana block, while to the east of these Tertiary rocks lay the highly faulted Santa Ana Mountains. The anticlinal structure of these mountains is cored by a basement assemblage of Mesozoic metasedimentary and Cretaceous volcanic and batholitic rocks. Over the top of this basement assemblage is a thick section of primarily upper Cretaceous marine rocks and Paleocene marine and nonmarine rocks. In the southern part of the Santa Ana Mountains, the anticlinal nature of the mountains transitions into an expansive, nearly horizontal erosional surface that is partly covered with Miocene basalt flows.

Both the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and the Decker Canyon site are located in the headwaters of San Juan Creek within the Cleveland National Forest boundary. The proposed Morrell Canyon site is bounded to the west by a ridge inside the Cleveland National Forest, to the east by a ridge partially within Morrell Ranch, and to the northeast by South Main Divide Road. Decker Canyon is the next drainage immediately north of Morrell Canyon and, in terms of hard-rock geology, is geologically similar. The Decker Canyon site is bounded by Morgan Hill on the south, a ridge to the north, and South Main Divide Road to the east. The rugged, mountainous terrain of the Santa Ana Mountains is characteristic of both the proposed and alternative reservoir sites.

The geologic units at the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites comprise granitic bedrock, alluvium, and slopewash[20]. The bedrock is typically light gray, medium- to coarse-grained, and moderately fractured. Weathering of

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[20] Slopewash is the down-slope accumulation of material (outside a confined channel) transported by gravity and or sheet flow. It is roughly synonymous with colluvium, with the addition of the assistance of water as a secondary transport mechanism.

the granitic rock is variable near the surface as evidenced by field observations and aerial photographs analyzed for the license application.

Recent alluvium occupies the valley floor of Morrell Canyon. The alluvium is derived from nearby granitic rock and comprises brownish medium- to coarse-grained sand. These materials are generally loose in the upper 10 to 15 feet of the alluvium, as evidenced by geophysical survey data supplied in the license application. The loose alluvium is underlain by 25 to 45 feet of dense alluvium, with crystalline bedrock underlying the alluvium.

Thin (less than 3 feet) deposits of slopewash exist along much of the Morrell Canyon site and along the majority of hillslopes in the area. These deposits are not mapped on U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or other published geologic maps. Site investigations discovered a thicker deposit of slopewash on the south-facing slope in a portion of Morrell Canyon near South Main Divide Road and Lion Spring. This deposit is greater than 5 feet deep and is estimated (but unconfirmed) to be no more than 15 feet thick. Lion Spring is located approximately 200 to 250 feet west of South Main Divide Road. In May 2003, the spring was observed to provide surface flow to the stream; however, that surface flow went subsurface and surface flow became intermittent downstream. Such intermittent flow is consistent with relatively permeable surficial geology consisting of slopewash underlain by alluvium. Additional indications of the existence of groundwater and soil moisture come from discernable vegetation patterns. Larger oaks and some riparian species (i.e., sycamore) that all have relatively high soil moisture requirements exist in the lower, flatter portions of the Morrell Canyon site, while the side slopes are restricted to more drought tolerant chaparral species that can survive in drier, less productive sites.

Although the rock units observable in Decker Canyon are the same as in Morrell Canyon, surface alluvium and thick accumulations of slopewash are largely absent from the site. The erosion gullies into the sideslopes and base of Decker Canyon show only a minor amount (less than 2 inches) of soil development overlying intact bedrock. No evidence of groundwater near the surface was noted during geologic reconnaissance.

The proposed penstocks connecting the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites with the proposed powerhouse sites would run through the eastern edge of the Elsinore Mountains. It is expected that the penstocks would be excavated into granitic bedrock similar to that described for the upper reservoirs and in the regional geology section. Because of the nature of such large expanses of bedrock and the characteristics of the Elsinore Mountains, faults, joints, fractures, and groundwater probably would be encountered during excavation of the penstock and tunnel system.

Base of the Elsinore Mountains

The proposed Santa Rosa and Ortega Oaks and Evergreen powerhouse sites are located between the base of the steep, east face of the Elsinore Mountains and Lake

Elsinore. The geologic conditions at the two northernmost sites (Ortega Oaks and Santa Rosa) are relatively similar, while the more southern site (Evergreen) has substantially different conditions.

The Ortega Oaks and proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse sites are both located in areas with substantial surface alluvium. This material is a relatively young alluvial fan deposit of mostly gravel-sized sediment. Because of the location at the base of a steep mountain side (a location heavily influenced by gravity-induced erosion from upslope), these sites are expected to contain a substantial amount of larger cobble- and boulder-sized clasts as well. Geophysical survey data summarized by the co-applicants for the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site indicate that 10 to 20 feet of loose alluvial soils is underlain by 20 to 50 feet of dense, unsaturated alluvial soils, which in turn are underlain by 70 to 90 feet of saturated alluvial soils and/or weathered bedrock. Crystalline bedrock was encountered at depths ranging from 120 to 145 feet below the ground surface. From this, we infer that depth to groundwater is approximately 30 to 70 feet below the ground surface. Geophysical survey data for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site indicate 10 to 30 feet of loose alluvial soils underlain by 60 to 125 feet of dense, unsaturated alluvial soils and/or weathered bedrock. Crystalline bedrock was encountered at depths ranging from 70 to 140 feet below the ground surface; therefore, from the data the co-applicants infer that groundwater was not encountered at the site.

Surface exposures of granitic bedrock characterize the optional Evergreen powerhouse site. This rock is similar to that found at the Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites (described above). An existing above-ground reservoir (tank) is currently located neat the site and is founded on granitic bedrock. No additional subsurface data are available for this site.

Lake Elsinore Shoreline and Vicinity

Lake Elsinore water surface elevations have historically experienced significant fluctuations due to periods of flooding followed by prolonged dry periods. Lake Elsinore is a historically ephemeral lake, with the main sources of water being direct natural runoff from the surrounding mountains and drainage from the San Jacinto River.

The proposed tailrace tunnel would extend eastward from any of the powerhouse sites. The surficial geology of this area is characterized by a transition from the alluvial fans found at the toe of the Elsinore Mountains out to the floodplain and lacustrine sediments of La Laguna. The exact location of the proposed tailrace tunnel and intake structures would vary (from north to south) in accordance with the selection of a powerhouse site, but in general would cross through this transition zone. The tailrace tunnel would exit the powerhouse, which is expected to be founded on granitic bedrock, and head east toward Lake Elsinore. Leaving the bedrock, the tunnel would likely be excavated through loose and dense alluvium (saturated and unsaturated) and weathered bedrock. Between the powerhouse sites and Lake Elsinore are portions of the active Elsinore Fault Zone (discussed in additional detail in subsequent sections). The Willard

fault is located near the base of the Elsinore Mountains and runs roughly under or between the proposed Santa Rosa and Ortega Oaks and Evergreen powerhouse sites and Lake Elsinore (figure 9). The Wildomar fault is mapped within the limits of Lake Elsinore; however, its exact location is unknown. We suspect that this fault crosses the alignment of the tailrace tunnel. Because the intake structure is located within the sediment of Lake Elsinore, it is expected that a portion of the tailrace tunnel would be constructed in soft or loose saturated alluvium and/or lacustrine sedimentary deposits.

Soils

Lake Elsinore Shoreline[21]

Most of the soils in Elsinore Valley surrounding Lake Elsinore are of the Hanford-Tujunga-Greenfield association. These soils are generally sandy loams, loamy sands, although some areas contain loams and coarse sandy loams with gravel and cobble. Erosivity of these soils generally ranges from slight to moderate; however, wind-caused erosion can be high in some areas. Permeability is generally moderate to rapid, and the shrink-swell potential is low. Soil depths range can reach 60 inches.

The soils in the back basins of Lake Elsinore are primarily Waukena loamy fine sand and Willows silty clay with some Traver loamy fine sand. All three of these soils are saline-alkali soils because of the repeated wetting and drying of these lake bed soils, as well as accumulation of salts because the lake is a natural sink. Wind-caused erosion of these finer (silt and clay) soils is assumed to be moderate to high.

Base of the Elsinore Mountains

Soils to the west of Lake Elsinore at the location of the proposed powerhouse sites, as well as the laydown areas for these sites, are Hanford sandy loams. These soils are generally well-drained soils on alluvial fans and alluvial plains formed of granitic alluvium. Permeability is moderate, and, if the soil is bare, runoff is slow to moderate and the erosion hazard is slight to moderate.

Santa Ana Mountains/Elsinore Mountains

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site area has three distinct soil types. The area of Lion Spring, the adjacent area, and the downstream riparian areas comprise well-drained sandy loam, forming within granitic alluvium. Permeability is moderate to rapid, and, if the soil is bare, runoff is slow to moderate and the erosion hazard is moderate. The areas running upslope of the canyon floor comprise shallow sandy loam soils over weathered granite with rock outcrops. These soils are somewhat excessively drained soils, and permeability is moderately rapid. Bare soil is susceptible to rapid runoff, and the erosion hazard is high. The terrace areas adjoining these slopes

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[21] Information in this subsection is derived from SCS (1971).

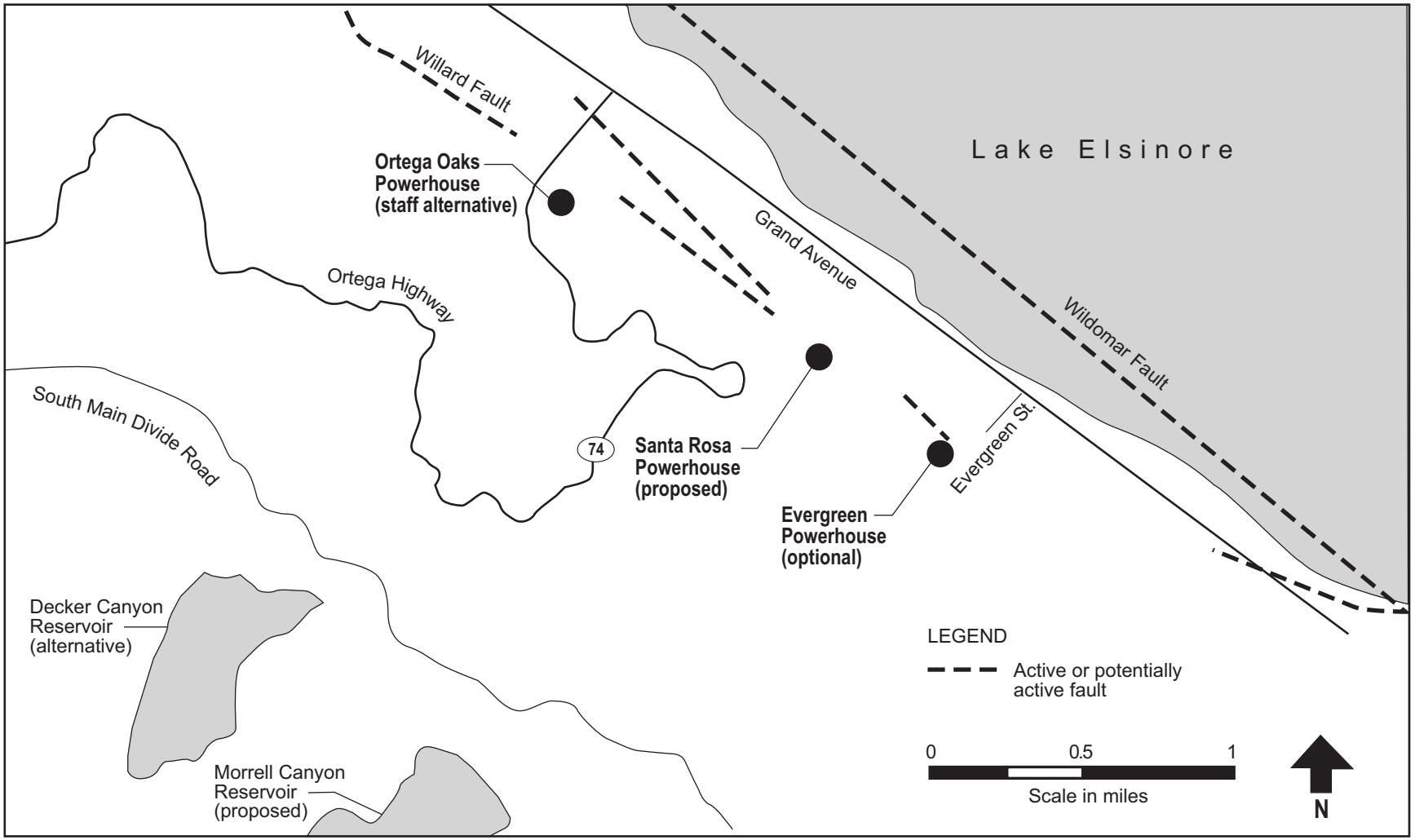

Figure 9. LEAPS Project—Fault zones in the project area. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a)

comprise well-drained coarse sandy loam and can include rock outcrops. Permeability is moderately rapid and if the soil is bare, runoff is rapid to very rapid, and the erosion hazard is high to very high.

The soils in the area of the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site are much the same as the proposed Morrell Canyon site, with the exception of the addition of gabbro bedrock as parent material and additional bedrock outcrops. The area directly adjacent to South Main Divide Road contains well-drained gravelly loam soils derived from gabbro parent material with a dark red clay subsoil 18 inches thick. The soil has moderately slow permeability, and, if the soil is bare, runoff is rapid and the erosion hazard is high. The areas following the stream channel southward include well-drained coarse sandy loams with steep side slopes and rock outcrops. Permeability is moderately rapid, and, if the soil is bare, runoff is rapid to very rapid, and the erosion hazard is high to very high.

Most of the transmission alignments (both north and south) travel through mountainous or hilly terrain for distances totaling more than 30 miles. Soil conditions can vary markedly between specific sites; however, along these alignments the dominant soil series include the Cieneba and Friant series. The Friant Series consists of somewhat excessively drained soils that formed in the mountains from material weathered from fine-grained metasedimentary rock. Slopes are generally steep and range from 30 to 70 percent. A typical Friant soil is a shallow, gravelly fine sandy loam with rock outcrops. Permeability is moderately rapid and if the soil is bare, runoff is rapid and the erosion hazard is high. The Cieneba Series comprises shallow, somewhat excessively drained sandy loams on steep to very steep slopes. Some soils in this series are only 5 to 15 inches deep over bedrock. Gullies cut through these soils, and intermittent drainage channels and small landslides are common. Bare soil is susceptible to rapid runoff, and the erosion hazard is high.

San Juan Creek Drainage Downstream of Proposed Upper Reservoir Sites

The soils found in proximity to Ortega Highway as it parallels San Juan Creek include calcareous[22] loamy sands and fine sandy loams soils that are on nearly level ground, alluvial fans and floodplains, along with pockets of moderately well-drained sandy loams with a strongly developed subsoil occurring on terraces and level to moderately steep ground.

Geologic Hazards

Potential geologic hazards at the proposed project area include ground rupture from active faulting, strong ground motions from earthquakes, landslides or rockfalls (induced by earthquake, rainfall and saturation, or other triggers), liquefaction and seismic settlement, and debris flows.

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[22] Soils containing calcium carbonate, commonly known as white chalk.

Seismicity

As previously described, the Elsinore Valley is a complexly faulted trough formed by the movement along a series of parallel northwest-trending faults. This Elsinore fault zone is a part of the Whittier-Elsinore fault system. The parallel series of faults within this zone includes the Willard, Rome Hill, Wildomar, Lake, Burchkhalter, Sedco, Glen Ivy, and Freeway faults. The three main faults within the Elsinore Valley are the Willard, Wildomar, and Glen Ivy faults. These faults appear very young in age, evidenced by features such as the steep northeast side of the Elsinore Mountains to the southwest of Lake Elsinore. At its northern end, the Elsinore fault zone splays into two segments, the Chino fault and the Whittier fault. At its southern end, the Elsinore fault is cut by the Yuha Wells fault from what amounts to its southern continuation, the Laguna Salada fault.

The Elsinore fault zone separates the upthrown and tilted block of the Santa Ana Mountains west of the fault zone from the Perris block to the east. Internally, both blocks themselves are relatively stable. This is evidenced by the presence of widespread erosional surfaces of low relief. There are, however, faults within the Elsinore block, which are discussed below.

Most faults within the Elsinore fault zone are normal in type and nearly parallel to the general trend of the trough or intersect each other at an acute angle. Vertical displacement generally exceeds horizontal, and several periods of activity are recognized. Research studies have been conducted to assess faulting on most of the sections and have documented Holocene activity for the length of the fault zone with a slip rate around 4 to 5 millimeter per year. Multiple events have only been dated on the Whittier fault and Glen Ivy North fault strand, so interaction between faults and adjacent sections is not well-known (USGS, 2005a).

One of the largest fault zones in southern California, the active Elsinore fault zone is more than 125 miles long and is a major element of the right-lateral strike-slip San Andreas fault system. The southeastern extension of the Elsinore fault zone (the Laguna Salada fault) ruptured in 1892 in a magnitude 7 earthquake, as measured on the Richter scale; however, the main trace of the Elsinore fault zone has only seen one historical event greater than magnitude 5.2, a magnitude 6 earthquake near Temescal Valley on May 15, 1910, northwest of Lake Elsinore, which produced no known surface rupture and did little recorded damage.

The principal structural element of the Elsinore trough is a system of faults (see figure 9) that can be divided into two major groups: piedmont or longitudinal faults, forming the northeast and southwest boundaries of the trough; and internal or transverse faults, which are between the faults of the first group and intersect them. In addition, a number of major faults are located within the Santa Ana-Elsinore Mountain block.

Liquefaction

Under certain conditions, strong ground motions can cause loose, sandy soils to liquefy and settle. These soft, fine-grained sediments can lose strength under such strong ground motions. The fine-grained sediments associated with the young lake deposits of Lake Elsinore could have the potential for liquefaction and seismic settling. Because all proposed alternative sites for the intake and tailrace structures are located on the shores of Lake Elsinore, segments of these project components could be founded on materials susceptible to liquefaction and seismic settling. The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site could contain such soils in the relatively thick overburden layer.

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was passed by the California State Legislature following the 1971 San Fernando earthquake. The purpose of the act is to regulate land development near active faults[23] in an effort to mitigate the hazard of surface fault rupture. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act's main purpose is to prevent the construction of buildings used for human occupancy on the surface trace of active faults. The act only addresses the hazard of surface fault rupture and is not directed toward other earthquake hazards. The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act, passed in 1990, addresses non-surface fault rupture earthquake hazards, including liquefaction and seismically induced landslides. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act requires the State Geologist to establish "earthquake fault zones" around the surface traces of active faults and issue appropriate maps. These maps are then used by local, county, and state agencies for planning and controlling development and redevelopment activities. The act dictates that local agencies must regulate activities within earthquake fault zones as defined by the appropriate setback from the fault trace.

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, has not yet prepared Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone maps for those portions of the proposed project located within the Cleveland National Forest (which includes portions of the proposed and alternative transmission alignments and the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites), within and adjacent to the Santa Rosa Plateau, and in San Diego County. However, maps of lands outside the Cleveland National Forest boundary show that the proposed northern transmission alignment traverses a designated Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone just south of Highway 71 in Temescal Valley

Landslides/Debris Flows

Areas prone to debris flows are frequently identified based on observed relationships between precipitation and specific landscape characteristics. If threshold

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[23] Active faults are defined in the act as faults along which surface displacement has occurred within Holocene time (during the last 11,000 years).

values for precipitation duration and intensity are met, debris flows may initiate on certain landscapes, particularly on and below steep slopes. Most debris flows stop moving as they reach more gentle slopes; however, some debris flows will reach the base of the hillside and can potentially travel a considerable distance (a mile or more) if confined by a channel. Debris flows moving through populated areas or locations with infrastructure can cause injury or death and produce extensive damage.

USGS has developed a generalized debris flow hazard map that includes the project area. Areas with slopes of 26 degrees or greater are highlighted on the map and correspond with slopes capable of producing debris flows given critical rainfall conditions. The areas indicated to have potential for debris flows in the area of proposed project facilities include a contiguous band along the steep eastern slopes of the Elsinore Mountains above the southwestern shores of Lake Elsinore. The mapping is general, but indicates the potential for debris flow to affect the proposed sites for the powerhouse and the proposed powerhouse laydown areas. Surficial instability in the form of slopewash and the accumulation of colluvium[24] was observed during geologic reconnaissance.

Evidence of deep-seated landsliding was not observed during review of aerial photographs and geologic reconnaissance.

3.3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

The co-applicants propose to build a lined upper reservoir with a 180-foot-high main dam, a perimeter dike as tall as up to 60 feet, a stream bypass system for the creek that flows through Morrell Canyon, and potentially an upstream detention basin. Final embankment design could call for a zoned earth and rockfill dam having a central impervious core or a concrete-faced earth and rockfill dam. The surface area of the proposed reservoir would be about 76 acres; the total footprint of the upper reservoir would be about 130 acres. Construction laydown areas would require approximately 20 to 40 acres. The material needed for this construction would be supplemented by material from excavation of other project components. Two parallel high-pressure water conduits each consisting of a 7,890-foot-long concrete-lined power shaft and tunnel transitioning to a 250-foot-long, 12-foot-diameter steel penstock would be constructed using a combination of tunnel boring machine technology and more conventional blasting and cut-and-cover techniques. An underground powerhouse, and two 1,950-foot-long, 20-foot-wide, and 20-foot-high concrete-lined tailrace tunnels would be constructed using both tunnel boring machine and traditional techniques. A 25- to 50-acre surface switchyard/substation would be located adjacent to the proposed powerhouse. About 30 miles of 500-kV transmission line would connect the project to an existing SCE transmission line located north of the proposed project and to an existing SDG&E

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[24] Loose, incoherent, eroded material at the base of a hillslope, moved downslope primarily under the force of gravity alone.

transmission line located to the south. The proposed transmission alignment also would include construction/maintenance access roads.

The potential adverse effects of project construction and operation on geological and soil resources include disturbance of sediment, erosion, and sedimentation of project waters. We also evaluate the effects of various geologic hazards on development of the project and any potential adverse effects of the proposed actions on geologic hazards (for instance, project operations potentially increasing debris flows).

The co-applicants propose a number of mitigation measures to address potential adverse effects of these actions on geological and soil resources. The proposed board of three or more qualified independent engineering consultants would assess the geology of the project site and surroundings; the design, specifications, and construction of the dike(s), dam(s), spillways(s), powerhouse(s), electrical and mechanical equipment, and emergency power supply; instrumentation; the filling schedule for the reservoir(s) and plans and surveillance during the initial filling; and construction procedures and progress. The proposed erosion control plan would be developed in consultation with the agencies and would include the following: (1) a description of area soils, hydrology, and vegetation; (2) a narrative discussion of the co-applicants' proposed erosion control measures; and (3) topographic map locations and functional design drawings of the control measures.

The proposed plan for the design and construction of a system that will automatically detect a conduit or penstock failure and immediately shut off flow in the conduit or penstock at the headworks in the event of such a failure would include the following: (1) design drawings; (2) a schedule for installation and testing of the system prior to operation of the project; (3) a schedule for annual testing of the system for the life of the project; and (4) a description of contingency measures to manually close off the conduit or penstock when the system is not operational.

The proposed reservoir clearing plan would include the following: (1) topographic maps identifying the location and acreage of lands to be cleared; (2) descriptions of the vegetation to be cleared; (3) descriptions of any resource management goals related to fish and wildlife enhancement through vegetative clearing or retention; (4) descriptions of the disposal methodologies and disposal location of unused timber, brush and refuse, and maps identifying the location of disposal sites; and (5) an implementation schedule. The proposed plan to revegetate disturbed areas with plant species beneficial to wildlife would describe the location of the areas to be revegetated and would include a description of proposed plant species and densities; fertilization and irrigation requirements; an effectiveness monitoring program; and an implementation schedule.

Resource Agency Measures

The USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 15 that the co-applicants provide an erosion control plan before undertaking any new construction or non-routine

maintenance projects with the potential for causing erosion and/or stream sedimentation on or affecting National Forest System lands. The USFS specifies that the plan include measures to control erosion, stream sedimentation, dust, and soil mass movement, including the following: (1) detailed descriptions, design drawings, and specific topographic locations of all control measures; (2) measures to divert runoff away from disturbed land surfaces; (3) measures to collect and filter runoff over disturbed land surfaces, including sediment ponds at the diversion and powerhouse sites; (4) revegetating disturbed areas in accordance with current direction on use of native plants and locality of plant and seed sources; (5) measures to dissipate energy and prevent erosion; and, (6) a monitoring and maintenance schedule. Additionally, the USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 32, *Ground Disturbing Activities*, that ground-disturbing activities may proceed only after the appropriate NEPA analysis and documentation. If the co-applicants propose new activities that were not previously addressed in the Commission's NEPA analysis processes, the co-applicants, in consultation with the USFS, should determine the scope of work, the potential project related effects, and whether additional information would be required to proceed with the planned ground-disturbing activity. Upon the USFS' request, the co-applicants should enter into an agreement with the USFS under which the co-applicants should fund a reasonable portion of USFS' staff time and expenses for staff activities related to the analysis and documentation of the proposed activities.

Effects of Construction on Erosion and Sedimentation

Co-applicants' Proposal—The proposed Morrell Canyon site (which encompasses Lion Spring) would include a 180-foot-high dam and a 60-foot-high perimeter dike. A patrol road would extend around the entire reservoir, atop the dam and dikes. The proposed Morrell Canyon site contains extensive deposits of slopewash, with thicker deposit of slopewash on the south-facing slope in a portion of Morrell Canyon near South Main Divide Road and Lion Spring. This deposit is from 5 feet to more than 15 feet thick. In the area of the proposed dam site, the thickness of alluvium may range from 25 to 50 feet atop sound bedrock. The proposed Morrell Canyon site would interrupt streamflow of the headwaters of this creek (totaling approximately 560 acres), and an instream collection structure would be constructed at the point where the perimeter dike would intercept Morrell Creek flows. A bypass conduit would transport Morrell Creek flows under the reservoir (and the reservoir liners) to an energy dissipater and monitoring station downstream of the dam. The co-applicants also indicate that they may install a detention basin upstream of the perimeter dike.

A collection structure and similar conduit would collect and transport Lion Spring discharge and transport this discharge to a point downstream of the dam. Hillslope drains would be installed and tied to the Lion Spring discharge system. The co-applicants indicate that excavation would be required to shape and engineer the hillslopes of the reservoir area to accept the liner and to prepare the base of the dam/dike. The dam and

dike would have crest elevation of 2,900 feet msl and a combined fill volume of approximately 2.6 million cubic yards and a total footprint of approximately 130 acres.

The proposed underground Santa Rosa powerhouse would use a 30-acre site. Because it is located below a vertical shaft, the powerhouse cavern would likely be constructed via conventional drill-and-shoot excavation techniques. An approximately 20 acre laydown area would be required during construction. The estimated depth of excavation to construct the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse would be 340 feet, and the powerhouse cavern excavation volume would be about 207,000 cubic yards.

The proposed tailrace tunnels would be constructed between the powerhouse and the intake/outlet structure to be located on the bed of Lake Elsinore. The tunnel would be built underground as it leaves the powerhouse, and would breach through to the ground surface under the waters of Lake Elsinore at elevation 1,200 feet msl. While the co-applicants indicate in construction schedules that tunnel boring machine technology would be used to construct part of the tailrace/intake tunnels, the proposed tailrace/intake structures would also necessitate in-lake construction operations for the intake/outlet end of the structure that surfaces in the bed of the lake. Construction for this in-lake work would take place within a cofferdam constructed prior to any excavation for the intake/outlet structure (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004b). Therefore, because excavation would occur in an area physically separated from Lake Elsinore by the cofferdam, the potential to disturb sediments and adversely affect water quality through increasing turbidity and suspended sediments would be eliminated.

The total volume of excavated material associated with the powerhouse (including the powerhouse cavern as well as the high-head water conduit tunnels, construction adits, power shaft intake, penstock, transformer gallery, surge shaft, powerhouse access shaft, vent shaft, draft tube tunnel, tailrace tunnel, and lower reservoir intake excavation) would be about 776,000 cubic yards.

The proposed transmission alignment (figure 4) would traverse mostly National Forest System lands on relatively inaccessibly, rugged, and steep terrain of the Elsinore Mountains and surrounding foothills. Laydown areas (dispersed along the corridor) as well as construction and maintenance roads would be necessary for the proposed transmission alignment. Construction activities would take place over the first and second year of construction.

Resource Agency Measures

As previously stated, the USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 15 that the co-applicants provide an erosion control plan before undertaking any new construction or non-routine maintenance projects with the potential for causing erosion and/or stream sedimentation on or affecting National Forest System lands.

Effects Analysis

The co-applicants' proposal would require substantial amounts of earthmoving, both to clear and prepare the dam and dike foundations and to transport from a storage/staging area (as yet to be determined) the material excavated from other project components that is to be used for construction of the dam and dikes. Excavation of hillslopes could cause soil erosion on hillslopes in the area of the upper reservoir during construction. The source of this erosion could be from gravity, wind, or water (direct precipitation, surface runoff, or groundwater seepage). Excavated material for use in the dam and dike(s) is also susceptible to such erosion both during storage and while being placed as dam/dike embankment (i.e., prior to final, finish-grade erosion control treatments). Excavation of the high-pressure conduit would be undertaken using tunnel boring machine techniques and should not result in surface erosion.

Methodologies for construction (including exact techniques and sequencing of hillslope excavation, channel interception, Lion Spring excavation, etc.) would be included in the final designs. Excavation and installation of the Lion Spring seepage collection system at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site presents the potential for additional erosion because the extent and character of groundwater has not yet been fully characterized or quantified. As reservoir excavation and contouring proceed, the potential for interception of groundwater increases and could lead to substantial dispersed flow and erosion. This could present constructability complications in addition to those erosion issues noted above.

The proposed Morrell Canyon site would interrupt streamflow of the headwaters of this creek, hence the need for an instream collection structure at the point where the perimeter dike would intercept Morrell Creek flows and a bypass conduit under or around the reservoir. The co-applicants also may construct a detention basin upstream of the perimeter dike. Large streamflows would likely be carrying sediment and debris, and that material would also need to be transported under or around the reservoir, resulting in the need for a very large conduit (see also section 3.3.2.2, *Environmental Consequences*, *Water Quantity* in *Water Resources)*. The co-applicants' potential detention basin would need to be designed and constructed to ensure it would not adversely affect the downstream perimeter dike.

Unmitigated, all construction activities at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site would have the potential to discharge sediment into the waters of San Juan Creek. Conceptual designs suggest that sediment discharges from the San Juan Creek Watershed as a result of project construction and operation would be minimal. The co-applicants would develop plans to address erosion associated with all aspects of project construction via an erosion control plan. The erosion control plan and erosion control measures would be developed in response to more-detailed final project designs. The plans and proposed actions would undergo review by the appropriate resource agencies, the co-applicants' board of engineering consultants, and by the Commission and,

therefore, should provide an adequate degree of protection for geological and soil resources.

The proposed high-pressure water conduit system would be aligned through the east side of the Elsinore Mountains. Constructed using a combination of tunnel boring machine technology and more conventional blasting and cut-and-cover techniques, the total excavation quantity is estimated to be 173,000 cubic yards for the high-head water conduit tunnels including construction adits and power shaft intake, and 4,500 cubic yards for the penstock excavation. Additional geotechnical and groundwater information for the alignment would be collected prior to the start of construction. A system that would automatically detect conduit or penstock failure and, in the event of such a failure, immediately shut off flow in the conduit or penstock at the headworks would ensure the avoidance of catastrophic flooding due to conduit failure.

At the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, excavation would occur in an isolated location, and after surface preparations, would continue entirely below the ground surface. If adequate erosion mitigation measures are incorporated into construction techniques, erosion during construction at the surface would not adversely affect geological and soil resources. Erosion below ground surface should not be an issue because all material would be contained within the excavation itself. Groundwater could be encountered at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, and could lead to construction difficulties that exacerbate erosion; however, if soil erosion within the excavation is increased because of wet material, all such eroded material would be captured within the excavation for subsequent removal to the staging site. Storage and transfer of excavated material to the staging area and subsequently to the dam/dike sites affords the opportunity for erosion from either wind or water (direct precipitation, surface runoff, or groundwater seepage). Again, the use of proper erosion control techniques would mitigate any adverse effects on the resource.

Characterization of lakebed sediments and final design drawings of the tailrace structure would be completed prior to the start of construction. The co-applicants indicate that about 200,000 cubic yards of sediment would be displaced by the lakebed. Some lakebed sediments would be disturbed to prepare the construction area for "dry" construction (placement of a cofferdam). Construction of the intake/outlet structure would have relatively short-term effects on the disruption (displacement) of lakebed sediments and concurrent short-term effects on water quality (see section 3.3.2.2, *Environmental Consequences*, *Water Quality*).

Because of the inherent nature of the design (lines suspended above the ground surface), the construction of the transmission lines is anticipated to produce relatively little effect on erosion and sedimentation. The more-important aspect of the construction of the proposed transmission alignment would be the construction of the anticipated temporary access and permanent maintenance roads. Road stream crossings (culverts, bridges, or low-water crossings) have the potential to have a greater effect on erosion and sedimentation than the lines themselves. The co-applicants have not delineated any road

options for such construction, and because of grade requirements (resulting in switchbacks, contour-hugging alignments), it is conceivable that stream crossings for the roads would far out number those of the linear transmission lines. For instance, the proposed transmission alignment would cross streams delineated by the USGS 22 times for the entire project. However, this assessment does not include smaller "unmapped" intermittent or ephemeral channels. In the Elsinore Mountains, these stream types are typically just as adept at moving sediment as perennial streams, and because they are often steeper and higher in elevation, they can also offer additional potential for debris flows.

Although the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment and any related access roads would cross San Mateo Creek and its tributaries at a number of locations, establishment of appropriate setbacks from streams, avoidance of sediment discharge to those streams, and implementation of BMPs including, but not limited to, those road, building site, and watershed BMPs identified in USFS' *Water Quality Management for Forest System Lands in California—Best Management Practices* (USFS, 2000), would ensure that construction activities would not result in sediment discharge to the San Mateo Creek Watershed. Further, the *Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan* (USFS, 2005a) limits road construction to slopes under 15 percent.[25] Final designs and sediment control plans and measures are proposed for appropriate agency and Commission approval. At this time, it is anticipated that through design and mitigation measures, all resources would be adequately protected during project construction. These same practices should be applied to any subsequent maintenance ground-disturbing activities over the term of any licenses issued.

Staff Alternative—The Decker Canyon site would include a 240-foot-high dam, a dike 50 feet high, and a patrol road around the reservoir. The rock units observable in Decker Canyon are the same as Morrell Canyon; however, surface alluvium and thick accumulations of slopewash are largely absent from this upper reservoir site. Soil development is shallow (reportedly less than 2 inches) and overlies intact bedrock. The location and configurations of the proposed reservoir at Decker Canyon encompass the upper end of the creek in Decker Canyon, as shown on USGS topographic maps. Therefore, because the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site is at the top of the watercourse, no stream bypass system would be required. It is presumed that a liner system for this site would require mechanical preparation of the hillslopes to accept the geosynthetic liner. Dam and dike construction would require excavation for foundations, and a perimeter patrol road would be built into the hillslope in areas where natural topography forms the side of the reservoir. The upper reservoir dam and dike would have a combined fill volume of approximately 3 million cubic yards (compared to 2.6 million

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[25] USFS staff indicated that road construction would probably not be allowed in areas with greater than 15 percent slope.

for the proposed Morrell Canyon site) and a total footprint of about 120 acres (compared to 130 acres for the proposed Morrell Canyon site).

There are 18 potential high-pressure conduit alignments between the upper reservoir sites and powerhouse sites, each with a different length (see table 1 for details on lengths and excavated volumes). The total excavation quantities range from 114,920 to 169,760 cubic yards (table 1). Staging and storage areas for boring and excavated materials have not been defined, but are ostensibly coincident with the footprint of the upper reservoir site, the powerhouse site, and their respective staging areas. Implementation of erosion control measures during construction of the conduits would be expected to provide an adequate degree of protection from erosion and sedimentation.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be 58 acres, with the construction laydown area located within the 58-acre site. The estimated depth of excavation to construct the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be 320 feet, compared to 340 feet for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. Unconfirmed[26] geophysical survey data suggest that groundwater is approximately 30 to 70 feet below the ground surface at this site. The effects of construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be similar to the proposed Santa Rosa site, and the proper use of erosion control measures would mitigate any effects on geology and soils.

For the most part, effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those described above for the proposed transmission alignment. However, stream crossings for the mid-slope transmission alignment corridors and roads have not been quantified, but we can assess such alignments qualitatively. The proposed transmission alignments would tend to have similar numbers of crossings, owing to their position upslope of the headwaters of many streams. In general, mid-slope roads and alignments would inherently cross more streams than the ridgeline alignments because mid-slope locations harbor more-developed drainage networks that are oftentimes more perennial in nature than upper slope locations.

Because the portions of this segment of transmission line that trend east to west would run nearly straight up the face of the Elsinore Mountains, helicopters would be used. Construction effects related to erosion and sedimentation would be limited to the pads required for each transmission tower. Exact alignment of the transmission line and

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[26] The presence or absence of a water table has a significant bearing on the difficulty and potential hazards associated with underground works. Seismic refraction data alone are insufficient to quantify groundwater depths or even the presence or absence of groundwater. There are significant unexplained differences between the subsurface seismic survey profile interpretations in the co-applicants' application. The seismic profile interpretations in the license application have not been confirmed ("proofed") by boreholes, down-hole logs, and geologic information, all critical elements in limiting the range of uncertainties present in seismic survey profile interpretations.

its towers would need to be done such that the pads or construction of the pads would not destabilize slopes or impair surface runoff and increase erosion. The north to south trending portion of this transmission line segment would run along the ridgeline or just below the ridgeline of the crest of the Elsinore Mountains. These portions of this segment could be constructed from either existing roads, or roads specially constructed for this project. Effects for this portion of the segment are similar to those previously described for the proposed and alternative alignments.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site would be a 75-acre site. The construction laydown area would be 30 acres immediately to the northeast, between the Evergreen powerhouse site and Grand Avenue. The estimated depth of excavation to construct the Evergreen powerhouse would be 290 feet, compared to 340 feet for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. The effects of construction at the Evergreen powerhouse site would be similar to the proposed Santa Rosa site, and the proper use of erosion control measures would mitigate any effects on geology and soils.

Effects of Operations on Erosion and Sedimentation

Co-applicants' Proposal—Operations would involve the cycling of water between Lake Elsinore and the upper reservoir by generating power with releases from the upper reservoir to Lake Elsinore and then returning water to the upper reservoir by operating the project in a pumped storage mode. This cycling operation would be accompanied by typical upper reservoir water-level fluctuations of about 40 feet on a daily basis and by water-level fluctuations of 75 feet during the course of a full-week cycle. Emergency outlets (spillway and low-level outlet) would only be used when rainfall or other phenomenon might cause overtopping and failure of the dam.

Water from the upper reservoir would be cycled to and from Lake Elsinore via the proposed tailrace and intake/outlet structure. Water velocities entering and exiting the intake/outlet structure could entrain sediment. These potential effects are primarily related to generation of water turbidity and are discussed and analyzed in section 3.3.2.2, *Environmental Consequences*, *Water Quality*.

Once constructed, the proposed transmission alignment would operate largely without frequent inputs of human contact or visitation. In spite of infrequent visitation, maintenance roads must be maintained to provide access at any time. In addition, based on their route through the chaparral and other vegetation types of the Elsinore Mountains that are at high risk of fire, the proposed transmission alignment may require periodic vegetation clearing and/or emergency access to facilitate fire suppression activities.

Effects Analysis

Rapid and frequent drawdown of the upper reservoir surface could have adverse effects on shoreline erosion and stability of an earth fill dam with inadequate protection on the upstream slope. These effects are in addition to the risk of settlement and cracking of the structure. The co-applicants propose to install a geosynthetic reservoir liner to

protect the upstream slope of the embankment. The final design of the embankment and calculations would be submitted to the Commission with the final designs and specifications. The design must be in accordance with the Commission's Engineering Guidelines and sound engineering practice. These documents would be prepared under the review of the board of three or more qualified independent engineering consultants and be reviewed by the Commission's Division of Dam Safety and Inspections.

Spills from the spillway are not anticipated and would only be used under emergency situations. Erosion from flows in the spillway would be mitigated through the use of concrete revetment on the spillway and an energy dissipater at the terminus of the channel. If a low-level outlet is incorporated into the reservoir design, a similar energy dissipater would mitigate erosion as it dispersed water into the natural stream channel. No mitigation is proposed for any resulting erosion within the downstream stream channel under emergency discharge from these structures.

Operations at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site would not produce erosion or sedimentation.

Operation of the project at Lake Elsinore would result in daily lake level fluctuations of about 1 foot and weekly lake level fluctuations of about 1.7 feet. This amount of fluctuation, in combination with wind waves and boat wakes, would produce a wave action effect, not unlike the rising and falling action of ocean tides, moving the sediments up and downslope across the relatively flat shoreline. The effect would be more of a re-working of sediments than erosion of sediments. Erosion and sedimentation effects of operating the proposed transmission alignment are related to maintenance. The clearing of vegetation itself could produce erosion depending on the method of removal (ranging from none if herbicide is applied to substantial if removed manually with a bulldozer or masticator). In addition, fire suppression activities also might be required to maintain operation of the transmission lines. Regardless, all maintenance or fire suppression activities would require roads unless helicopter transportation is employed. Road maintenance should include provisions to ensure that surface grading is undertaken in a way that would not exacerbate erosion.[27] All road maintenance and vegetation management techniques would be developed in conjunction with appropriate agency and Commission review; as such, all techniques are anticipated to provide an adequate level of resource protection.

Staff Alternative—Operations at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site also would involve the cycling of water between Lake Elsinore and the upper reservoir by generating power with releases from the upper reservoir to Lake Elsinore and then returning water to the upper reservoir by operating the project in a pumped storage mode.

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[27] Road surface maintenance activities can result in undesirable conditions such as the concentration of water in inboard ditches and the burial of cross road drains, rendering them ineffective.

Consequently, the effects on the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would be the same as described above for the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

As with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, operations at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not produce erosion or sedimentation. Effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as previously described for the proposed transmission alignment.

The costs pertaining to the erosion control plan are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*; and measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—As with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, operations at the Evergreen powerhouse site would not produce erosion or sedimentation.

Effects of Construction Related to On- and Off-Site Borrow

Co-applicants' Proposal—The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir could call for a zoned earth and rockfill dam having a central impervious core or a concrete-faced earth and rockfill dam. Either option would require substantial material for its construction (see table 2). The co-applicants' propose that, overall, the project site would achieve a balance between excavation and fill, thereby avoiding the need to transport materials to the project site.[28]

Table 2. Fill quantities for upper reservoir alternatives. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, exhibit E, appendix E-10, as modified by staff)

Upper Reservoir Site	Alternative	Fill Volume (million cubic yards)
Morrell Canyon	A.1	3.0
	A.2	2.5
	A.3	2.6
Decker Canyon	B.1	5.0
	B.2	3.0

Based on the co-applicants' proposed project configurations (where the Morrell Canyon alternative A.3 reservoir configuration requires 2.653 million cubic yards and the

[28] An exception to the excavation and fill balance would be in the case of a dam requiring an impervious core requiring low-permeability clay or clay-like material.

quantities of material obtained from other project component includes 333,500 cubic yards for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site [including the powerhouse cavern, transformer gallery, surge shaft, powerhouse access shaft, vent shaft, and draft tube tunnel excavation], 177,500 cubic yards for the high-pressure conduit [alternative H.3] and penstock, and 265,000 cubic yards for the tailrace tunnel and intake structure [less the 186,000 cubic yards needed for backfilling]), a deficit of approximately 2.063 million cubic yards would remain in order to build the proposed Morrell Canyon A.3 reservoir configuration. Further, this scenario assumes that all of the material excavated would be suitable for placement in the dam/dike(s)—an unlikely event based on the preliminary information related to soft-grained soils at the site of the proposed tailrace structure and the fact that if a tunnel boring machine is employed, the size of the rock spoil would be too small for rock fill. Therefore, the deficit would likely be larger.

The deficit could be made up via material excavated on site (to prepare the site for the dam/dike foundation and from the reservoir floor, as needed); however, this assumes that all of the material excavated would be suitable for placement in the dam/dike(s). Substantial on-site (within the reservoir footprint area) sorting of excavated material may be needed to create either dam option (zoned earth and rockfill dam with central impervious core, or concrete-faced earth and rockfill dam). In addition, one of the designs needs low-permeability material (clay) for the central core areas of the dam/dike(s). The co-applicants have identified a readily available source of clay in the Alberhill area (Pacific Clay Products, Inc.), located about 10 miles northwest of the project site. The Alberhill area, in the northern part of the Lake Elsinore quadrangle and at the southeast end of the Temescal Valley, contains the largest known high-aluminous clay deposits in southern California.

Off-site borrow would not be necessary for the construction of any of the proposed powerhouse or proposed transmission alignments.

Effects Analysis

The shaft, tunnel, and powerhouse cavern excavations would not result in appreciable quantities of excavated rock, requiring that the remaining material be obtained at the reservoir site itself. Consequently, suitable material at the dam site would have to be developed to provide the remaining dam fill. Based on the relatively substantial amount of overburden at the Morrell Canyon site (from 5 to 50 feet), development of on-site fill material is an option but would substantially increase the estimated unit cost for earth and rock fill proposed by the co-applicants. In addition, excavating material from the reservoir footprint to achieve the remaining fill would likely have substantively different effects from that related to site clearing and grading and contouring the reservoir for the liner (which would happen subsequent to material excavation/dam construction and would entail only grading activities). These different

effects include the double handling[29] associated with sorting, crushing, and developing soil and rock material as on-site fill material, increased duration (and potentially the magnitude) of noise and diesel emissions, and the increased costs of these activities.

It is anticipated that final designs and work sequences would establish a system for sorting that would use portions of the overburden to create a final, smooth surface for the reservoir liner and other portions for zoned earth and rock fill.

Clay can apparently be obtained from an existing source (the Alberhill area). Although volume estimates and product availability at the proposed off-site location do not appear on the record, the adverse effects of clay excavation would appear to be minimal based on the fact that a developed source exists and infrastructure is likely to be already in place.

Staff Alternative—Construction of a dam and dike (alternative B.2 from table 2) at the Decker Canyon site would use material from shaft, tunnel, and powerhouse cavern excavations, as well as material obtained from within the reservoir footprint. The on-site material requirements for the B.2 alternative at Decker Canyon are more than for the proposed Morrell Canyon A.3 alternative; however, procurement of sound rock material at Decker Canyon would be far easier because of the lack of substantial overburden. Because the overburden is quite thin at Decker Canyon, there would not be a need for as much "sorting" of overburden to separate out usable material for the dam from that which is suitable only for re-contouring. Instead, material for placement as dam fill will be immediately available upon excavation from within the reservoir footprint.

On-site and off-site borrow would not be necessary for the construction the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

On-site and off-site borrow would not be necessary for the construction of the mid-slope transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—On-site and off-site borrow would not be necessary for the construction the optional Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation Related to On-site and Off-site Borrow

Because on- and off-site borrow is only related to construction of the project, there are no operational effects related to off-site borrow.

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[29] Double handling consists of moving soil or rock material more than one time between just two locations. In this instance, material would be excavated and taken to a sorter and/or crusher, then again hauled to either its final placement in the dam or temporary storage location where the material would await placement as re-contouring material.

Effects of Construction on Geologic Hazards

Construction of the LEAPS project could be influenced by two types of geologic hazards: those related to seismicity (including the potential for liquefaction and existing Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones) and those related to landslides and debris flows.

Seismicity (Liquefaction, Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones)

Faulting in the Lake Elsinore area has been relatively well documented. The Willard fault zone has been tentatively classified as active, however; the position of the fault zone is uncertain. Genterra Consultants (2003) indicate that the (single) fault lies between the proposed powerhouse and Lake Elsinore, and would be crossed by the tailrace tunnel(s). However, the description of the fault zone indicates that several fault strands are involved, and that surface expressions occur at elevation 1,450 feet msl, about elevation 1,700 feet msl, elevation 1,850 feet msl, and elevation 2,100 feet msl. The proposed Santa Rosa underground powerhouse is centered on the elevation 1,420 feet msl ground surface contour, which would place it between the lowest surface expression of the Willard fault strands and Lake Elsinore, and the series of faults would be crossed by the high pressure tunnel(s). The other alternative powerhouse sites appear to be either directly on (figure 5) or above the fault, indicating that the tailrace structure would need to traverse the series of faults.

The Wildomar fault is classified as active. The latest USGS mapping shows its possible position beneath Lake Elsinore as being a short distance from the southwestern shore. The potential lateral displacement of this fault in a magnitude 7 to 7.5 earthquake as measured on the Richter scale[30] is estimated to be in the order of 5 to 16 feet (Berger, 1997). The tailrace structure for the proposed and alternative powerhouse sites would likely cross this fault.

Related to ground surface rupturing, California Division of Mines and Geology mapping indicates the proposed northern transmission alignment traverses a designated Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone just south of Highway 71 in Temescal Valley.

Effects Analysis

It is very unlikely that any of the activities related to construction of the proposed project would induce seismic instability and result in a seismic event. This includes the effects of blasting for tunnels, penstocks, and powerhouses and the effects of groundwater disturbance.

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[30] Each whole number increase in Richter magnitude means that the ground motion of the quake is ten times greater than the previous whole number. Thus, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 has ten times the ground motion of one with a magnitude of 5.5; an earthquake of 7.5 has 100 times the ground motion of the 5.5 earthquake, and so on.

Conversely, the adverse effects of a seismic event on project construction activities would be potentially substantial depending on the component of the project being worked on. These effects may include damage to project infrastructure or construction related equipment, or injury or loss of life of construction crews. Such potential would be mitigated through adherence to Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards for workplace safety. Because of the nature of the work being performed (underground drilling, boring, and facility construction) the adverse effects of damage to project infrastructure or construction-related equipment are inherently without mitigation.

Co-applicants' Proposal—Subsurface flows at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site may be controlled by the existence of faults that can act as barriers or conduits of subsurface flows (Berger, V., 1997).

As previously discussed, at least two faults near Lake Elsinore may directly influence project facilities in the vicinity of Lake Elsinore. As such, the proposed powerhouse, high-pressure conduit, and tailrace structure are analyzed together. Further, the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would traverse a designated Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone south of Highway 71 in Temescal Valley.

Especially challenging geotechnical hazards have not been identified for the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site. Furthermore, available information suggests that even if a fault is present, it probably predates the active faults previously discussed, and is therefore more likely to be a concern from the perspective of locally poor quality ground due to shearing/weathering rather than the possibility of movement. This would affect constructability from the perspective of a need for additional high-quality rock or soil fill (as discussed in *Off-Site Borrow Area*), rather than from a seismic safety perspective.

The direction of the Willard fault(s) is approximately parallel to the longitudinal axes of the powerhouse cavern, the transformer gallery, and the surge chamber (shaft). An active fault or extensive adjacent shear zone could not be tolerated in these excavations/facilities. Because of the lateral extent (upstream-downstream) of these facilities, positioning them to avoid the Willard fault zone may be extremely difficult, possibly requiring them to be moved deeper into the Elsinore Mountains or closer to the lake. The former move would seriously affect access, and the latter move would raise a concern as to the adequacy of the rock cover.

Although the co-applicants have not proposed them, measures are available to permit water supply tunnels to operate across active faults. These measures consist of an over-excavation through the fault zone and on each side and installation of a steel liner/pipe with lightweight cellular concrete backfill around the pipe. Although other applications of these measures have involved relatively small conduits compared to those that would be required for the proposed project, measures could conceivably be developed to allow either the high or low pressure conduits to cross the Willard fault zone, particularly if large lateral displacements are not anticipated. The feasibility of

crossing the faults also depends on the extent of the ground disturbance on either side; if there are extensive shear zones, particularly if accompanied by deep weathering, then tunneling itself will be difficult.

A currently unknown depth of overburden would separate the project structures from the rupture surface of the Wildomar fault. However, a displacement of the magnitude envisioned would undoubtedly be accompanied by substantial disturbance of the overlying materials. Crossing this fault would likely result in serious damage in the event of large displacements. Accordingly, every effort should be made to determine its location, and the tailrace tunnels/conduits and intake/outlet structure should be positioned to the shoreward side of the fault.

The presence or absence of a water table has a significant bearing on the difficulty and potential hazards associated with the underground components of the project in general, and the soft-ground section of the tailrace tunnel in particular. If the overburden materials are not saturated, then they cannot liquefy, regardless of the particle size and grading. However, overburden material consisting of loose unconsolidated sediment could liquefy if saturated.

Review of sub-surface seismic survey profile interpretations for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site reveals uncertainty regarding the presence of a water table (or a deeply weathered bedrock zone). A water table or zone of weathered bedrock is seen in other nearby profiles but is absent at the Santa Rosa site. Some structural geologic differences between the sites may explain this uncertainty; however, any uncertainty related to the presence of or depth to a water table translates to an unknown degree of complication for construction at the Santa Rosa site.

The co-applicants propose to support the intake/outlet structure on piles. Whether this is an appropriate solution depends on the nature of the materials and on the depth to bedrock. If the nature of the materials and/or the potential for liquefaction is such that end-bearing piles are required to support the structure, and if the depth to bedrock is such that the piles would have to be of excessive diameter to prevent buckling, or toppling, piling would not provide a solution. A solution might not be available in such a situation.

Given the limited available information at this stage of preliminary project design and geotechnical exploration, we do not think the project, as currently proposed by the applicants, can be built at the site for the cost they estimate (see section 4, *Developmental Analysis*). The uncertainty that exists about the position of fault zones and adjacent ground conditions could require the applicants' to modify the existing design for the proposed powerhouse, conduits, tailrace tunnels/conduits, and intake/outlet structure. To address this uncertainty, additional measures may be needed to design and build the project structures at this site. We account for these measures in our estimate of the project's cost.

These additional measures would be designed prior to construction and be described in detail in the final Supporting Design Report, plans, and specifications for

project construction. With these measures, the project could be constructed at the site, but at a greater cost, as presented in section 4, *Developmental Analysis*.

The proposed northern transmission alignment crosses an approximately 1,000-foot-wide (Hart and Bryant, 1997) designated Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone. This fault does not appear to be major, and it is anticipated that during design, accommodations can be made to either span this zone by placing the towers outside the zone or by way of designing both the towers and lines to accommodate any ground movement.

Staff Alternative—No major faults have been identified in Decker Canyon and the site does not appear to be influenced by faulting. As with the proposed upper Morrell Canyon reservoir site, especially challenging geotechnical hazards have not been identified for the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site.

There are significant unexplained differences between the sub-surface seismic survey profile interpretations at the Ortega Oaks and the Santa Rosa powerhouse sites. The Ortega Oaks profile shows either a water table at about where one might be expected given the presence of Lake Elsinore at about elevation 1,245 feet msl a few hundred feet from the line, or a deeply weathered bedrock zone. This feature is absent at the Santa Rosa site only 4,000 feet to the southeast. Perhaps there is an ancient northeasterly trending fault between the two sites, as suggested by the lineaments and the second stage geotechnical evaluation (Berger, V., 1997). However, this would not explain why a water table is not evident at the Santa Rosa site, not even a static water table at the level of Lake Elsinore.

In summary, groundwater and subsurface geologic conditions at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site are unconfirmed. As such, seismicity issues at this site are not quantified and would be resolved via geophysical investigations and characterizations undertaken prior to the start of construction. Based on available information, it appears that the alternative mid-slope transmission alignment would not cross a designated Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—As with the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, groundwater and subsurface geologic conditions at the Evergreen powerhouse site are unconfirmed. Seismicity issues at this site are not quantified and would be resolved via geophysical investigations and characterizations undertaken prior to the start of construction.

Landslides/Debris Flows

Deep-seated landsliding in the project area is not evident; however, surficial instability in the form of slopewash and rocks (colluvium) accumulating at the base of slopes was observed. Projected maximum credible ground motions estimated for the project area may generate sufficient shaking to dislodge some of the slopewash and rocky materials mantling the slope.

The issues related to project construction and landslides/debris flows are discussed and analyzed relative to operational effects.

Effects of Operations on Geologic Hazards

Seismicity (Liquefaction, Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones)

The potential effects of seismic hazards related to operation of both the co-applicants' proposal and the staff alternative are covered in our previous discussion related to construction. This is because a substantial component in determining constructability of the project entails determining the feasibility of designing project features such that they can be constructed to adequately function while subjected to a variety of seismic hazards (i.e., strong ground movements, ground rupture, and liquefaction). As such, the potential effects of seismic hazards related to operation of both the co-applicants' proposal and the alternatives would be addressed during the design (and construction) process.

Landslides/Debris Flows

Steep slopes loaded with sufficient quantities of colluvium and/or loose or weathered rock are susceptible to landslides and debris flows given sufficient initiation. This initiation could come from a seismic event, addition of water from a reservoir or penstock breach, or the concentration of hillslope runoff by a project road or drainage structure onto a slope. A landslide or debris flow also could be affected by the project through the construction roads constructed using side-cast fill on steep slopes (instead of full-bench construction). Transmission line towers located in steep terrain (for instance, the east-west trending portions of the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment) could be subjected to landslides or debris flows depending on their placement.

During the subsequent design phase of the project, existing slopewash and accumulated rocks would be evaluated as to the potential effect of site development (i.e., roads, transmission towers, and other facilities) on their stability and the potential effect on project facilities as a result of strong ground motions. This analysis and design process would also need to take into account the effect of the concentration of hillslope runoff on areas of colluvium and steep draws as related to the initiation of landslides or debris flows. This design and analysis process would be under the review and approval of appropriate resource agencies, such as the USFS, and the Commission, and is anticipated to provide adequate protection to geological and soil resources. In addition, the co-applicants would develop and implement a plan for the design and construction of a system to automatically detect conduit or penstock failure and, in the event of such a failure, immediately shut off flow in the conduit or penstock at the headworks.

Dam Breach and Dike Failure

The Commission's *Engineering Guidelines for the Evaluation of Hydropower Projects*, require that dam break studies be performed to determine the consequences of a

dam failure, as well as the inflow design flood. This evaluation is known as an incremental hazard evaluation (FERC, 2000). The dam break studies are performed to determine the incremental increase due to failure under both normal pool conditions (full reservoir with normal streamflow conditions prevailing) and floodflow conditions (dam failure during a flood) up to the point where a dam failure would no longer significantly increase the threat to life or property. For each flood condition, water surface elevations with and without dam failure, flood wave travel time, and rates of rise are determined. The inflow design flood is the flow above which the incremental increase in water surface elevation due to failure of a dam is no longer considered to present an unacceptable threat to downstream life and property. The inflow design flood is used in the design of the dam for sizing the spillway and outlet works and determining the maximum height of the dam, freeboard, and temporary storage requirements.

The co-applicants state that, because the precise location and configuration of the proposed upper reservoir has not been determined and cannot be entirely known pending the outcome of the Commission's licensing process, they have only undertaken dam break analyses for normal pool conditions and the preliminary design of the structures. The co-applicants note that an incremental hazard evaluation will be provided as part of the Emergency Action Plan, which would also examine potential inundation hazards associated with floodflow conditions.

Effects Analysis

Because the proposed upper reservoir sites are located at the headwaters of San Juan Creek, roughly coincident with the drainage divide between that watershed and that of Lake Elsinore, a dam failure could discharge water into San Juan Creek, and a dike failure could discharge water toward Lake Elsinore. Mode of failure in the co-applicants' dam breach analyses were via a hypothetical piping failure; the hypothetical failure modes for the dike breach analyses included overtopping of the dike crest and internal erosion (piping) through the dike embankment materials.

Co-applicants' Proposal—The preliminary inundation area for the project is depicted in figure 10. The Commission's Division of Dam Safety and Inspection's San Francisco Regional Office performed a Pre-License inspection and issued a report dated January 6, 2005. Paragraph A of the Pre-license Inspection Report discusses the downstream hazard potential of the project.

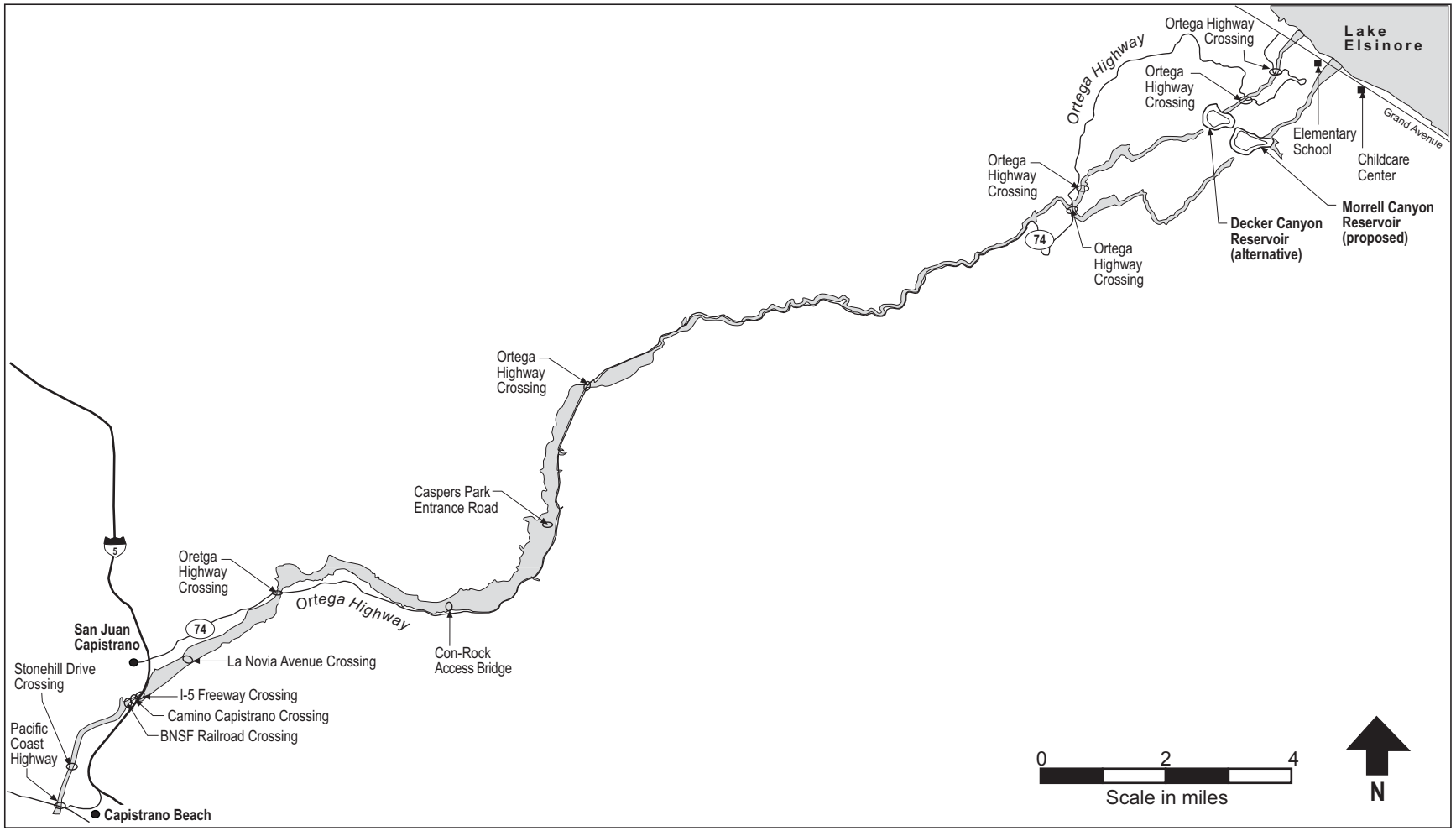

Figure 10. LEAPS Project—Extent of inundation resulting from dam/dike break. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

The report notes that based on the dam break analyses included in the license application, a dam breach at the Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site would generate a flood wave that would cause overbank flow along San Juan Creek for about 15 miles to the Pacific Ocean. The areas subject to flooding include campgrounds, residential and commercial buildings, and Ortega Highway (State Route 74) stream crossings. The study estimates that depths could be as high as 39 feet in the narrow canyon areas. A similar study was performed to estimate inundation toward Lake Elsinore should a lower elevation dike fail. Breaching of a dike would result in flooding, however with less release of water. Structures and possibly residences in the city of Lake Elsinore would be inundated up to 14 feet for Morrell Canyon reservoir.

The report notes that observations made during the inspection confirm that the proposed project would be classified as having a high downstream hazard potential. In accordance with the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety – Hazard Potential Classification Systems for Dams (October 1998), dams assigned the high hazard potential are those where failure or misoperation will probably cause a loss of human life.

The dam break analyses discussed in the license application was based on preliminary designs and did not include an inflow design flood condition. The design of the structures could change prior to construction which would affect the parameters used in the daybreak analyses. The inflow design flood will need to be determined for the final design of the structures as well as the finalizing the dam break analyses. The inflow design flood determination should be included in the Supporting Design Report – which would be reviewed and commented by the Commission staff prior to start of construction. The dam break analyses under both the normal and inflow design flood conditions would be included in the Emergency Action Plan, which would be submitted at least 60 days prior to initial filling of the reservoir begins in accordance with Part 12, Subpart C of the Commission's regulations.

Staff Alternative—The preliminary inundation area for the staff alternative using the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site also is depicted in figure 10. The Commission's Division of Dam Safety and Inspection's report notes that based on the dam break analyses included in the license application, a dam breach at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site also would generate a flood wave that would cause overbank flow along San Juan Creek for about 15 miles to the Pacific Ocean, similar to the Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site. The same areas would be subject to flooding with water depths that could be as high as 39 feet in the narrow canyon areas. Breaching of a dike would result in flooding, however with less release of water. Structures and possibly residences in the city of Lake Elsinore would be inundated up to 6 feet for Decker Canyon reservoir.

The report notes that observations made during the inspection confirm that the Decker Canyon upper reservoir would be classified as having a high downstream hazard potential. In accordance with the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety—Hazard Potential Classification Systems for Dams (October 1998), dams assigned the high hazard potential are those where failure or misoperation will probably cause a loss of human life.

As with the Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, the inflow design flood will need to be determined for the final design of the structures as well as the finalizing the dam break analyses.

3.3.1.3 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

The placement of a dam, dike, and reservoir at Morrell Canyon would interrupt natural streamflow and sediment transport processes. These effects would be largely unavoidable. This effect is not present at the Decker Canyon reservoir location because the reservoir would be situated at the top of the watershed and has essentially no contributing drainage area. The construction of a dam at either location would create an unavoidable adverse effect in the unlikely event that either the dam or dike fails. In addition, shoreline stabilization measures (at Lake Elsinore), placement of informative signage, and the construction and/or improvement of fisheries facilities, trails, campsites, boat ramps, and access areas, all elements of the co-applicants' proposal, have the potential to result in minor, unavoidable, short-term, localized increases in the potential for erosion.

3.3.2 Water Resources

3.3.2.1 Affected Environment

Surface Water

Lake Elsinore

Lake Elsinore is a natural lake and is about 5 miles long and 2 miles wide. The primary source of water to the lake is the San Jacinto River with a drainage area of about 723 square miles, which is the largest part of the 782 square mile drainage area to Lake Elsinore. The remaining watershed consists of smaller tributaries which flow directly into Lake Elsinore and direct rainfall on the lake surface. Canyon Lake, which has a storage capacity of about 12,000 acre-feet and a surface area of 525 acres is located along the San Jacinto River, about 3 miles upstream from Lake Elsinore. The Elsinore Valley MWD, the owner of Canyon Lake dam, operates the reservoir for water supply and storage of water purchased from the Colorado River. Spillage at the Canyon Lake dam is relatively rare except during high runoff from winter storm events due to the Elsinore Valley MWD withdrawals and small inflow values. Table 3 provides flow data for USGS Gage No. 11070500 located about 2 miles downstream from the Canyon Lake dam. Natural inflow to the lake averages 11,380 acre-feet per year.

Table 3. Daily discharge (cfs) statistics for USGS gage no. 1107055 San Jacinto River at Elsinore, California, for water years 1975 to 2004. (Source: USGS, 2005b)

Month	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum	10% Exceedance	90% Exceedance
Annual	23.93	0.63	8,080	0.00	4.80	0.00
October	0.44	0.36	12	0.00	0.92	0.00
November	0.69	0.65	11	0.00	1.30	0.08
December	1.14	0.94	25	0	1.80	0.36
January	41.55	1.10	4,490	0.15	8.93	0.48
February	128.84	1.45	8,080	0.17	91.30	0.68
March	93.57	1.40	5,350	0.00	237.10	0.60
April	18.01	0.96	365	0.01	63.00	0.37
May	8.13	0.57	490	0.00	18.00	0.16
June	0.93	0.26	17	0.00	2.00	0.00
July	0.28	0.10	1.90	0.00	0.99	0.00
August	0.18	0.05	1.60	0.00	0.55	0.00
September	0.26	0.16	2.10	0.00	0.55	0.00

Note: cfs – cubic feet per second

Adjacent and located to the southeast of Lake Elsinore are three other water bodies: Back Basin, Lake Alpha, and Lake Beta. Back Basin is normally dry and is separated from Lake Elsinore by a 2.5-mile-long earthen berm constructed as part of the Lake Elsinore Management Project under the auspices of the Corps, BLM, and Riverside County FCWCD. This project was completed in the early 1990s to reduce evaporation losses from Lake Elsinore and provide additional flood storage, while improving water quality, habitat, and recreational opportunities associated with Lake Elsinore. The Back Basin berm has an overflow weir at elevation 1,262 feet msl at which point flow from Lake Elsinore enters Back Basin. Lake Alpha and Lake Beta are connected to Lake Elsinore by a 48-inch gated conduit in the levee. These two lakes form a wetland area and are effectively the low spots in the Back Basin.

An unfinished element of the Lake Elsinore Management Project was the establishment of a long-term supplemental water supply for the lake. Planners felt that recycled water would be a preferred source over using scare potable water for lake level stabilization.

To address this issue, the Elsinore Valley MWD and the city of Lake Elsinore formed a Recycled Water Task Force charged with determining public opinion on the use of recycled water to supplement Lake Elsinore, identifying the desired actions and outcomes for the use of recycled water, and preparing a white paper on the topic. The task force published its findings in 1997 and concluded that recycled water may be acceptable for supplementing the water in Lake Elsinore provided that Title 22 standards for disinfected tertiary treatment approved uses are met, nutrient removal to within the lowest natural background levels can be integrated into the next treatment plant upgrade, and a lake water quality monitoring program is implemented. Subsequently, the Elsinore Valley MWD implemented a feasibility study in support of a NPDES permit and, along with the Eastern MWD, began a pilot discharge project in June 2002. With permits to add 4,480 acre-feet of recycled water and up to 5,000 acre-feet of groundwater (from the Island Wells) each year for 2 years, the pilot discharge project was intended to increase and stabilize lake levels and to test the effects of recycled water discharge on water quality and beneficial uses of the lake. The pilot discharge project was extended through January 2005.

In July 2001, the LESJWA filed a Notice of Intent to prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report for the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project. The stated objectives of this project are the following: (1) stabilization of water level of Lake Elsinore, by maintaining the lake elevation within a desirable operating range (minimum of 1,240 feet msl to a maximum of 1, 247 feet msl); (2) improvement of lake water quality (i.e., reduce algae blooms, increase water clarity, increase DO concentrations throughout the water column, and reduce or eliminate fish kills); and (3) enhancement of Lake Elsinore as a regional aesthetic and recreational resource. The LESJWA approved the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project in September 2005.

The primary source for make-up water is Elsinore Valley MWD's Regional Reclamation Plant[31] adjacent to Lake Elsinore. Elsinore Valley MWD relies on water rights permit 30520 for an exclusive right to all water discharged from the reclamation plant. Elsinore Valley MWD also can supplement make-up water with water from its Island Wells. Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005) indicate that no water acquisition rights would be needed to purchase reclaimed water. Additionally, a March 13, 2003, Escrow Agreement manages a Lake Maintenance Fund established as part of the Lake Elsinore Comprehensive Water Management Agreement signed with the city of Lake Elsinore.

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[31] Elsinore Valley MWD's Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant provides tertiary treatment to wastewater such that it can be reused in a variety of applications and is suitable for contact recreation.

Substantial human actions in the watershed and Lake Elsinore itself affect the lake's inflow, elevation, and discharge. Water can flow out of Lake Elsinore through an outlet channel and into Warm Springs Creek and subsequently to Temescal Wash whenever the lake level exceeds 1,255 feet msl. This only occurs under torrential rainfall conditions or when an extended wet period results in abnormally high lake elevations. The bottom elevation of Lake Elsinore is 1,223 feet msl. At an elevation of 1,240 feet msl, Elsinore Lake has a surface area of 3,074 acres and stores 38,519 acre-feet. Historically, the lake elevation was highly variable and has completely dried out including years 1850, 1880, 1954, and 1959 through 1963 (Dunbar, 1990, as cited in LESJWA, 2005). The co-applicants indicate that 1951 was also a year in which the lake went completely dry. Evaporation losses from Lake Elsinore are substantial and are estimated at 56.2 inches per year, much larger than the average annual precipitation of 11.6 inches. Such evaporation losses translate to 15,500 acre-feet per year assuming a nominal elevation of 1,245 feet msl, an elevation that corresponds to a lake area of 3,319 acres.

Temescal Wash flows about 28 miles from Lake Elsinore in a northwesterly direction to its confluence with the Santa Ana River, just upstream of Prado dam (LESJWA, 2005). Following the construction of the Back Basin berm and other improvements of the Lake Elsinore Management Project, Lake Elsinore has a 100-year flood elevation of 1,263.3 feet msl and a combined storage of about 150,000 acre-feet, which includes the Back Basin (LESJWA, 2005). Prior to this construction, in February 1980, a series of storms caused Lake Elsinore to rise to elevation 1,265.7 feet msl, causing substantial spill into Temescal Creek (personal communication, letter from R. Koplin, Chief, Engineering Division, S.C. Thomas, Senior Civil Engineer, Riverside County FCWCD, dated August 15, 2003; Corps, 2003). After the flood control improvements were made, the highest peak flow recorded at USGS gage no. 11072100, Temescal Creek near Corona, about 15 miles downstream from Lake Elsinore, was 3,660 cubic feet per second (cfs) on February 24, 1998 (USGS, 2005b). Under normal conditions when Lake Elsinore is not spilling, Temescal Wash receives discharges of highly treated tertiary effluent from the Elsinore Valley MWD Regional Plant and excess recycled water from the Eastern MWD Temescal Valley Water Reclamation Facility (MWH, 2005).

Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon

The Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon sites would be located on the west side of the Elsinore Mountains within the upper drainage of San Juan Creek which does not drain to Lake Elsinore. The Morrell Canyon site has a drainage area of 3.28 square miles upstream of the proposed dam, although most of that drainage would be bypassed around the reservoir. The Decker Canyon site is located at the headwaters of its drainage basin and would only drain about 90 acres (0.14 square mile). The San Juan Creek flows generally towards the west and has a 176 square mile drainage area when it discharges into the Pacific Ocean at Doheny State Park near Dana Point and Capistrano Beach in

Orange County. Stream flows in the proposed Morrell Canyon site and Decker Canyon site are seasonal and intermittent. However, owing largely to development and urban runoff (about 35 percent of the watershed is urbanized), San Juan Creek becomes perennial near the mouth of the basin, possibly due to effluent from waste water treatment plants and similar inflows during the dry season. Streamflow in San Juan Creek since 1986 has been measured at USGS gage no. 11046530, La Novia Street Bridge near San Juan Capistrano, which has a drainage area of 109 square miles. Table 4 shows the annual stream flow data for this gage.

Table 4. Daily discharge (cfs) statistics for USGS gage no. 11046530, San Juan Creek at La Novia Street Bridge near San Juan Capistrano, for water years 1986 to 2004. (Source: USGS, 2005b)

Mean	Median	Max.	Min.	10% Exceedance	60% Exceedance
20.6	0.90	5,700	0	20	Less than 0.1

Note: cfs – cubic feet per second

Groundwater

The Elsinore groundwater basin extends under a surface area of 40.2 square miles in Elsinore Valley, which includes Lake Elsinore. The groundwater basin is bounded by the Santa Ana and Elsinore Mountains to the southwest along the Willard fault. To the southeast it adjoins the Temecula Valley groundwater basin at surface drainage divide. The Temescal subbasin of the Upper Santa Ana River Valley groundwater basin forms the northwest boundary at a constriction in the Temescal Wash. The northeast boundary is a zone of nonwater-bearing rocks in the Peninsular Ranges along the Glen Ivy fault. Lake Elsinore is underlain by layers of clay, which greatly impedes the downward movement of groundwater because clay acts as an impervious barrier. Due to the geological layout and the surrounding faults, the Elsinore groundwater basin is essentially a closed groundwater basin. The groundwater level in the basin has dropped considerably with estimates of at least a 100-foot drop having occurred in the first half of the twentieth century alone (LESJWA, 2005). Until recently, in addition to groundwater withdrawal for irrigation and other needs, groundwater has been pumped from the Elsinore Valley MWD Island Wells, near Lake Elsinore to provide an additional source of water for Lake Elsinore under the pilot discharge project in an attempt to increase and stabilize lake levels. Currently, an ongoing deficit of 1,800 acre-feet per year is estimated (table 5).

Elsinore Valley MWD developed a draft groundwater management plan for the Elsinore Basin, which was approved by its Board of Directors on March 24, 2005. The objective of the plan is to reverse the ongoing decline in groundwater levels and provide a long-term sustainable groundwater supply by recharging the basin with injection wells that would be located in the Back Basin and on the northwest side of Lake Elsinore.

The San Juan groundwater basin is a shallow basin that is essentially an underground flowing stream with limited storage capabilities. It is located under the San Juan Creek Watershed and tributary valleys in the southern part of Orange County, and is bounded to the west by the Pacific Ocean. Projects supporting groundwater recovery in the San Juan Creek groundwater basin have been initiated (Orange County, 2005).

Table 5. Estimated groundwater basin budget for Elsinore groundwater basin. (Source: MWH, 2003, as cited in LESJWA, 2005)

Location	**Average (1990–2000) (acre-feet per year)**
Inflows	
Precipitation infiltration from rural areas	2,000
Precipitation infiltration from urban areas	800
Recharge from San Jacinto River	1,700
Recharge from Lake Elsinore	0
Return flows from applied water	600
Return flows from septic systems	1,000
Return flows via subsurface inflow	0
Total inflows	6,100
Outflows	
Groundwater pumping	7,900
Surface outflow	0
Subsurface outflow	0
Total outflows	7,900
Net Deficit	**1,800**

The part of the groundwater basin near the areas of the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites contains canyon bottomlands that are covered by alluvium and underlain by granitic bedrock. Lion Spring, a cluster of natural springs, is located just above the 2,800 feet msl contour line in Morrell Canyon about 500 feet south of the South Main Divide Road. The ephemeral Morrell Creek flows towards the Lions Spring area from a southeasterly direction. During the dry seasons of most years, the surface flows from Lions Springs percolate into the canyon alluvium within a short distance of the springs. Evaporation estimates for the higher elevations associated with

Morrell and Decker canyons have not been estimated but are probably slightly lower than the 56.2 inches per year at Lake Elsinore.

Water Quality

Lake Elsinore's morphology and location in a rapidly urbanizing area and upstream land use activities contribute to the quality of storm-water runoff that affects the water quality in the San Jacinto River and, ultimately, Lake Elsinore (LESJWA, 2005). Consequently, the overall water quality of Lake Elsinore typically does not meet applicable water quality standards, and the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) has listed Lake Elsinore as impaired under Section 303(d)[32] of the Clean Water Act for nutrients, organic enrichment/low DO, sedimentation/siltation, and unknown toxicity.

Surface water in the upper San Juan Creek Watershed in proximity to the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites is intermittent and directly related to precipitation. Lions Spring, a natural spring within Morrell Canyon, is a length of streambed where perched groundwater surfaces into the canyon drainage for portions of the year. Because of the natural setting, surface flows originating from the upper watershed are of good quality during the brief times there is enough to runoff; typically during winter rainy season. This contrasts with conditions in the lower watershed near the coast as creek water (limited groundwater mixed with urban nuisance flows) is strongly influenced by the expansive urban development surrounding the lower reaches and is consequently considered impaired under Section 303(d) for pathogens (specifically coliform bacteria). The San Mateo Creek Watershed (south of San Juan Creek Watershed where the southern transmission alignments would be located) is similar to San Juan Creek in that the upper, mountainous creek beds are often void of running water. The lower portion of the San Mateo Creek, which typically has some water, flows through Camp Pendleton, and it has been compromised by the Marine base's activities although not significantly enough to require listing under Section 303(d).

Lake Elsinore water quality objectives are set by the Santa Ana RWQCB and published in the Santa Ana Basin Plan (Santa Ana RWQCB, 1995). Both San Juan Creek and San Mateo Creek watersheds are under the jurisdiction of the San Diego RWQCB and subject to provisions of the San Diego Basin Plan (San Diego RWQCB, 1994). According to the Santa Ana Basin Plan, the existing beneficial uses within Lake

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[32] Under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states are required to submit a list of waters for which effluent limits will not be sufficient to meet all state water quality standards. The 303(d) listing process includes waters impaired from point and non-point sources of pollutants. States must also establish a priority ranking for the listed waters, taking into account the severity of pollution and uses. EPA regulations that govern 303(d) listing can be found in 40 CFR 130.7.

Elsinore[33] include contact and non-contact recreation, warm freshwater habitat, and wildlife habitat.

The designated beneficial uses of San Juan Creek include agricultural and industrial process supply, contact and non-contact recreation, warm and cold fresh water habitat, and wildlife habitat. The designated beneficial uses of San Mateo Creek include contact and non-contact recreation, warm and cold fresh water habitat, wildlife habitat, rare, threatened or endangered species, and spawning, reproduction and/or early development habitat. Table 6 shows the beneficial use designation definitions while table 7 presents objectives for algae, temperature, DO, pH, coliform bacteria, toxicity, and physical parameters.

Table 6. Beneficial use designation definitions. (Source: Santa Ana RWQCB, 1995; San Diego RWQCB, 1994)

Beneficial Use	Definition
AGR	Agricultural Supply waters are used for farming, horticulture, or ranching. These uses may include, but are not limited to, irrigation, stock watering, and support of vegetation for range grazing.
COLD	Cold Freshwater Habitat waters support coldwater ecosystems that may include, but are not limited to, preservation and enhancement of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, and wildlife, including invertebrates.
IND	Industrial Service Supply waters are used for industrial activities that do not depend primarily on water quality. These uses may include, but are not limited to, mining, cooling water supply, hydraulic conveyance, gravel washing, fire protection, and oil well re-pressurization.
RARE	Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species waters support habitats necessary for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species designated under state or federal law as rare, threatened or endangered.
REC1	Water Contact Recreation waters are used for recreational activities involving body contact with water where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses may include, but are not limited to, swimming, wading, water-skiing, skin and scuba diving, surfing, whitewater activities, fishing, and use of natural hot springs.

[33] In 1988, the California SWRCB adopted the Sources of Drinking Water Policy (SWRCB Resolution No. 88-63) that directed the Santa Ana and San Diego RWQCBs to add the Municipal and Domestic Supply (MUN) Beneficial Use for all waterbodies not already so designated, unless they met certain exception criteria. Lake Elsinore is excepted under this provision.

Beneficial Use	Definition
REC2	Non-contact Water Recreation waters are used for recreational activities involving proximity to water, but not normally involving body contact with water where ingestion of water would be reasonably possible. These uses may include, but are not limited to, picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tide pool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, and aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above activities.
SPWN	Spawning, Reproduction, and Development waters support high-quality aquatic habitats necessary for reproduction and early development of fish and wildlife.
WARM	Warm Freshwater Habitat waters support warmwater ecosystems that may include, but are not limited to, preservation and enhancement of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, and wildlife, including invertebrates.
WILD	Wildlife Habitat waters support wildlife habitats that may include, but are not limited to, the preservation and enhancement of vegetation and prey species used by waterfowl and other wildlife.

Table 7. Applicable water quality objectives for waters potentially affected by the proposed project. (Source: Santa Ana RWQCB, 1995; San Diego RWQCB, 1994)

Parameter	Santa Ana Basin Plan Objective	San Diego Basin Plan Objective
Algae	Waste discharges shall not contribute to excessive algal growth in inland surface receiving waters.	Does not exist.
Temperature	The temperature of waters designated WARM shall not be raised above 90°F June through October or above 78°F during the rest of the year as a result of controllable water quality factors. Lake temperatures shall not be raised more than 4°F above established normal values as a result of controllable water quality factors.	Natural water temperatures of basin waters shall not be altered unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the San Diego RWQCB that such alteration does not affect beneficial uses.

Parameter	Santa Ana Basin Plan Objective	San Diego Basin Plan Objective
Turbidity	Waters shall be free of changes in turbidity that cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Increases in turbidity attributable to controllable water quality factors shall not exceed the following limits: 0–50 NTUs not to exceed 20%, 50–100 NTU increases not to exceed 10 NTU, greater than 100 NTUs not to exceed 10%.	Waters shall be free of changes in turbidity that cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Inland surface waters shall not contain turbidity in excess of 20 NTUs more than 10% of the time during any 1-year period.
Dissolved Oxygen	The DO content of surface waters shall not be depressed below 5 mg/l for waters designated WARM, as a result of controllable water quality factors. In addition, waste discharges shall not cause the median DO concentration to fall below 85% of saturation or the 95th percentile concentration to fall below 75% of saturation within a 30-day period.	DO concentrations shall not be less than 5.0 mg/l in inland surface waters with designated MAR or WARM beneficial uses or less than 6.0 mg/l in waters designated COLD beneficial uses. The annual mean DO concentration shall not be less than 7 mg/l more than 10% of the time.
pH	The pH of inland surface waters shall not be raised above 8.5 or depressed below 6.5 as a result of controllable water quality factors.	The pH value shall not be changed at any time more than 0.2 pH units from that which occurs naturally.
Total Inorganic Nitrogen	1.5 mg/l	Does not exist.

Notes: COLD – cold freshwater habitat
DO – dissolved oxygen
mg/l – milligrams per liter
NTUs – Nephelometric turbidity units
RWQCB – Regional Water Quality Control Board
WARM – warm freshwater habitat

As described above, Lake Elsinore is a large, shallow lake marking the terminus for flows in the San Jacinto River. Development throughout the watershed has led to stream diversions and groundwater withdrawals preventing surface flows from reaching Lake Elsinore in all but the wettest years. Its high evaporation rate (56.2 inches annual average) coupled with its low annual precipitation (11.6 inches annual average) and

relatively small watershed area results in a shallow lake for most of the year (LESJWA, 2005). Annual precipitation and runoff varies widely, and so do lake levels along with the amount of exposed shoreline. Throughout its history, Lake Elsinore has been subject to periods of extreme flooding or drying due to the semi-arid climate and varying runoff amounts.

The quality of the lake is also a function of lake levels. As lake levels fall because of low inflow or high evaporative losses, lake constituents such as nutrients and salinity become concentrated, and DO falls as the temperature of the shallower water rises in the summer (LESJWA, 2004, as cited by Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a). These conditions are accompanied by algal blooms (exacerbating DO depletion), odors, and fish kills.

Water Temperature

The Santa Ana RWQCB and others have been involved in water quality monitoring since June 2002 as part of improvement projects as discussed in section 3.2, *Cumulatively Affected Resources*. Since 2002, vertical lake sample profiles were conducted at over 10 positions located throughout Lake Elsinore. Vertical profiles taken at sampling site 9 (the deepest sampling site located in the central part of the lake) show strong seasonal differences in temperature, with daytime surface summer water temperatures reaching 29 to 30 degrees Celsius (°C), while the lower water column was typically 25 to 27°C. A transition to cooler temperatures begins in the fall, with the surface temperatures cooling to approximately 20°C in October. Water column temperatures then cool further, with temperatures ranging from 12 to 14°C from November to March. The lake generally begins warming in April, with modest stratification present during this time, while strong heating and stratification were observed in late May to early June.

The co-applicants filed water temperature data for waters in Morrell and Decker canyons in the upper San Juan Creek Watershed and reported temperatures between 13.3 and 17.0°C (4 field measurements taken April 28, 2005, post precipitation event). No water temperature data were collected for waters in San Mateo Creek in the upper San Mateo Creek Watershed. Decker Canyon only experiences surface flows during precipitation events while the Morrell Canyon stream receives some contribution from Lion Spring. Sampling to date has not isolated the difference between storm water and seepage. San Mateo Creek only experiences surface flows during storm events, and temperature data do not exist for this watershed. Because Lion Spring is perched groundwater, it is likely that the average annual temperature is below 20°C.

Dissolved Oxygen

The Santa Ana RWQCB has listed Lake Elsinore as impaired for failing to meet numerous Santa Ana Basin Plan objectives, including DO objectives. Measurements that are below state objectives are continually recorded throughout the water column for the majority of the year. Low DO levels in the lake result from aerobic decomposition of

algae and other organic material in the bottom waters, nighttime respiration of phytoplankton, plankton blooms, and higher water temperature (warm water contains less oxygen than cold water) during summer months. The Santa Ana RWQCB has developed and implemented measures from the draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nutrients to improve water quality and reverse the presently compromised conditions.

DO levels within Lake Elsinore exhibit spatial and temporal trends that vary with lake temperature and depth, which are dynamic throughout the year. In August 2002, oxygen was substantially depleted across the lake, resulting in a fish kill (levels recorded below 1 milligram per liter (mg/l) in the lower third of the water column). As the lake began to mix in October and November 2002, the lake generally exhibited higher concentrations but still reduced DO levels (5 mg/l) near the sediments relative to the surface (8 to 10 mg/l). This period of mixing was followed by a sharp decline in DO throughout the water column in early December 2002. Conversely, Lake Elsinore was generally well oxygenated during the winter of 2003. Historically, DO levels have been observed between 0.1 and 16 mg/l and vary greatly with season, temperature, and depth.

The co-applicants collected DO data for both Morrell and Decker canyons during two sampling events in the winter and early spring of 2004–2005 (December 5, 2004 and April 28, 2005). DO levels within Morrell Canyon around Lion Spring (including immediately upstream and downstream) averaged 8.9 mg/l, which coincided with two precipitation events. The co-applicants provided a single DO measurement of 8.9 mg/l from a sample collected from Decker Canyon in April 28, 2005. No DO data exist for waters in the upper San Mateo Creek Watershed. San Mateo Creek Watershed, due to its relative similarity (intermittent, upper-watershed setting in the same southern California mountain range) to Morrell and Decker canyons is assumed to exhibit similar water quality traits. As such, water (when present) within these upper watersheds is likely to be well oxygenated.

Nutrients

The Santa Ana RWQCB recognizes that the narrative water quality objectives set to protect the beneficial uses of Lake Elsinore are not being met as a result of high nutrient concentrations stimulating excessive algae growth and compromising DO levels. As such, Lake Elsinore is listed as impaired under Section 303(d) for nutrients, and this impairment requires the establishment of a TMDL for the pollutants causing the impairment (nitrogen and phosphorus).

Lake Elsinore is technically eutrophic in that it exhibits the following characteristics: (1) large algae blooms (chlorophyll-*a* > 50 micrograms per liter [μg/l]) and common presence of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), specifically Microcystis; (2) large seasonal and daily swings in concentrations of DO; anoxic values that have been recorded in deeper waters during most summers; (3) low water clarity; Secchi disc values less than 1 meter; (4) high concentrations of inorganic nitrogen; and (5) high concentrations of total phosphorus. These observations substantiate the pilot Lake

Elsinore Recycled Water Project, an effort that enables Elsinore Valley MWD to discharge treated wastewater into Lake Elsinore to maintain higher lake levels in hope of minimizing effects from high evaporative losses and low inflow rates. This effort is designed to help restore the water quality of Lake Elsinore to meet state objectives.

Sampling results show that the total phosphorus concentration in Lake Elsinore has generally been increasing between 2002 and 2004. Total phosphorus concentrations vary with the season but were generally observed at approximately 0.3 mg/l throughout the second half of 2002 and rising to approximately 0.5 mg/l in early 2004.

Total nitrogen concentrations were variable between 2000 and 2004. Average summer concentrations were approximately 3.0 mg/l in 2000 and 2001 rising to approximately 5.0 mg/l in 2002 and 2003. Winter total nitrogen concentrations for all sampled sites from 2003 to 2004 averaged 11.8 mg/l; however, data presented by the co-applicants exhibit considerable variability between days and pronounced swings seasonally and annually.

Sampling information filed by the co-applicants indicates that the total nitrogen: total phosphorus ratio was variable since sampling began in summer 2000. From summer 2000 through the summer of 2002, there were periods of strong phosphorus limitation (ratios up to 50:1), interrupted with periods during the winter of co-limitation (~15:1) and brief periods of nitrogen limitation (~5:1). The general trend since June 2002 has been moving toward nitrogen limitation.

Field sampling to characterize the waters of Morrell and Decker canyons filed by the co-applicants report total nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations following a precipitation event. Total nitrogen concentrations for above and below the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site were reported as 5.0 and 4.4 mg/l, respectively. The total nitrogen concentration below the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site was reported at 1.4 mg/l. A single sample recorded a phosphorus concentration of 0.56 mg/l below the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site. All other samples were below the reporting limit. No samples were collected within the upper San Mateo Creek Watershed.

Algae (Chlorophyll and Transparency)

According to the Santa Ana RWQCB, hypereutrophication (over enrichment of nutrients) of nitrogen and phosphorus is the most severe water quality problem in Lake Elsinore (Santa Ana RWQCB, 2001). These elevated nutrient concentrations cause algae blooms that also result in low DO levels, which further result in fish kills. The presence of unsightly amounts of algae conflicts with the beneficial uses of Lake Elsinore, specifically warmwater habitat (WARM), body and non-body contact recreation (REC-1 and REC-2), and is directly linked to the implementation of the nutrients TMDL. Chlorophyll concentrations show a slight seasonal trend with peaks in the late spring-summer. The Santa Ana RWQCB recorded a maximum concentration of about 400 μg/l in fall 2002; however, 200 μg/l is a more typical concentration observed since 2003.

Algae blooms are known to occur in the lake and result in floating mats of algae. These blooms typically occur in the summer to fall season but could potentially occur at anytime during the year when there are sufficient nutrients and ample sunlight. Secchi depths, an indicator of the lake's transparency, have been relatively stable since June 2002 at approximately 0.2 meter.

Samples from the San Juan Creek and San Mateo Creek watersheds are not available to include in this discussion. Given the remote nature and the intermittent nature of the waters potentially affected by the proposed project, and the low nutrient concentrations observed in field samples, it is unlikely that large amounts of algae as a result of nutrient enrichment would compromise the waters.

pH

The Santa Ana RWQCB sampling program has observed that the pH of Lake Elsinore has averaged slightly greater than 9 between April 2002 and June 2004, although the pH profiles show some vertical and temporal trends. The range of pH values recorded during this time period is 8.7 to 9.5. High pH values are often the result of the respiration of aquatic organisms (e.g., algae). The build up of carbon dioxide in the water leads to a chain of chemical reactions that ultimately increase the alkalinity of the water (increased pH). The co-applicants reported pH values between 7.42 and 7.65 from samples taken within Morrell and Decker canyons in December 2004 and April 2005 shortly after rain events. Information about the water quality of upper San Mateo Watershed is not available, but is likely to be similar to the waters in the upper San Juan Watershed.

3.3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Water Quantity

Construction of the LEAPS Project may result in short-term effects on surface water quantity, including alteration to existing drainage patterns and possible effects on regional storm drainage and flood control facilities and groundwater flow patterns. Subsequent operation of the project may affect water quantity, such as evaporation, diminished spring flow, and effects on groundwater supplies, on a long-term basis. New facilities could alter runoff patterns, and the construction of new dams could increase the risk of possible inundation either from reservoir overflow or dam failure. The co-applicants have committed to fully complying with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements and regulations for the maintenance of the affected surface water and groundwater for their stated beneficial uses and are committed to working with the California SWRCB, Santa Ana RWQCB, and San Diego RWQCB to increase or enhance those uses.

Effects of Construction on Surface Water

Co-applicants' Proposal—Before starting construction, the co-applicants propose to submit an erosion control plan as described in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*. A detailed description of the measures to be constructed by the co-applicants is also contained therein.

The co-applicants propose to use existing roads wherever possible and to recontour and revegetate temporary roads after construction. Surface drainage would be provided around any proposed facilities to limit erosion and ponding around foundations and access roads.

The co-applicants may construct a small detention facility to temporarily accumulate storm water to control large stormwater flows. Storage in this facility would be designed to minimize uncontrolled inundation. The co-applicants also make the following proposals:

- Reroute or channel Lion Spring;
- Realign Morgan Trail and make subsequent plantings to stabilize the area;
- Mitigate the effects of construction on surface water quantity by managing storm water in accordance with BMPs; and
- Construct the intake-outlet structure in Lake Elsinore using dry methods.

Resource Agency Measures

The USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 15, as elements of the erosion control plan, that the co-applicants implement measures to divert runoff away from disturbed land surfaces and provide descriptions of both actual site conditions and detailed descriptions, design drawings, and specific topographic locations of all control measures. The erosion control plan and its effects are described in greater detail in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*.

The Riverside County FCWCD requests that effects on Riverside County FCWCD storm drainage facilities be identified and that encroachment permits be obtained from the Riverside County FCWCD prior to construction. Additionally, the Riverside County FCWCD requests that effects on the West Elsinore Master Drainage Plan be assessed.

The co-applicants also indicate they would be subject to the San Jacinto Watershed Permit for storm water discharges. New developments such as the LEAPS Project are required to have storm-water pollution prevention plans, monitoring programs, and post-construction management plans that have been approved by the Santa Ana RWQCB's Executive Director prior to the start of construction. Storm-water runoff must be monitored for at least three storm events per year during construction and an

additional year after construction is completed. Although primarily geared toward water quality, BMPs related to drainage control during construction would be included.

Effect Analysis

Construction of the proposed project could affect the county storm drain infrastructure and flow quantities in San Juan Creek and its tributaries. The development of an erosion control plan that includes measures to control surface runoff, as proposed by the co-applicants and specified by the USFS would be necessary to identify specific BMPs and might include temporary diversion and routing facilities, temporary detention basins, and a specific approach for dealing with flood events during construction. Implementation of such measures would minimize the amount of surface runoff during construction. In developing detailed drainage plans for construction, the co-applicants would likely consult with local and county government agencies responsible for drainage and flood control. Similar measures would apply to staging areas and borrow areas throughout the project area. Construction of a new Morgan Trail alignment in the vicinity of the upper reservoir would also require drainage control measures to prevent portions of the trail from eroding away under higher water conditions. Such measures could potentially alter current runoff patterns in the basin by concentrating the flow over drainage ways as opposed to overland flow that presently occurs. These measures should also specifically address the diversion of Lion Spring during construction and describe how that water would be delivered to an area downstream of the project-affected area. Any temporary roads developed here or elsewhere in the project would be removed, recontoured, and revegetated following construction except where the USFS authorizes continued use of the roads for transmission line maintenance, eliminating long-term impacts from temporary roads. All of these measures would be expected to control and minimize the amount of surface runoff during construction. The potential effects of surface runoff on geology and soils and water quality are discussed in sections 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.2.2, respectively.

The development of a 30-acre site for the proposed Santa Rosa underground powerhouse also would likely require drainage planning during construction. As the site is cleared and graded, the runoff characteristics would change and BMPs would be necessary to control and detain drainage in the modified environment. The proposed erosion control plan would address how this would be accomplished. Implementation of drainage measures developed in consultation with appropriate drainage and flood management agencies would diminish the quantities of uncontrolled runoff and potential flood damages.

Lake Elsinore is an existing reservoir, and significant hydraulic modification has already occurred. Potential effects during construction include greater than normal drawdowns to facilitate construction. This would be a short-term measure and the drawdown elevation would largely be dictated by the hydrologic conditions present at that time.

Construction of the proposed project could affect the county storm drain infrastructure and potentially the water levels of Lake Elsinore. The development of surface runoff control measures as part of the erosion control plan for construction activities would identify specific BMPs, which could include temporary diversion and routing facilities, temporary detention basins, any necessary cofferdams, and would provide a specific approach for dealing with flood events during construction. Implementation of an erosion control plan, including measures to control surface runoff, would minimize the potential for increased or uncontrolled surface runoff entering Lake Elsinore during construction. In developing drainage plans for construction, the co-applicants would likely consult with local and county government agencies responsible for drainage and flood control. The erosion control plan also should identify storm drainage facilities that could potentially be affected by the project. The co-applicants should meet the requirements of local flood authorities for encroachment permits on flood facilities. Implementation of appropriate drainage controls and BMPs developed in coordination with local drainage authorities and incorporation of these agencies' concerns would minimize effects on the local storm drainage system.

There are 22 stream crossings along the proposed 30-mile transmission alignment that would be affected during construction. Effects may include temporary diversion during access road construction and in some instances relocation. Open streams may also be channeled through culverts over the course of construction. Some of these may be permanent as discussed below.

Transmission towers would likely be sited to avoid floodplain areas and thus minimize the potential for affecting watercourses. Access roads would likely affect watercourses where alternative routes avoiding streams could not be established. Effects from the construction of both temporary and permanent access roads would be partially mitigated by complying with both USFS and local drainage requirements as appropriate. Staging areas for temporarily storing transmission line materials would require drainage planning similar to that which the pumped storage project staging areas would require.

Staff Alternative—Construction mitigation for water quantity at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would be similar to the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, except there is no need to manage flows from Lion Spring. The need for stream bypass system would be eliminated because Decker Canyon is located in the headwaters of the basin and no upstream flows are associated with that site. Side drainage for flows falling off the upstream face of the dam into the basin would still be required.

The co-applicants propose to mitigate the effects of construction on water quantity by managing storm-water in accordance with BMPs. Surface drainage would be provided around the Ortega Oaks powerhouse facilities to limit erosion and ponding around the foundations and access roads. These measures would apply project-wide, not

just in the Ortega Oaks powerhouse area, and are independent of where the powerhouse would ultimately be located.

Construction-related effects on water quantity for the mid-slope transmission alignment would be similar to those associated with the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Surface drainage would be provided around the Evergreen powerhouse facilities to limit erosion and ponding around the foundations and access roads.

Effects of Operation on Surface Water

Currently, there are no dams or water retention facilities in the upper reaches of San Juan Creek. Such structures are present in the Caspers Regional Park area located farther downstream. The proposed development and long-term operation of the upper reservoir fluctuating up to 75 feet on a weekly basis would change the characteristics of the upper San Juan Watershed. Operation of a pumped storage project with an upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site and a pumped storage powerhouse at the proposed Santa Rosa site would affect water levels both at the upper reservoir and Lake Elsinore.

Project operations would directly affect the diurnal fluctuation of Lake Elsinore. Currently, lake levels vary in Lake Elsinore on a seasonal basis. In the lower reservoir (Lake Elsinore), the typical daily water-level fluctuation would be 1 foot, with the lake level fluctuating about 1.7 feet during the course of the full-week cycle.[34]

Co-applicants' Proposal—Under existing conditions, flows from Lion Spring would flow through this area. The co-applicants propose to install a system to convey these waters under the reservoir. Water from a collection structure would be discharged just below the toe of the dam into San Juan Creek via an energy dissipater about 1,050 feet upstream of the northern boundary of the San Mateo Wilderness Area.

The co-applicants propose to replace the water lost to the San Juan Creek drainage from interception in the upper reservoir, if required. The co-applicants suggest that potable water might be used to make up for this loss.

The co-applicants propose to develop and implement a plan for the design and construction of a system that would automatically detect conduit or penstock failure and, in the event of such a failure, immediately shut off flow in the conduit or penstock at the headworks.

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[34] Specifically, the co-applicants indicate that a 1.7 feet drawdown could occur between 2200 hours on Friday and 1800 hours on Saturday, a period of 20 hours.

As stated previously, the co-applicants propose to operate the lower reservoir (Lake Elsinore) between 1,240 and 1,249 feet msl, except for the December through March flood control season, during which they propose a maximum operating level of 1,247 feet msl.

The co-applicants propose to address water quantity effects on Lake Elsinore by paying a lake management fee to Elsinore Valley MWD for make-up water necessary to maintain Lake Elsinore at the proposed project minimum operational target elevation of 1,240 feet msl or above, consistent with the goals of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project. The LESJWA Program Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project indicates that higher, more stable lake levels could be maintained in Lake Elsinore by importing additional water (LESJWA, 2005). The co-applicants propose to assist in the funding of such a program, but identify the effects of adding make-up water to Lake Elsinore as outside of the scope of the proposed project. These potential effects are addressed in the Program Environmental Impact Report for the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project. Specific locations for any point(s) of discharge would be determined in coordination with the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project design.

The co-applicants propose to develop and implement a revised lake operating plan for Lake Elsinore, addressing increased minimum lake levels, flood control implications, and water supply issues.

The co-applicants also propose a dam safety monitoring program. A dam safety program would address Caltrans' concerns about potential dam failure by ensuring the dams are designed in accordance with FERC criteria and that inundation areas of any potential dam break are clearly delineated. We describe the results of a preliminary analysis in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior recommends, in its 10(j) recommendation no. 2, that the co-applicants be required to monitor for releases of water from the upper reservoir into the San Juan Creek drainage and to take immediate steps to remedy any effect to fish and wildlife resources. Because such releases primarily affect water quality and aquatic resources, we analyze this recommendation in the water quality section below and in *Aquatic Resources* section in section 3.3.3.2, *Environmental Consequences*.

Caltrans expresses concern about downstream inundation effects on Ortega Highway in the event of a dam failure at Decker Canyon. Potential inundation effects are described in detail in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*. It should be noted that a catastrophic release of water from any upstream reservoir site could potentially affect Ortega Highway, further highlighting the importance of dam safety and warning measures proposed in conjunction with the upper reservoir.

Effects Analysis

Construction of an upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site would create a 76-acre reservoir in a predominately forested area that contains watercourses with intermittent flow. The reservoir would affect about 130 acres including the non-wetted portion. About 4.3 percent[35] of the Morrell Canyon Watershed area would be directly affected by the footprint of the new upper reservoir at that location. The Morrell Canyon reservoir would be built over the main intermittent stream that drains the canyon. The drainage area corresponding to this stream is approximately 560 acres. A 100-year flood from this tributary would correspond to about 2,200 cfs (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004b).

Approximately 1.5 acres of waters of the United States would be affected, while 20 acres of waters of the state of California would be affected (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2005).

Interception of rainfall by the uncovered reservoir is expected to be minimal relative to the size of the watershed. The co-applicants estimate that precipitation over the proposed upper reservoir at Morrell Canyon could contribute as much as 135 acre-feet per year during an average year to the San Juan Creek Watershed. This amounts to about 1 percent of the average runoff as measured at the La Novia Street Bridge Gage. Construction of a new reservoir would preclude this water from flowing downstream into the San Juan Creek Watershed.

The effect of rainfall capture during extreme flood events such as the 100-year flood would reduce outflow at the lower end of Morrell Canyon by about 6 percent during such events. On a relative magnitude basis, the effect would be most pronounced close to the dam. For example, about 2 miles downstream of the dam, more than 50 percent of the flow would be affected, while approximately 5 miles downstream of the dam, only 10 percent of the flow would be affected. More extreme events centered over the drainage area above the reservoir could increase these percentages.

During storm events, the co-applicants propose to route water from the upstream tributary under Morrell Canyon reservoir. It is undesirable to have uncontrolled water upstream of a dike or dam structure. The Commission normally requires that upstream water be controlled up to the probable maximum flood. Under the co-applicants' proposal controlling large hydrologic events would require either a very large pipeline (for example, to control a flow 2,500 cfs would require a 9-foot-diameter pipe if a design velocity of 40 feet per second were selected) or a modification to the upstream collection structure. The co-applicants also discuss a potential small detention facility upstream of the diversion structure. As discussed in section 3.3.1, *Geology and Soils*, such a detention structure may be problematic. Insufficient information was provided to fully

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[35] Computed by dividing the 90 acres of the reservoir the flows inward by the 2,100-acre Morrell Canyon drainage area.

evaluate whether such a scheme would accommodate the probable maximum flood. It is likely that some type of passive overflow structure also would be required to pass large events into the reservoir and subsequently out through the reservoir spillway. Regardless, a plan would need to be provided to describe how the co-applicants would control upstream water during a probable maximum flood if the Morrell Canyon concept were to proceed to design.

It is estimated that the upper reservoir would receive about 18 inches of precipitation per year. Approximately 38.2 inches of net evaporation would occur at the upper watershed when precipitation is factored in under the proposed action. Assuming 60 acres is a typical daytime reservoir surface area, approximately 200 acre-feet of water would evaporate from the upper reservoir annually. Since the upper reservoir would be pumping from Lake Elsinore on a daily basis, any evaporation loss from the upper reservoir would be made-up under the same water replacement plan outlined for Lake Elsinore by the LESJWA and the added cost would be included in the co-applicants' proposed payment to the Elsinore Valley MWD.

Monitoring potential releases of water from the upper reservoir and having specific remediation plans ready to implement, as recommended by Interior's 10(j) condition no. 2 could provide an early warning of problems containing the Lake Elsinore water in the upper reservoir, in addition to providing potential benefits to water quality and aquatic resources.

The long-term effects of the powerhouse site development on runoff would be mitigated by drainage design in accordance with local requirements. Such requirements would apply regardless of the powerhouse location. The co-applicants' proposal to develop and implement a plan for the design and construction of a system that would automatically detect conduit or penstock failure and provide automatic shutdown under such conditions would reduce or eliminate uncontrolled discharges in the project area. This would also have significant benefit for erosion reduction which is discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*.

Under the proposed project, water levels in Lake Elsinore would vary both on a diurnal and weekly basis. The Lake Elsinore daily drawdown would typically be 1 foot per day or 1.7 feet per week. By paying a lake management fee as they propose, the co-applicants can make sure Lake Elsinore would be at the levels needed for the LEAPS Project to be built. Under the current configuration of the lake with the Back Basin levee in place, total evaporation averages 15,500 acre-feet per year, or about 56.2 inches per year (LESJWA, 2005) assuming a nominal elevation of 1,245 feet msl, which corresponds to a lake area of 3,319 acres. Evaporation is partially compensated for by 11.6 inches of precipitation over Lake Elsinore or about 3,200 acre-feet of inflow from direct precipitation; however, this evaporation appears to be accounted for in natural inflow estimates. Natural inflow to the lake averages only 11,380 acre-feet per year, resulting in a deficit of about 4,000 acre-feet. Additional factors, such as seepage to groundwater, have led to estimates of annual water deficit that average as high as

7,500 acre-feet per year (about a 4.5-foot drop). During drier years, the deficit can be as high as 15,000 acre-feet. Consecutive dry years can even result in a dry lake condition. A 4-foot drop in Lake Elsinore water surface elevations (from proposed high reservoir level of 1,249 feet msl to a typical reservoir level of 1,245 feet msl, for example) results in 93 acres of exposed shoreline; a drop of 9 feet (to the lowest expected reservoir level of 1,240 feet msl) exposes 338 acres.

Implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, as supported by the lake management fee would provide make-up water needed to maintain lake levels necessary for project operations and would eliminate the occurrence of undesirable low water levels below 1,240 feet msl. According to LESJWA (2005), dry lake conditions would be eliminated entirely, whereas, under current conditions, lake levels are below elevation 1,225 feet msl (close to empty) 20 percent of the time. Under the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, the amount of recycled water used for make-up water (in lieu of well water) would be phased in between now and 2020. The projected response of Lake Elsinore from current conditions through 2020 is summarized in table 8. The anticipated frequency of various Lake Elsinore elevations in the year 2020 is summarized in figure 11. Although daily and weekly fluctuations could be greater than under current conditions, the lake would become more stable over a longer time frame. For example, evaporation losses alone could cause the lake to drop 9 to 11 inches in a given month (Corps, 2003). This effect would accumulate over several months. Under the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, the lake would be above elevation 1,244 feet msl more than 60 percent of the time and never drop below elevation 1,240 feet msl. The lake would be stabilized over a 5-foot range from elevation 1,242 feet msl to 1,247 feet msl nearly half the time. Without the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, the lake would fall below elevation 1,240 feet msl over 58 percent of the time and below elevation 1,247 feet msl 72 percent of the time.

Table 8. Projected Lake Elsinore response to proposed sources of make-up water. (Source: LESJWA, 2005)

	Recycled Water[a]			**Island Wells**			**Lake Elevation**	
Year	**Flow to Lake (mgd)**	**Target Elevation for Water Addition**	**Percent of Time Used**	**Water to Lake (mgd)**	**Target Elevation for Water Addition**	**Percent of Time Used**	**Minimum Elevation (feet msl)**	**Percent of Time Exceeding 1,240**
Base-line	0.0	NA	0	0.0	NA	0	1,223.0	58
2005	4.5	1,247.0	65	3.2	1,247.0	65	1,235.6	88
2010	5.9	1,247.0	61	3.2	1,247.0	61	1,240.0	100

	Recycled Water[a]			Island Wells			Lake Elevation	
Year	Flow to Lake (mgd)	Target Elevation for Water Addition	Percent of Time Used	Water to Lake (mgd)	Target Elevation for Water Addition	Percent of Time Used	Minimum Elevation (feet msl)	Percent of Time Exceeding 1,240
2015	6.4	1,247.0	63	3.2	1,244.4	39	1,240.0	100
2020	7.00	1,247.0	63	3.2	1,242.7	23	1,240.0	100

Notes: MGD – million gallons per day
msl – mean sea level

[a] Recycled water supply is the projected effluent from the Regional Plant less 0.5 mgd, which is discharged to Temescal Wash.

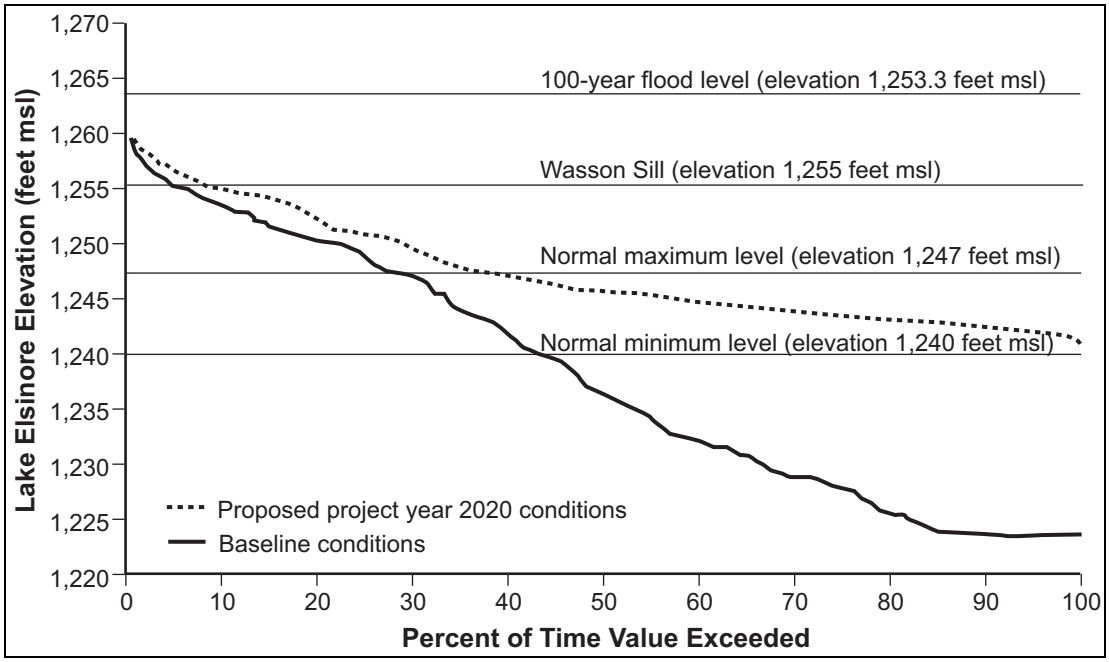

Figure 11. Projected frequency of Lake Elsinore lake elevations under current conditions (baseline) and proposed 2020 conditions with make-up water. (Source: LESJWA, 2005)

Another projected effect of higher lake levels is a greater increase in the frequency of spills into Temescal Wash and Back Basin. Currently, Temescal Wash spills occur 43 months during a 74 year simulation period, while Back Basin spills occur twice in the same period. Under 2020 conditions with augmentation in place, Temescal Wash spills would rise to 72 months during a 74-year simulation period, and Back Basin spills would increase to 3 months in 74 years. The magnitude of Temescal Wash spills would not change; however, the Back Basin spills would increase from a maximum monthly spill of 61,123 acre-feet to 85,432 acre-feet (LESJWA, 2005).

The co-applicants' proposal to develop a revised lake operating plan for Lake Elsinore would ensure that the effects related to higher lake water levels, flood control, and water supply in combination would not produce unexpected consequences. This plan should be developed in consultation with the Corps and local flood control authorities.

Staff Alternative—Water level fluctuations and evaporation effects at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would be comparable to those effects determined for proposed Morrell Canyon site. Interception of rainfall by the uncovered reservoir would be expected to be minimal relative to the size of the watershed. Because the Decker Canyon reservoir would be a similar size as the Morrell Canyon reservoir, we estimate that precipitation over the upper reservoir at Decker Canyon could contribute as much as 135 acre-feet per year during an average year to the San Juan Creek Watershed. This amounts to about 1 percent of the average runoff as measured at the La Novia Street Bridge Gage. Construction of a new reservoir would preclude this water from flowing downstream into the San Juan Creek Watershed. Because of the similar size and hydrology, the effects during extreme events at the Decker Canyon site would be similar to those anticipated at the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

The effects of operations at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would have similar effects on Lake Elsinore and upper reservoir water surface fluctuation as the proposed Santa Rosa site. The long-term effects of site development on runoff would be mitigated by drainage design in accordance with local requirements. Such requirements would apply regardless of the powerhouse location.

Effects similar to the proposed transmission alignment would occur for the mid-slope transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The effects of operations at the Evergreen powerhouse site would have similar effects on Lake Elsinore and upper reservoir water surface fluctuation as with the proposed Santa Rosa site.

Groundwater

Effects of Construction on Groundwater

Excavation to construct the upper reservoir dam/dike foundations, to install the seepage collection system at Lion Spring (and for other as-yet unmapped groundwater, as shown by typical "subdrain laterals" on design drawings), and to develop tunnels for the conveyance of water from the upper reservoir could encounter and release groundwater. The co-applicants propose to develop tunnels for conveyance of water from the upper reservoir to the Santa Rosa powerhouse. They also propose building an underground powerhouse.

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to develop and implement an upper reservoir and water conduit monitoring program to determine effects on groundwater levels and water quality. The program would include a baseline

groundwater monitoring system installed prior to site development designed to avoid any adverse effects of any groundwater on aquifers during construction. The system would include perimeter wells around the facility and a network of wells down-gradient of the perimeter wells to observe groundwater levels and facilitate collection of water quality samples.

The co-applicants propose to grout and seal observed seeps that are encountered during tunneling operations. This would be done prior to the installation of either the concrete or steel tunnel liners. The co-applicant also proposes to perform remedial grouting after construction if excessive seepage is discovered to occur.

Effects Analysis

Because of the inherently linked nature of the powerhouse gallery, tailrace structure, and the high-pressure conduit these project components are analyzed together. Groundwater has not been characterized for the conduit alignments through the Elsinore Mountains, at the powerhouse locations, or the tailrace area; however, based on its location below the water surface of Lake Elsinore, it is expected to be encountered during construction of the tailrace structure. Groundwater may be encountered in the Elsinore Mountains during construction of the high-head tunnels. To facilitate work in a safe environment, this water may be temporarily drained from the tunnel during construction; however, once the tunnels are lined with concrete we do not anticipate that the tunnels will have adverse effects on groundwater.

Excavation for reservoir construction and the placement of a seepage collection system could destabilize localized artesian groundwater. Groundwater extent (depth to aquifer, hydrostatic pressures, etc.) has not been surveyed or characterized. Additionally, there are approximately 600 residents living downstream near the Ortega Highway-San Juan Creek crossing. The water source of these residents is presumably dominated by groundwater supplies. The effect on these water sources (particularly as related to the known groundwater system tied to Lion Spring) has not been quantified.

Groundwater and soft soils may produce problematic construction conditions for the tailrace tunnels and intake/outlet structure; however, the effect of any dewatering (groundwater pumping for construction) is likely to be localized and only for a relatively short duration until a shaft casing could be installed. Based on the aspects of project construction and the regional geologic setting, long-term effects on the local and regional groundwater (i.e., a lowering of the piezometric surface) are not anticipated for the proposed powerhouse and tailrace structure; however, this assessment could change based on the co-applicants' proposed groundwater level monitoring and geotechnical studies prior to the start of construction.

Following geologic investigations, the Commission would require a plan be submitted explaining the possible effects of project construction and operations on groundwater. In particular, the plan would describe the upper reservoir and water conduits monitoring program to determine groundwater levels and water quality and any

expected impacts on groundwater sources used by nearby residents. The plan would also include a description of the proposed measures proposed by the co-applicants that would be taken during construction and project operations to prevent adverse impacts on the local water supply. The safety and adequacy of design specifications and construction measures such as a dewatering plan would also be developed prior to construction by the co-applicants' design engineer under the oversight of the board of three or more qualified independent engineering consultants and be reviewed by the Commission's Division of Dam Safety and Inspection.

Control of groundwater may involve the discharge of such water to receiving waters (surface waters) in the Lake Elsinore Basin, and the erosion control plan should address the routing of such water. It is not anticipated that groundwater run-off during construction would be a significant source of make-up water into Lake Elsinore. However, groundwater run-off could occur during construction and could affect aquifers and the habitats that rely on natural seeps or near surface groundwater from aquifers. Installation of a groundwater level monitoring system would enable the co-applicants to detect changes in groundwater level changes and to take remedial actions. The tunnel would be lined, and excessive seepage would not be expected after construction. However, should groundwater level changes be detected during construction, continued monitoring of project operations over the term of any license issued for the project would be reasonable to ensure that lining is effective in preventing seepage.

The effect of daylighting[36] and destabilizing local groundwater through road cuts and disruption of hillslope runoff has been documented in numerous wildland road studies (King and Tennyson, 1984; Reid, 1999; Wemple et al., 1996). Effects for the proposed transmission alignment would be the same, with the exact extent and location determined by final design and routing of access and maintenance roads. Analysis of individual alternatives and effects is not possible nor needed, as all alternatives traverse relatively similar terrain. Roads would be restricted to slopes less than 15 percent.

The main effect of daylighting a slope is the draining of the groundwater (if any) that was slowed and held in place by the soil since removed by the roadcut. In topographic draws and creek valleys, such interception of groundwater can substantially dry up the area downslope (cutting off the supply of shallow groundwater while the roadway captures surface runoff), and areas upslope realize a decline in groundwater

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[36] Daylighting of groundwater occurs where the water surface or entire layer of water leaves the cover of rock or soil and is open to the atmosphere, exposing the groundwater surface or layer to the daylight. This can occur naturally (e.g., a line of seeps or springs across a hillslope), or as in this instance, in a roadcut where groundwater is exposed by removal of soil and rock from a hillslope, typically at a location where there is an increase in the slope angle.

levels as the roadcut "drains" the hillslope. In arid environments, such effects could be profound for vegetation and the species that depend upon it.

To the extent possible, BMPs and sound road design practices that are cognizant of such wildland road construction effects can mitigate partly for the inherent effects of road construction on groundwater. In certain situations, there is no cost-effective alternative or mitigation for the adverse effects of hillslope roadcuts on local groundwater. Installation of transmission towers via helicopter in areas with slopes greater than 15 percent would minimize the potential effects of road cuts.[37]

Construction of the proposed transmission alignment for placement of the towers has minimal potential to affect groundwater. Roads and their construction, with direct cuts across hillslopes and through their capture and relatively rapid transfer of runoff to stream channels, could affect shallow groundwater.

Staff Alternative—Effects associated with the alternative upper Decker Canyon reservoir site would be the same as previously described for the proposed upper reservoir site, with the exception that effects related to Lion Spring are limited to the proposed Morrell Canyon. Although no detailed groundwater data is are provided for the alternative Decker Canyon site, unlike the proposed Morrell Canyon site, the effects associated with groundwater at the Decker Canyon site should be less because there is reportedly no surface manifestation of groundwater at Decker Canyon.

Effects of construction on groundwater would be the same at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa site.

As with the proposed transmission alignment, localized groundwater could be encountered during the construction of foundations for the mid-slope transmission alignment and appurtenant facilities and would require controls. Effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as described above for the proposed transmission alignment, with the exception that mid-slope road locations have a somewhat increased potential to cross more well-developed surface and groundwater pathways. This is because mid-slope locations harbor more-developed drainage networks (both surface and subsurface) as compared to upper slope locations. Therefore, these locations may have increased potential to intercept groundwater.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects of construction on groundwater would be the same at the Evergreen powerhouse site as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa site.

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[37] The USFS staff indicated that road construction would probably not be allowed in areas with greater than 15 percent slope.

Effects of Operations on Groundwater

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to install reservoir liners at the proposed Morrell Canyon site. The liner would be a double-liner system designed to prevent upper reservoir leakage from contacting natural groundwater seeps. The liner system is described in section 2.3.1.

Effect Analysis

Installation of a liner system would maintain a separation between the reservoir water and the adjacent groundwater levels. Experience with liners of the type proposed shows that leakage or failure would be unlikely. However, if the liner leaks or otherwise fails, there could be a release of water originating from Lake Elsinore into the groundwater that could migrate to the San Juan Creek. Such releases could potentially affect groundwater quantity in the San Juan Basin. Measures to monitor water quality in San Juan Creek are discussed under *Water Quality* below. Installation of a double liner system should minimize the effect of upper reservoir pool levels on adjacent groundwater resources. The collection system would ensure that spring flows would continue to flow into the San Juan Creek Basin (either as groundwater or surface water). Groundwater recharge in the area directly under the upper reservoir would be eliminated unless additional water were imported. Concern about water quality effects merits careful attention to the source of such make-up water.

As geotechnical studies proceed and more information is developed, the co-applicants should better identify the quantities of such groundwater and the manner in which it can be controlled during construction.

The penstock tunnels could affect groundwater levels. For example, if the native groundwater pressures exceed the tunnel pressures, native groundwater could seep into the tunnels and thereby lower the groundwater level if the water table lies above the penstock. Conversely, if pressure is greater inside the tunnel, water may seep into the native groundwater table and possibly raise the elevation. Because the tunnels would be lined with concrete, we would not anticipate that operation of the tunnels would have adverse effects (i.e., diversion of groundwater. However the potential for seepage exists and the plan to monitor groundwater levels during and after construction of the penstocks would be warranted.

Operation of an underground powerhouse at the proposed Santa Rosa site would have localized effects on groundwater flow patterns. The powerhouse would need to be isolated from groundwater flows by a combination of sealing and water control sumps. Groundwater may need to be pumped out of the powerhouse cavity and could potentially be redirected to Lake Elsinore at the surface.

The Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project would likely raise groundwater levels adjacent to the lake since the average lake level would rise (figure 11). LESJWA (2005) concluded that pumping from Island Wells to maintain Lake Elsinore lake levels would not substantially deplete the groundwater basin because

of the proposed use of recycled wastewater as an additional source of supplementation. Additionally, over time, the percentage of time that Island Wells water would be used to maintain the lake would decrease. Ultimately, as described in LESJWA (2005), reliance on Island Wells would fall to zero as recycled waste water availability rises to meet 100 percent of the need to maintain lake levels.

The co-applicants may encounter groundwater in excavating the foundations for transmission towers and appurtenant facilities.

Staff Alternative—Similar liners would be required for the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site to prevent fugitive flows into the San Juan Creek Basin as proposed for the Morrell Canyon site. The requirements for an under collection system could be eliminated since no active springs were identified in Decker Canyon. Because the Decker Canyon site is similar in size to the proposed Morrell Canyon site, it has a similar potential to affect water quantity and quality in the event of leakage and/or failure.

Construction of the Ortega Oaks powerhouse would be expected to have effects on groundwater that are similar to those associated with the Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Construction of the mid-slope transmission alignment would affect groundwater in a manner similar to the proposed alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction of the Evergreen powerhouse would be expected to have effects on groundwater that are similar to those associated with the Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Water Use

Effects of Construction on Water Use

About 5,500 acre-feet of water would be needed for the initial filling of the upper reservoir. The co-applicants propose to obtain this water from recycled water sources available to the Elsinore Valley MWD.

Effects Analysis

Because the co-applicants propose to use recycled water for the initial filling of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir, effects on local water supply would be minimal. Initial filling requirements and sources of water for the Decker Canyon upper reservoir would be comparable to those for Morrell Canyon. The co-applicants have not identified the source of water for use for dust control during construction and other construction uses of water. Reliance on recycled water would minimize the effects on local water supplies. It is important to note that the initial filling is a one-time use. Water use during construction is a short-term use, and the co-applicants would either purchase or produce the water needed.

Effects of Operations on Water Use

As discussed in *Water Quantity* above, the co-applicants propose to pay an annual lake management fee to the Elsinore Valley MWD for make-up water to maintain Lake Elsinore at 1,240 feel msl or above.

Effects Analysis

The total storage capacity of the San Juan Creek groundwater basin (location of the upper reservoir) is estimated to be 90,000 acre-feet, including surface and subsurface water in the 111,000-acre watershed. Currently, the basin is estimated to provide 5,000 acre-feet per year of usable groundwater, including 2,000 acre-feet for urban supply and 3,000 acre-feet for agricultural supply. Because the potential yield could be up to 50,000 acre-feet, any effects on groundwater supplies by the upstream reservoir (interception of precipitation which otherwise would have partially infiltrate to groundwater) are estimated to be miniscule. Precipitation for the 90-acre upper reservoir site is 18 inches or 1.5 feet per year. Thus, if precipitation were 100 percent effective, it would amount to 135 acre-feet per year. Once evaporation losses are taken into account, the net effect would likely be considerably less than that amount.

Beneficial uses associated with the Elsinore groundwater subbasin include municipal and domestic water supplies. Groundwater extraction in the Elsinore Basin has been an ongoing problem as water demands have increased over time. Declines in the water table in excess of 100 feet have been documented. Currently, Elsinore Valley MWD must import over 48 percent of its water supply and is subject to water shortages during prolonged droughts. A groundwater management plan for the basin is under preparation. Pilot studies on Back Basin groundwater injection also have been initiated.

The co-applicants' proposal to only operate in the pumping mode when Lake Elsinore's elevation is higher than elevation 1,240 feet msl, and to pay an annual lake management fee to the Elsinore Valley MWD for make-up water to ensure that the lake water surface level is maintained at 1,240 feet msl, or above, would not result in any additional long-term effects on groundwater levels adjacent to Lake Elsinore, beyond the effects of implementing the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project. Also under the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, LESJWA (2005) propose to reduce reliance on the Island Wells over time making more use of treated wastewater.

Water Quality

In general, Lake Elsinore is a hypereutrophic lake and listed by the state of California as "impaired" per Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act for failing to meet applicable water quality objectives for nutrients, organic enrichment/low DO, sedimentation/siltation, and unknown toxicity as described above. Construction of the proposed project could potentially increase the amount of sediment that enters the water, which would affect turbidity. Proposed project construction and operation activities and

the storage of oils, fuels and lubricants have the potential to introduce hazardous substances into project waters. Operation of the proposed project (the cycling of water between the upper reservoir and Lake Elsinore, the fluctuating shoreline, and the maintenance of facilities and transmission lines) could potentially affect multiple water quality parameters within Lake Elsinore and San Juan and San Mateo creeks. Because no water quality issues have been raised in regard to operation of the proposed transmission alignment, we do not include them in our discussion of water quality effects.

Effects of Construction on Turbidity

Construction of the proposed project may affect the rates of erosion and sedimentation as discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*, resulting in increased turbidity and subsequent effects on water quality. Disturbed soils are susceptible to erosive processes and may be transported into project and non-project waters, compromising water quality. All construction activities related to the proposed project could increase erosion potential.

The co-applicants propose several measures to minimize the risk of increased turbidity. In addition to following all local and state regulations related to implementing appropriate BMPs, the co-applicants propose to prepare an erosion control plan with coordination and approval of regulatory agencies as discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*. The co-applicants would construct a coffer dam within Lake Elsinore to ensure all work is performed in a dry environment physically separated from the water.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 15 specifies that the co-applicants, during planning and prior to any new construction or non-routine maintenance projects with the potential for causing erosion and stream sedimentation on or affecting National Forest System lands, file with the Commission an erosion control plan for the proposed project, approved by the USFS, that includes measures to control erosion, sedimentation, dust, and soil mass movement. The USFS specifies that the plan would be based on actual-site geological, soil, and groundwater conditions. The details of the USFS measure are discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*.

Project construction could increase turbidity in area streams and Lake Elsinore through two primary pathways: (1) increased surface erosion and (2) in-water construction activities. The potential for increased surface erosion and delivery of sediments into streams adjacent to construction sites is discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*.

The co-applicants originally proposed the use of a silt curtain or turbidity barrier to mitigate the potential to adversely affect water quality through increasing turbidity and suspended sediments when conducting in-water construction. This could potentially occur during the installation of the intake/outlet structure, were it to be constructed in the

wet. However, construction is proposed to take place within a cofferdam constructed prior to any excavation for the intake/outlet structure. The use of cofferdams would be more effective than a silt curtain.

The proposed construction activities would contribute to continued poor water quality (Lake Elsinore has a current water quality status of impaired for sedimentation/siltation). The incorporation of effective erosion and sedimentation control measures, including BMPs, into the proposed plans for site-specific areas would ensure the following: (1) water resources would be protected from increased turbidity resulting from project-related construction and operations, and (2) project waters would be in a better position to meet applicable state water quality objectives. The development of site-specific erosion and sedimentation control measures for each area of construction would be consistent with USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no.15.

Staff Alternative—Construction of the upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would produce the same potential effects on water quality as the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would exhibit the same potential to affect turbidity and suspended sediment levels in Lake Elsinore as the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Construction of the mid-slope transmission alignment would result in the same effects on water quality as the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site would exhibit the same potential to affect turbidity and suspended sediment levels in Lake Elsinore as the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Turbidity

Daily lake levels within Lake Elsinore are estimated to fluctuate between 1 foot and 1.7 feet as water is pumped to the upper reservoir and back and the volume of water within Lake Elsinore changes. Theoretically, changing water levels can cause shoreline soils to expand and contract, asserting a stress that eventually causes the soil structure to break down to the point of failure, resulting in erosion.

Effects Analysis

Lake Elsinore is a shallow lake relative to its surface area with most shoreline slopes between 4 and 8 percent. Proposed project operations would result in daily surface elevation changes between 1 foot and 1.7 feet; these changes correspond to a 12- to 38-foot change in exposed shoreline. As discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences, Geology and Soils,* the low slope of the shoreline around Lake Elsinore would result in the shifting sediments rather than in erosion. The daily and weekly fluctuation of the water level as a result of project operations would occur within a narrower range of elevation from 1, 240 feet msl and above. Shoreline sediments within

the range of fluctuating lake elevations, as described above, are typically coarse with little organic material. Because Lake Elsinore has fluctuated more than 38 feet in the past, the erosive forces of the water under proposed project conditions would be equal to past and current conditions where wind and wave action increase turbidity in the nearshore environment, except that under the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project the lake would be maintained at elevation 1,240 feet msl or above so that wave activity would be concentrated in narrower band of shoreline. Over time, the shoreline would reach seasonal equilibriums as fluctuating lake levels combined with wind and wave patterns work to move the sands into seasonally stable formations that would generate turbidity levels similar to current conditions.

Effects of Construction on Hazardous Substances Management

Construction activities would require the storage and use of fuels, oils, lubricants, and other potentially hazardous liquids near the water resources. The release or spill of hazardous substances into waters or streams affected by construction or operation activities could have negative effects on water quality as well as terrestrial and aquatic resources. Lake Elsinore is currently listed on the California SWRCB's 303(d) list of impaired bodies for unknown toxicity. The release of additional hazardous substances would only exacerbate this condition. The upper watershed sites are currently void of noticeable negative effects due to hazardous substances.

The co-applicants propose to, and the USFS in its preliminary 4(e) condition no. 7 specifies, that the co-applicants prepare an oil and hazardous substance pollution spill prevention control and counter measure plan to prevent and minimize any effects associated with the handling of hazardous substances during project construction and operation.

Effects Analysis

In accordance with 40 CFR §112.1 of EPA's regulations, a hazardous substances plan (also referred to as a spill prevention control and countermeasure plan) is required to be in place for any facility where unburied storage capacity exceeds 1,320 gallons of oil or a single container has a capacity in excess of 660 gallons, which would include construction and operation areas. In addition to the on-site storage of lubricants and other oil products, transformers at the proposed powerhouse are likely oil-cooled and would be of sufficient capacity to exceed the 1,320-gallon threshold that would require a hazardous substances plan to be in place independent of this licensing procedure. This plan would provide a quick reference to procedures and notifications in case of oil spills to reduce the possibility of oil or other hazardous substances reaching Lake Elsinore or the San Juan Creek drainage if a spill occurs. A hazardous substances plan would help to minimize the amount of petroleum products that would enter the proposed project waters in the unlikely event of a spill. There is no evidence that the co-applicants would store smaller quantities of oil than those that would require the preparation of a hazardous substances plan or additional hazardous substances beside petroleum products would be used within

the proposed project boundary. However, if such is the case, extending the hazardous substances plan to include smaller quantities of oil and other hazardous substances would reduce the risk of contamination of proposed project lands and waters by these products and would reduce the extent of contamination should a spill occur. As such, water quality would continue to be protected in an effort to meet the applicable state objectives.

Effects of Operations on Hazardous Substances Management

The storage and use of fuels, oils, and lubricants during proposed project operations could potentially affect the water quality of project waters. The co-applicants propose and the USFS specifies that the co-applicants develop and file a hazardous substances plan with the Commission.

Effects Analysis

The operation of the proposed project would require the storage of more than 1,320 gallons of petroleum products, which as stated above would require the development and implementation of a hazardous substances plan. Development of the plan would be consistent with the USFS conditions described above.

Effects of Construction on Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, and Nutrient Cycling

Construction of the proposed project could affect temperature, DO, and nutrient cycling within Lake Elsinore and other affected streams. The co-applicants and agencies do not recommend any measures to protect these water quality parameters during the construction phase.

Effects Analysis

Construction of the intake/outlet structure would require work to be performed in the water. This work would be conducted within the confines of a cofferdam. As such, this work is not anticipated to disturb sediments, which in part contain nutrients in various forms. The release of nutrients from the sediments within Lake Elsinore occurs naturally; however, the construction activities as planned would limit the amount of disturbed sediments, thereby minimizing the amount of nutrients released into the water column.[38] Construction effects on temperature and DO are unlikely.

Effects of Operation on Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen and Nutrient Cycling

Development and operation of the proposed project could affect the temperature, DO, and nutrient cycling occurring in Lake Elsinore. Water transferred and stored at the upper reservoir during nighttime hours could lower water temperatures beyond current observed trends in Lake Elsinore. The pumping of water could aerate the water above

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[38] Depending on other factors at the time of release, a large nutrient release could stimulate additional algae growth in Lake Elsinore.

naturally occurring levels, while discharges could disturb bottom sediments, increasing turbidity and releasing nitrogen and phosphorus, which would alter the nutrient cycling in the reservoir. Changing shoreline elevations could also stir up sediments, increasing turbidity and releasing nutrients into the water column.

The co-applicants state that operating the project as proposed would improve DO in Lake Elsinore. The co-applicants propose to monitor DO and temperature within the tailrace in Lake Elsinore.

Effects Analysis

To minimize air entrainment in the intake structure within Lake Elsinore, the structures should be built well below the surface. Transferring water from Lake Elsinore at night and returning it during daylight hours could reduce the temperature of the returning flow by up to 3°C (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a). This colder water would be denser than the waters in Lake Elsinore, and the density gradient would assist in mixing the water column depending on where (depth) the water is returned to Lake Elsinore. The volume of cooler water would not be substantial enough to change the mean temperature within Lake Elsinore, but it should be enough to disturb the water column, resulting in local mixing.

Operation of the proposed project would increase the concentration of DO in waters returning to Lake Elsinore. The activity of transferring the water through the conduit, penstock pipes, and turbines in conjunction with a greater surface area to volume ratio within the upper reservoir would allow for a greater amount of oxygen to become dissolved in the waters than under current conditions. The amount of oxygenation would depend on DO concentrations in the water upon transfer, a function of temperature, depth, and season. Water drawn from near the surface would typically have DO concentrations between 4 and 16 mg/l, depending on the season, so additional oxygenation would be marginal as compared to water drawn from the bottom in summer, which can exhibit DO concentrations of less than 1 mg/l. Transferring water from the bottom of Lake Elsinore to the upper reservoir would provide a greater percentage increase in DO concentrations than from waters drawn at the surface. Returning this oxygenated water to the bottom of Lake Elsinore would provide the most benefit as these waters typically become anoxic (lack oxygen) during the summer months.

Discharges from the outlet pipe within Lake Elsinore could stir up bottom sediments, increasing turbidity in and around the outfalls and potentially releasing

dissolved nutrients previously sequestered at the bottom.[39] The area of effect would be concentrated around the pipe outfalls. Lake Elsinore is currently a dynamic system far from steady-state conditions and experiences high internal sedimentation rates and internal loading of nutrients (Anderson, 2001). LESJWA (2005), summarizing nutrient monitoring reports, states "internal recycling from lake sediments was clearly the dominant source of nutrients to the lake (87 percent of the TP and 79 percent of the TN)." As such, the disturbances of additional sediments and release of nutrients stored within those sediments would not constitute a new effect on the lake. However, because the project would run daily, the frequency of the effect may be increased in the short term and localized until the bottom became armored. Furthermore, the purpose of undertaking the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project is to promote beneficial conditions to the lake, including aeration to prevent the suspension of nutrients within the sediments. Depending on the amount of oxygenation the water receives prior to returning to Lake Elsinore, the discharge of water near the bottom could provide a benefit to the water quality of the lake. Overall, the stabilization project could buffer the proposed project effects and outweigh any effects that result from disturbance of bottom sediments associated with proposed project operations.

Fluctuating shoreline levels due to project operation would occur between the target range of 1,240 and 1,247 feet msl. Shoreline sediments in this range are typically coarse with little organic matter (Anderson, 2001). As such, the changing water levels associated with proposed project operations would not likely re-suspend dissolved nutrients sequestered in the sediments above any such action currently occurring. These actions are not expected to generate additional negative effects and further degrade water quality.

Over time, project operations should provide a measurable benefit to the annual mean water quality by using temperature and oxygen concentration differences between the two water bodies to control internal nutrient loading within Lake Elsinore; however, the proposed action alone is not expected to improve water quality to the point where water quality objectives could be met. All of the effects described here, although beneficial in isolation, would be incremental relative to the effects of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, which includes the installation of a mechanical aeration system to improve water quality.

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[39] The release of nutrients (specifically phosphorus) sequestered in sediments occurs when conditions near the sediments become anoxic (and is often termed 'internal loading'), which can result in algae blooms. Maintaining oxygenated water throughout the water column prevents the nutrients stored within the sediments from being released into the water column, which reduces the amount available for use by algae thus improving water quality. Over time, as additional nutrients settle they become stored in the sediments as long as oxygenated conditions persist.

Internal nutrient loading studies (performed for the RWQCB TMDL development effort for Lake Elsinore [Anderson, 2001]) state that it is clear that control of both internal and during wet years, external sources of nutrients, in conjunction with lake level stabilization, is necessary before significant improvements in water quality in Lake Elsinore can be achieved. This statement indicates that lake level stabilization would result in benefits to water quality greater than the effects associated with sediment disturbances. Over time, the area near the outflow pipes would become hardened as the finer sediments would be disturbed and eventually settle away from the disturbance area.

Effects of Operations on the Interbasin Water Transfer and Upper Reservoir

The storage of low quality Lake Elsinore water in the upper reservoir within the San Juan Creek Watershed could negatively affect water quality in the San Juan Creek drainage. Spills or releases from the upper reservoir or leaks in the upper reservoir liner, membrane system, water conveyance system, or subterranean diversion structure that would allow the water from the upper reservoir to reach the San Juan Creek drainage have the potential to degrade water quality in the San Juan Creek Watershed. The co-applicants propose the following: (1) develop a conveyance system to deliver inputs upstream of the reservoir to downstream of the dam; (2) line the upper reservoir with a double-liner system designed to separate upper reservoir leakage from natural groundwater seeps; and (3) monitor water quality during project operation to ensure that Lake Elsinore waters do not find their way into the San Juan Creek drainage.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior recommends (in its 10(j) recommendation no. 2) that the co-applicants develop, in consultation with the FWS and CDFG, and file for Commission approval, written monitoring, maintenance, and remediation plans incorporating agency recommendations for eliminating or reducing the release of water and non-native species from the upper reservoir into San Juan Creek drainage.

Effects Analysis

Water quality within the San Juan Creek drainage is generally superior to that of Lake Elsinore; therefore, release of water from the upper reservoir, which would be imported from Lake Elsinore, would reduce water quality within the San Juan Creek drainage. The transfer of non-native aquatic vegetation is discussed in section 3.3.3, *Aquatic Resources*. The areal extent of effect from a release or spill would depend on a number of factors including the volume of water released, the soil conditions at the time of release, existing flow conditions within the drainage, and the quality of water at the time of the release.

Implementation of the co-applicants' proposed measures would reduce the risk associated with a spill event that could deliver less desirable water in to the neighboring watershed. Although the risk of release would be reduced through implementation of the co-applicants' proposal, it would not be eliminated. The potential risk could further be

reduced following monitoring and early detection system as recommended by Interior. Monitoring and early detection system measures would notify the co-applicants immediately if Lake Elsinore water would start making its way into the adjacent drainage and would allow for rapid response measures or plans to be activated.

Staff Alternative—The Decker Canyon upper reservoir would be positioned in the very extreme upper edge of the watershed. Although design plans have not been finalized for this site it is unlikely that surface waters would need to be diverted around the reservoir as there would not be any watershed positioned upstream of the reservoir. Otherwise, effects would be the same as those associated with the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

Effects associated with the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be the same as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those associated with the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects associated with the Evergreen powerhouse site would be the same as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

The cost estimate for the monitoring, maintenance, and remediation plan cost estimate is presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis,* and measures included in the staff alternative are presented in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

Effects of Construction on Algae Blooms

Construction activities associated with the proposed project will be completed within the confines of a cofferdam. Because of this, they are not anticipated to stir up nutrients or result in algae blooms within Lake Elsinore. The co-applicants' proposal to install a silt curtain for all work to be performed in the lake would not be necessary.

Effects Analysis

The potential effects of construction activities on algae blooms are related to the effects of construction on nutrient cycling. The release of nutrients and the resulting availability of nutrients to trigger an algae bloom are directly related. Algae blooms typically occur when there are sufficient nutrients and sunlight, which usually occur during the summer but could occur anytime of year at the lake. The release of nutrients into an oxygenated environment would limit the bioavailability of the nutrients as the forms of nitrogen and phosphorus are related to the conditions in the water column including oxygenation concentrations. Because in-lake construction will be undertaken within the confines of a cofferdam, the release of nutrients (which are dissolved and cannot be contained by alternative methods such as silt curtains) is anticipated to be very minimal. The placement of the cofferdam pilings could disturb a very small amount of sediment displaced by the material being driven into the ground. This effect however

would be localized and short term and is not expected to contribute additional sediments or nutrients to the water column triggering an algal bloom.

Effects of Operations on Algae Blooms

Currently, Lake Elsinore experiences conditions conducive for algae blooms which lead to low DO conditions and at times fish kills. Operation of the proposed project could disturb Lake Elsinore sediments releasing nutrients into the water column at rates different than under natural conditions leading to algae blooms. The co-applicants contend that the transfer of water via the proposed penstocks would generate pressures that would be effective in killing the floating algae in the water reducing the amounts of floating algae within Lake Elsinore.

Effects Analysis

Operation of the proposed project could result in oxygenation of a small volume of water as discussed above. Operation of the proposed project would disturb sediments in and around the discharge and intake pipes at the bottom of the lake and along the shoreline resulting in the re-suspension of sediments near the discharge pipes, and depending on the oxygen content of the water, disperse any stored nutrients into the water column. These nutrients would be exposed to an environment with more oxygen than under current conditions, minimizing the amounts of nutrients readily available for algae to metabolize. As such, the operation of the proposed project could help to reduce the occurrence of algae.

To further reduce the risk of algal blooms and to minimize the size of an occurring bloom, the co-applicants contend that the project intake structure could be designed so that water is drawn from near the surface in hopes that floating algae is captured into the conduits so that when the water is transferred between the upper and lower reservoir the increased pressures within the penstocks destroys the tiny gas vacuoles in the algae cells[40] eliminating their ability to float. Algae that can no longer float would have a very difficult time receiving sufficient sunlight required for photosynthesis, and the cells would eventually die, sinking to the bottom. The amount of floating algae collected and destroyed via this method is thought to be minimal however because it would be very difficult to design an intake structure close enough to the surface (given the lake level fluctuation) and with enough suction to draw large amounts of floating algae mats from the surface of Lake Elsinore. If these design hurdles were overcome, the prospect that significant amounts of algae would be drawn into the system at levels great enough to visibly reduce the amount of floating algae on the lake would be undermined by wind processes, which play a large role in dictating where the floating algae mats are at any

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[40] The co-applicants suggest 2 to 3 additional atmospheres of pressure that would be achieved within the water tunnel. Note: 1 atm is equal to about 34 feet of head.

given time. In general, the winds push the floating algae mats towards the lake's shoreline.

Staff Alternative—Effects associated with the Decker Canyon reservoir site would be the same as those associated with the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

Effects associated with the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be the same as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those associated with the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects associated with the Evergreen powerhouse site would be the same as those associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

3.3.2.3 Cumulative Effects on Water Quantity and Quality

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority issued its Integrated Watershed Plan, 2005 Update in June 2005. The plan is a tool for improving the sustainability of water resources and ecological health of the watershed (SAWPA, 2005). Population growth and its commensurate demands on water resources in the watershed is expected to increase from a current level of 5 million to almost 10 million people by 50 years from now. The Authority is responsible for developing and maintaining regional plans for both water supply and water quality. A key goal of the plan is to develop and adaptive approach to make the Santa Ana Basin region entirely self sufficient during drought cycles. Aspects of the strategy include identifying and describing a comprehensive mix of water resources projects and assuring that three years of groundwater storage is maintained in the Santa Ana River Basin by 2020 so that no imported water would be needed under a drought scenario. Congress recently appropriated $153.9 million to improve water quantity and quality in the region (WaterTech, 2005), including:

- Approximately $51.8 million to support a water reclamation project in Orange County;
- $50 million to perform groundwater desalination in the Chino Basin;
- $20 million develop large-scale wetlands along the Santa Ana River in the Prado Basin; and
- $40 million to develop brine lines to help discard excess water from desalination plants.

Final EPA approval of the Lake Elsinore TMDL is expected in 2006, which will define acceptable waste load allocations for phosphorus and nitrogen inputs into Lake Elsinore and associated offsets. The TMDL in conjunction with the operation of the proposed Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project would result in additional benefits to the water resources of Lake Elsinore.

We expect that the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project would improve water quality in Lake Elsinore over time. The co-applicants' proposed project would likely cumulatively contribute to efforts to improve water quality in Lake Elsinore by improving the mixing of water in the lake and having a slight positive increase to the DO concentrations.

3.3.2.4 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

None.

3.3.3 Aquatic Resources

3.3.3.1 Affected Environment

Fish Habitat and Populations

Lake Elsinore

Lake Elsinore supports warmwater fisheries consisting primarily of threadfin shad, common carp, bluegill, and green sunfish as well as limited populations of stocked gamefish including largemouth bass. Lake Elsinore contains no native or sensitive species. Currently, Lake Elsinore is a terminal lake, and there are no existing facilities that would entrain fish.

Lake Elsinore is a hypereutrophic system, meaning that it is characterized by excessive nutrient loading resulting in high concentrations of algae and corresponding low levels of DO. High water temperatures, high alkalinity and mineral concentrations, high algae levels, and low DO levels historically have resulted in numerous fish kills. Low water levels contribute to these conditions and have resulted in the presence of an aquatic fish community that is highly tolerant of this environment (EIP Associates, 2005).

The temperature regime of the lake, which ranges from 12 to 14°C in the winter and 29 to 30°C in the summer (see section 3.3.2.1, *Surface Water*) is a determining factor in the fish assemblage present in the lake.

Lake Elsinore historically has experienced periods when the lake completely dries up (see section 3.3.2.1, *Surface Water*). Lake Elsinore receives water from the San Jacinto River only in extremely wet years or from runoff from the surrounding watershed. Historically, when Lake Elsinore refilled during wet years, it was colonized by fish from the San Jacinto River (EIP Associates, 2005).

Currently, no native riparian vegetation exists on the shore of the lake, and the lake does not support floating or submerged aquatic vegetation (EIP Associates, 2005).

Historically, Lake Elsinore was stocked with a variety of native and non-native fish. As early as the 1890s, northern largemouth bass, green sunfish, and common carp were stocked in the lake. Through the years, often following fish kills, species of bass,

bullheads, sunfish, crappies, and shad also were stocked in the lake in an effort to create a recreational fishery.

Lake Elsinore was dry from 1959 through 1964. Then in 1964, the state of California purchased water from the Colorado River, and water was routed through Canyon Lake and the San Jacinto River. This event likely re-introduced common carp into the lake, likely from Canyon Lake populations.

Table 9 and the following section identify the fish populations reported in Lake Elsinore in various years and characterize the species found there.

Table 9. Fish species reported to occur in Lake Elsinore from 1964 to 2003. (Source: EIP Associates, 2005)

Common Name of Species (Scientific Name)	**Year Reported or Documented in Lake Elsinore**					
	1984[a]	**1993[b]**	**2000[c]**	**2001[d]**	**2002[e]**	**2003[f]**
Clupeidae (Herring Family)						
Threadfin shad *(Dorosoma petenense)*	X	X			X	X
Cyprinidae (Minnow Family)						
Golden shiner *(Notemigonus crysoleucas)*	X					
Goldfish (*Carassius auratus)*						X
Common carp *(Cyprinus carpio)*	X	X			X	X
Ictaluridae (Bullhead Catfish Family)						
Black bullhead *(Ameiurus melas*)[g]						
Brown bullhead *(Ameiurus nebulosus)*		X				
Yellow bullhead *(Ameiurus natalis*)		X				
Channel catfish *(Ictalurus punctatus)*	X				X	X
Salmonidae (Salmon and Trout Family)						
Rainbow trout *(Oncorhynchus mykiss)*			X	X		

Common Name of Species (Scientific Name)	Year Reported or Documented in Lake Elsinore					
	1984[a]	1993[b]	2000[c]	2001[d]	2002[e]	2003[f]
Moronidae (Striped Bass Family)						
Striped bass *(Morone saxatilis)*					X[h]	
Centrarchidae (Sunfish Family)						
Bluegill sunfish *(Lepomis macrochirus)*	X	X			X	X
Redear sunfish *(Lepomis microlophus)*	X					X
Green sunfish *(Lepomis cyanellus*	X	X				X
White crappie *(Pomoxis annularis)*	[g]					
Black crappie *(Pomoxis nigromaculatus)*	[g]	X			X	X
Largemouth bass *(Micropterus salmoides)*	X	X			X	X
Cichlidae (Cichlid Family)						
Tilapia (*Tilapia* sp.)	X					

[a] Reported in Lake Elsinore State Recreation Area General Plan (CDPR, 1984, as cited by EIP Associates, 2005).

[b] Electrofishing data from CDFG.

[c] City of Lake Elsinore trout planting records and CDFG trout planting records.

[d] CDFG trout planting records.

[e] Electrofishing and gill net data from CDFG.

[f] EIP Associates seining data.

[g] Listed in the city of Lake Elsinore's field guide titled *Sport Fishing on Lake Elsinore*, but not documented by the CDFG records or collected during sampling in 1993 and 2003.

[h] Newspaper documentation of angler harvest.

Threadfin Shad—Threadfin shad, which are native to tributaries to the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River, were introduced into California in 1954. They typically inhabit open waters of reservoirs, lakes, and large ponds, and they can tolerate high salinities, although that may impair their reproduction. Threadfin shad prefer to

swim near the surface, and are rarely found below 60 feet (Moyle, 2002). Threadfin shad was the most abundant fish species in Lake Elsinore in 2003, despite a massive die-off event that occurred in 1998. Optimal growth occurs when summer temperatures exceed 22 to 24°C; however, prolonged periods of cold water (4°C) will cause mortality (Moyle, 2002). The occurrence of threadfin shad in Lake Elsinore is the result of either stocking by CDFG or introduction when water from the Colorado River was transferred to Lake Elsinore from 1964 through 1966 (EIP Associates, 2005).

Goldfish—Goldfish were probably introduced to California waters and Lake Elsinore by aquarists and bait anglers. They become established in warm (>27°C), oxygen-deficient waters where winters are mild, and they thrive in polluted and disturbed habitats (Moyle, 2002), similar to those colonized by common carp. They feed on algae, zooplankton, and organic detritus.

Common Carp—The common carp, one of the first fish species planted in Lake Elsinore, is mostly likely to have recolonized the lake for the first time during the addition of Colorado River water to Lake Elsinore. The seed population likely originated in Canyon Lake. Carp are abundant in eutrophic lakes and reservoirs with silty bottoms and submerged aquatic vegetation. They are tolerant of high turbidity, high temperatures, and low DO concentrations and typically do not go below 100 feet (Moyle, 2002). It appears the majority of carp in Lake Elsinore are from a 1995 year class, and subsequent natural spawning has not produced prolific year classes. Predation by adult carp and competition for limited food supply are likely reasons for poor year-class survival (EIP Associates, 2005). The common carp is now considered a nuisance species. Following surveys in 2003, the city of Lake Elsinore implemented a carp removal program from June through September of that year. An estimated 291,000 carp were removed from the lake, most appeared to be from the 1995 year-class (EIP Associates, 2005).

Channel Catfish—The channel catfish was the third most abundant sport fish found in Lake Elsinore during surveys conducted in 2003. These fish were stocked in the lake in 2000, although few fish from this stocking effort were observed, and natural reproduction in the lake appears to be very low likely because of limited food resources. Channel catfish feed on amphipods and aquatic larvae when small and on aquatic insects and other fish and crayfish when larger. This species is tolerant of low DO, turbid, and high salinity conditions (Moyle, 2002). In streams, catfish move to shallow areas to feed at night and move to deep holes or shelters during the day, although little is known about their habitat preferences in lakes or reservoirs (Wydoski and Whitney, 2003).

Bluegill Sunfish—Bluegill sunfish prefer warm, shallow waters and can tolerate high salinities and low DO levels. They are also very temperature tolerant. They feed throughout the water column, eating a variety of aquatic insects and zooplankton, planktonic crustaceans, snails, small fish, and fish eggs, although they rarely are observed below 15 feet (Moyle, 2002). They are not common in the lake, and during seine surveys conducted in 2003, all bluegill appeared to be from the same 2000 year class. They do not appear to be reproducing successfully in the lake (EIP Associates, 2005).

Redear Sunfish—Redear sunfish prefer deeper (>6 feet deep) areas of warmwater lakes and ponds with aquatic vegetation. They are bottom-feeders, eating snails, clams, benthic insects, and aquatic plants. Only one specimen was captured in Lake Elsinore during seine surveys in 2003, and they do not appear to be reproducing successfully in the lake (EIP Associates, 2005)

Green Sunfish—In reservoirs, the green sunfish is typically found in shallow, weedy areas. This species is tolerant of high temperatures and low DO, although it is not tolerant of high salinities. The diet of the green sunfish comprises zooplankton and benthic invertebrates when small and larger aquatic insects, terrestrial insects, crayfish and fish when larger (Moyle, 2002). Little is known about current status of this species in the lake.

Black Crappie—Black crappie are often found in large warmwater lakes and reservoirs. Optimal temperatures for this species range between 27 to 29°C. Black crappie can withstand low DO levels for short periods and appear to tolerate high salinities. They can be found around large submerged objects during the day, and move offshore in the evening or early morning (Moyle, 2002). Black crappie appear to be reproducing in Lake Elsinore, and while they are not abundant, they are the most abundant sunfish found in the lake (EIP Associates, 2005).

Largemouth Bass—Largemouth bass are uncommon in Lake Elsinore; only two adults were captured in surveys conducted in 2003. They appear to prefer temperatures of 27°C, although they can persist in waters that reach to 37°C during the day and with DO levels as low as 1 mg/l. They prefer depths less than 20 feet and beds of aquatic plants (Moyle, 2002). Likely factors limiting successful reproduction are poor water quality, absences of suitable spawning habitat, limited food supply for juvenile fish, and nest destruction by common carp (EIP Associates, 2005). Largemouth bass were stocked into Lake Elsinore in 2005, and the LESJWA intends to continue the stocking them in the future.

Rainbow Trout—Rainbow trout do not survive in Lake Elsinore for more than short periods because of unsuitable water quality and water temperature conditions. CDFG stocked rainbow trout in the lake to provide a novelty put-and-take fishery (EIP Associates, 2005). Rainbow trout are considered a coldwater species, preferring temperatures much cooler than those found in Lake Elsinore. Optimal rainbow trout habitat in lakes consists of clear water with an average summer temperature of < 22°C (Raleigh et al., 1984). The Fisheries Management Plan for Lake Elsinore does not include plans to stock Lake Elsinore with rainbow trout.

Wiper—Wipers are a sterile cross of white bass and striped bass. These fish are cultured in hatcheries and approximately 5,000 were stocked into Lake Elsinore in 2004, and 18,000 were stocked in 2005 (EIP Associates, 2005). Wipers, which are predatory on pelagic fish such as threadfin shad and young-of-the-year carp, are more tolerant of warmer water and lower DO than striped bass.

The LESJWA developed the Fisheries Management Plan for Lake Elsinore (EIP Associates, 2005). The goal of the plan is to develop a sports fisheries enhancement and maintenance program that will improve recreational fishing in Lake Elsinore. In developing this plan, the LESJWA identified the following factors that limit the production of game fish in Lake Elsinore: lake level fluctuations, poor water quality, carp predation and competition with other fish, poor food supply, poor feeding conditions, and poor reproduction. LESJWA makes the assumption that actions to stabilize lake level fluctuations and water quality would be implemented, and the Fisheries Management Plan focuses it efforts on fisheries management actions. Elements of the final Fisheries Management Plan to be implemented include:

- Carp control through beach and cove seining to remove fish, and stocking large predatory striped bass, and wipers to prey on young-of-the-year carp. In 2004 and 2005 the LESWJA stocked striped bass into Lake Elsinore, and because striped bass require large, cool rivers to spawn, their populations will not reproduce in Lake Elsinore.
- Zooplankton enhancement to increase the food supply and help recruitment of juveniles to adult reproducing populations. Predator stocking to control undesirable, zooplankton-feeding threadfin shad and establishing aquatic vegetation would also help increase zooplankton abundance in the reservoir.
- Establishment of aquatic and emergent vegetation through planting along with carp exclosures to prevent plant destruction by the carp.
- Fish habitat improvement by establishing rooted vegetation, establishing shoreline vegetation by implementing erosion control methods, introducing physical habitat structures for bass and crappie, placing spawning gravels to create spawning beds, and creating diversity in the profile of the lake shoreline.
- Stocking sportfish into the lake, and potentially limiting angler harvest if fishing pressure is jeopardizing establishment of reproducing populations.

San Mateo Creek

San Mateo Creek's headwaters lie in the Santa Ana and Santa Margarita Mountains in the Trabaco Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest (figure 12). The upper portions are steep and rocky, and flows in the upper reaches range from 0.5 cfs in the summer to more than 500 cfs in wet months. In the lower reaches, groundwater extractions in Camp Pendleton to support base military training operations and on-base agriculture have contributed to intermittent flow conditions, riparian vegetation has been lost, stream channel width has increased, and surficial flow has been reduced or eliminated during most of the year in some portions of the stream (50 CFR Part 224). San Mateo Creek currently supports populations of largemouth bass, green sunfish, bluegill, black bullhead, bullfrog, mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis)*, and red swamp crayfish.

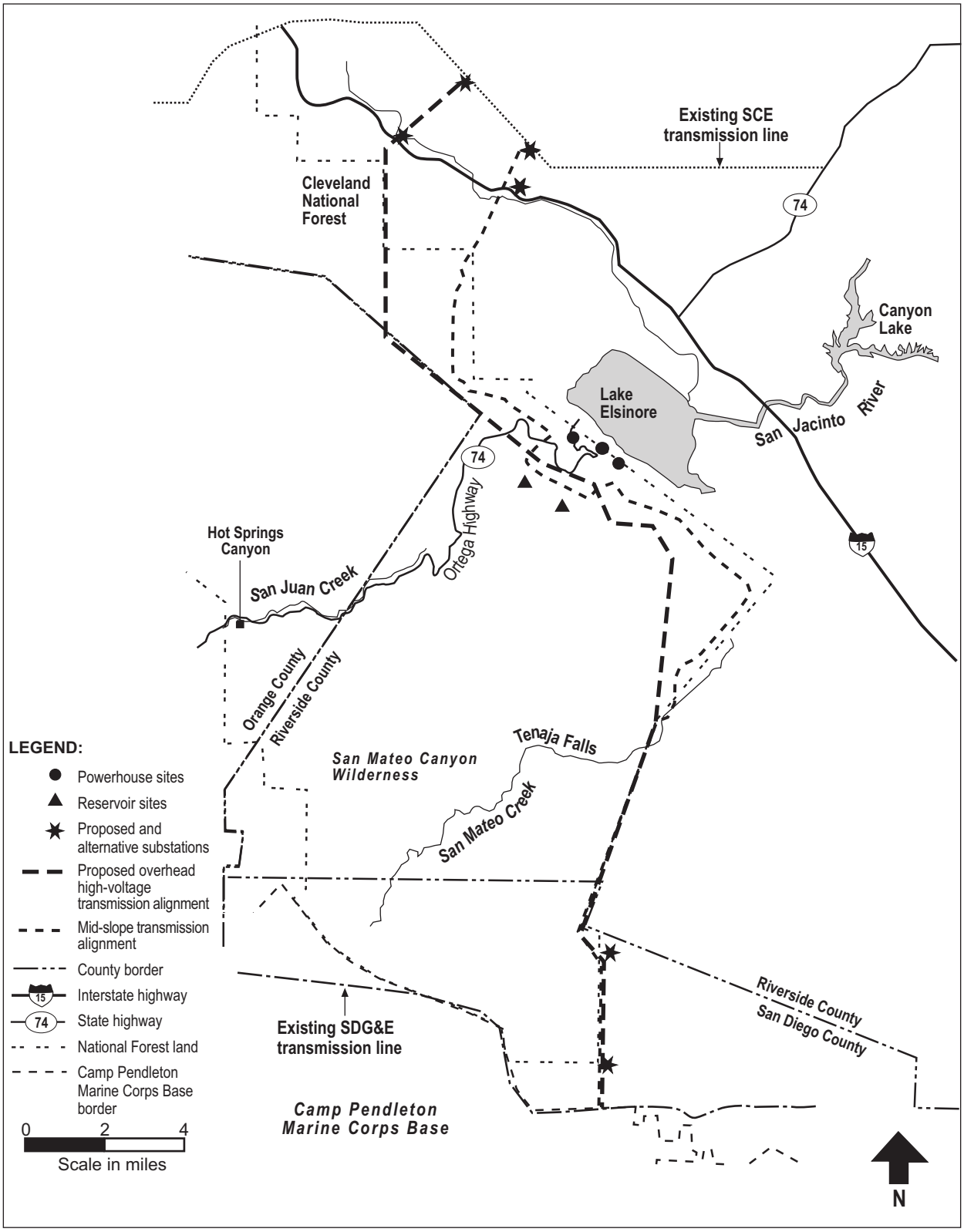

Figure 12. San Juan and San Mateo creeks near the project area. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Steelhead appear to have been most abundant in the San Mateo Creek Watershed prior to 1950 and were rarely found in later years (50 CFR Part 224). There were no recorded observations between 1980 and 1998. They reappeared in surveys of San Mateo Creek in 1999. NOAA Fisheries speculates the steelhead population in San Mateo Creek was likely affected from natural episodes of sediment input from within the watershed, exacerbated by fires in the upper watershed. Southern California steelhead are state and federally listed as endangered, and are discussed further in section 3.3 5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

The Corps is the lead federal agency responsible for the development of a Special Area Management Plan for San Mateo Creek. With Special Area Management Plans, the Corps undertakes a comprehensive review of aquatic resources in an entire watershed, identifying priority areas for preservation, potential restoration areas, and determining the least environmentally damaging locations for proposed projects. The initial step recommended in the Special Area Management Plan is implementation of a program to remove largemouth bass, green sunfish, bluegill, black bullhead, bullfrog, mosquito fish, red swamp crayfish from the lower reaches of San Mateo Creek (Corps, 2005). These fish are predatory to steelhead during various lifestages. The California State Coastal Conservancy allocated $800,000 in 2000 to restore the arroyo chub, partially armored stickleback, and southern steelhead fisheries to their native creeks of San Mateo Creek and its tributary Devil Canyon Creek, and San Onofre Creek in San Diego County.

San Juan Creek

The headwaters for San Juan Creek, like San Mateo Creek, lie in the Santa Ana and Santa Margarita mountains, in the Trabaco Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest. San Juan Creek is seasonal and intermittent near the headwaters and becomes a perennial stream in downstream reaches as flows are augmented by urban runoff. The channel is braided for most of its length; there are several gradient control structures in the main channel as well as a sand and gravel mining operation. Downcutting is occurring along the entire main stem, and the lower 2.6 miles have concrete banks and an earthen bottom (CERES, 2005).

On July 25, 1996, FWS biologists surveyed San Juan Creek from Interstate 5 east to just beyond Hot Springs Canyon. During the seining, FWS collected one species of native fish, the arroyo chub (*Gila orcutti*), and several non-native species, such as mosquitofish, green sunfish, smallmouth bass (*Micopterus dolornieu*), yellow bullhead (*Ameiurus natalis*), and red shiner (*Cyprinella lutrensis*) (FWS, undated, as cited in the Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, exhibit E).

Fish Species of Special Concern/Sensitive Species

Table 10 shows special status fish species that could occur or are known to occur in the study area.

Table 10. Special status fish species that may occur or are known to be present within the study area. (Source: CDFG, 2005)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Location
Gila orcutti	Arroyo chub	CSC	Documented in lower reaches of San Juan Creek
Onchorhynchus mykiss irideus	Southern California summer steelhead	FE	Documented in lower reaches of San Mateo Creek

Notes: CSC – state special concern
FE – federal endangered

Arroyo Chub

The arroyo chub is listed as a California species of special concern because it is considered threatened in its native range. It is now most abundant in areas outside of its native range. This species is found in slow-moving or backwater sections of warm to cool (10 to 24°C) streams with mud or sand substrates.

Southern California summer steelhead are discussed in section 3.3.5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

3.3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

Effects of Construction on Fish Habitat and Populations

Construction of the upper reservoir could affect fish in San Juan Creek if sediments from construction activities are transported into streams that flow into San Juan Creek. Construction of transmission line towers at stream crossings could affect water quality and fish habitat in the streams that are crossed. The initial drawdown and construction of the intake/outlet and tailrace structures in Lake Elsinore could increase turbidity and affect the fish populations in the lake.

Co-applicants' Proposal—To address the potential effect of project construction on fisheries resources, the co-applicants propose to retain a qualified biologist or natural resource specialist to serve as an environmental construction monitor to ensure that incidental construction effects on biological resources are avoided or limited to the most feasible extent.

The co-applicants also propose measures to avoid or mitigate potential effects on fisheries in San Juan or San Mateo creeks during project construction. These include establishing setbacks from streams and implementing BMPs including, but not limited to, those road, building site, and watershed BMPs identified in USFS' *Water Quality Management for Forest System Lands in California—Best Management Practices* (USFS, 2000). Further, the co-applicants propose to implement BMPs identified by the USFS to avoid any effects on the existing steelhead recovery efforts in the San Mateo Watershed.

The co-applicants propose facilities for the collection and conveyance of all flows from the upstream drainage area, and all seepage emanating from Lion Spring for discharge into the stream channel downstream of the proposed upper reservoir. The monitoring plan includes continual measurement of the flows discharging from the downstream end of the conveyance system. Monitoring of flows and water quality would be continued during the preparation of the site, the construction of the dam, and the construction of the reservoir and appurtenant structures.

The co-applicants would construct the intake\outlet structures in the dry with facilities isolated from Lake Elsinore waters through construction of cofferdams.

They also propose that, during construction drawdown, they would remove or reduce the existing fish population via netting or rotenone poisoning. The co-applicants propose to develop an annual fish stocking program for Lake Elsinore in consultation with the FWS, CDFG, and the LESJWA (see section 3.3.6.2, *Recreational Resources)*.

Additionally, the co-applicants propose to minimize initial drawdown during springs that follow winters with below-normal precipitation to ensure that young-of-the-year fish would have adequate vegetative cover.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior recommends that the co-applicants develop and implement a San Juan Creek drainage monitoring and remediation plan to eliminate or reduce the release of non-native species from the upper reservoir into San Juan Creek.

Interior requests that the co-applicants consult directly with the FWS regarding project plans and designs for measures to protect, mitigate damages to, and enhance fish and wildlife resources.

Effects Analysis

If ground or vegetation-clearing activities are located near riparian areas, these activities could negatively affect fish populations in those streams. Removal of riparian vegetation would reduce shading and cover for fish in streams. Reduced shading could contribute to an increase in water temperatures, which could negatively affect native trout that prefer cool water temperatures. Reduced cover could make fish more vulnerable to predation from other fish and from birds. Sediments from ground-disturbing activities could be transported to the streams, potentially decreasing water quality, inundating gravel interstices with silt and fines, filling in spawning habitat and potentially decreasing spawning success. Effects on water quality are discussed in section 3.3.2.2.

Construction of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir could affect fish in the San Juan Creek Watershed if sediments from ground-disturbing activities were allowed to wash down the headwater stream to perennial portions of San Juan Creek from the base of the reservoir. Transport of sediments can negatively affect fish and the

macroinvertebrates on which they prey if streambeds were to be inundated or if turbidity were to be increased.

Headwaters of San Juan Creek stream near the project area flow intermittently; and sediment transport several miles downstream to perennial portions of San Juan Creek would be unlikely. As recommended by Interior, development of a San Juan Creek drainage monitoring and remediation plan in cooperation with Interior and CDFG to eliminate or reduce release of water and non-native fish species from the upper reservoir into the San Juan Creek drainage would minimize the potential for negative effects on native fish in the San Juan Watershed.

Construction activities associated with the proposed transmission alignment would occur within the San Mateo Watershed. Aspects of constructing the proposed transmission alignment that could affect aquatic resources would result from vegetation clearing and construction near tributaries and streams. Tower locations have not been identified as part of transmission alignment; however, at least 22 stream crossings occur along the proposed transmission alignment. Construction of transmission alignment facilities could affect fish in the watershed if sediments from ground-disturbing activities were allowed to wash into headwater streams in the San Mateo Watershed. Transport of sediments could negatively affect fish and the macroinvertebrates on which they prey if streambeds were to be inundated or if turbidity were to be increased.

The co-applicants plan to locate transmission towers outside of riparian habitat so that the proposed transmission alignment would span sensitive areas, avoiding adverse effects on riparian vegetation and stream habitat. Development of measures to control erosion and surface transport of sediments as proposed by the co-applicants and recommended by the USFS to the headwater streams of San Mateo Creek during construction of the proposed transmission alignment would also help to reduce the potential for negative effects from construction on resident fish.

Development of the water quality monitoring plan as proposed by the co-applicants could help to identify project-related effects on water quality that might affect fish in San Juan Creek. Subsequent actions defined in the plan to address potential effects would reduce or mitigate for such effects on resident fish. Locating transmission towers away from streams would reduce or eliminate effects on San Juan Creek during construction.

Construction of the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse would not be located near streams or lake habitats. Therefore, powerhouse construction would not affect fish resources.

Construction of the intake/outlet structures through a dry process would disturb the lakebed. Constructing cofferdams to isolate the intake/outlet structures would isolate fish in the lake from direct effects of construction of the intakes.

The co-applicants propose to remove or reduce the existing fish population via netting or rotenone poisoning during construction drawdown. Either action would remove undesirable fish such as carp and threadfin shad from Lake Elsinore. If netting is used, the mesh size of the nets used may not capture juveniles and may capture desirable game fish as well. Rotenone poisoning of the fish population in the lake would kill desirable as well as undesirable fish, however, it would allow fisheries managers to restock the lake with desirable fish species and over the long term help to establish a desirable sports fishery.

Rotenone poisoning to remove fish is not identified as a preferred option in the Fisheries Management Plan for Lake Elsinore (EIP Associates, 2005), however, netting for carp removal is. The Fisheries Management Plan recommends controlling carp and threadfin shad populations through seining for carp and through the introduction of predators such as striped bass, wipers, or largemouth bass. The Fisheries Management Plan states the city of Lake Elsinore has already acquired equipment to conduct seining, and that seining for carp is planned annually through 2008, and biannually from 2016 through 2024. It would be appropriate for the co-applicants to coordinate measures for the removal of the existing fish population during construction activities with the city of Lake Elsinore and administrators of the Fisheries Management Plan, the LEWSJA, to ensure their proposal does not conflict with other management actions relating to fish resources in Lake Elsinore.

Staff Alternative—Construction at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would have the same types of effects as those described for proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site.

Construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not affect fish or riparian habitat because the site is upland from the lake and contains no riparian areas or streams.

In addition to Temescal Wash, the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross three named drainages: Leach Canyon, McVicker Canyon, and Rice Canyon creeks. The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross the same major drainages in Alamos Canyon, Tenaja Canyon, and San Mateo Creek as the proposed transmission alignment. We anticipate that effects of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be similar to the proposed transmission alignment because the co-applicants propose to place the towers outside of riparian habitats and to implement BMPs for stream crossings.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction at the Evergreen powerhouse site would not affect fish or riparian habitat because this site is upland from the lake and contains no riparian areas or streams.

Effects of Operation on Fish Habitat and Populations

Operational effects on fish populations could include potential leakage of the upper reservoir liner that could affect water quality and fish habitat in San Juan Creek,

the spread of non-native fish species from Lake Elsinore into San Juan Creek, impingement in turbines or trashracks, entrainment in turbines, or loss or degradation of fish habitat in Lake Elsinore from reservoir fluctuations.

Fish populations could be introduced to the upper reservoir either through transfer of fish through pumped water from Lake Elsinore or from introductions by the public. Fish introduced into the upper reservoir would not be expected to thrive there due to the lack of habitat structures, the magnitude of reservoir fluctuations, and the potential for entrainment in turbines through drawdown activities.

Current lake level fluctuations in Lake Elsinore contribute to the lack of native riparian vegetation on the shore of the lake and the lack of submerged aquatic vegetation. Intermittent inundation prevents vegetation from establishing on the lake shoreline. Shoreline vegetation that provides cover and shading for juvenile fish, and rooted shallow water vegetation that provides spawning, rearing, foraging, and cover from predators could benefit from the reduction in lake level fluctuations that currently occur by establishing a constant regime of inundation. Proposed project operations would limit lake level fluctuations to 1 foot on a daily basis, and 1.7 feet on a weekly basis as water is pumped between the upper reservoir and Lake Elsinore.

Potential project-related adverse effects on fish from operations in Lake Elsinore would include mortality from entrainment (i.e., passing aquatic organisms through pump intake valves and turbines) and impingement (i.e., trapping aquatic organisms on intake screens or trashracks). Attraction flows and/or suction caused by the intakes could be too strong for some Lake Elsinore fish to escape, particularly juvenile fish with low swimming speeds, resulting in death or injury as they are pumped through the turbines to the upper reservoir. Fish that are entrained to the upper reservoir may not survive due to direct mortality from passage through the turbines, or delayed mortality from exhaustion, suffocation, or other physical injury. Fish that may survive transport through the turbines may not survive in the upper reservoir due to a lack of habitat, a forage base for food, and high reservoir fluctuations.

Co-applicants' Proposal—To address the potential for impingement and entrainment at the intake/outlet structure, the co-applicants propose to establish limits of flow velocity rates of the underwater intakes of1.5 feet per second to 1.8 feet per second. They also propose to install fish screens that would be operated and maintained in accordance with NMFS' fish screen criteria, as outlined in the NMFS' *Juvenile Fish Screen Criteria* (NMFS, 1995) and the *Addendum Juvenile Fish Screen Criteria for Pump Intakes* (NMFS, 1996) in consultation with the FWS.

The co-applicants propose to conduct hydroacoustic monitoring for 1 year to assess the extent of fish entrainment at the pump intake screens and behind the trashracks. If the entrainment studies indicate that significant fish entrainment is occurring and is resulting in fish mortality during passage through the pump-turbines, the co-applicant would conduct additional studies to determine the level of mortality. If monitoring indicates that entrainment is significant, the co-applicants would implement

and test filters or fish behavioral measures such as strobe lights, sonic devices, poppers/hammers or some combination of these devices to elicit an avoidance response.

The co-applicants also propose to develop an annual sport fish stocking program in consultation with the LESJWA. Sports fish stocking is discussed in section 3.3.6, *Recreational Resources*.

Over the term of any license issued for the project, Interior recommends the development of a San Juan Creek drainage monitoring and remediation plan to eliminate or reduce release of water and non-native fish species from the upper reservoir into the San Juan Creek drainage in cooperation with CDFG.

Effects Analysis

Lake Elsinore water from the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir could be introduced into the San Juan drainage in the event of leakage from the reservoir or through failure of the reservoir walls. Such leakage or failure would have to be extensive enough to carry enough water to support fish survival as the water flows down the canyon in the headwater tributary, and then persist farther downstream to San Juan Creek. If non-native fish were present in the upper reservoir, however, and if they were to survive such an event, the non-native fish introduced into the San Juan Creek Watershed could compete with native species for prey and habitat, thereby negatively affecting native fish in the watershed. The co-applicants' proposal to line the reservoir with an impermeable layer would prevent leakage of water from the reservoir.

Interior's recommendation to develop a monitoring and remediation plan in conjunction with CDFG to eliminate or reduce release of water and non-native fish species from the upper reservoir into the San Juan Creek drainage would minimize the potential effects on native fish in San Juan Creek. If monitoring shows that non-native fish from the reservoir are being introduced to San Juan Creek, actions already defined in a remediation plan could be quickly implemented, thereby reducing the potential for negative interactions with native fish.

Once construction of the proposed transmission alignment towers is complete, no ongoing effects on stream or riparian habitat would be anticipated. If no roads are constructed to provide access to the proposed transmission alignment, we anticipate there would be no operational effects on riparian habitat. If roads are constructed, additional effects would occur as a result of road maintenance or runoff from roads affecting water quality of streams at stream crossings through the term of any license that may be issued. As discussed in section 3.3.1, *Geology and Soils*, implementation of the erosion control plan should prevent the transport of sediments that could affect water quality.

Ongoing operations at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site would not affect aquatic resources because it is located several blocks from the lake shore and the parcel does not contain any riparian areas or streams.

If the maximum operational drawdown in Lake Elsinore were to occur during summer months, following a winter of below normal precipitation resulting in below normal inflow into the lake and the lake's level were not stabilized in accordance with the Lake Elsinore Management Project, the water quality, and consequently the fish population could be negatively affected. As discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Quality,* at lake elevations below 1,240 feet msl would cause the lake water temperature to increase and the DO to decrease, and could contribute to algal blooms that would further exacerbate the low DO conditions and may result in fish kills. Because the co-applicants propose a target minimum water surface elevation of 1,240 feet msl, operation of the project would not contribute to future algae blooms or fish kills and would be expected to improve fish habitat in Lake Elsinore.

The cycling of water through the tailrace and intake structures could potentially stir up lake bed sediment if the volume and/or direction of water discharged to the lower reservoir create sufficient turbulence to reanimate sediments, nutrients, and particulates. Increasing turbidity and/or nutrient concentrations in the water column, particularly any phosphorus that is bound to the sediments, would negatively affect the water quality and could cause increased algae blooms and decreased DO, resulting in negative effects on the fish population, including fish kills.

As discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Quality,* releasing water through the outlet structure at the bottom of the lake could benefit fish populations in the lake if it increases oxygen levels in the lake, particularly during times when DO levels in the summer at depth are very low.

The co-applicants stated that the maximum pumping velocity in the tailrace tunnels would be 1.5 feet per second to 1.8 feet per second, and the maximum discharge velocity would be 1.5 to 1.8 feet per second (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004b). Furthermore, they propose to install fish screens in accordance with NMFS fish screen criteria (NMFS, 1996, 1995) and in consultation with the FWS. NMFS criteria were developed for salmonids, however, and there is little information in the literature on fish screening criteria for the non-salmonids found Lake Elsinore. Assuming that the NMFS criteria of a maximum approach velocity of 0.4 feet per second (recommended approach velocity for salmonid fry less than 2.36 inches in length) were effective for Lake Elsinore fish, each 1,967 cfs-capacity intake screen for the 20-foot-diameter D-shaped tailrace tunnels at Lake Elsinore would have to be approximately 4,917 square feet (NMFS, 1996) to meet the 0.4 feet per second criteria. If the criteria for salmonid fingerlings of 0.8 feet per second were used (fish longer than 2.36 inches), the screens would need to be 2,456 square feet each to meet the velocity criteria.

The LESJWA intends to periodically stock adult and juvenile largemouth bass, black crappie, Sacramento perch, and bluegill into Lake Elsinore beginning in 2006. In addition to adult fish, the Fish Management Plan includes stocking at different times of the year, juvenile or fingerling largemouth bass (1.5 to 2.0 inches), bluegill fingerlings (2.0 to 3.0-inch), redear sunfish fingerlings (2.0 to 4.0-inches), striped bass or hybrids

(wipers) (1.5 to 2.0-inch fingerlings), and/or black crappie (2-inch fingerlings) (LESJAW, 2005). The juvenile fish stocked may not be able to avoid entrainment if the intakes are located close to shoreline habitats or close to the surface where these fish typically are found.

Bell (1991) reported darting speeds of 1-inch striped bass to be 0.5 to 1.0 feet per second, and for 2-inch striped bass to be 1.0 to 2.0 feet per second. Therefore, stocked striped bass under 2 inches may be unable to avoid entrainment unless the intake approach velocity were reduced through screening or other measures. Adult fish that are stocked are likely to avoid entrainment or impingement in intake screens if approach velocities are within the range of the unscreened intakes at 1.5 to 1.8 feet per second. However, a study of impingement at the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania found that channel catfish, white crappie, and bluegill were the most commonly entrained fish where the intake velocity was 0.75 feet per second or less (Mathur et al., 1977). Largemouth bass were rarely impinged.

Without more information on the exact location, distance from shore, depth and orientation of the intake/outlet structure to the surface and shore we can only generalize the potential effects on the Lake Elsinore fishery from entrainment. If the intake structure were to be placed on the shoreline where juvenile fish would encounter the intake while foraging, spawning, or cruising, the likelihood for entrainment is higher than if the structure were placed farther away from shore where they are less likely to be. Based on conceptual drawings of this structure, it could extend up to 200 feet into Lake Elsinore (see discussion in 3.3.6, *Recreational Resources*). Also, currently and in the future, many of the sport fish in the lake will originate from stocking efforts, and most will be large enough to avoid entrainment so that project effects on adult stocks are likely to be small. In addition, unlike river systems, the intake/outlet structure area is small in relation to the overall size of the lake, and fish would need to actively swim into the area in order to be vulnerable to entrainment.

The LESJWA Fish Management Plan calls for measures to improve nearshore habitat in the lake by creating exclosures for carp, planting emergent and aquatic vegetation, creating additional habitat structures in the lake such as brush shelters, log cribs, bass spawning benches and placing spawning gravels. These enhancements would help to establish naturally reproducing populations of desirable sport fish such as largemouth bass, bluegill, and black crappie. Participation by the co-applicants in these activities would help to mitigate the unavoidable entrainment mortality of juvenile sport fish in the lake. Locating the planned habitat improvement measures away from the intake/outlet structure would help to further reduce effects on fish using these areas as they would not be attracted to the intake vicinity.

The 1-year monitoring program proposed by the co-applicants would be used to assess which species are being entrained or impinged and enable estimates of the effects of entrainment on fish that are stocked in Lake Elsinore. If monitoring indicates that entrainment is significant, the co-applicants propose to implement and test structures or

fish behavioral devices to elicit an avoidance response for the species being entrained, thereby reducing potential source of fish mortality in the reservoir.

Net barriers to prevent entrainment of adult fish are being used successfully at the Ludington Pumped Storage Project (FERC Project No. 2680) in Michigan. There the licensee has seasonally installed 2.5-mile long barrier nets for the past 17 years to screen game fish (salmonids and yellow perch) and forage fish (alewife and rainbow smelt) over 5 inches long. The nets are constructed of 0.5-inch and 0.75-inch bar mesh. For 2005, reported effectiveness for game fish was 90.2 percent and for forage fish was 92.6 percent (Consumers Energy Company and Detroit Edison Company, 2005). The co-applicants suggested that an aquatic filter barrier system might be employed to prevent entrainment of fish, fish eggs and larvae, however the such systems were designed for much smaller flow rates and have not been tested for flows as high as 1967 cfs as is proposed for Lake Elsinore.

Behavioral avoidance devices such as strobe lights, sonic devices, and poppers/hammers or some combination of these to elicit an avoidance response are still considered experimental (Coutant, 2001). Effectiveness can be variable depending on individual species, species life stage, time of day, hydrology, and configuration of the system (Popper and Carlson, 1998; Coutant, 2001). Much of the research to date has involved salmonids. Low-frequency sound was found to be effective for evoking avoidance responses in migrating Atlantic salmon (Knudsen and Sand, 1994), but was not effective when tested on salmon in a navigation lock in Washington State (Goetz et al., 2001). Although strobe lights have shown some potential for repelling juvenile salmonids (Ploskey and Johnson, 2001; Amaral et al., 2001), they are still generally viewed as an experimental technology and have been evaluated in few full-scale applications. Preliminary tests on smallmouth bass showed an avoidance response to strobe lights, although further testing was recommended (Amaral et al., 2001). In sum, the application of behavioral avoidance systems in Lake Elsinore would be highly experimental and potentially costly, and would provide no guarantee of effectiveness.

The cost estimates for the fisheries enhancements are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

Staff Alternative—Flows at the Decker Canyon site would be handled the same way they would be managed at the proposed Morrell Canyon site, i.e., flows would be conveyed from Lake Elsinore to the upper reservoir and returned to Lake Elsinore by the same means. For this reason, we expect effects would be the same.

The potential effects of project operations on the entrainment and impingement of fish at the Decker Canyon reservoir would be similar to the effects at the Morrell Canyon reservoir.

No operational effects on fish resources or riparian habitat are anticipated at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Operational effects along the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those described above for the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No operational effects on fish resources or riparian habitat are anticipated at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

3.3.3.3 Cumulative Effects

The Lake Elsinore Fisheries Management Plan proposes measures to control undesirable species and enhance populations of more desirable game fish in the lake. Funding for implementation of the Fisheries Management Plan is anticipated through the acquisition of grants from a variety of sources. The co-applicants' proposal to fund stocking fish in the lake in coordination with objectives of the Fisheries Management Plan would help ensure that the plan can be implemented as designed.

Implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project would decrease the likelihood that lake elevations would drop to levels that would result in decreased water quality that result in fish kills. Operation of the proposed project would not affect implementation of the stabilization project. Aeration stations proposed as part of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project would help to increase DO at depth. Proposed project operations will also increase mixing in the lake, thereby improving water quality and benefiting the fish population.

3.3.3.4 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

The proposed project would have some unavoidable adverse effects on fish in Lake Elsinore if they become entrained in the intake facilities. The co-applicants' proposal to monitor entrainment and provide screening in consultation with the agencies would minimize this effect; however, it cannot eliminate it completely, and mortality from impingement on screens would also likely occur.

3.3.4 Terrestrial Resources

3.3.4.1 Affected Environment

Vegetation Cover Types and Special Status Plant Communities

The LEAPS study area encompasses 8,578 acres of land and water, including almost 500 acres of developed land, 310 acres of disturbed land, and about 46 acres of agricultural land. Elevations range from about 1,255 feet above msl at Lake Elsinore to about 2,900 feet at the proposed upper reservoir sites. This range of elevations supports a wide variety of habitats; the co-applicants mapped seven different vegetation cover types, or natural communities, within the study area. Table 11 shows the acreage of each community and briefly describes the habitat characteristics and dominant plant species.

Table 11. Natural communities mapped in the study area. (Source: MBA, 2004, as modified by staff)

Cover Type	Acres	General Habitat Characteristics and Dominant Plants
Chamise Chaparral	3,304	Dense shrub canopy dominated by chamise, with manzanita, laurel sumac, ceanothus, scrub oak, toyon, sugar bush and mountain mahogany also present.
Coastal Sage Scrub	173	Open shrub canopy dominated by California sagebrush, black sage, California buckwheat, and California brittlebush.
Non-native Grassland	819	Introduced annual grasses, with both native and introduced forbs. Dominant species include telegraph weed, slender oats, red brome, and hare barley.
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	175	Broad-leaved woodland dominated by coast live oak, with some southern California black walnut intermixed. Toyon, laurel sumac, poison oak, and Mexican elderberry comprise the shrub understory, while mixed grasses and weedy forbs provide ground cover.
Southern Sycamore-Alder Riparian Forest	84	Sycamore and alder predominate. Occurs along streams and subsurface drainages. Understory shrubs include Mexican elderberry, poison oak, and blackberry.
Southern Willow Scrub	26	Dense, broad-leaved, winter-deciduous shrub thickets associated with seasonally flooded or saturated streambeds and river corridors. Characteristic species include black willow, arroyo willow, and red willow.
Open Water	3,143	This cover type includes Lake Elsinore and portions of Corona Lake. Neither lake supports aquatic or emergent vegetation. Riparian vegetation is sparse and patchy, including a variety of native species, ornamentals, and weedy forbs and grasses.

The California Natural Diversity Database lists a number of plant communities in California that have special status because of limited distribution or vulnerability to loss or disturbance as a result of factors such as urban development, conversion to agricultural or other land use, or noxious weed invasion. Special status plant communities in the

study area include southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern sycamore alder riparian forest, and southern willow scrub.

Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest

Coast live oak is slow-growing and long-lived. Seedlings are often unsuccessful in competing with introduced annual grasses for moisture and nutrients, which limits regeneration at many sites and increases the risk of habitat loss. Oak woodlands provide habitat for at least 60 species of mammals and 100 species of birds. Oak woodlands in the project area occur primarily in Morrell Canyon, with a smaller stand also present in Decker Canyon.

Southern Sycamore-Alder Riparian Forest

Sycamore and alder are both fast-growing. Sycamore trees can live to be as old as 200 years, and as they age, they often develop cavities that provide nesting or denning habitat for birds or mammals. Both sycamore and alder can tolerate long periods of flooding, and are usually found along streambanks. They contribute to structural complexity in riparian zones and provide foraging opportunities for a number of bird species that eat the seeds. In the project area, southern sycamore-alder riparian forest has a patchy distribution. There are small amounts of sycamore in Morrell Canyon and at stream crossings along the proposed and alternative transmission alignments.

Southern Willow Scrub

Willows are generally fast-growing, and rapidly colonize disturbed sites. This habitat type is found along streams and rivers, where it provides important cover for wildlife. It is of special importance to species that use riparian corridors for dispersal and migration. Willow scrub in the project area occurs as a narrow band along the stream channel below Lion Spring, and at numerous stream crossings along the proposed and alternative transmission alignments.

Plant Species of Special Concern, Sensitive Species, and Management Indicator Species

Special status plants are those listed as threatened or endangered at the federal or state level, or those proposed for listing. Special status plants also include species considered sensitive by the USFS or California Native Plant Society. The co-applicants' biological consultant, Michael Brandman Associates (MBA), reviewed species lists developed by FWS, the USFS, and California Native Plant Society to identify special status plants that should be included in pre-licensing studies for the LEAPS Project. After comparing the lists with the known range of each species and the habitat that is present in the LEAPS study area, MBA determined that 61 species had a low, moderate, or high likelihood of occurrence, or had already been observed in the study area (see table 13 at the end of this section). MBA concluded that the 24 species considered to have a moderate to high likelihood of occurrence should be targeted during the field surveys. Surveys conducted during spring and summer months from 2001 to 2004

covered most of the areas that each alternative project configuration would affect. The broader survey area was divided into 12 subareas, as shown in figure 13.

Table 13 (presented in section 3.3.4.1) shows the special status plants species that may occur in the project area including the nine federally listed plants: Munz's onion, slender-horned spineflower, San Diego ambrosia, California Orcutt grass, Nevin's barberry, San Jacinto valley crownscale, San Diego thornmint, thread-leaved brodiaea, and spreading navarretia. We present additional information about these federally listed threatened and endangered species in section 3.3.5.

Some of the species shown in table 13 (at the end of this section) are designated as Management Indicator Species (MIS). The USFS uses MIS to evaluate the effects of various management actions on habitat. These species do not necessarily have special status, but are important in representing certain habitats or other species or guilds associated with such habitats. Plant MIS for the Cleveland National Forest include Engelmann oak, big cone Douglas-fir, Coulter pine, California black oak, and white fir. These species may occur as scattered individuals in the LEAPS Project area, but do not represent a substantial proportion of any cover type.

Noxious Weeds

Based on information obtained from the USFS and the California Invasive Plant Council (formerly the California Exotic Pest Plant Council) listings, the co-applicants determined that 42 noxious weeds or non-native invasive plant species could occur in the study area. Formal weed surveys were not conducted, but the co-applicants noted the presence of weeds during other field efforts, including rare plant surveys. Table 12 lists the nine species invasive non-native plants MBA encountered in the study area, plus two others known to occur, along with the general locations of their occurrence.

Wildlife

MBA conducted general biological surveys, as well as focused surveys for special status wildlife species, in areas that could be affected by construction at the alternative sites for the upper reservoir, penstock, and powerhouse, and along the northern and southern transmission alignments. During these surveys, MBA documented the occurrence of 157 wildlife species, including moths, butterflies, mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles.

Common mammals included mule deer, coyote, raccoon, opossum, desert cottontail, dusky-footed woodrat, and California ground squirrel. MBA observed bobcats, and based on their review of the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships Database, mountain lion, gray fox, and long-tailed weasel are also likely present.

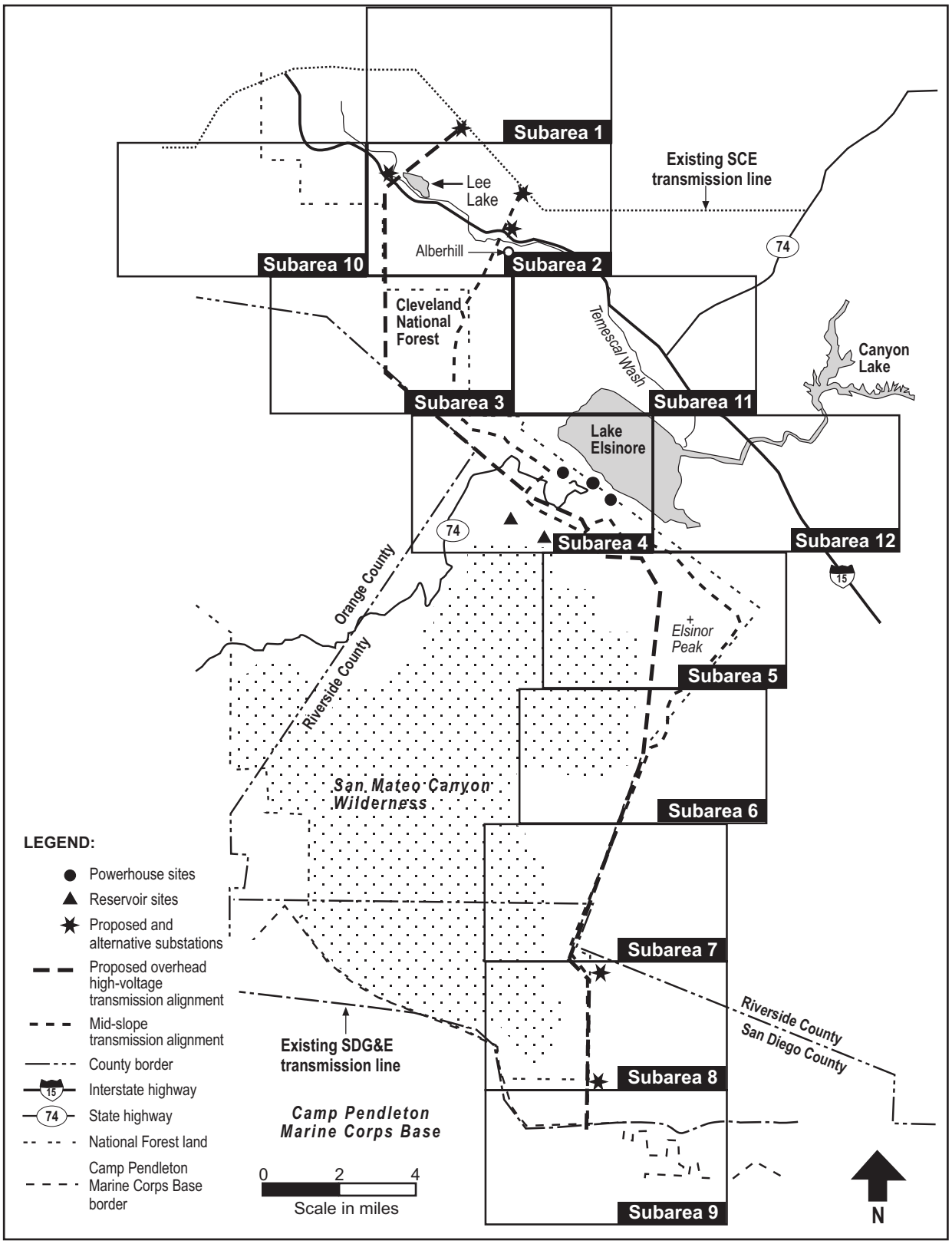

Figure 13. LEAPS Project—Habitat subarea locations. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Table 12. Invasive non-native plants documented to occur within the study area. (Source: MBA, 2004).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Cal-IPC Listing	General Location
Bromus madritensis ssp. *rubens*	Red brome	A-2	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Lupinus arboreus	Bush lupine	A-2	Subarea 2
Brassica nigra	Black mustard	B	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Olea europaea	Olive	B	Subarea 4
Ricinus communis	Castor bean	B	Subareas 2 and 11
Nicotiana glauca	Indian tree tobacco	NMI	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Salsola tragus	Russian thistle	NMI	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Melilotus officinalis	Yellow sweet clover	CNL	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Picris echioides	Bristly ox-tongue	CNL	All subareas, except 8 and 9
Tamarix species	Tamarisk	A-1	Vicinity of Subarea 12 (documented in other studies)
Arundo donax	Giant reed	A-1	Vicinity of Subareas 1, 2, or 3 (field notes not specific)

Notes: A-1 – most invasive wildland pests—widespread
A-2 – most invasive wildland pest plants—regional
B – wildland plants of lesser invasiveness
Cal-IPC – California Invasive Plant Council
CNL – considered, but not listed; plants that, after review of status, do not appear to pose a significant threat to wildlands
NMI – need more information; current information does not adequately describe nature of threat to wildlands

Scrub jay, bushtit, wrentit, Nuttall's woodpecker, ruby-crowned kinglet, yellow-rumped warbler, western meadowlark, song sparrow, and western kingbird were common

in the study area. Biologists also observed a variety of raptors, including red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, American kestrel, great-horned owl, barn owl, California spotted owl, turkey vulture, and western screech owl.

Amphibians were not abundant, but biologists documented the California tree frog, canyon tree frog, Pacific chorus frog, coastal California newt, and western toad. By contrast, MBA observed 15 reptile species. These included Great Basin fence lizard, San Diego horned lizard, side-blotched lizard, coastal western whiptail, red-diamond rattlesnake, rosy boa, gopher snake, and striped racer.

Wildlife Species of Special Concern, Sensitive Species, and Management Indicator Species

Special status wildlife species include those listed as threatened or endangered at the federal or state level, those proposed for listing, California species of concern or fully protected species, and those considered sensitive by the USFS or BLM. The co-applicants' consultation with FWS, the USFS, BLM, and CDFG along with review of the California Natural Diversity Database initially indicated that 40 special status species could occur in the study area. However, the study area is located outside the range of some of these species, or does not contain suitable habitat for them; these species are not shown in table 14 (presented at the end of this section).

The co-applicants selected seven species for focused surveys: Quino checkerspot butterfly, coastal California gnatcatcher, least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, and California spotted owl. With the exception of the California spotted owl, all of these species are federally listed as threatened or endangered. We present additional information about federally listed species in section 3.3.5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

Several of the wildlife species shown in table 14 as having special federal or state status are also USFS MIS. MIS do not necessarily have special status, but are important in representing certain habitats or other species or guilds associated with such habitats. Wildlife MIS in the project area include mule deer, song sparrow, California spotted owl, mountain lion, and arroyo toad (USFS, 2005b).

The Cleveland National Forest uses mule deer as an indicator of healthy, diverse habitats with low to moderate levels of human disturbance (USFS, 2005b). In low-elevation mountain ranges of southern California, such as the Santa Ana Mountains, mule deer reach their highest densities in oak woodlands, riparian areas, and meadow and grassland margins. They also occur in open scrub and young chaparral. The Land Management Plan indicates that the four southern California national forests support most of the deer in the southern part of California (USFS, 2005b). The USFS (2005b) reports that Santa Ana population is estimated at about 950 deer. Based on analysis of trends between 1990 and 1996, CDFG believes that populations are stable in the South Coast Deer Analysis Unit, which includes the Santa Ana Mountains (CDFG, 1998).

The Cleveland National Forest selected the song sparrow as an MIS for the health of riparian habitat (USFS, 2005b). In California, this species breeds primarily in riparian habitat or wetlands, where it typically nests in herbaceous vegetation or shrubs. The Land Management Plan describes song sparrows as being well distributed in southern California forests; surveyors documented song sparrows at 197 out of 206 point count stations during an 8-year period of forest riparian bird count surveys. The Partners in Flight Species Assessment (Panjabi et al., 2005) indicates population trends are highly variable or unknown within the species' range, and predicts a slight to moderate decline in future suitability of breeding conditions. The Land Management Plan describes a slight downward (but insignificant) trend in populations in the California foothills (USFS, 2005b).

The California spotted owl is an MIS for montane conifer forest habitat (USFS, 2005b). The Cleveland National Forest anticipates that monitoring for this species would provide information about whether USFS management is maintaining enough mature, large-diameter, high-canopy cover stands with densely shaded understories to provide sufficient habitat for interior forest species. California spotted owls in the Santa Ana Mountains, and in other southern California forests, are clustered in islands of suitable habitat, surrounded by habitat that is not suitable (USFS, 2005b). As of 1992, surveys confirmed 114 pairs in the San Bernardino Mountains, the largest subpopulation in southern California, and 11 in the Santa Ana Mountains (Beck and Gould, 1992). The results of a 2003 report on range-wide population trends were inconclusive, but USFS (2005b) indicates there is a high risk that the southern California metapopulation will go extinct within the next 30 to 40 years.

The Cleveland National Forest chose the mountain lion as an MIS to evaluate planning and management of habitat fragmentation and habitat linkages. Mountain lions occur within all four of the southern California national forests. They are most abundant where their primary prey—mule deer—is also abundant. Beier (1993) estimates a population of about 20 mountain lions in the Santa Ana Mountains on the Cleveland National Forest. This population is isolated as a result of habitat fragmentation, and is likely to be extirpated unless adequate movement corridors are established and protected between the Santa Anas and the Palomar Range to the east.

The arroyo toad is an indicator of aquatic habitat quality. The Cleveland National Forest anticipates that long term trends in arroyo toad abundance, distribution and habitat condition will reflect the effectiveness of protection and improvement measures for arroyo toads and other riparian dependent species. Arroyo toads occur in most of the major stream systems on the Cleveland National Forest, including San Juan and San Mateo creeks, where populations are found immediately adjacent to the national forest boundary (USFS, 2005b). However, populations are small, and the Land Management Plan notes that the species has disappeared from about 76 percent of its total historic range (USFS, 2005b). We discuss the arroyo toad in more detail in section 3.3.5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

Migratory Birds

Based on Audubon notes, USGS records, and incidental sightings, the co-applicants report that at least 140 species of birds have been documented to use Lake Elsinore. These include the mallard, western grebe, least sandpiper, California gull, great egret, and great blue heron. While habitat around the lake provides breeding habitat for several species, such as killdeer and vireos, many of the birds that may use the lake are migrants.

Lake Elsinore is located within the Pacific Flyway, used by birds migrating along the west coast from western Alaska, through interior California, to wintering grounds in Mexico. The lake and surrounding habitat may serve as a suitable resting and re-fueling stop, but the co-applicants suggest that poor water quality and low productivity of Lake Elsinore make it less attractive to migrating birds than other lakes in Riverside County, such as Lake Skinner, Lake Mathews, and Lake Hemet.

Mosquito Production

Participants during scoping identified the potential for the upper reservoir to support production of mosquitoes as a resource issue that should be addressed in the EIS. Mosquitoes are of concern because they can transmit diseases to and between humans, birds, and mammals. In California, West Nile virus is of particular concern. While most cases are not serious, infection can cause death in people with comprised immune systems, including the elderly. Twenty-seven deaths were associated with West Nile virus in California in 2004 (USGS, 2005c). Riverside County reported 109 cases, and one death.

Since it appeared in North America in 1999, West Nile virus has been documented in over 200 different species of birds and mammals (Audubon, 2005). The primary host of West Nile virus appears to be birds. The species most vulnerable to infection are crows, jays, and magpies, but many others, including raptors, waterfowl, wading birds, and songbirds, have also succumbed to West Nile virus. In 2004, Riverside County reported 139 bird deaths associated with West Nile virus (USGS, 2005d).

About 52 species of mosquitoes are known to occur in California (ACMAD, 2005). All species require standing water to complete their life cycle. Development from egg to adult typically takes about a week, depending on water temperature. Given adequate water temperature, breeding success is also related to the length of time that shallow standing water is available. Factors that are conducive to breeding success in standing water include water level stability, lack of wave action, high nutrient levels, and the presence of vegetative or other cover that affords protection of the larvae from predators or desiccation (TVA, 2004).

Table 13. Special status plant species that may occur or are known to occur in the LEAPS study area. (Source: MBA, 2004; personal communication, L. Young, Cleveland National Forest, November 17, 2005; as modified by staff)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Acanthomintha ilicifolia	San Diego thornmint	FT USFS SE CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, vernal pools (clay), valley/foothill grasslands. 30–3,000 feet.	Unlikely: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Allium munzii	Munz's onion	FE USFSS ST CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, cismontane woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland, grasslands. 1,000–3,400 feet.	Documented during USFS surveys within proposed southern transmission alignment (Subarea 5). Critical habitat designated on Elsinore Peak. Also known from Estelle Mountain, Alberhill, and Temescal Valley.
Ambrosia pumila	San Diego ambrosia	FE	River terraces, openings in coastal scrub and grasslands, occasionally near vernal pools. Sea level to 1,300 feet.	Low: known from one disjunct population northeast of Lake Elsinore.
Arctostaphylos rainbowensis	Rainbow manzanita	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral. 900–2,600 feet.	Documented during surveys. One occurrence along common segment of the proposed and alternative southern transmission alignment (Subarea 6).
Astragalus deanei	Deane's milkvetch	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, riparian scrub. 240–2,200 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Astragalus douglasii var. *perstrictus*[a]	Jacumba milkvetch	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, valley/foothill grasslands. Rocky soils. 3,000–4,500 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Astragalus oocarpus	San Diego milkvetch	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral openings, cismontane woodland. 1,000–5,0000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Astragalus pachypus var. *jaegeri*	Jaeger's milkvetch	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, valley/foothill grassland, sandy and rocky soils. 1,200–3,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Atriplex coronata var. *notatior*	San Jacinto valley crownscale	FE CNPS-1B	Playas, chenopod scrub, grasslands, vernal pools. 1,300–1,700 feet.	Low: known from vicinity, but habitat in study area is marginal.
Berberis nevinii	Nevin's barberry	FE USFSS SE CNPS-1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal sage scrub, riparian scrub, sandy or gravelly soils. Sea level to 2,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Brodiaea filifolia	Thread-leaved brodiaea	FT USFSS SE CNPS-1B	Coastal scrub, cismontane woodland, grasslands, vernal pools, clay soils. Sea level to 2,800 feet.	Moderate: not known from project area, but critical habitat designated at Miller Mountain west of proposed transmission alignment and essential habitat along Tenaja Road east of proposed transmission alignment.
Brodiaea orcuttii	Orcutt's brodiaea	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, meadows, valley grasslands. Sea level to 5,300 feet.	High: known from project vicinity in Subarea 7; project area contains suitable habitat.
Calochortus dunnii	Dunn's mariposa lily	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer forest, chaparral (gabbro soils). 1,200–6,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Castilleja lasiorhyncha	San Bernardino Mountains owls' clover	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, meadows, seeps, pebble plain, upper montane conifer forest (mesic). 4,250–7,800 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Ceanothus cyaneus	Lakeside ceanothus	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed–cone conifer forest, chaparral. 700–1,900 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Ceanothus ophiochilus	Buckthorn	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, meadows, grassland. Sea level to 4,800 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Chorizanthe polygonoides var. *longispina*	Long-spined spineflower	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, meadows, grasslands. Sea level to 4,800 feet.	High: known from project vicinity.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Chorizanthe procumbens	Prostrate spineflower	formerly CNPS-4	Chaparral, coastal sage scrub. Sea level to 2,600 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present within the study area.
Clarkia delicate	Delicate clarkia	USFSS CNPS-2	Chaparral, cismontane woodland. 770–3,300 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Comarostaphylis diversifolia ssp. *diversifolia*	Summer holly	CNPS-1B	Chaparral. Sea level to 2,800 feet.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Cupressus forbesii	Tecate cypress	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer forest, chaparral. 840–4,900 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Cupressus stephensonii	Arizona cypress	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer forest, chaparral, riparian scrub, gabbro soils. 3,400–5,600 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Delphinium hesperium Gray ssp. *cuyamacae*	Cuyamaca larkspur	USFSS CNPS-1B	Lower montane conifer forest, meadows and seeps. 4,000–5,400 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Dodecahema leptoceras	Slender-horned spineflower	FE USFSS SE CNPS-1B	Sandy alluvial benches, floodplain terraces with alluvial fan sage scrub. 700–2,500 feet.	High: known from Temescal Wash.
Dudleya cymosa[b]	Canyon live-forever	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub. 400–1,800 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Dudleya multicaulis	Many-stemmed dudleya	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub. Sea level to 2,600 feet.	High: known from project vicinity. Study area contains suitable habitat.
Dudleya viscida	Sticky dudleya	USFSS CNPS-1B	Coastal scrub, coastal bluff scrub, chaparral. Sea level to 1,800 feet.	High: known from project vicinity. Study area contains suitable habitat.
Eryngium aristulatum var. *parishii*	San Diego button-celery	FE SE CNPS-1B	Vernal pools, coastal scrub, grassland. Sea level to 2,000 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present.
Fremontodendron mexicanum	Mexican flannel bush	FE USFSS SR CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer, chaparral, cismontane woodland, gabbroic, metavolcanics or serpentinite soils. 320–1,600 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Githopsis diffusa ssp. *filicaulis*	San Gabriel bluecup	USFSS CNPS-3	Chaparral, mesic disturbed areas. 1,500–2,300 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Harpagonella palmeri	Palmer's grapplinghook	CNPS-4	Chaparral, coastal sage scrub, valley/foothill grassland. 70–3,100 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Hemizonia floribunda	Tecate tarplant	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub. 230–4,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Hemizonia mohavensis	Mojave tarplant	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, riparian scrub. 2,780–5,250 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Horkelia truncate	Ramona horkelia	CNPS-1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland. 1,300–4,300 feet.	High: known from project vicinity.
Lasthenia glabrata ssp. *coulteri*	Coulter's goldfields	CNPS-1B	Vernal pools, playas, marshes. Sea level to 5,000 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present.
Lepechinia cardiophylla	Heart-leaved pitcher sage	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland. 1,800–4,500 feet.	Documented by USFS along proposed transmission alignment in Subarea 3.
Lessingia glandulifera var. *tomentosa*	Warner Springs lessingia	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, sandy soils. 2,800–4,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat, but outside species' range.
Lilium humboldtii var. *ocellatum*	Humboldt lily	CNPS-4	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane conifer forest/openings. 300–3,600 feet.	Documented during field surveys. One population along proposed northern transmission alignment (Subarea 3).
Lilium parryi	Lemon lily	USFSS CNPS-1B	Lower montane conifer forest, meadows and seeps, riparian scrub, upper montane conifer forest/mesic. 4,360–8,500 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Limnanthes gracilis ssp. *parishii*	Parish's meadowfoam	USFSS SE CNPS-1B	Wet meadows, seeps, vernal pools. 2,000–5,800 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Linanthus orcuttii	Orcutt's linanthus	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, lower montane conifer forests in gravelly clearings. 3,000–7,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Machaeranthera asteroides var. *lagunensis*	Laguna Mountains aster	USFSS CNPS-1B	Cismontane woodland, lower montane conifer forest. 2,600–7,850 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Monardella macrantha ssp. *hallii*	Hall's monardella	CNPS-1B	Broad-leaved upland forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane conifer forest, grassland, 2,300–7,200 feet.	High: known from project vicinity.
Monardella nana ssp. *leptosiphon*	San Felipe monardella	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, lower montane conifer forest. 4,000–6,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Myosurus minimus ssp. *apus*	Little mousetail	CNPS-3	Vernal pools. Sea level to 2,100 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present.
Navarretia fossalis	Spreading navarretia	FT CNPS-1B	Vernal pools, clay flats, irrigation ditches, alkali grasslands, alkali playas, alkali sinks. Sea level to 4,250 feet.	Unlikely: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal. Species thought to have very narrow geographic distribution.
Navarretia peninsularis	Baja pincushion plant	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral openings, lower montane conifer forest (mesic). 4,900–7,500 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Nolina cismontane	Chaparral nolina	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, sandstone or gabbro soils. 500–4,200 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Orcuttia californica	California Orcutt grass	FE SE CNPS-1B	Vernal pools. 50–2,200 feet.	Moderate: not know from project vicinity, but suitable habitat is present.
Penstemon californicus	California penstemon	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, lower montane conifer forest, pinyon and juniper woods/sandy. 3,800–7,500 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Phacelia suaveolens ssp. *keckii*	Santiago Peak phacelia	USFSS CNPS-1B	Closed-cone conifer forest, chaparral. 2,000–5,250 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Poa atropurpurea	San Bernardino bluegrass	USFSS CNPS-1B	Meadows and seeps. 4,500–8,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Quercus engelmannii	Engelmann oak	CNPS-4 MIS	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, riparian woodland, valley and foothill grassland. 400–4,250 feet.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Ribes canthariforme	Moreno currant	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral. 1,200–4,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Romneya coulteri	Coulter's matilija poppy	CNPS-4	Chaparral, coastal scrub, often in burned or disturbed areas. 65–3,900 feet.	Documented during field surveys along proposed northern transmission alignment (Subarea 2); alternative northern transmission alignment (Subarea 2); common segment of the proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subarea 8); proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse penstock alignment (Subarea 4); and the Ortega Oaks powerhouse penstock alignment (Subarea 4).
Satureja chandleri	San Miguel savory	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, riparian woodland, grassland. 400–3,300 feet.	High: known from project vicinity.
Senecio ganderi	Gander's ragwort	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, gabbroic and burned areas. 1,300–4,000 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Sibaropsis hammittii	Hammitt's clay-cress	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral openings, valley/foothill grasslands, clay soils. 2,360–3,500 feet.	Documented during USFS field surveys within proposed southern transmission alignment (Subarea 5).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Streptanthus campestris	Southern jewel-flower	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, lower montane conifer forest, pinyon and juniper woodland, rocky soils. 3,000–7,500 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Tetracoccus dioicus	Parry's tetracoccus	USFSS CNPS-1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub. 500–3,300 feet.	High: known from project vicinity.
Thermopsis californica var. *semota*	Velvety false lupine	USFSS CNPS-1B	Cismontane woodland, lower montane conifer forest, meadows and seeps, valley and foothill grasslands. 3,400–6,100 feet.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.

Notes: FE – federal endangered
FT – federal threatened
USFSS – U.S. Forest Service sensitive
SE – state endangered
ST – state threatened
CNPS-1B – California Native Plant Society rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
CNPS-2 – California Native Plant Society rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere
CNPS-3 – California Native Plant Society more information is needed regarding status
CNPS-4 – California Native Plant Society species with limited distribution (watch-list)

[a] MBA's report does not indicate which variety of *Astragalus douglasii* was evaluated, but based on the common name, we assume MBA considered var. *perstrictus*.

[b] There are four subspecies of *Dudleya cymosa*. The USFS comments that ssp. *ovatifolia* is of particular concern. MBA's report does not indicate which subspecies were considered during their surveys; however, review of CNPS records indicates none are known from the project area (CNPS, 2005).

Table 14. Special status wildlife species that may occur or are known to be present within the study area. (Source: MBA, 2004, modified by staff)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Euphydryas editha quino	Quino checkerspot butterfly	FE	Sparse sage scrub/grassland mix, with dwarf plantain and/or purple owls' clover.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Bufo californicus	Arroyo toad	FE MIS	Streams with sandy banks.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Ensatina klauberi	Large-blotched salamander	USFSS CSC	Deciduous evergreen forests, oak woodland, chaparral	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal
Rana aurora draytonii	California red-legged frog	FT CSC	Ponds, streams, permanent waterways with abundant riparian shrub or emergent vegetation.	Low: not known from project vicinity; habitat in study area is marginal.
Spea (Scaphiopus) hammondii	Western spadefoot	BLM-S CSC	Washes, floodplains, alluvial fans, playas, alkali flats.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Taricha torosa torosa	Coastal California newt	CSC	Coastal drainages, ponds, reservoirs and slow-moving streams.	Documented in study area along common segment of the proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subarea 7).
Emy (Clemmys) marmorata pallida	Southwestern pond turtle	USFSS BLM-S CSC	Permanent freshwater streams, rivers, ponds, lakes.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Aspidoscelis (Cnemidophorus) hyperythra belgingi	Belding's orange-throated whiptail	CSC	Chaparral/semi-arid areas with loose, sandy soil.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Crotalus ruber ruber	Northwestern red-diamond rattlesnake	CSC	Chaparral, desert scrub, rocky alluvial fans.	Documented in study area along proposed and alternative northern transmission alignments (Subareas 1 and 2).
Diadophis punctatus similis	San Diego ringneck snake	USFSS	Rocky areas, woodpiles, stable talus.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Eumeces skiltonianus interparietalis	Coronado skink	BLM-S CSC	Chaparral, rocky habitats near streams.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Lampropeltis zonata pulchra	Sand Diego mountain kingsnake	USFSS CSC	Moist woods, conifer forest, woodland, chaparral.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Charina (Lichanura) trivirgata roseofusca	Coastal rosy boa	USFSS BLM-S	Rocky shrublands, desert.	Documented in study area near common segment of proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subarea 6).
Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei	San Diego horned lizard	USFSS CSC	Sandy soil with low vegetation.	Documented in study area along alternative northern transmission alignment and common segment of proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subareas 2 and 6).
Thamnophis hammondii	Two-striped garter snake	USFSS BLM-S CSC	Permanent freshwater, streams with rocky beds, willow or other riparian.	Documented in study area near common segment of proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subarea 6).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Accipiter cooperii	Cooper's hawk	CSC	Mature forest, open woodlands, riparian forest.	Documented in study area along common segment of proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments (Subarea 6).
Asio otus	Long-eared owl	CSC	Riparian bottomlands, live oak stands.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Strix occidentalis occidentalis	California spotted owl	USFSS MIS BLM-S CSC	Conifer forest, wooded canyons.	Documented in study area near proposed northern transmission alignment (Subarea 3).
Elanus leucurus	White-tailed kite	CFP	Open savannah, grasslands, fields.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Empidonax traillii extimus	Southwestern willow flycatcher	FE	Dry willow thickets, alders.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald eagle	FT SE	Nesting in large trees near lakes, reservoirs, large rivers.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable foraging habitat.
Polioptila californica	Costal California gnatcatcher	FT CSC	Coastal scrub, dry washes and ravines.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, study area contains suitable habitat.
Vireo bellii pusillus	Least Bell's vireo	FE SE	Riparian areas, forest edges.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Lanius ludovicianus	Loggerhead shrike	CSC	Grasslands, coastal sage scrub, chaparral.	Documented in study area along proposed northern transmission alignment (Subarea 2).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Associations	Likelihood of Occurrence
Aimophila ruficeps canescens	Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow	CSC	Coastal sage scrub, chaparral.	Documented in study area near upper reservoir sites.
Antrozous pallidus	Pallid bat	USFSS CSC	Roosts in caves, tunnels, mines, buildings, tree hollows; forages in open areas and edge habitats.	Low: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable foraging habitat.
Chaetodipus fallax fallax	Northwestern San Diego pocket mouse	CSC	Coastal scrub, chaparral, grasslands, sagebrush	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Dipodomys stephensi	Stephens' kangaroo rat	FE ST	Annual and perennial grassland, coastal scrub, sagebrush scrub.	High: known from project vicinity; study area contains suitable habitat.
Lasiurus blossevillii	Western red bat	USFSS	Wooded areas.	Moderate: not known from project vicinity, but study area contains suitable habitat.
Perognathus longimembris brevinasus	Los Angeles little pocket mouse	USFSS CSC	Grassland, coastal scrub, fine sandy soils.	Low: known from project vicinity, but study area may not contain suitable habitat.

Notes: FE – federal endangered
FT – federal threatened
USFSS – U.S. Forest Service sensitive
MIS – U.S. Forest Service management indicator species
BLM-S – U.S. Bureau of Land Management sensitive
SE – state endangered
ST – state threatened
CSC – California species of concern
CFP – California fully protected

3.3.4.2 Environmental Consequences

Vegetation

Table 15 shows the existing acreage at each of the sites associated with the Morrell Canyon or Decker Canyon reservoir and staging sites; the Santa Rosa, Ortega Oaks, and Evergreen powerhouse and staging sites; and substations sites, transmission alignments, and roads. The table also shows the number of acres that could be revegetated at each site.

Effects of Construction on Vegetation

Co-applicants' Proposal—Construction of the project would require clearing of approximately 265 acres of existing vegetation. About 71 acres (including about 11 acres of temporary access roads) could be revegetated. As discussed in section 3.3.1.2, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Geology and Soils*, the co-applicants propose to develop and implement a reservoir clearing plan and a revegetation plan, in conjunction with their plan for erosion control. The clearing plan would identify the location and acreage of lands to be cleared, describe the vegetation to be cleared, describe resource management goals related to fish and wildlife enhancement, and describe and map disposal methods and locations. The revegetation plan would describe plant species and densities to be used, fertilization and irrigation requirements, an effectiveness monitoring program, provision for filing monitoring reports, and procedures to be followed if monitoring reveals that revegetation is not successful.

Resource Agency Measures

These plans would be consistent with USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 15, as described in section 3.3.1.2.

Effects Analysis

In addition to the removal of vegetation, clearing, grading, and excavation can damage soil structure, alter soil nutrients, and reduce the viability of existing seed banks. These changes may complicate revegetation efforts that are needed to prevent soil erosion and restore functional native plant communities. Adding a specific measure to the clearing plan to address stockpiling of topsoil as construction proceeds and replacing (and possibly amending) topsoil after construction is completed would provide additional support for re-establishment of native plant communities in native soils.

For the LEAPS Project, the co-applicants propose to develop and implement a plan that would aid in restoring vegetation to its current condition or enhancing it to improve wildlife habitat. Adding a specific measure to the revegetation plan to identify criteria for success (e.g., percent coverage of desired species at specified time intervals)

Table 15. Acreage that would be affected by construction and revegetation at proposed and alternative reservoir, powerhouse, staging, substation, transmission, and road locations. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2005, as modified by staff)

	Oak Woodland	**Coastal Sage Scrub**	**Chaparral**	**Non-native Grassland**	**Disturbed[a]**	**Total Acres Initial Disturbed**	**Total Acres Revegetated**	**Total Acres Permanently Converted**
Morrell Canyon	20	0	80	0	0	100	0	100
Reservoir staging	0	0	40	0	0	40	40	0
Santa Rosa powerhouse	0	30	0	0	0	30	0	30
Santa Rosa powerhouse staging	0	0	0	20	0	20	20	0
North substation	0	0	0	25	0	25	0	25
South substation	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0
Proposed transmission alignment	0	1	32	6	0	39	0	39
Proposed transmission alignment roads[b]						11.1	11.1	0
Decker Canyon	5	0	95	0	0	100	0	100
Decker Canyon staging	0	0	40	0	0	40	40	0
Ortega Oaks powerhouse (and staging)[c]	0	5	0	53	0	58	20	38
Evergreen powerhouse	0	20	0	35	0	55	0	55
Evergreen staging	0	0	0	20	0	20	20	0

	Oak Woodland	Coastal Sage Scrub	Chaparral	Non-native Grassland	Disturbed[a]	Total Acres Initial Disturbed	Total Acres Revegetated	Total Acres Permanently Converted
North substation	0	0	0	25	0	25	0	25
South substation	0	0	25	0	0	25	0	25
Mid-slope transmission alignment	0	1	32	6	0	39	0	39
Mid-slope transmission alignment roads[b]						15	15	0

[a] The estimated 25 acres of land at the site of the proposed south substation is currently in a disturbed condition and would not be disturbed by construction.

[b] Estimates of acres that would be disturbed for road construction are not assigned to any vegetation cover type because their locations are unknown.

[c] The Ortega Oaks site does not have a separate staging area, but it is assumed that 20 acres of the site could be revegetated following construction.

would assist the co-applicants in achieving this goal, by providing the basis for determining which vegetation parameters to monitor as revegetation proceeds. By measuring progress at intervals as vegetation re-establishes, the co-applicants would be able to provide remediation if and when it is needed.

Limiting the scope of the clearing plan to the reservoir would leave almost half the area affected by construction without mitigation. Broadening the scope of the clearing and revegetation plans to include areas outside the reservoir area (e.g., powerhouse site, staging area, transmission towers, and access roads) and outside the Cleveland National Forest would be a useful means of minimizing overall project effects on terrestrial resources.

Staff Alternative—About 100 acres would be affected by construction of a reservoir at the Decker Canyon site.

Effects associated with the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be the same as they would be for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, although acreages would differ. Construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would affect about 58 acres, with about 20 acres being revegetated.

Effects would be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as for the proposed alignment, except that about 15 acres versus 11 acres would be affected and then restored along temporary access roads.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects associated with the Evergreen powerhouse site would be the same as they would be for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, although acreages would differ. Construction at the Evergreen powerhouse site would affect about 75 acres, of which 20 acres would be revegetated.

Effects of Operation on Vegetation

As discussed in section 3.3.1.2, operation of the project could affect groundwater, which would in turn affect vegetation. Construction of each of the project features, with the exception of transmission towers, would likely intercept and release groundwater, could have desiccating effects in some areas, and could increase hydrologic support for others. Because native plants are adapted to existing conditions, these changes could reduce their cover, while promoting conditions that would favor invasive species. Effects of operation on groundwater at the proposed Morrell Canyon site cannot be determined until studies to characterize the local groundwater system have been completed. Discharge of reservoir water to groundwater at the proposed Morrell Canyon site would not occur because the co-applicants would install a geosynthetic liner.

Using helicopter access to maintain transmission lines where slopes exceed 15 percent would minimize the risk of effects on groundwater so that hydrologic support for native plant communities would not be interrupted.

Staff Alternative—Effects of project operation on groundwater and the vegetation it supports at the Decker Canyon site would likely be similar to those that would occur at Morrell Canyon.

Effects of project operation on groundwater and vegetation at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would likely be the same as for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Effects on groundwater would likely be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as for the proposed transmission alignment, except that about 15 acres versus 11 acres would be affected.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects of operation on groundwater processes at the Evergreen site would likely be the same as for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse.

Special Status Plants

Southern California is considered 1 of 25 worldwide hotspots of biodiversity because it supports an exceptional concentration of species that are found nowhere else in the world, and because these species are undergoing an exceptional loss of habitat (Myers et al., 2000). Almost 3,000 species of vascular plants occur in the mountains and foothills of southern California; nearly half of these are endemic (Stephenson and Calcarone, 1999). This region's contribution to global biodiversity highlights the importance of evaluating the potential effects of the LEAPS Project on special status plants.

Effects of Construction on Special Status Plants

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants' biological consultant, MBA, conducted special status plant surveys to cover most accessible areas of the study area between 2001 and 2004, and documented the occurrence of four sensitive plants[41]. At least 11 other species have been identified as having a high likelihood of occurrence in the habitat types that would be affected by construction, including chamise chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and southern coast live oak woodland.[42]

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[41] Three of MBA's sensitive plant survey reports (MBA, 2004, 2003, and 2002) indicate that areas located on private property, those containing impenetrable shrub, or those situated in "inhospitable terrain" were considered inaccessible and were not surveyed.

[42] Recent USFS comments indicate that mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) is a USFSS species (and CNPS-1B) plant that should have been evaluated during the rare plant surveys. It is known from occurrences in Riverside and San Diego counties, and is associated with habitat types that occur in the project area, including chaparral and coastal shrub (CNPS, 2005).

The co-applicants propose to employ a biologist or natural resource specialist to monitor construction activities to help prevent adverse effects on sensitive species or habitats.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior 10(j) recommendation no. 3 requests that the co-applicants demonstrate that the project is consistent with existing or proposed HCPs that encompass the project area or would be affected by certain project features. These HCPs include the Western Riverside County MSHCP, the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP, and the North County MSHCP.[43]

The county of Riverside recommends that the co-applicants conduct habitat assessments and surveys as needed to ensure compliance with the MSHCP.

Effects Analysis

Construction of an upper reservoir at Morrell Canyon and a powerhouse at the Santa Rosa site would affect a total of about 190 acres of land that could support special status plants that are associated with chamise chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and southern coast live oak forest. Construction of the north and south substations would affect about 25 acres of non-native grasslands and about 25 acres of habitat that has already been disturbed.

The co-applicants do not propose to clear vegetation beneath the entire transmission alignment, but small amounts of habitat (about 0.25 acre) would be removed for construction of each of about 167 transmission line towers. Approximately 39 acres, dominated by chamise chaparral, would be affected by construction of the proposed transmission line (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2005). Additional acreage would be affected by construction of temporary access roads needed to build the transmission line. To minimize slope failure and erosion, roads would not be constructed on slopes greater than 15 percent; most of the line (about 24.4 miles of the 29.5-mile route) would be constructed by helicopter. About 7.6 miles (an area of about 11.1 acres,

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[43] The MSHCP, completed in 2003, is intended to protect more than 150 species of plants and animals, preserve or build core habitats and linkages, and set aside open space, while allowing for planned development (Riverside County, 2003). The MSHCP includes a number of over-arching BMPs for development in sensitive areas and identifies specific measures to protect threatened and endangered species, species endemic to the region, and key planning species. The Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP is a single-species HCP, which has been effectively integrated into the MSHCP. The North County Subarea HCP that is currently being developed for northern San Diego County is taking an approach that is similar to Riverside County's and would cover some of the southernmost edge of the LEAPS Project area.

given an estimated road width of 12 feet) of access roads would be obliterated and revegetated following construction, and the co-applicants would use helicopters for O&M.

Three populations of Coulter's matilija poppy (CNPS-4) lie within areas that could be affected by the co-applicants' proposal. One of the populations is located near the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site (Subarea 4; see figure 13 for subarea locations).

Two of the poppy occurrences are located within areas that could be disturbed as a result of transmission line construction, depending on tower placement and the need for access roads. One is located within the right-of-way of the proposed northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment (Subarea 2), and one is located along the southern segment (Subarea 8).

One occurrence of rainbow manzanita (USFSS, CNPS-1B) was documented within the right-of-way of the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment (Subarea 6). Again, effects would depend on tower placement and the need for access roads.

One population of Humboldt lily (CNPS-4) was observed along the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment in Subarea 3. Another population was noted in the same vicinity, but about half a mile west of the currently proposed transmission alignment. Effects would depend on tower placement and the need for access roads.

The USFS reports one historic occurrence of heart-leaved pitcher sage (USFSS, CNPS-1B) along Horsethief Trail, in the path of the proposed transmission alignment in Subarea 3 (personal communication, L. Young, Cleveland National Forest Botanist, November 17, 2005). Effects would depend on tower placement and the alignment of any access roads.

MBA did not observe any Hammitt's clay-cress (USFSS, CNPS-1B) or Munz's onion (FE, USFSS, ST, CNPS-1B) during field surveys for the LEAPS Project, but both of these species are known to occur near the proposed transmission line alignment in Subarea 5, southeast of Elsinore Peak (memorandum from S.D. White, Botanist, White & Leatherman Bioservices, Upland, CA, to S. Crawford, Project Manager, MBA, San Bernardino, CA, dated November 16, 2004). We discuss potential effects of the project on Munz's onion in section 3.3.5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

The primary concern in protecting special status plants during project construction is to prevent effects that could occur as the result of vegetation clearing and soil compaction. By obtaining more detailed survey data and accurate mapping, it may be possible to site project features (such as access roads, transmission line towers, and substations) away from rare plant populations. If rare plant populations occur near proposed project features, detailed mapping would allow plants to be identified in the field (e.g., with flagging) and protected (e.g., with fencing) prior to the start of

construction. Without such information, the co-applicants' proposal to monitor construction activities would not prevent adverse effects on sensitive plants.

Introduction and spread of noxious weeds and non-native invasive plants that could compete with special species plants is also a concern during construction, which is expected to last 4.5 years. The co-applicants' proposal to develop a management plan would help to minimize risks, and would likely be consistent with USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 34, discussed in more detail in the following section regarding noxious weeds.

Interior's 10(j) recommendation no. 3 and Riverside County's recommendation regarding consistency with existing HCPs would apply to all four of the species known to occur in the project area because all are covered by the MSHCP. To be consistent with the MSHCP, the co-applicants would need to conduct site-specific pre-construction surveys according to guidelines for protection of narrow endemics in specific areas of potential effect, and would need to implement strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate project effects. The FWS Biological Opinion on the MSHCP indicates this approach would provide adequate protection for special status species within the MSHCP area (FWS, 2004c).

Staff Alternative—Construction at the Decker Canyon site would affect habitats that may support special status species associated with chamise chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and southern coast live oak forest; however, no special status plants are known to occur in the vicinity.

One population of Coulter's matilija poppy was observed near the route of the penstock tunnel that would be constructed between an upper reservoir at Decker Canyon and the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site. The mapped information is at a broad level of detail, but it appears this occurrence is outside any area that would be disturbed by surface construction.

One population of Coulter's matilija poppy was observed along the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment in Subarea 2, about a mile south of Interstate 15. Although no rare plant surveys were conducted along the middle section of this route where it traverses the foothills above Lake Elsinore, effects could likely be avoided by siting towers away from this known occurrence, and from any rare plant populations that may be detected during site-specific pre-construction surveys.

The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would avoid suitable habitat for Hammitt's clay-cress and would avoid any known populations of this species.

For this transmission alignment, we assume that about 23.8 miles of the 30.7-mile-route would be constructed using helicopter access, and that 10.3 miles (15 acres) of access roads would be needed. No rare plant surveys have been conducted to evaluate potential effects of road location or construction. However, site-specific pre-construction

surveys could be used to collect data that would serve as the basis for road alignment to avoid rare plant populations, if any occur.

No rare plant surveys were conducted in the segment of the transmission alignment that traverses the foothills above Lake Elsinore. As indicated for road construction, however, transmission line features could likely be sited to avoid rare plant populations, if any are located during site-specific pre-construction surveys.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—MBA's surveys identified no rare plants in the vicinity of the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Special Status Plants

Co-applicants' Proposal—USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 30 specifies annual employee awareness training that would cover local resource issues, including special status species. According to this condition, the co-applicants would coordinate with the USFS to provide information about special status species and their locations to the co-applicants' field personnel.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 31specifies that the co-applicants would consult annually with the USFS and FWS to review lists of special status species that might occur within the project boundary to determine if any new species (federally listed threatened or endangered species or USFSS) have been added, for which study or survey may be necessary. In that event, the co-applicants would submit draft study reports to the USFS before finalizing the reports and filing them with the Commission.

Effects Analysis

The main concern in protecting special status plants during long-term project operation would be to minimize the risk of damage to potential habitat or known populations that could occur during routine maintenance activities or as the result of uncontrolled public use (e.g., off-highway vehicles [OHVs], vandalism) of the estimated 7.6 miles of temporary road that would be built for transmission line access. In addition to disturbing soils and ground cover, public access often serves as a vector for the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and increases the risk of fire.

Implementation of USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 30 would ensure that the co-applicants provide training to field personnel so that staff who are responsible for project O&M are knowledgeable about the identification, location, and protection of rare plant species. By implementing USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 31, the co-applicants could be sure that their information about the status of plants in the project area, including the Morrell Canyon reservoir site, the Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the transmission line, and any access roads, is current as plants are added or subtracted from the list or as more information becomes available about their range or habitat requirements.

Implementation of these two USFS preliminary conditions would provide a framework for protection over the long-term. In addition, botanical resource monitoring could be incorporated into USFS preliminary 4(e) condition nos. 10, 11, 12, or 27 (discussed in section 3.3.6, *Land Use*) to address specific effects that could be associated with the estimated 7.6 miles of transmission alignment temporary access roads. We anticipate that effects of helicopter access along the transmission alignment for O&M would be minimal.

Staff Alternative—The anticipated effects of operation at the Decker Canyon reservoir site and the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site on special status plants would be the same as those discussed under the co-applicants' proposal.

The potential for disturbance of rare plants that may occur along temporary transmission line roads as a result of public access would affect 10.3 miles. Risks to rare plants could be addressed through implementation of the same measures described for the proposed alternative.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The anticipated effects of operation on special status plants would be the same as those discussed under the co-applicants' proposal. Although no rare plants are known at this site at the current time, implementation of measures regarding employee awareness and annual consultation with the USFS would assist the co-applicants in responding to changes in status or range of important species.

The costs of recommendations pertaining to special status plants are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed further in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Noxious Weeds and Exotic Plants

Noxious weeds are a growing threat to California's environment because of their potential to degrade native plant communities, outcompete rare species, and reduce wildlife habitat values. Both federal and state laws require landowners to manage noxious weeds on their land.

Effects of Construction on the Spread of Noxious Weeds and Exotic Plants

Construction of the LEAPS Project would cause soil disturbance at several sites, including the upper reservoir, construction laydown areas, power tunnel adits, penstocks, powerhouse site, and intake at Lake Elsinore. Soil disturbance would also occur at sites where transmission line towers are constructed, along any roads needed for construction of the transmission lines, and at the northern and southern substations. Soil disturbance creates conditions that promote the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and non-native invasive plant species that may be carried into the project area by construction equipment, or in fill material.

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to develop and implement plans to prevent and control weeds and revegetate disturbed areas.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 30 specifies annual employee awareness training that would cover local resource issues, including noxious weeds. According to this condition, the co-applicants would coordinate with the USFS to provide information about noxious weeds and their locations to the co-applicants' field personnel.

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 34 specifies that the co-applicants would prepare a plan to control and contain the project-related spread of noxious weeds. The purpose of the plan would be to identify which species are present within the project area, and which are a priority for control. The plan would identify methods to control existing populations and make reasonable efforts to control entire population units, in situations where weeds within the project area are contiguous with populations outside the project boundaries. At a minimum, the USFS specifies that the plan would need to include:

- educating project staff about current infestations and how to identify species likely to occur in the project area;
- coordinating with the USFS regarding any new populations that are observed and reasonable efforts to control them;
- cleaning all construction equipment and other equipment that operate off the roads or moves soil before entering the project vicinity;
- cleaning all project vehicles and equipment that leave the project site to ensure that noxious weeds are not spread to additional sites.
- avoiding, to the extent possible, entering areas with existing populations of noxious weeds, and if not possible, working in clean areas first and then in the areas with weeds to avoid spreading weeds within the project area;
- using certified weed free straw for all construction or restoration needs, or if not available, using rice straw;
- using an approved mix of plant species native to the Cleveland National Forest for restoration and erosion control; and
- conducting an invasive non-native plant and noxious weed risk assessment as outlined in the Land Management Plan (USFS, 2005b); conducting an inventory of noxious weeds at project facilities and other possible points of introduction every 5 years, using the current list of noxious weeds of concern to the Cleveland National Forest, and using survey methods and report forms approved by the USFS. This frequency may be adjusted based on the results of these inventories.

As part of this plan, the USFS specifies that the co-applicants should coordinate with the USFS regarding which noxious weeds populations are the co-applicants' responsibility, which are USFS' responsibility, and which are a shared responsibility.

Effects Analysis

Although the co-applicants did not conduct formal weed surveys, they noted the occurrence of weeds as they performed surveys for special status plants and wildlife. MBA's reports do not give specific locations of weed sightings, instead noting that certain weeds were observed in certain subareas or are likely to occur in them. As described in section 3.3.5.1, 10 species were observed.

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site are located in Subarea 4 (see figure 13). Noxious weeds observed in this subarea include red brome, black mustard, olive, Indian tree tobacco, Russian thistle, yellow sweet clover, and bristly ox-tongue. Because these species are typical of disturbed areas, they would more likely be found around the proposed powerhouse site than the proposed Morrell Canyon site, where native vegetation and soils are intact, except along the Morgan Trail. Under existing conditions, hikers, companion dogs and equestrians may serve as vectors for the spread of weeds.

In preliminary 4(e) condition no. 34, the USFS specifies that noxious weeds presently identified as concerns for this project include giant reed, tall whitetop, and perennial pepperweed. MBA does not report the occurrence of any of these species in the vicinity of Morrell Canyon, but field notes indicate giant reed was observed during a 2003 survey for coastal California gnatcatcher. The status of this species as CalIPC List A-1 (most invasive wildland pest plants) indicates that control of any occurrences should be a high priority.

During construction, soil disturbance in uplands, wetlands, or riparian areas would create conditions that would promote the establishment and spread of weeds. Work in riparian zones also has the potential to contribute to weed spread by breaking plants into fragments that can then be transported downstream to infest new sites. Development of a plan to monitor and control weed establishment and spread would help to minimize these risks and would benefit native plant communities. It would also help to ensure the co-applicants' compliance with federal and state laws that require landowners to control weeds on their property.

Staff Alternative—As with the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site is located in Subarea 4. It is likely that weed occurrences documented in Subarea 4 were located in disturbed areas outside Decker Canyon.

During construction, the risk of weed introduction and spread would be similar to what would be likely at the proposed Morrell Canyon site, both in terms of upland and riparian-associated weeds.

As with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site is located in Subarea 4. It is likely that weeds observed in Subarea 4 would be present at this site because soils have been disturbed at both sites.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would pass through the same subareas as the proposed transmission alignment. For this reason, we anticipate that effects would be similar.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—As with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the Evergreen powerhouse site is located in Subarea 4. It is likely that weeds observed in Subarea 4 would be present at the Evergreen site because soils have been disturbed by residential, commercial, and road development and human activity.

Effects of Operation on the Spread of Noxious Weeds and Exotic Plants

Co-applicants' Proposal—Weed establishment and spread would be a continuing consideration during project operation, as a result of constructing an estimated 7.6 miles of transmission line access roads, although we assume roads would be permanently closed and helicopters would be used to perform regular maintenance. Public access would difficult to prevent, once roads have been constructed through chaparral. Access by OHVs is common in such situations and could cause soil disturbance, introduce weed seeds, and promote spread of weeds. Concerns would be minimized by monitoring the effectiveness of the road closures and revegetation efforts, and implementing remedial measures (i.e., placement of boulders or pylons to prevent access; additional plantings to support re-establishment of native plant communities), if necessary. A plan for monitoring and managing weeds and non-native invasive species would be beneficial throughout the life of the project to protect habitat quality.

Staff Alternative—The anticipated effects of operation at the Decker Canyon reservoir site and the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site on the spread of noxious weeds and exotic plants would be the same as those discussed under the co-applicants' proposal, and the same measures could be implemented to address weed monitoring and control.

The anticipated effects of operation on the spread of noxious weeds and exotic plants would be the same as those discussed under the co-applicants' proposal but would occur along an estimated 10.3 miles of access roads. The same measures described for the proposed alternative could be implemented to reduce the risks of adverse effects.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The anticipated effects of operation at the Evergreen powerhouse site on the spread of noxious weeds and exotic plants would be the same as those discussed under the co-applicants' proposal.

The costs of measures pertaining to noxious weeds and exotic plants are discussed in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitat

Effects of Construction on Wetlands and Riparian Habitat

Co-applicants' Proposal—In Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005), the co-applicants evaluated the presence and extent of wetlands that could be affected by

project construction at the proposed and alternative upper reservoir and construction staging sites and at the proposed and two alternative powerhouse sites and construction staging areas, and at the proposed north and south substations sites. Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005) did not consider Lake Elsinore in terms of wetlands, and no preliminary surveys were completed at the lake. However, the lake is a water of the United States and supports adjacent wetlands, including those constructed by the Corps in the Back Basin.

The co-applicants propose to conduct formal wetland delineations, as needed, when the final location of each project feature has been determined. When the delineations are complete, the co-applicants would prepare a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan for approval by the Corps, CDFG, and the USFS.

Effects Analysis

Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005) indicate that construction at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site would affect about 20.1 acres of wetlands, including Lion Spring, where a complex of seeps rise through subsurface fractures on the east side of Morrell Canyon. About 0.4 acre could be affected at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. Construction of the substations for the proposed transmission alignment could affect about 1.1 acres at the north site near Lee Lake (also known as Corona Lake) and about 0.5 acre at the south site. Based on the co-applicants' descriptions of habitat along the Lake Elsinore shoreline and our observations during the site visit, it is anticipated that construction of the pumping station would result in the clearing of a very small amount of wetland habitat, if any, but as mentioned above, wetland acreage has not been quantified at Lake Elsinore.

In southern California, slope wetlands such as those in Morrell Canyon typically perform a variety of hydrologic, biochemical, and biological functions, to some degree (Corps, 2004). Wetlands in Morrell Canyon are probably most important in serving biological functions because they are located in the headwaters of San Juan Creek and do not contain extensive areas of open water or emergent vegetation throughout the year.

The seeps, springs, streams, and associated riparian habitat in Morrell Canyon are relatively rare features in the project vicinity, in comparison to the dominant chaparral. They provide a unique microclimate and plant community, which in turn supplies unique food resources, nesting opportunities, and hiding and thermal cover for wildlife. Loss of this site to reservoir construction would likely affect a number of wildlife species with large territories or home ranges that use Lion Spring to meet some of their daily or seasonal needs (e.g., mountain lions, mule deer), in addition to animals that may be resident year-round (e.g., California quail, acorn woodpecker).

The co-applicants propose to collect flows from upstream of the new reservoir and Lion Spring, convey them under the reservoir, and return them to the channel just below the dam. Using this conveyance system, the co-applicants anticipate there would be no substantial change in flows in San Juan Creek downstream of the reservoir. This

approach would minimize indirect effects on the creek and riparian habitat downstream of the reservoir.

The co-applicants indicate that the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would cross about five named drainages, while the southern segment of the route would pass over about four named drainages. The co-applicants plan to locate the towers outside of riparian habitat so that the lines would span sensitive areas, avoiding adverse effects on wetland vegetation and soils.

As discussed earlier in this section, helicopters would be used to construct the transmission line where slopes are greater than 15 percent to minimize the risk of slope failure and erosion. Thus, roads would be constructed in flatter areas, which are often located in floodplains (e.g., Temescal Wash). We would anticipate temporary adverse effects on wetlands and riparian habitats, and the need for implementation of BMPs to protect sensitive soils and maintain proper drainage.

Conducting wetland delineations when the site of each project feature has been determined would provide information needed by the co-applicants to begin consultation with the federal and state agencies regarding wetland permits for the project. Development and implementation of a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan would help compensate for adverse effects on wetlands, preferably by providing on-site, in-kind mitigation. On-site, in-kind mitigation may be possible for construction effects at the powerhouse site, at Lake Elsinore, and for any effects that may occur along at stream crossings along the transmission line and any access roads that are constructed. Mitigation of wetland impacts at Morrell Canyon would be more difficult because of its location and the unique characteristics of Lion Spring and oak woodlands. Also, we note that the Corps' approach to alternatives analysis requires choosing the least environmentally damaging alternative that is practicable. The wetland effects at Morrell Canyon would be considerably greater than at Decker Canyon as indicated below.

Staff Alternative—At the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site, the total acreage of streams and riparian habitat affected by construction would be about 4.5 acres. Decker Canyon is a central drainage that supports oak woodland habitat, with several tributary drainages on the upland slopes surrounding it. Construction at this site would have the same types of effects as those described for Morrell Canyon, but the area of effect would be much smaller.

Construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would affect about 0.4 acre of streams and riparian habitat.

In addition to Temescal Wash, the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross three named drainages, including Leach Canyon, McVicker Canyon, and Rice Canyon creeks. The southern segment of this alignment would cross the same major drainages as the proposed alignment, in Alamos Canyon, Tenaja Canyon, and San Mateo Creek. We anticipate that effects, if any, would be minor because the co-applicants propose to place the towers outside wetlands and riparian habitats. This

alignment would cross the Decker and Morrell Canyon drainages and would parallel two unnamed drainages that flow eastward toward Lake Elsinore. Because the co-applicants propose to locate transmission towers outside wetlands and riparian habitats, effects would be assumed to be minor.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—At the Evergreen powerhouse site, construction would affect less than a tenth of an acre of these habitats.

Effects of Operation on Wetlands and Riparian Habitat

Co-applicants' Proposal—As mentioned above, the co-applicants propose to collect flows from Lion Spring, convey them beneath the reservoir at Morrell Canyon, and return them to San Juan Creek downstream of the dam. Assuming that design features would not alter the natural hydrograph (i.e., flow volume and timing would be the same), we do not anticipate any effects on streams, wetlands, or riparian habitat to result from project operation at the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

Project operations would affect Lake Elsinore and its shoreline, which includes the Back Basin wetlands and may also include other small pockets of wetland habitat. Extensive efforts have been made to establish wetlands in the Back Basin, but success has been limited by the amount of water available to support them. The co-applicants indicate that very little riparian vegetation of any kind is present around Lake Elsinore and do not identify any areas of wetland habitat, although some pockets of willow, tule, and cattail are present. However, as mentioned above, the co-applicants did not consider Lake Elsinore as a wetland, did not conduct preliminary delineations, and did not evaluate the lake's shoreline habitats.

As described in section 3.3.2, *Water Quantity*, under the proposed project operations daily water surface elevations would fluctuate more than they do under existing conditions, but the lake level would be more stable from month to month and from year to year. Prior to implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, Lake Elsinore fell below 1,240 feet msl about 58 percent of the time. Under current conditions with the implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project, make-up water is used to ensure that the lake does not fall below 1,240 feet, even in dry years. Spills from the lake into Temescal Wash and the Back Basin wetlands would occur more frequently.

Increasing the frequency of spills into Temescal Wash and the Back Basin wetlands would provide additional hydrologic support to existing wetlands in those locations. The co-applicants' proposal to develop a revised lake operating plan (as discussed in section 3.3.2.2, *Water Quantity*), in consultation with the Corps and local flood control authorities would help to ensure that such spills do not produce unintended adverse effects.

Stabilizing year-to-year and seasonal lake elevations, while allowing daily and weekly fluctuations, may have little effect on existing wetlands around Lake Elsinore, if any are present. Native hydrophytic species that persist around the shoreline, such as

willows, tule and cattails, are tolerant of seasonal water level fluctuations that occur in natural systems throughout the semi-arid west and these species would likely tolerate daily fluctuations of 1 foot. Native willows such as sandbar and black willow do not require saturated soils. They typically grow in well-drained, gravelly soils on riverbanks, bars, and terraces that are periodically inundated, where their roots can make contact with the water table (Uchytil, 1989; Tesky, 1992). Cattails and tules prefer shallow standing water, but also grow in saturated soils (Uchytil, 1992). Fluctuations limited to 1 foot and occurring within a 24-hour time-frame, as proposed, should allow for soils to remain moist; these species would likely persist.

Operational effects on wetlands that may be associated with Lake Elsinore would likely be minor. However, a formal wetland delineation would be needed to evaluate and quantify effects. Operational effects on wetlands that may be associated with Lake Elsinore would be minor. However, formal wetland delineations would be needed to quantify these effects. This information would serve as the basis for measures the co-applicants could include in their proposed habitat mitigation and monitoring plan. Lake Elsinore and the Back Basin wetlands offer a number of opportunities for wetland enhancement.

Assuming access roads are permanently closed and revegetated following construction, we conclude there would be no long-term adverse effects on wetlands and riparian habitats as a result of project O&M, except those that may be associated with public use of access roads.

Staff Alternative —Flows at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would be handled the same way they would be managed at Morrell Canyon, i.e., flows would be conveyed beneath the reservoir and returned to the drainage below the dam. For this reason, we expect effects would be the same.

We do not anticipate any operational effects on wetlands or riparian habitat at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Operational effects along the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those described above for the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—We do not anticipate any operational effects on wetlands or riparian habitat at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Oak Woodland Communities

As mentioned in section 3.3.4.1, oak woodlands are considered to have special status in the state of California. They provide high-quality habitat for a large number of birds and mammals. According to the California Oak Foundation (CalPIF, 2002), they sustain higher levels of biodiversity than virtually any other terrestrial ecosystem in the state. Several participants in scoping identified effects on oak woodlands as an important concern for both wildlife and recreation.

Effects of Construction on Woodland Communities

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants' proposal to construct a reservoir at Morrell Canyon would require removal of about 20 acres of southern coast live oak forest. An arborist counting all oaks over 8 inches in diameter at breast height at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site tallied approximately 670 trees, indicating that 500 to 600 of these would be affected by inundation (letter from C. McPhail, Certified Arborist, Alta Loma, CA, to P. Lewandowski, President, Nevada Hydro, Vista, CA, dated November 9, 2004, filed with Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004b,c)

No oak woodland would be affected at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. Cover type maps of the proposed transmission line route indicate that it would pass through oak woodland at a few locations along both the northern and southern segments. No oak woodland is shown on cover type maps of sites that would be occupied by substations.

To compensate for the loss of oak woodland, the co-applicants propose to mitigate at a ratio of 2:1 for areas of direct effect.

Resource Agency Measures

The USFS suggests a mitigation ratio of 5:1 for the loss of oak woodlands.[44]

Effects Analysis

The co-applicants' proposal to provide mitigation at a 2:1 ratio for the loss of oak woodlands would be consistent with the MSHCP, but would not match USFS Section 10(a) suggestion that indicates a ratio of 5:1 would be expected.

Several mitigation options would be available. These include acquisition (in fee title or via conservation easement) and protection of another site where oak woodlands are threatened, planting and maintaining a new stand of oaks, or contributing to a mitigation bank (e.g., the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund recently established by the state).

In terms of ecological benefit, on-site mitigation is clearly more effective in replacing habitat functions that are lost as a result of habitat conversion and maintaining biodiversity in the landscape. Collecting acorns from existing oaks at Morrell Canyon and starting them as seedlings to replant within the same drainage would also help to protect their genetic integrity and increase their chances of survival. However, oaks are slow-growing, and new plantings would not provide habitat functions equivalent to the

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[44] Where USFS has made recommendations apart from its preliminary 4(e) terms and conditions, we consider them under Section 10(a) of the FPA.

existing stand for over 100 years, assuming oaks mature at about 60 to 80 years (Holland, 1988). To provide mitigation at a 2:1 ratio, enough trees would be planted to establish a 40-acre stand. However, finding suitable site conditions for 40 acres of oak woodland may be problematic, i.e., the current narrow distribution of oak woodlands in the vicinity may indicate that nearby sites are not suitable. Finding suitable site conditions to meet a 5:1 mitigation ratio and establish 100 acres of oak woodland would be even more difficult. However, implementation of the higher mitigation ratio would help to ensure that habitat loss is adequately compensated, despite the length of time that will pass before the stand is capable of providing the same wildlife benefits that it provides under current conditions.

Transplanting existing trees would have more immediate benefits, in terms of maintaining biodiversity and supporting wildlife communities. Again, the challenge would be to find suitable site conditions in Morrell Canyon or the upper San Juan Creek Watershed to support 700 oaks of various ages, and costs would likely be prohibitive.

Acquiring and protecting existing oak woodlands off-site would contribute to conservation of this special status habitat on a broad regional level. However, this option would not mitigate for losses to wildlife currently occupying upper Morrell Canyon. Provision of funding to a mitigation bank would have similar effects.

Although the proposed transmission line route would pass through oak woodland at a few locations along both the northern and southern segments, Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005) do not identify any transmission towers as being located in coastal live oak woodlands. With transmission towers spaced about 1,000 feet apart, it may be possible to avoid effects on this cover type along the transmission line route.

Staff Alternative—Construction of a reservoir at Decker Canyon would require removal of about 5 acres of southern coast live oak forest. Thus, effects of construction at this site would be similar to those that would be expected at Morrell Canyon, but a much smaller area would be affected, and a much lesser amount of mitigation (i.e., 25 acres) would be needed to offset the effects.

Construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not involve removal or disturbance of oak woodlands.

Effects of construction of the mid-slope transmission line alignment on coast live oak woodlands would be about the same as those described above for the proposed alignment. In addition, this alignment would traverse oak woodlands in Decker and Morrell canyons. Construction of towers could require removal of small amounts of oak woodland (e.g., less than 0.5 acre in each drainage), depending on siting.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction at the Evergreen powerhouse site would not involve removal or disturbance of oak woodlands.

Effects of Operation

Co-applicants' Proposal—We anticipate there would be no adverse effects of project operation on live oak woodlands, other than the potential for public use of temporary access roads along the transmission line right-of-way that are intended to be obliterated and revegetated following construction. As we have noted for many resources, it is difficult to control public access, and for this reason, roads would pose a long-term risk of disturbance to native plant communities, including oak woodland, as a result of OHV use, vandalism, fire hazard, and weed introduction. Development and implementation of road management measures as specified by the USFS in preliminary 4(e) conditions no. 10, 11, 12, and 27 could be used to minimize these potential effects.

Staff Alternative—No operational effects on oak woodlands are anticipated in association with the Decker Canyon reservoir site.

No oak woodlands are present at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Potential effects of roads would be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as described above for the proposed transmission alignment

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No oak woodlands are present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

The costs of the measures regarding coast live oak woodlands are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Special Status Wildlife and Management Indicator Species

The foothills and mountains of southern California support 18 species of amphibians, 61 reptiles, almost 300 birds, and more than 100 mammals (Stephenson and Calcarone, 1999). Populations of many of these species are at risk or in decline because of habitat loss, fragmentation, alteration, or disturbance. Federal and state wildlife agencies have designated these animals as having special status, indicating a need for special protection or management consideration. During consultation with the resource management agencies, the co-applicants determined that at least 30 special status species could occur in the project area and should be evaluated in terms of potential project effects.

The USFS requested that wildlife MIS for the Cleveland National Forest also be evaluated. Based on the new Land Management Plan, wildlife MIS in this vicinity include the mule deer, song sparrow, California spotted owl, mountain lion, and arroyo toad. We address project effects on the mountain lion later in this section, under Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement. We address effects on the arroyo toad in section 3.3.5.2, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

Effects of Construction on Special Status Wildlife

Co-applicants' Proposal—Based on Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005), construction of the LEAPS Project would affect about 265 acres of wildlife habitat. This estimate includes 140 acres at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site (120 acres of chamise chaparral and 20 acres of southern coast live oak woodland); 50 acres at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site (30 acres of coastal sage scrub and 20 acres of non-native grasslands); and 25 acres of non-native grasslands at the north substation. Within these cover types, the co-applicants estimate that construction of the project features would affect a total of about 22.1 acres of wetlands and riparian habitat. Most of this acreage (20.1 acres) is associated with oak woodlands at Morrell Canyon.

The acreage estimate also includes approximately 39 acres that would be occupied by transmission line towers. As previously mentioned, the co-applicants do not propose to clear vegetation beneath the entire transmission alignment; about 0.25 acre would be removed for construction at each of about 167 transmission line towers. Transmission towers would affect about 32 acres of chamise chaparral, 6 acres of non-native grasslands, and about 1 acre of coastal sage scrub. The co-applicants would have some flexibility in locating transmission towers, and propose to avoid placing them in wetlands or riparian habitats.

Construction of temporary access roads would affect about 11.1 acres of unknown vegetation types Assuming the roads follow the transmission lines, most of the affected acreage would likely comprise chaparral.

As described in section 3.3.1, *Geology and Soils*, the co-applicants propose to revegetate any areas that are disturbed by construction, if they are not needed for permanent project use, including all temporary roads. Approximately 40 acres of chaparral at the Morrell Canyon staging area, 20 acres of non-native grasslands at the Santa Rosa site staging area, and all temporary roads could be revegetated. Revegetating a total of about 71 acres would bring the total area of habitat loss to 194 acres for the project, as proposed.

The co-applicants propose to employ a biologist or natural resource specialist to monitor construction activities to help prevent adverse effects on sensitive species or habitats. The co-applicants propose to provide mitigation for project effects on coastal sage scrub and southern coastal oak woodlands.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior's 10(j) recommendation no. 3 recommends the co-applicants demonstrate that the project is consistent with existing or proposed HCPs that encompass the project area or would be affected by certain project features.

The county of Riverside asks that the co-applicants conduct habitat assessments and surveys as needed to ensure compliance with the MSHCP.

Effects Analysis

MBA documented nine special status wildlife species during field surveys for the LEAPS Project: Cooper's hawk, California spotted owl, loggerhead shrike, rufous-crowned sparrow, coastal California newt, San Diego horned lizard, two-striped garter snake, red-diamond rattlesnake, and rosy boa. In addition to the California spotted owl, MBA reported the occurrence of two other MIS, the mule deer and song sparrow. Nine other special status species (including four federally listed species) are considered to have a high likelihood of occurrence but were not observed during the surveys. We discuss project effects on federally listed special status species and their habitat in section 3.3.5, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

The primary direct effects of construction on special status species and MIS would be loss of habitat as native plant communities are converted to project uses, and disturbance caused by noise, traffic, and human activity during the 4.5-year construction period. Construction of temporary access roads would cause indirect effects, as well, beyond the immediate road surface.

Loss of 20 acres of southern coast live oak woodland and associated riparian habitat in upper Morrell Canyon would adversely affect Cooper's hawk and mule deer. Cooper's hawks are most often found in live oak, deciduous riparian and other forest types near water. They use oak woodlands for nesting and perching opportunities, while hunting along forest edges and over adjacent open areas, including chaparral and grasslands. Mule deer use oak woodlands for thermal and hiding cover, and rely heavily on acorns as a food resource during the fall. As mentioned in section 3.3.4.1, the Land Management Plan indicates that mule deer in the Santa Ana Mountains reach their highest densities in oak woodlands, riparian areas, and along the margins of meadows and grasslands (USFS, 2005b).

The co-applicants' proposal to provide mitigation for the loss of oak woodlands may help to offset the loss. However, the benefits to local populations would be very small, because mitigation would either occur off-site through acquisition of existing mature stands of oak woodlands; or would occur some years in the future, through re-establishment of oak woodlands on-site.

Loss of live oak woodland at Morrell Canyon would not directly affect the California spotted owl. The co-applicants' surveys did not detect California spotted owls at either of the upper reservoir sites, or along a survey route that paralleled the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment. Noise disturbance is also unlikely; the owl site closest to the project area is located about 2 miles west of the proposed transmission alignment.

No recent survey data are available, but a 1992 report indicates a total of 11 pairs of California spotted owls have been confirmed in the Santa Ana Mountains. The Land Management Plan indicates that California spotted owls in southern California may uses

home ranges as small as 98 to 243 acres when they are located in riparian/hardwood forests, because they use narrow stringers of dense forest along steep canyons in areas otherwise dominated by chaparral (USFS, 2005b). Small oak stands may also serve as important stepping stones in dispersal. For these reasons, construction at Morrell Canyon would contribute to cumulative adverse effects on the California spotted owl by reducing the area of potential habitat, and would further impede recovery of populations in the Santa Ana Mountains.

Loss of 31 acres of coastal sage scrub and 112 acres of chaparral would adversely affect loggerhead shrike and southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and would represent an additional habitat loss for mule deer. Loss of coastal sage scrub and chaparral would also reduce available habitat for Belding's orange-throated whiptail, northwestern red-diamond rattlesnake, Coronado skink, San Diego mountain kingsnake, coastal rosy boa, and northwestern San Diego pocket mouse. Although not observed during MBA's surveys, these special status species may also be present in the project area.

The co-applicants propose to provide mitigation for construction effects on coastal sage scrub, but not for chaparral, because it is abundant in the project vicinity, or for 31 acres of non-native grasslands. Loss of non-native grasslands would further reduce the area of available habitat for mule deer. Loss of mule deer habitat could reduce local deer populations, which are already estimated to number less than 1,000 animals in the Santa Ana Mountains (USFS, 2005b). Decreases in the mule deer population would reduce the availability of prey for mountain lions, another USFS MIS.

The co-applicants propose to avoid placing transmission towers in wetlands and riparian areas, which would minimize the loss of habitat for the coastal California newt, two-striped garter snake, and song sparrow. The co-applicants also propose to develop a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan to address wetland impacts. Implementation of a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan could help to offset habitat losses for song sparrows and other species that use these habitats.

We do not know the location of any road segments and, thus, cannot quantify the acreage of potential habitat that would be removed or altered for any particular special status species or MIS. Indirect effects on habitat adjacent to roads are also difficult to quantify. Roads alter the characteristics of the habitats they traverse by creating edge effects (Reed et al., 1996; Tinker et al., 1998). The distance that edge effects extend into habitat blocks varies from site to site. Animal responses to edge effects are also highly variable and may be described as occurring on a continuum from attraction to avoidance (Brehme, 2003).

Many wildlife species use narrow roads and hiking trails as travel routes. Reptiles often use them for thermoregulation, and birds may take advantage of forage plants that develop in edge habitats along road margins, and increases in small mammal populations that use them. However, roads also function as barriers to wildlife movement, and even narrow, unpaved roads with little vehicle traffic have been shown to interrupt the daily

movements and seasonal dispersal of some small mammals, reptiles and amphibians (Swihart and Slade, 1984; Weatherhead and Prior, 1992; Gibbs, 1998; deMaynardier and Hunter, 1995). Noise and traffic would cause disturbance to wildlife throughout the construction period, which is estimated to last approximately 4.5 years. Species that are mobile (e.g., rufous-crowned sparrow, song sparrow, Cooper's hawk, loggerhead shrike, mule deer) would likely avoid the immediate area. Use of nearby habitats for breeding and possibly for foraging, as well, would be limited if such areas are already occupied. Less mobile species (e.g., San Diego horned lizard, red diamond rattlesnake) would experience adverse effects as a result of clearing, grading, and excavation.

The co-applicants' proposal to employ a biologist or natural resource specialist to monitor construction activities would not be likely to provide measurable benefits. Species that are physically capable of avoiding the area would likely do so. Less mobile species typically depend on concealment to avoid danger, and for this reason, they would be difficult to detect and protect from construction effects.

Construction would affect habitat for a number of special status wildlife species that are protected as part of the MSHCP. To be consistent with the MSHCP (and with Interior's 10(j) recommendation no. 3), the co-applicants would need to evaluate project effects in terms of MSHCP guidelines to determine mitigation needs. Although habitats on the Cleveland National Forest contribute to the MSHCP reserve lands, mitigation requirements for project effects on National Forest System lands may be quite different, especially for special status habitats such as oak woodland.

Staff Alternative—Construction of an upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would affect about the same total acreage as would be affected at Morrell Canyon, but less oak woodland (5 acres) would be affected. The same special status wildlife species would be affected, but over a smaller area. We assume that the 40-acre staging area could be revegetated following construction.

Construction would affect about 58 acres at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, including 53 acres of non-native grasslands and 5 acres of coastal sage scrub. Although no specifics are given about the area that would be used for construction staging at the Ortega Oaks site, we assume about 20 acres could be revegetated following construction, as it would be at the Santa Rosa or Evergreen sites.

Effects associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment would be similar to those described above for the proposed transmission alignment. About 15 acres of roads could be revegetated.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—At the Evergreen powerhouse site, construction would affect about 75 acres. This total would include 55 acres of non-native grasslands, and 20 acres of coastal sage scrub. About 20 acres could be revegetated following construction.

Effects of Operation on Special Status Wildlife and Management Indicator Species

Co-applicants' Proposal—USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 30 specifies annual employee awareness training that would cover local resource issues, including special status species. According to this condition, the co-applicants would coordinate with the USFS to provide information about special status species and their locations to the co-applicants' field personnel.

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 31specifies that the co-applicants would consult annually with the USFS and FWS to review lists of special status species that might occur within the project boundary to determine if any new species (federally listed threatened or endangered species or USFSS) have been added, for which study or survey may be necessary. In that event, the co-applicants would submit draft study reports to the USFS before finalizing the reports and filing them with the Commission.

Effects Analysis

Project operations would result in a small increase in disturbance as a result of regular maintenance activities at the reservoir. However, the incremental effect above existing disturbance caused by traffic along the South Main Divide Road and hikers and equestrians in Morrell Canyon would not likely be measurable. O&M at the powerhouse would occur in an area where traffic and human activity levels are already high, and would not likely cause additional disturbance to special status species or MIS.

The co-applicants would perform transmission line maintenance using helicopters. Helicopter activity would cause brief, high levels of disturbance. However, as mentioned above, monitoring and management would be needed to ensure there is no public access to the estimated 7.6 miles of temporary access roads, once they have been obliterated and revegetated. Uncontrolled public access often results in damage to habitat and disturbance to wildlife, as a result of OHVs, garbage dumping, target shooting, harassment, and illegal take (Gucinski et al., 2001; Joslin and Youmans, 1999).

As noted by the USFS, the existing list of special status species and MIS may be modified in the future as animals are added or subtracted from the list or as more information becomes available about their range or habitat requirements. Annual training of the co-applicants' field personnel and annual consultation with the USFS and FWS regarding special status species would help to minimize the risk of adverse effects on wildlife as status or conditions change.

Staff Alternative—Operation of an upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would cause the same types of effects on special status wildlife as described for the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site.

Operation of a powerhouse at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would cause similar types of effects on special status wildlife species as described for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Operational effects would be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as for the proposed transmission alignment, except that the risk of public use (OHVs, in particular) could adversely affect habitat along 10.3 miles of road.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Operation of a powerhouse at the Evergreen site would cause similar types of effects on special status wildlife species and MIS as described for the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

The costs of the measures pertaining to special status wildlife species are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement

Habitat connectivity allows the movement of animals across the landscape, between habitat blocks or cores. Loss of habitat connectivity can impair the ability of many species to find food, shelter, mates, and new territories. At a broader level, loss of connectivity can alter community dynamics, reduce gene flow, and increase susceptibility to disease and environmental disturbances. During scoping, several participants identified specific concerns about the effect of the LEAPS Project on habitat connectivity for mountain lions. As mentioned earlier, the Cleveland National Forest has selected the mountain lion as an MIS to evaluate habitat fragmentation.

Effects of Construction on Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement

Co-applicants' Proposal—Construction of the LEAPS Project would affect several existing and proposed habitat cores and linkages that are part of the MSHCP. As defined in the MSHCP, cores provide "live-in" habitat, and linkages provide "movement" habitat. Morrell Canyon is located within Existing Core B, which comprises the Cleveland National Forest (figure 14).

The northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would traverse and then border Existing Core B and would cross Proposed Linkage 1. Proposed Linkage 1 is intended to allow for the movement of mountain lions (and other wildlife species) into the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain area.

The southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would also traverse Existing Core B, and then cross Proposed Linkage 9 (the Tenaja Corridor), which connects Existing Core B with the Santa Rosa Plateau. This proposed linkage is intended primarily to improve habitat connectivity for mountain lions between the Santa Ana Mountains and the Palomar Range.

Lake Elsinore comprises Existing Core E. Currently, this core is not linked to other core habitats, but core extensions and proposed linkages would improve wildlife movement to the north and east of the lake. Management priorities for Existing Core E focus on minimizing the effects of edge factors, including lighting, surface runoff, toxics, and domestic predators, that result from urban, residential, and commercial development.

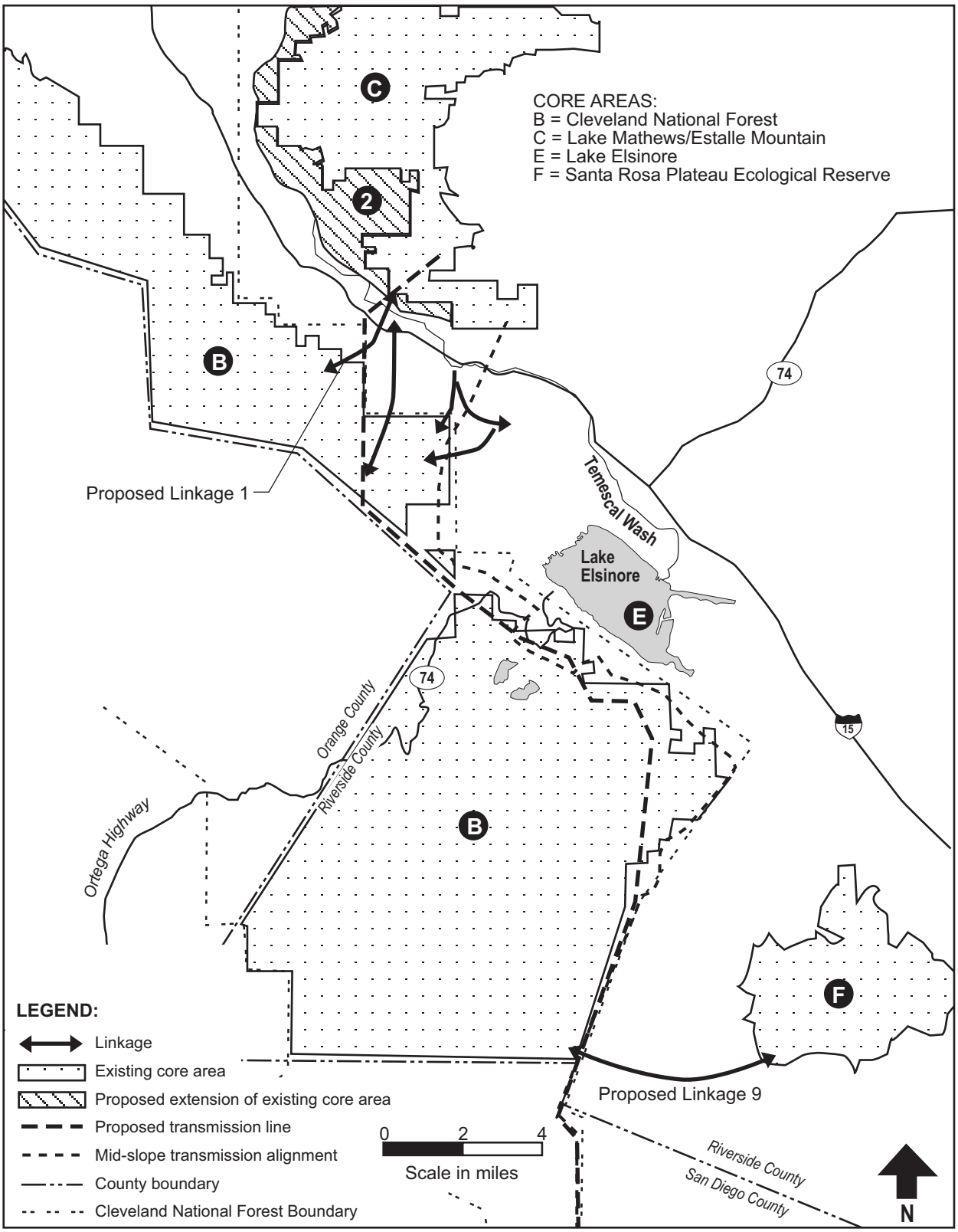

Figure 14. LEAPS Project—Habitat core areas and linkages. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff).

Resource Agency Measures

Interior 10(j) recommendation no. 3 requests that the co-applicants demonstrate that the LEAPS Project is consistent with the MSHCP, Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP, and North County MSHCP. Interior identifies project effects on core reserves and linkages as being of particular concern.

Effects Analysis

Construction at Morrell Canyon would remove about 140 acres of suitable habitat for mountain lions within Core B, with about 40 acres being revegetated following construction. Construction of the transmission alignment where it passes through Core B would disturb an additional 10.5 acres, assuming one transmission tower would be constructed every 1,000 feet and that each would disturb about 0.25 acre. The southern segment of the transmission alignment would follow along the boundary of Core B, and no suitable habitat for mountain lions would be affected. About 4.8 miles of road would be needed to construct this transmission line.

Existing Core B represents a large proportion of the remaining habitat for mountain lions in the Santa Ana Range. Modeling of the Santa Ana mountain lion population indicates it is demographically unstable and at risk of extinction, because it is isolated from other populations (Beier, 1993). Removal or disturbance of suitable habitat within Existing Core B would result in additional adverse effects on mountain lions. Reductions in mule deer populations that may also occur as a result of habitat loss in Core B would cause further adverse effects on mountain lions, because of their reliance on deer as their primary prey.

A 5-year study of mountain lions in the Santa Ana Mountains showed that two animals occupied home ranges that included sites where LEAPS Project features would be constructed (Beier and Barrett, 1993). One of these animals (a young male) was documented several times in upper Morrell Canyon. Radiotracking of both this individual and one other mountain lion (an adult female) showed frequent movements near the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment route, parallel with the ridgeline (a northwest-southeast orientation).

Based on the Santa Ana monitoring studies, it is unlikely that the transmission line would function as a barrier to mountain lion movement or would reduce existing habitat quality in Proposed Linkage 1 or Proposed Linkage 9. The monitoring studies indicated that mountain lions are habitat generalists, and use any area with predominantly native, woody vegetation; ample prey (especially mule deer); and low density of human inhabitants (Dickson et al., 2005).

It is also unlikely that the estimated 7.6 miles of temporary access roads needed to construct the transmission alignment would function as barriers. The Santa Ana studies showed that mountain lions avoided two-lane, paved roads, but they did not avoid dirt

roads and often used them to travel along canyon washes. They also used roads or hiking trails to move along ridgetops (Dickson et al., 2005). Assuming a minimal road design (i.e., one lane, dirt surface), the presence of transmission line access roads should not adversely affect mountain lions. However, as discussed above, it is difficult to control public access to back-country roads, and the risk of noise disturbance, harassment, and illegal take would be high. Impacts of roads on mule deer would also affect mountain lions.

The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the Lake Elsinore shoreline, segments of the transmission alignment outside Core B, and the northern and southern substations do not provide suitable mountain lion habitat. For this reason, we conclude there would be no effects on mountain lions from construction at these sites.

Staff Alternative—In comparison to Morrell Canyon, construction of an upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would convert a smaller area of riparian habitat to project uses, and no seeps or springs would be affected. However, the tracking studies discussed above indicate that Decker Canyon is within the home range of the same mountain lion (a young male) that used Morrell Canyon. For this reason, we would expect the effects to be similar.

No effects would be expected because the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site does not provide mountain lion habitat.

The northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross Proposed Linkage 1 near Alberhill. Because clearing for the transmission line towers would be limited to 0.25 acre per tower, no substantial effect on wildlife movement is anticipated between Core B and Core C, the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve. It is not anticipated that construction of 10.3 miles of temporary access roads would impede wildlife movement.

From either upper reservoir site, the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would continue southeast along the face of the Elsinore Range for a longer distance before turning southwest, following the edge of Core B. This adjustment could reduce the need for access roads in Core B. For this reason, the mid-slope transmission alignment would have a smaller potential for effects on mountain lions.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No effects would be expected because the Evergreen powerhouse site does not provide mountain lion habitat.

Effects of Operation on Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement

Co-applicants' Proposal—Human activity can affect mountain lion behavior because mountain lions typically avoid humans. When human/mountain lion interactions occur, the result is often fatal to the animal, i.e., it is identified as an imminent threat to public safety and destroyed. Under existing conditions, hikers and equestrians along the

Morgan Trail in Morrell Canyon represent an unknown level of disturbance to mountain lions. As mentioned in section 3.3.6, *Recreation*, USFS personnel indicate they observe from two to three cars parked at the trailhead on peak use weekends. USFS personnel also report that they frequently observe mountain lion tracks during hikes along the Morgan Trail (personal communication, J. Behrens, Cleveland National Forest Recreation Officer, August 24, 2005). Long-term O&M of the upper reservoir would not be likely to increase disturbance or the risk of interaction, assuming the same numbers of people continue to use the Morgan Trail. If people avoid the trail because of its proximity to a new reservoir, disturbance to mountain lions would decrease.

The co-applicants propose to permanently close construction access roads along the transmission alignment. Monitoring and management to assure there is no public access following road closures would be needed to prevent an increase in disturbance to mountain lions. Helicopter access for routine transmission line maintenance would cause short-term, localized adverse effects.

Staff Alternative—Construction of an upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would not affect any existing trails or other recreation facilities. Long-term, regular, low-level activity (e.g., small numbers of personnel performing inspections and maintenance) at the Decker Canyon site would represent a small increase in the level of human disturbance within mountain lion habitat.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site is not located within mountain lion habitat, and there would be no effects.

The effects of long-term operations and maintenance of the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those for the proposed transmission alignment. The effects of these activities along the southern segment of this alignment would be smaller in comparison to the proposed alignment, owing to the alignment of the southern segment to remove it to a greater degree from Core B. Helicopter access to perform maintenance activities along the segment of the transmission line near Decker Canyon would cause short-term, localized disturbance to mountain lions, if present, but would not affect wildlife movement between Core B and existing or proposed linkages.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site is not located within mountain lion habitat, and there would be no effects.

The costs of the measures pertaining to habitat connectivity (road and traffic management plans) are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Habitat for Migratory Birds, Shorebirds, and Nesting Waterfowl

Topography, soils, and land use influence the characteristics of plant communities that grow along the shorelines of lakes and reservoirs. Daily and seasonal changes in

water surface elevation also affect these plant communities. Several participants in scoping for the LEAPS Project indicated concerns about whether project-related changes in lake levels would adversely affect riparian and shallow water vegetation that could provide habitat for migratory birds, shorebirds, and nesting waterfowl.

Effects of Operation on Lake Level Fluctuations

Co-Applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to operate the project so that daily fluctuations in the surface elevation of Lake Elsinore would be about 1 foot. A daily fluctuation of 1 foot would affect about 86 acres along the lake margin between elevations 1,240 and 1,241 feet msl. A weekly fluctuation of 1.7 feet would affect an additional 34 acres (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2005).

Resource Agency Measures

Interior's 10(j) no. 3 recommends that the co-applicants consult with FWS and CDFG to develop a plan to eliminate or reduce effects on nesting shorebirds. The plan would include monitoring to allow early detection of effects; immediate steps to remedy effects; timing and performance criteria; and annual reporting to FWS and CDFG.

Effects Analysis

Review of existing information (including aerial photographs supplied with the license application, the analysis provided in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro [2005], and staff observations during the site visit in September 2004) indicate that very little riparian vegetation of any kind grows around Lake Elsinore. The co-applicants report that where vegetation is present, it consists primarily of weedy invasive species, but native willows, cattails, and tule grow at scattered locations.

The co-applicants report that no aquatic vegetation is present. They attribute the lack of vegetation to several factors, including seasonal and year-to-year water level fluctuations; lack of fine sediments that would support rooting; shading of light by dense algal populations; turbidity; and foraging activity of common carp across the bottom of the lake.

Information concerning current bird use of Lake Elsinore is limited. MBA compiled a list of 140 species that have been documented within 5 to 10 miles of Lake Elsinore, but because this area encompasses a variety of upland habitats, it does not serve as a good indicator of which species use the lake for breeding, foraging, resting, or overwintering. MBA notes that birds may be less likely to use Lake Elsinore during migration than other nearby lakes (e.g., Lake Skinner, Lake Mathews, Lake Hemet) that are less polluted and more productive.

During recent spring (April) and summer (July and August) wildlife surveys conducted in the Back Basin, biologists observed many native songbirds, but no waterfowl, shorebirds, or wading birds (Frank Hovore Associates, 2003). They noted

that great blue heron and great egret nest nearby, and probably forage in the Back Basin (Frank Hovore Associates, 2003).

Most of the Lake Elsinore shoreline has been developed for residential, commercial, or industrial use. Vegetation near the shore in these areas consists of ornamental trees, shrubs, and flowers used in landscaping, or non-native weedy species that take hold in disturbed soils. Vegetation growing on the 2.5-mile-long levee that forms the southeastern shoreline is very sparse and consists mainly of non-native forbs and grasses.

Undeveloped portions of the shoreline with gradual slopes may be suitable for ground-nesting birds that use uplands or nest in the open, but most ground-nesters that are typically associated with lake shorelines (e.g., mallard, pied-billed grebe, American bittern) prefer to nest in areas with dense emergent or scrub-shrub vegetation within a few feet of the waters' edge, or to construct platforms of vegetation over the water. Under current conditions, no dense emergent or scrub-shrub vegetation grows along the shoreline that could be affected by proposed operation of the LEAPS Project.

As discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*, implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project has reduced year-to-year water level fluctuations and Lake Elsinore would prevent the lake from drying up in drought years. Under these existing circumstances, additional riparian vegetation and possibly, some wetlands, may establish along the shoreline. The extent of riparian vegetation and the characteristics of the riparian community that might establish would depend on other factors, such as topography, soils, and the seed bank, in addition to changes in the hydrologic regime that would result from LEAPS Project operation. If native riparian communities establish along the shoreline, implementation of a plan to monitor waterfowl and shorebird nesting would help to identify effects that may result from project operation. However, long-term lake management and adjacent land uses would also affect any new riparian habitat that might develop, and would strongly influence use by migratory songbirds, wading birds, and/or nesting waterfowl. For example, establishment of protected shoreline buffer zones could promote bird use, while intensive residential, commercial, or recreation development could preclude it.

The cost estimate for the nesting shorebird plan is presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis,* and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

Bird Interactions with Transmission Lines

Effects of Operation

Co-applicants' Proposal—During the scoping process, participants identified concerns about the potential risk of bird electrocution or collision with the proposed power lines. Avian injuries and fatalities have been reported since the late 1800s, and as

power lines have proliferated across the country, losses of birds to electrocution or collision have increased dramatically; a recent California Energy Commission report estimated that annual fatalities in the United States are between 3.5 million and 1.05 billion (Hunting, 2002a).

In addition to bird safety, participants indicated a concern that electrocuted birds could fall to the ground, igniting vegetation and causing wildfires. An electrocuted red-tailed hawk is thought to have been the cause of the 6,000-acre Foothills Fire near Los Angeles in 2004 (USFS, 2004).

The co-applicants propose to construct about 30 miles of 500-kV power lines to connect to an existing SCE transmission line north of the project area and to an existing SDG&E transmission line located to the south. Consistent with USFS preliminary condition no. 36, the co-applicants propose to construct the transmission alignments in accordance with current APLIC et al. (1996) guidelines to minimize the risk of avian electrocution.

Resource Agency Measures

Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 1 requests that the co-applicants coordinate with FWS regarding the completion of plans and designs for measures to protect, mitigate damages to, and enhance fish and wildlife resources.

Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 2 requests that the co-applicants take immediate action to prevent or minimize further loss if at any time situations arise where fish or wildlife are being killed. The co-applicants would immediately notify the nearest FWS office and implement, to the extent practicable, any reasonable restorative measures they recommend.

Effects Analysis

Electrocution occurs when a bird perching or nesting on a power pole or tower spans two conductors or spans between a conductor and a ground. A relatively small number of tower-related electrocutions occur on high-voltage lines (i.e., lines carrying more than 69 kV) because the spacing of hardware on the large power poles or towers associated with these lines is sufficient (or can be modified to be sufficient) to prevent birds from spanning between conductors or between a conductor and a ground (APLIC et al., 1996).

Most collision-related fatalities occur as a result of birds in flight striking the terminal ground wires (or static wires) that are installed on the lines to dissipate lightning (Hunting, 2002a). Reducing the risk of collision with power lines can be challenging because a number of physical and biological factors contribute to the relative risk of collision. These factors include weather conditions; the relationship between the transmission line route and local topography, wind patterns, land use, and vegetative

cover; and bird species, abundance, and behavior (APLIC, 1994). However, the level of risk of a particular alignment can generally be described as follows:

- Power lines that bisect flight paths (for daily movement or seasonal migration) across wetlands, waterways, and mountain passes pose a higher risk to birds in flight, especially in fog or rain, than lines that are oriented parallel to flight paths.
- Power lines located in proximity to areas of bird concentration (wetlands, lakes, agricultural lands) pose a higher risk to birds taking off and landing than lines located at least a mile away.
- Lines located above the tree line may be less visible to birds than lines located at or below the tree line.

Several bird groups appear to be highly susceptible to collision. Large, heavy-bodied birds (e.g., waterfowl) are less maneuverable in flight, and their habit of flying at high speeds and low elevations between foraging areas and nearby resting areas exposes them to collision more frequently, especially at dawn and dusk when visibility is low. The great blue heron, with its long neck, long legs, and poor vision, is a species at particularly high risk.

As a group, raptors are at a higher risk of electrocution on poorly designed transmission line towers than any other birds, but there are few reports of raptor collision with transmission lines. An analysis of avian power line interactions in Europe indicated that about 94 percent of raptor fatalities were caused by electrocution on poles or towers, while only 6 percent were the result of collision with power lines.

For purposes of this analysis, the co-applicants' proposed transmission alignment can be divided into three segments: the northern segment, from the northern terminus to Leach Canyon Creek; the central segment, from Leach Canyon Creek to the point just east of Elsinore Peak where it turns south; and from that point southward to the proposed substation (see figure 15).

The northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment crosses Temescal Wash near Lee Lake. This crossing would represent a high risk to waterfowl because of the presence of extensive wetlands and agricultural fields along the Lee Lake shoreline.

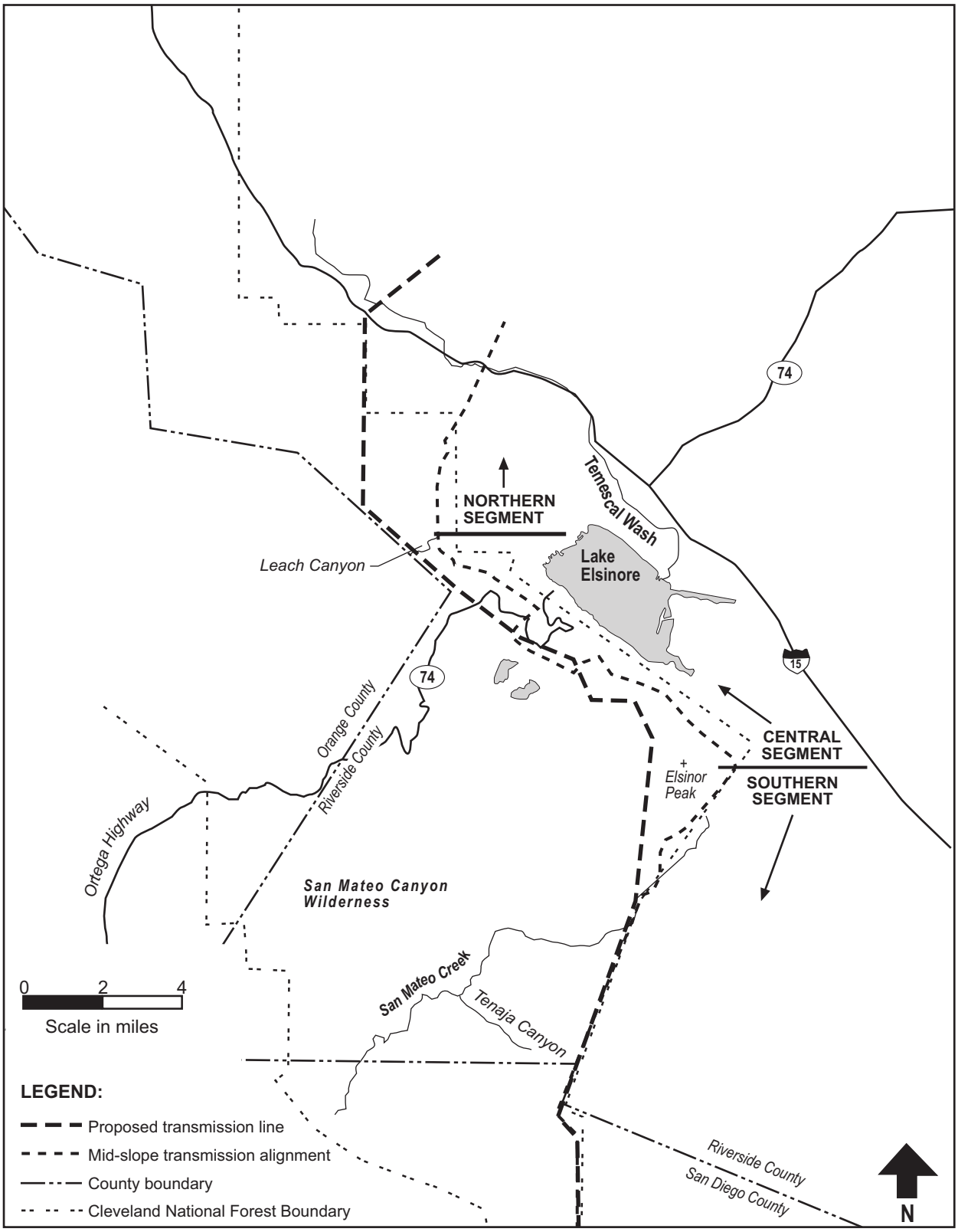

Figure 15. LEAPS Project—Transmission line segments. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

In addition to Temescal Wash, the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment crosses four other named drainages (Cow Canyon, Horsethief Canyon, McVicker Canyon, and Leach Canyon creeks). Aerial photographs submitted as part of the license application do not cover any of these crossings, but topographic maps indicate that McVicker Canyon and Leach Canyon may support moderate amounts of riparian vegetation. For this reason, we consider these two transmission alignment crossings to pose a moderate risk of collision.

No major crossings occur along the northwest-to-southeast oriented central segment of the proposed transmission alignment. This alignment would not affect waterfowl because there is no suitable waterfowl habitat in this vicinity. It crosses the face of the Elsinore Range near the middle of the slope. Because raptors tend to soar along mid- to upper slopes and ridgelines to take advantage of thermals and updrafts, we would expect that siting the segment at this mid-elevation would interfere with raptor flight patterns.

The southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment crosses three named drainages, including Los Alamos Canyon, Tenaja, and San Mateo creeks. Review of aerial photographs and topographic maps suggest these creeks also support moderate amounts of riparian vegetation and may represent a moderate risk of collision.

Staff Alternative—The mid-slope transmission alignment can also be divided into three segments (see figure 15). The northern segment extends from the terminus to Leach Canyon; the central segment extends from Leach Canyon in a relatively straight line to the Cleveland National Forest boundary; and the southern segment travels southwestward along the boundary to meet up with the proposed alignment just north of Tenaja Canyon.

The northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross Temescal Wash about 2 miles upstream of Lee Lake. This area is characterized by more residential and industrial development and a narrower band of wetlands along the creek than the site where the proposed alignment would cross. We conclude that the risk of collision at this crossing would be smaller than at the co-applicants' proposed crossing.

Named drainages along the route of the northern segment of the alignment include Rice Canyon, McVicker Canyon, and Leach Canyon. Crossings of these drainages would occur downstream of the crossings along the proposed transmission alignment route. At these crossings, the canyons open up as they enter Temescal Wash, and although they appear more developed, they also may support more riparian and wetland habitat than crossings of the same creeks along the co-applicants' proposed transmission line route.

For the most part, the central segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would traverse the slope above Lake Elsinore at a much lower elevation than the proposed route. Being closer to the toe of the slope would likely reduce the risk of

collision for raptors soaring upward, interfering less with flight and hunting activity. Approximately 1.45 miles of the central segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would traverse Decker and Morrell canyons, and two lengths of it would parallel two unnamed drainages that flow down the east face of the foothills above Lake Elsinore. This alignment would not affect any waterfowl habitat, but would be constructed in areas that may be used extensively by raptors for hunting. The segment paralleling the South Main Divide Road would be constructed back from the crest of the slope, which should allow it to be visible to raptors as they move up the slope and over the top. The segments following the drainages downslope could interfere with flight patterns across the face of the foothills. The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission would cross the same drainages as the proposed transmission alignment. We would anticipate the same level of risk to occur at crossings on Los Alamos Canyon Creek, Tenaja Creek, and San Mateo Creek.

The costs of measures pertaining to protection of birds from adverse interactions with power lines are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis*, and the measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues*.

Mosquito Production

Effects of Operation

Co-Applicants' Proposal—As mentioned in section 3.3.4.1, *Terrestrial Resources*, participants during scoping identified the potential for the upper reservoir to support production of mosquitoes as a resource issue that should be addressed in the EIS. Mosquitoes are of concern because they can transmit diseases to and between humans, birds, and mammals.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS 4(e) condition no. 14 specifies that the co-applicants should obtain permission from the USFS before applying pesticides to control undesirable insects on National Forest System lands and that any pesticides should be registered by EPA for that specific purpose.

Effects Analysis

Mosquitoes breed in shallow standing water, or lay their eggs in moist soils adjacent to standing water, especially where vegetation or other cover provides protection from predators and desiccation. As larvae develop, they breathe through siphons they extend from the water surface. Water level fluctuations and wave action interrupt their ability to breathe.

The upper reservoir would fluctuate about 40 feet daily and up to 75 feet through the weekly cycle. It would be lined with geomembrane and would not contain soils or support any riparian or emergent vegetation. The characteristics of the reservoir and its

proposed operation would make it an inhospitable environment for mosquitoes. Lake Elsinore would also be unlikely to support mosquitoes because of daily and weekly water level fluctuations and wave action caused by wind and boating. Therefore, there would be no risk of mosquito production associated with construction or operation of the proposed project.

Staff Alternative—Effects on the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would be the same as described above for the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

3.3.4.3 Cumulative Effects

Construction of the LEAPS Project would contribute to ongoing losses of wetlands and coast live oak woodland riparian habitat in southern California that are occurring as a result of human population growth. As discussed in section 3.3.7, *Land Use and Aesthetic Resources*, the population of Riverside County was predicted to grow by almost 70 percent between 2000 and 2020 (SCAG, 1998). The construction of homes, businesses, services and infrastructure to serve this population is likely to adversely affect wetlands, despite federal, state, and county regulations that require protection, because substantial amounts of development are likely to occur in small increments that are difficult to regulate. Live oak woodlands are also at risk of loss as a wildlife resource, because their aesthetic qualities make parcels containing mature oaks especially attractive for human use (Giusti et al., 2004). Over 30,000 acres of oak woodlands in California are annually converted to residential and commercial uses (Standiford and Scott, 2001, as cited in Giusti et al., 2004). Recent legislation (California Senate Bill 1334, signed into law in January, 2005) is designed to protect oak woodlands, but the effectiveness of the bill is, as yet, unproven. Construction and operation of the LEAPS Project would also contribute to ongoing losses of chaparral habitat that is not considered to have special status, but which supports very high levels of biodiversity, including plants and wildlife that are endemic to the region. Cumulative adverse effects on oak woodlands and chaparral would in turn contribute to cumulative effects on the California spotted owl, an MIS that is rapidly declining in southern California forests, although range-wide populations may be stable (USFS, 2005b).

The cumulative effects of the LEAPS Project on mountain lions, an MIS, would be of particular concern. Habitat loss within Core B for mountain lion and their primary prey, the mule deer (also an MIS) would contribute to adverse effects on a population that is already at risk of extirpation in the Santa Ana Mountains.

3.3.4.4 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

Project construction would result in the loss of riparian oak woodlands and coastal sage scrub, as well as chaparral and non-native grasslands. Construction of approximately 30 miles of transmission lines would increase the risk of avian collision. Risks can be minimized by proper siting and marking but cannot be eliminated.

3.3.5 Threatened and Endangered Species

3.3.5.1 Affected Environment

Listed Species

Based on consultation with FWS and the USFS, 11 federally listed plant species and eight federally listed wildlife species could occur or have been documented to occur in the LEAPS study area. Surveys were conducted for all of these species, except the Stephens' kangaroo rat and the bald eagle. The co-applicants assume the project would affect habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat and propose to provide mitigation for effects on an acreage basis, consistent with the existing HCP for this species. The co-applicants concluded that no surveys for bald eagles were needed, because of the low likelihood of project effects. None of these listed species were observed during field surveys conducted in the study area between 2001 and 2004.

The draft EIS serves as the biological assessment for these federally listed species, for purposes of consultation with FWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Fish

Southern California Steelhead (Endangered)—In August 1997, NMFS listed the Southern California steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) evolutionarily significant unit as an endangered species (62 FR 43937). At the time of listing, NMFS believed Malibu Creek to the north represented the southernmost extent of the range of anadromous steelhead in southern California. In 1999 and in subsequent surveys, steelhead were reported in lower reaches of San Mateo Creek. These findings lead NMFS in 2002 to extend the southern evolutionarily significant unit boundary to include Mateo Creek (67 FR 21586).

This steelhead evolutionarily significant unit is a winter-run steelhead that spawns in streams whose lower reaches flow through coastal plains (Moyle, 2002). In San Mateo Creek, only the lowermost 6 to 7 stream miles are reported to be accessible to southern steelhead trout in the main stem and tributaries. The cliffs of Tenaja Falls, on the main stem of the San Mateo (see figure 12), present an impassible barrier to the upstream extent of historical and potential steelhead migration. Similarly lower reaches in the creek are available to anadromous steelhead only when significant precipitation events make these areas accessible to steelhead for spawning.

Plants

San Diego Thornmint (Threatened)—San Diego thornmint is an annual of the mint family, currently known only from San Diego County. It occurs in openings within coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and native grasslands on heavy clay soils. The species is also associated with gabbro soils, those derived from igneous rock and calcareous marine sediments. The occurrence nearest the project area is located on the Santa Rosa Plateau, about 6 miles southeast of Lake Elsinore, but because of its very narrow habitat

requirements and narrow geographic distribution, it is unlikely to occur in the project area, and we do not discuss it further in this document.

Munz's Onion (Endangered)—Munz's onion is a small perennial that occurs in grasslands and grassy openings in coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and juniper woodland on clay soils between approximately 1,000 and 3,000 feet. It is currently known from 15 populations in Riverside County. Three of the largest populations are located near the LEAPS Project, at Estelle Mountain near the northern terminus of the proposed transmission alignment; near Alberhill in the vicinity of the mid-slope transmission alignment; and on Elsinore Peak, about 3 miles south of the proposed upper reservoir site at Morrell Canyon. USFS surveys documented the occurrence of this species at scattered locations in the vicinity of the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment. The Elsinore Peak is located near, but outside, the boundary of recently designated critical habitat (70 FR 70).

San Diego Ambrosia (Endangered)—This perennial herb occurs in sparsely vegetated non-native grasslands and ruderal habitats on open floodplain terraces, in vernal pools and alkali playas. The species occurs at three locations in Riverside County: two sites near Alberhill and one site near Murrieta Hot Springs. The Alberhill sites are about 4 miles northwest of Lake Elsinore. In 2002, FWS found that designation of critical habitat for this species would be prudent, but was precluded by higher priorities (67 FR 127).

San Jacinto Valley Crownscale (Endangered)—San Jacinto Valley crownscale is a low-growing, grayish annual that requires seasonal inundation. It occurs only in highly alkaline seasonal floodplain wetlands and occasionally in alkali grasslands. The species is endemic to western Riverside County. Twelve occurrences are known from the county. The nearest location to the LEAPS Project area is at Alberhill Creek, approximately 4 miles northwest of Lake Elsinore. FWS identified about 32 acres in the Alberhill Creek floodplain as essential habitat for San Jacinto Valley crownscale, but because this location would be protected under the provisions of the MSHCP, have proposed to exclude it from designation as critical habitat (69 FR 193).

Nevin's Barberry (Endangered)—Nevin's barberry is an evergreen shrub that reaches heights up to about 12 feet. It is associated with chaparral and alluvial scrub habitats, growing in coarse soils on the margins of washes and rocky slopes. It is known from six areas in Riverside County. The occurrence nearest the project area is located in the vicinity of Temecula, about 10 miles southeast of the project area. We conclude that this species is unlikely to occur in the project area, and we do not discuss it further in this document.

Thread-leaved Brodiaea (Threatened)—Thread-leaved brodiaea is a member of the lily family. It occurs in vernal pools and alkali grassland habitats on hillsides, valleys, and floodplains from near sea level to about 2,000 feet in San Diego and Riverside counties. Twelve populations are known from Riverside County. These are clustered in two main areas: one along the San Jacinto River near Perris and Lakeview,

and the other on the Santa Rosa Plateau. FWS proposed designated critical habitat at Miller Mountain near the proposed transmission alignment route in 2004 (69 FR 235).

Slender-horned Spineflower (Endangered)—Slender-horned spineflower is a small, herbaceous annual that is usually associated with mature alluvial scrub growing in sandy or gravelly soils. It is currently known from four locations in Riverside County. The occurrence nearest the LEAPS Project area is in Temescal Wash, northwest of Lake Elsinore.

San Diego Button-celery (Endangered)—This species is known only from vernal pools on the Santa Rosa Plateau. Because of its very narrow habitat requirements and geographic distribution, this species would not likely occur in any areas that would be affected by construction of the LEAPS Project. For this reason, we do not discuss it further in this document.

Mexican Flannelbush (Endangered)—The total population of this species is thought to number less than 100 individuals, located at sites in southern San Diego County and in Baja, Mexico. We conclude that this species is not likely to occur in the project area, and we do not discuss it further in this document.

Spreading Navarretia (Threatened)—Spreading navarretia is a low-growing member of the phlox family. It occurs in vernal pools and in depressions in areas that once supported vernal pools, persisting only in the wettest areas. Its range extends from Los Angeles County to northwestern Baja. Twelve of the approximately 38 existing U.S. populations are located in Riverside County. FWS identified essential habitat for this species in the vicinity of the Santa Rosa Plateau in 2004 (69 FR 194). Because this species has very narrow habitat requirements, it is unlikely to occur in the project area, and we do not address it further in this document.

California Orcutt Grass (Endangered)—California Orcutt grass occurs only in vernal pools with clay or alkali soils. It is typically found in the deepest portions of pools that support it, and less frequently along the margins. It is known from three sites in Riverside County. The site nearest the project area is located on the Santa Rosa Plateau, about 6 miles southeast of Lake Elsinore. In 1993, FWS determined that it would not be prudent to designate critical habitat for this species, because of its vulnerability to vandalism, illegal collection and other human activities (58 FR 147). FWS addresses recovery of California Orcutt grass in the Draft Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon (FWS, 2004b).

Animals

Quino Checkerspot Butterfly (Endangered)—Although it may once have been the most common butterfly in coastal southern California, the Quino checkerspot butterfly is now known to occur only in Riverside and San Diego counties and northwestern Baja, California. Key populations in Riverside County are located at approximately 14 sites. The occurrence nearest the project area is located near Harford Springs Regional Park, about 7 miles north of Lake Elsinore.

FWS designated critical habitat in 2002 (67 FR 72) and completed a recovery plan for the species in 2003 (FWS, 2003). Designated critical habitat for this species is located in the vicinity of Estelle Mountain, where the northern segment of the proposed and alternative transmission alignment would terminate. Protection for this species in Riverside County is addressed in the MSHCP.

In its early lifestages (egg, larva, pupa), the Quino checkerspot butterfly is closely tied to just a few host plant species. These include western plantain, purple owl's clover, white snapdragon, and southern Chinese houses. Adults survive on nectar from small annual plants such as yerba santa, chia, ground pink, and gilia. Habitat components that support both early stages and adults are found in association with a variety of cover types. Adults have been observed in vernal pool settings, sage scrub, chaparral, native and non-native grassland, and open oak woodland communities, at elevations from sea level to about 5,000 feet. Diverse topography may be important; Quino checkerspot butterfly adults often use open or sparsely vegetated hilltops, ridgelines, and rocky outcrops.

Arroyo Toad (Endangered)—The range of the arroyo toad extends through the coastal plains and mountain streams of southern California, west of the desert, from Monterey County to northwestern Baja. Most populations occur at elevations from about 1,000 to 4,600 feet. Arroyo toad populations are known from nine locations in Riverside County. This species is also known from several locations on the Cleveland National Forest, where it is an MIS that represents riparian-dependent species (USFS, 2005b).

The FWS recovery plan indicates the arroyo toad is present in the headwaters of San Mateo Creek and some of its tributaries, and identifies San Juan Creek from Decker Canyon to the Orange County line as being within Recovery Unit 10 (FWS, 1999). Essential habitat for this species is located in the San Juan Creek drainage downstream of the Riverside/Orange County line, about 4 miles south of Morrell and Decker canyons (70 FR 70). Protection of this species in Riverside County is addressed within the MSHCP.

The arroyo toad breeds in the shallow pools of slow-moving streams, where the canopy is open and there is little herbaceous cover. After metamorphosis, juveniles remain in moist habitats, where they forage primarily on ants. Adults may move farther from water, foraging for a variety of insects and arthropods in sandy or gravelly terraces, chaparral, oak woodland. Recent studies indicate dispersal movements of over 1 mile along riparian corridors or overland.

California Red-legged Frog (Threatened)—The historical range of the California red-legged frog extended through the Pacific slope drainages from Shasta County south to Baja, at elevations from sea level to 4,500 feet. One very small population (e.g., less than five individuals) is known to occur in Riverside County; this location is the only extant population known to exist south of Ventura County.

FWS designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog in 2001 (66 FR 49) that includes the San Mateo Creek Watershed and the Santa Rosa Plateau, from 5 to

10 mile southeast of the southern segment of the transmission alignment, where both the proposed and alternative transmission alignments would cross Tenaja Creek. The Santa Rosa Plateau is located within Recovery Unit 8 (FWS, 2002). FWS recently issued a revised proposed designation of critical habitat (70 FR 212), which excludes both the San Mateo Creek Watershed and the Santa Rosa Plateau. The MSHCP addresses protection of this species in Riverside County.

The California red-legged frog is typically associated with still or slow-moving water over 16 inches deep, bordered by dense, shrubby or emergent vegetation. Two thirds of the known localities are from small drainage areas. Larvae need cool water for proper development, so although this species may be found in ephemeral streams, it is unlikely that populations persist in such habitats. The California red-legged frog is often found over 300 feet from water, and during dispersal, frogs may move overland as much as 2 miles.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Endangered)—The breeding range of the southwestern willow flycatcher extends from southern California into northwestern Mexico, and eastward into west Texas. The southwestern willow flycatcher overwinters in Mexico and Central America, arriving in southern California in late April-early May, and returning to wintering grounds in late summer. In Riverside County, there are records (both historic and current) of southwestern willow flycatcher at 12 locations. Those nearest the LEAPS Project area are in the vicinity of Canyon Lake, about 3 miles northeast of Lake Elsinore, and at Temescal Wash/Alberhill Creek, about 2 miles north of Lake Elsinore.

FWS completed a recovery plan for this species in 2002 (FWS, 2002) and designated critical habitat in October 2005 (70 FR 201). Critical habitat nearest the LEAPS Project area is located in San Diego County about 5 miles southeast of the proposed substation (70 FR 201). The MSHCP addresses protection of this species in Riverside County.

The southwestern willow flycatcher nests in riparian woodlands where surface water is present throughout the breeding season, including areas dominated by dense stands of willows, cottonwoods or alders,. Suitable habitat occurs mainly along low-gradient streams with wide floodplains, but some nesting also occurs in steeper, more confined stream corridors.

Least Bell's Vireo (Endangered)—The least Bell's vireo was once a common breeding species in California. It winters in Mexico, returning to California in late March or early April, and departs by the end of September (Zeiner et al., 1990). Its historical breeding range extended from Tehama County southward into Baja and eastward into the Owens Valley, Death Valley, and the Mohave River. Currently, the highest concentrations of this species occur in San Diego County. In the study area, this species is found in the vicinity of Lake Elsinore and Temescal Wash, just north of the lake.

FWS designated critical habitat for the least Bell's vireo in 1994, including a unit along the Riverside/San Bernardino County border, well to the north of the LEAPS Project area (59 FR 22), and completed a draft recovery plan for this species in 1998 (FWS, 1998). The MSHCP protects habitat for this species in Riverside County.

Breeding pairs are associated primarily with dense riparian vegetation, including southern willow scrub, sycamore alluvial woodland, and coast live oak riparian forest. This species forages primarily in willow-dominated riparian areas, but may also forage in chaparral.

Bald Eagle (Threatened)—In the western United States, the range of the bald eagle extends from Alaska to Baja, California. Bald eagles that breed in California usually are present year-round. The number of eagles increases at several locations during the winter, with an influx of migrants from farther north. The number of occupied territories in California increased from about 25 in 1977 to more than 150 in 1999. This upward trend is consistent with increases in bald eagle populations throughout the United States. In 1999, FWS proposed to remove the bald eagle from the list of threatened and endangered species.

The MSHCP considers the bald eagle to be primarily a migrant and wintering species in western Riverside County, although two nest territories have been documented in the county. One of these is located at Lake Skinner, about 15 miles southeast of Lake Elsinore. The co-applicants indicate this nest has not been active since 1999. A pair of eagles nesting at Lake Hemet, about 40 miles east of Lake Elsinore on the San Bernardino National Forest, has been resident since 1994, and fledged two young in 2003 (USFS, 2005b). The USFS has conducted annual bald eagle counts at Big Bear Lake on the San Bernardino National Forest from December through March since 1978. In the 27-year period, the average number of observations each winter has ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 18.

For nesting, bald eagles select large trees on the shorelines of lakes, reservoirs and large rivers, where prey is abundant. Perch sites are also located in large trees that provide a clear view of the water. Fish is usually the mainstay of the bald eagle diet, but eagles are opportunistic in their foraging habits, and also take small mammals, waterfowl and gulls, carrion, and refuse.

The MSHCP mentions records from Lake Elsinore, indicating that bald eagles bred there at one time. The co-applicants state that eagles have been observed to forage in Lake Elsinore during the winter, but suggests that prey is more abundant in other lakes in the vicinity (e.g., Lake Skinner, Lake Mathews), and eagles are more likely to forage at those sites. For this reason, the co-applicants did not conduct bald eagle surveys at Lake Elsinore.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher (Threatened)—The historical range of the coastal California gnatcatcher extended from southern Ventura County southward into Baja California. The coastal California gnatcatcher occupies generally the same range under

current conditions, but it is no longer considered common. Approximately 10 percent of the known population occurs in Riverside County.

FWS proposed designation of critical habitat in 2003 (68 FR 79). In the LEAPS Project vicinity, proposed critical habitat is located along the north side of Interstate 15 from Murrietta to El Cerrito, and in some areas (including Temescal Wash), encompasses lands along the south side of the interstate, as well. FWS is continuing to analyze the economic effects of this designation. Protection for populations in Riverside County is addressed in the MSHCP.

The coastal California gnatcatcher is strongly associated with low-elevation (i.e., sea level to 1,000 feet) sage scrub habitat, including Riversidean sage scrub. These habitats are composed of low-growing, dry-season deciduous and succulent plants. This species also uses chaparral, grassland, and riparian habitats if they are adjacent to sage scrub.

Suitable habitat in the study area (Riversidean sage scrub) is located in three areas along the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment and along the alternative penstock routes.

Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (Endangered)—The Stephens' kangaroo rat is restricted to Riverside County and north-central San Diego County. The MSHCP identifies 14 key populations in Riverside County, and indicates the species has a patchy distribution throughout suitable habitat. The Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain population is the nearest to the LEAPS Project area.

FWS listed the Stephens' kangaroo rat as endangered in 1988 and prepared a draft recovery plan in 1997 (FWS, 1997). FWS announced in 2004 that it would conduct a status review of this species (69 FR 77), in response to a petition to delist it. The MSHCP addresses protection of Stephens' kangaroo rat in Riverside County.

Stephens' kangaroo rat is found primarily in open grasslands or sparse shrublands in relatively flat or gently sloped settings, with sandy or sandy loam soils. It feeds almost exclusively on the seeds of filaree, an introduced forb, and annual bromes.

3.3.5.2 Environmental Consequences

Listed Aquatic Species

In San Mateo Creek, only the lowermost 6 to 7 stream miles are reported to be accessible to listed southern steelhead trout in the main stem and tributaries. The cliffs of Tenaja Falls on the main stem of the San Mateo present an impassible barrier to the upstream extent of historical and potential steelhead migration. Similarly, lower reaches in the creek are available to anadromous steelhead only when significant precipitation events make these areas accessible to steelhead for spawning. Water quality in tributaries to San Mateo Creek could be affected during construction of project transmission lines that cross these tributaries.

Effects of Construction on Southern California Steelhead

Co-applicants' Proposal—Construction of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir would occur outside of the San Mateo Watershed, where listed steelhead have been reported.

The co-applicants propose to develop and implement a water quality monitoring plan in consultation with the USFS, California SWRCB, and San Diego RWQCB for the purpose of assessing project-related effects on both the San Mateo and San Juan Creek watersheds.

The co-applicants propose to locate transmission line towers outside of sensitive areas, including streams. They propose to establish setbacks from streams and implement BMPs including, but not limited to, those road, building site, and watershed BMPs identified in USFS' *Water Quality Management for Forest System Lands in California—Best Management Practices* (USFS, 2000).

Effects Analysis

Construction of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir would not occur in the San Mateo Creek Watershed and would not affect steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

In San Mateo Creek, only the lowermost 6 to 7 stream miles are reported to be accessible to listed southern California steelhead trout in the main stem and tributaries. As noted above, the cliffs of Tenaja Falls on the main stem of the San Mateo present an impassible barrier to the upstream extent of historical and potential steelhead migration. Similarly, lower reaches in the creek are available to anadromous steelhead only when significant precipitation events make these areas accessible to steelhead for spawning.

The southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would cross San Mateo Creek and its tributaries at 12 locations, although no construction activities are proposed in or in proximity to any of those stream channels. Steelhead have not been reported in those tributaries that would be crossed by the proposed transmission alignment. Development of measures to control construction erosion and transport of sediments to San Mateo Creek would serve to avoid downstream transport of sediment that could negatively affect steelhead spawning or rearing habitat.

Implementation of BMPs as proposed would limit the potential for construction activities to result in sediment discharge to the San Mateo Creek Watershed and reduce the potential for effects on steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

Development of the proposed water quality monitoring plan could help to identify project-related effects on water quality that might affect steelhead in San Mateo Creek. Subsequent actions to address effects would reduce such effects on steelhead as well as resident fish.

Staff Alternative—Construction of the Decker Canyon reservoir would not occur in the San Mateo Creek Watershed and would not affect steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

Construction of the Ortega Oaks powerhouse would not occur in the San Mateo Creek Watershed and would have no effect on steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would cross San Mateo Creek and its tributaries at 12 locations, although no construction activities are proposed in or in proximity to any of those stream channels. Steelhead have not been reported in those tributaries that would be crossed by the proposed transmission alignment. Development of measures to control construction erosion and transport of sediments to San Mateo Creek would serve to avoid downstream transport of sediment that could negatively affect steelhead spawning or rearing habitat.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction of the Evergreen powerhouse would not occur in the San Mateo Creek Watershed and would have no effect on steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

Effects of Operation on Southern California Steelhead

Operation of the LEAPS Project would not affect steelhead or steelhead habitat in San Mateo Creek.

Listed Plant Species

The co-applicants' biological resource consultant, MBA, conducted surveys for rare plants in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004. Surveys were conducted by qualified scientists using California Native Plant Society guidelines. No listed plants were found during any of the surveys.

The surveys covered suitable habitat at the two potential sites for the upper reservoir, the three potential sites for the powerhouse and their associated penstock routes, at the potential substation sites, and within 600 feet of the centerline of the proposed transmission alignment and transmission alignment variation 1 (see figure 8). As explained in section 3.3, *Terrestrial Resources*, some areas that could be affected by the project were not surveyed because MBA considered them inaccessible due to rugged terrain, impenetrable shrub, or private ownership. Portions of the mid-slope transmission line route that do not coincide with the proposed route were not surveyed because the alternative was only recently developed by the USFS and Commission staff.

Surveys were not conducted along access roads, because no road alignments have been identified, as yet. As described earlier, helicopters would be used to construct most of the transmission line alignment, to avoid adverse effects on steep slopes (e.g., over 15 percent). About 7.6 miles (about 11.1 acres) of temporary access roads would be needed to construct the proposed transmission alignment. About 10.3 miles of road

(15.5 acres) would be associated with the mid-slope transmission alignment. The roads would be obliterated and revegetated following construction.

Section 3.3, *Terrestrial Resources*, describes several protection, mitigation and enhancement measures that are proposed by the co-applicants or recommended by the agencies and are intended to prevent or minimize the risk of adverse effects on special status plants. Those measures also apply to the federally listed plants identified below.

Effects of Construction on Munz's Onion

Co-applicants' Proposal—Munz's onion has a very narrow geographic distribution, occurring only in southwestern Riverside County. For the most part, it is restricted to just a few clay and cobbly clay soil types. It is known from several sites in and near the project area, including Estelle Mountain (Subareas 1 and 2), the Temescal Valley (Subareas 2 and 11), Alberhill (Subareas 2, 3, and 11), and Elsinore Peak (Subarea 5), where it grows in grasslands or grassy openings in coastal sage scrub, chaparral, or coast live oak woodland. No Munz's onion was observed during MBA's fieldwork.

Effects Analysis

The northern segment of the proposed transmission line alignment would pass through areas that may support Munz's onion where it crosses the Temescal Valley and terminates at Estelle Mountain. As mentioned above, the co-applicants estimate that transmission towers would be constructed at about 1,000-foot intervals along the route. Assuming all of the distance between the southern edge of Temescal Wash and Estelle Mountain contains suitable habitat, about 16 towers would be needed to span the distance, and a total of about 4 acres would be disturbed.[45] An additional 25 acres would be disturbed for construction of the substation.

The southern segment of the proposed transmission line would pass near (i.e., within about 100 feet) the eastern boundary of recently designated critical habitat for this species just east of Elsinore Peak (70 FR 108). Although most of the known occurrences are located within the designated critical habitat, occurrences of Munz's onion are scattered in grasslands and openings in chaparral in this area, outside the boundaries of the designated critical habitat (memorandum from S.D. White, Botanist, White & Leatherman Bioservices, Upland, CA, to S. Crawford, Project Manager, MBA, San Bernardino, CA, dated November 16, 2004). About 11 transmission towers would be

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[45] The co-applicants estimate that the area occupied by each tower would be about 2,500 square feet, and that the area maintained to meet firebreak clearance requirements would extend the footprint to about 4,900 square feet. For planning purposes, however, the co-applicants assume each tower would affect about 0.25 acre.

placed over the 2-mile distance that passes through potential habitat for Munz's onion to the east of Elsinore Peak. Construction of 11 towers would disturb about 2.75 acres.

Site-specific surveys could be used to locate towers so that known populations of Munz's onion could be avoided, new populations could be identified, and minimal amounts of suitable habitat would be disturbed. The same survey approach could be implemented to identify occurrences along access roads, if any are constructed in potential habitat for this species.

In addition to removing habitat, construction activity often functions as a vector for the introduction of non-native species and noxious weeds that could reduce habitat quality for Munz's onion. Construction activity can cause secondary effects on habitat, also, such as soil compaction, trampling of vegetation, increased dust, and litter in areas adjacent to construction sites. BMPs could be implemented to minimize these effects during the construction period. The co-applicants' proposal to employ a construction monitor to coordinate with project engineers regarding mapping, flagging, and fencing of sensitive areas would help to minimize the risk of accidental habitat damage due to construction vehicles and personnel operating outside approved areas.

As described in section 3.3.1.2, *Effects of Construction Related to On- and Off-Site Borrow*, one dam design would require importing clay from the Pacific Clay Company pits at Alberhill. We assume no areas supporting Munz's onion would be disturbed, because the Alberhill population of Munz's onion is protected within the MSHCP Criteria Area (Riverside County, 2003).

Staff Alternative—Construction at the Decker Canyon site would not affect designated critical habitat. Soils at the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site are not known to support Munz's onion; however, the existing South Main Divide Road in this vicinity passes through soils mapped as Las Posas gravelly loam, which does support at least a few occurrences of this species. Access to the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site from the existing road could pass through this same soil unit. Focused surveys could be used to identify existing populations, when the road is designed.

No suitable habitat for Munz's onion is known to occur at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Construction of the mid-slope transmission alignment would not affect designated critical habitat. Munz's onion is known to occur in the vicinity of Alberhill, where the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross Temescal Wash. Based on the assumptions described above, about 8 transmission towers would cross potential habitat for Munz's onion, and about 2 acres of habitat would be disturbed. Construction of the substation would disturb an additional 25 acres of potential habitat.

Construction of the central portion of the mid-slope alignment would not affect designated critical habitat, but would traverse Decker Canyon, and may pass through soils mapped as Las Posas gravelly loam along the South Main Divide Road. Additional

surveys could be conducted to determine whether Munz's onion occurs at sites where towers or access roads would be located.

The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would swing from 1 to 2 miles to the east of the proposed transmission alignment in the vicinity of Elsinore Peak. This alignment would be well outside designated critical habitat and any known occurrences of Munz's onion.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No suitable habitat for Munz's onion is known to occur at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Munz's Onion

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants proposes to perform transmission line maintenance using helicopters. Transmission line access roads would be permanently closed and revegetated. However, as mentioned in section 3.3.4.1, *Terrestrial Resources*, public access on project roads may be difficult to control, and additional site-specific measures (e.g., boulders or pylons to prevent trampling of listed plant populations) may be needed to protect listed species, if present. A monitoring and management plan in conjunction with USFS preliminary 4(e) conditions regarding road management could be used to determine whether road closures are effective in minimizing the risk of adverse effects (e.g., increased risk of wildfire, illegal dumping, OHV use with associated trampling and soil compaction, introduction and spread of weeds and invasive non-native plants) on sensitive soils and any listed plants they may support. Implementation of a plan to monitor and manage noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants, as the co-applicants have proposed, could be used to increase the likelihood that if weeds are introduced, they could be quickly eradicated or contained.

Staff Alternative—The same precautions as described above would be needed to minimize the risk of disturbance to potential Munz's onion habitat, if an access road is built at the Decker Canyon site.

No habitat that would support Munz's onion is present at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

The same precautions as described above would be needed to minimize the risk of disturbance that would be associated with uncontrolled public access, if roads are constructed along the northern segment of this route or in suitable habitat near Decker Canyon and along the South Main Divide Road.

During project operation, we anticipate there would be no adverse effects on Munz's onion or habitat along the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment. Any roads that are constructed would closely follow the mid-slope transmission alignment route and would be located over 1 mile from suitable habitat and known populations.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat that would support Munz's onion is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Construction on Slender-horned Spine Flower

Co-applicants' Proposal—Slender-horned spine flower is associated with mature alluvial scrub on sandy soils, where periodic flooding provides overbank deposits (MSHCP [Riverside County, 2003]). Documented occurrences nearest the LEAPS Project area are in Temescal Wash at Indian Creek and Alberhill, in Subarea 2. The co-applicants' identified an area adjacent to Lee Lake as providing suitable habitat for this species, but did not observe any slender-horned spine flower.

Effects Analysis

The northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would cross Indian Canyon Creek and Temescal Wash and would pass through areas of mature alluvial sage scrub. Siting transmission towers in alluvial sage scrub may be unavoidable, although this habitat is interspersed with other cover types, and a total of about 4 towers would affect a maximum of 1.0 acre. Surveys would be needed at each tower sited in this habitat type to ensure no effects on this species. Although helicopters would be used to construct most of the transmission line, roads may be constructed in areas like Temescal Wash, where topography allows. Grading plans would need to take suitable habitat into account, as well to ensure that construction of towers does not interfere with flood processes that help to maintain suitable habitat for this listed species. The same measures would be needed for designing and constructing access roads, if any built in this vicinity.

Staff Alternative—No suitable habitat for slender-horned spine flower is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

The northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross Temescal Wash about 3 miles from Lee Lake, where the co-applicants identified potential habitat for slender-horned spine flower. Because this species is strongly associated with sandy soils, it would not be likely to occur on clay soils mapped near Alberhill. The central and southern segments of the transmission alignment would not be located in or affect suitable habitat for the slender-horned spine flower.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No suitable habitat for slender-horned spine flower is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on the Slender-Horned Spine Flower

Co-applicants' Proposal—If roads are constructed to provide maintenance access, a road management program would help minimize, but would not eliminate, the risk of adverse effects (e.g., increased risk of wildfire, illegal dumping, OHV use, introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants) on sensitive soils and any listed plants they may support. Implementation of a plan to monitor and manage noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants, as described above, would also be needed to allow for rapid detection and control of weeds.

No habitat is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site, at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, or along the mid-slope transmission alignment that would support the slender-horned spine flower.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No suitable habitat for slender-horned spine flower is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Construction on San Diego Ambrosia, California Orcutt Grass, Thread-leaved Brodiaea, and San Jacinto Valley Crownscale

Co-applicants' Proposal—Several of the federally listed plant species that may occur in the project area are found primarily in vernal pool habitats but also are known to grow in clay soils in alkali floodplains. These include San Diego ambrosia, California Orcutt grass, thread-leaved brodiaea, and San Jacinto Valley crownscale.

Both the northern and southern segments of the proposed transmission alignment would pass through the Western Riverside County Vernal Pool Region, which extends into northern San Diego County (Keeler-Wolf et al., 1998). Regional mapping was based on several factors, including underlying geology and soils. It indicates the potential occurrence of vernal pools and shows known locations of vernal pool species and communities, but it was not intended to provide precise planning-level data.

Soils mapping conducted for the MSHCP shows that clay soils underlie alkali floodplains along Temescal Wash in the vicinity of Alberhill. These areas currently support non-native grasslands and alluvial sage scrub plant communities.

As discussed in section 3.3.5.1, above, the co-applicants' consultant did not observe any listed vernal pool-associated or alkali floodplain-associated plant species during field surveys. The co-applicants did not map any vernal pools as part of their vegetation studies, but they did note the presence of one vernal pool near the study area in Subarea 8. This site is located about 600 feet west of the proposed transmission alignment, about 1 mile south of the Riverside/San Diego County line.

The MSHCP cites one 1969 record of California Orcutt grass that may be from Tenaja Canyon, and interactive mapping associated with the MSHCP (Scott Laboratory, 2001) shows a 1990 record that appears to be near Alberhill. San Diego ambrosia has been documented at two sites along the floodplain of Alberhill Creek. San Jacinto Valley crownscale has also been documented to occur at Alberhill Creek. All of these occurrences are located in Subarea 2 or in the adjacent Subareas 3 and 11.

Thread-leaved brodiaea occurs on floodplain substrates in mixed grasslands and alluvial sage scrub plant communities on clay or alkaline soils, as well as in vernal pools. FWS has proposed critical habitat for this species at Miller Mountain, within approximately 0.5 mile of the southern segment of the transmission alignment route and has proposed essential habitat along Tenaja Road, approximately 2 miles east of the proposed transmission alignment route (69 FR 235). These locations are in or near Subarea 7.

Effects Analysis

The northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would cross Temescal Wash about 3 miles northwest of Alberhill and would cross four other tributary drainages. No clay or saline-alkali soils were mapped in this vicinity for the MSHCP, but the co-applicants mapped non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub along approximately 2 miles of the proposed transmission line route in this vicinity. If soils and hydrology are suitable, it is possible that these areas support the same listed species (California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, and San Jacinto Valley crownscale) that are known from sites near Alberhill. No critical habitat would be affected along this segment of the transmission line alignment. Installation of transmission towers could affect about 2.75 acres of potential habitat.

The southern segment of the proposed transmission line alignment would cross Tenaja Creek. Based on documented occurrences of thread-leaved brodiaea in habitats upstream and downstream of the crossing, it is possible that thread-leaved brodiaea could also occur at the crossing. No critical habitat would be affected along this segment of the transmission line route. Installation of transmission towers could affect approximately 1.25 acres of potential habitat.

The co-applicants propose to place transmission line towers outside wetlands and riparian habitats, and they do not plan to clear vegetation beneath the line. As plans for the project are developed, the co-applicants propose to delineate any wetlands that may be affected by construction. Once a route is selected, wetland delineations should provide an adequate base of information to allow siting of transmission towers outside any vernal pools that may be present along the route. Grading plans would also need to take vernal pools into account to ensure that construction does not interfere with hydrologic support. The same measures would be needed for designing and constructing access roads.

Siting transmission towers in floodplain habitats at Temescal Wash and Tenaja Canyon may be unavoidable. Focused surveys at sites where transmission towers are proposed would be needed to evaluate potential effects on listed plants.

Staff Alternative—No habitat is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site that would support California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crownscale, or thread-leaved brodiaea.

The northernmost segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross Temescal Wash near Alberhill and would cross three other tributaries to Temescal Wash. Installation of transmission towers could affect about 2.75 acres of potential habitat, under this alternative. Because California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia and San Jacinto Valley crownscale are all known from the Alberhill vicinity, the same planning efforts as described above would be needed to ensure no adverse effects to these listed species.

Like the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment, the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would pass through the Western Riverside County Vernal Pool Region and would cross Tenaja Creek. The effects of constructing this segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those described for the proposed transmission alignment.

No habitat is present along the central portion of the transmission alignment that would support California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crownscale, or thread-leaved brodiaea.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site that would support California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crownscale, or thread-leaved brodiaea.

Effects of Operation on San Diego Ambrosia, California Orcutt Grass, Thread-leaved Brodiaea, and San Jacinto Valley Crownscale

Co-applicants' Proposal—If roads are constructed to provide maintenance access, a road management program would help to minimize the risk of adverse effects on vernal pools and floodplains, and any listed plants they may support. However, public access on project roads would be difficult to monitor and control, and additional site-specific measures (e.g., boulders or pylons to prevent trampling of listed plant populations) might be needed to protect listed species, if present. Also, public access would increase the risk of fire and the introduction and spread of weeds.

Staff Alternative—No habitat is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site that would support California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crownscale, or thread-leaved brodiaea.

The potential effects would be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as for the proposed transmission alignment, i.e., there would be a risk of disturbance along access roads in the vicinity of Temescal Wash and Tenaja Canyon.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site that would support California Orcutt grass, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crownscale, or thread-leaved brodiaea.

Listed Wildlife Species

The co-applicants' biological resource consultant, MBA, conducted a number of surveys for listed wildlife species in the LEAPS Project area (table 16). MBA concluded that no surveys were necessary the bald eagle because of their infrequent occurrence in the project area. Rather than conducting surveys for Stephens' kangaroo rat, MBA assumed presence within the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Fee Assessment Area. No listed species were found during any of the surveys (MBA, 2004).

Table 16. Number of field visits conducted during FWS protocol surveys for listed species, by year, in the LEAPS Project area. (Source: MBA, 2004, 2003).

FWS Protocol Surveys	2001	2002	2003	2004
Quino checkerspot butterfly	0	0	8	6
Arroyo toad	6	0	0	6
California red-legged frog	4	0	4	4
Southwestern flycatcher	5	5	5	5
Least Bell's vireo	8	8	8	8
California gnatcatcher	8	6	8	6

Surveys were conducted by qualified biologists using FWS protocols to cover suitable habitat that could be affected by construction at either of the upper reservoir sites, the potential powerhouse sites and associated penstocks, and within 600 feet of the centerline of the proposed transmission line route and potential northern and southern substations. Surveys were also conducted in suitable habitat for each species along the originally identified alternative transmission line route. Surveys were not conducted in areas where the mid-slope transmission alignment differs from the proposed or original alternatives. Surveys were not conducted along access roads, because no road alignments have been identified, as yet. Some areas that could be affected by the project were not surveyed because MBA considered them inaccessible due to rugged terrain, impenetrable shrub, or private ownership.

Section 3.3, *Terrestrial Resources*, describes several protection, mitigation and enhancement measures proposed by the co-applicants or specified or recommended by the agencies, that are intended to prevent or minimize the risk of adverse effects on special status animals (e.g., USFS 4(e) conditions no. 30 and 31, and Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 2). Those measures also apply to the federally listed animals discussed in this section.

One measure—Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 3—applies specifically to federally listed fish and wildlife. Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 3 requests that the Commission retain an ESA reopener provision and other appropriate reservations of authority to reinitiate Section 7 consultation, if needed. This recommendation is outside the scope of environmental analysis because it pertains to a legal matter. This recommendation would be addressed in any license order the Commission may issue for the LEAPS Project.

Effects of Construction on Quino Checkerspot Butterfly

Co-applicants' Proposal—Potential habitat for Quino checkerspot butterfly in the project area occurs along the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment between Temescal Wash and Estelle Mountain, and the transmission line would extend about 1.5 miles into designated critical habitat at Estelle Mountain. The co-applicants

conducted surveys for Quino checkerspot butterfly in suitable habitat, but they did not observe this species (MBA, 2004).

Effects Analysis

Approximately 25 acres of suitable habitat (outside designated critical habitat) would be removed for construction of the proposed substation near Lee Lake. About 2.75 acres would be removed for construction of the towers, assuming five towers per mile, with 0.25 acre of habitat removal at each tower site. About 1.75 acres of this would be removed within critical habitat.

Staff Alternative—No suitable habitat for Quino checkerspot butterfly occurs at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Potential habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly occurs along the northernmost segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment between the crossing at Temescal Wash and the proposed substation site, and the transmission line would extend about 0.1 mile into designated critical habitat at Estelle Mountain. The co-applicants estimate that construction of the substation would affect about 25 acres. About four transmission line towers would be constructed, resulting in removal of about 1 acre of suitable habitat. With towers located at approximately 1,000-foot intervals, from 0 to 0.25 acre within designated critical habitat would be affected by construction. Effects of constructing the mid-slope transmission alignment would be similar to those described above for the proposed transmission alignment, but less habitat would be removed.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No suitable habitat for Quino checkerspot butterfly occurs at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Quino Checkerspot Butterfly

Co-applicants' Proposal—With the exception of the indirect effects of roads that may be constructed to provide access to the transmission line for maintenance, no operational effects would be expected because no additional habitat would be removed or altered. As discussed above, public access of roads is often difficult to control. Adverse effects associated with public access include OHV use that could cause trampling and soil compaction; increased dust that could smother plants that butterflies rely on; increased risk of wildfire; illegal dumping; and introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants. The combination of management plans to address public access and weeds would reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of adverse indirect effects resulting from public access into and across designated critical habitat or nearby suitable habitat.

Staff Alternative—No operational effects would be expected at the Decker Canyon site because no potential habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly exists in these areas.

No operational effects, other than those that may be associated with access roads, would be expected along the mid-slope transmission alignment because no additional

suitable habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly would be removed or altered, once construction is complete. Effects would be about the same as those described for the proposed transmission alignment, except that the mid-slope transmission alignment would extend a shorter distance into designated critical habitat and any accompanying access road also would be shorter. For this reason, we anticipate there would be a smaller risk of indirect effects on Quino checkerspot butterfly from implementation of this alternative.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No operational effects would be expected because no potential habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly exists at the Evergreen powerhouse sites.

Effects of Construction on Arroyo Toad and California Red-legged Frog

Co-Applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants' consultant, MBA, identified potential habitat for the arroyo toad and the California red-legged frog at one location on the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment (Temescal Wash) and at two locations along the southern segment (Los Alamos Canyon and Tenaja Creek), where the transmission alignment would cross streams and associated riparian habitat. MBA conducted surveys for the arroyo toad and California red-legged frog at each of these sites but did not observe any evidence of either species (MBA, 2004).

Effects Analysis

The co-applicants propose to place the transmission line towers outside riparian habitat, and do not propose to clear vegetation beneath the line. This approach would minimize adverse effects on potential habitat for the arroyo toad and California red-legged frog at Temescal Wash, Los Alamos Canyon, and Tenaja Creek; however essential habitat for the arroyo toad is considered to include uplands within 1,640 feet of riparian habitat (70 FR 70). The co-applicants assume a maximum distance of 1,000 feet between transmission towers. For this reason, it may be impossible to avoid effects on suitable habitat for the arroyo toad. Assuming two towers would be placed within upland habitat adjacent to each of the three crossings, construction of the LEAPS Project would adversely affect a total of about 1.5 acres of potential arroyo toad habitat. No critical habitat for this species would be affected.

California red-legged frogs are known to use upland habitats, also, but essential upland habitat is considered to occur within a narrower band (i.e., 300 feet) along each side of a suitable stream or wetland (69 FR 71). It is assumed (but not guaranteed) that potential effects on habitat for the California red-legged frog could be avoided through proper siting of the transmission towers. Although FWS proposed on November 3, 2005 to revise the boundaries of designated critical habitat (70 FR 212), the current designation includes the San Mateo Creek Watershed (66 FR 49). Construction of the southern segment of the transmission line would cross San Mateo Creek and several small tributaries within the watershed boundary.

Most of the proposed transmission line would be constructed using helicopters to access areas where slopes are steeper than 15 percent, and only 5.1 miles of temporary access roads would be needed.

Temporary road construction could adversely affect the San Mateo Creek Watershed due to erosion and sedimentation. Transmission line crossings at tributaries to San Mateo Creek (e.g., Los Alamos Creek) constructed by helicopter would minimize these effects along with the use of existing roads for construction.

The co-applicants did not conduct surveys for the arroyo toad or California red-legged frog at the proposed site of the upper reservoir, because it does not provide suitable habitat for either species. However, Morrell Canyon is located in the headwaters of San Juan Creek, which provides essential habitat for the arroyo toad and supports essential populations of this species in its lower reaches and tributaries. Morrell Canyon is located about 4 miles upstream from the Riverside/Orange County line. The county line was the upstream limit of proposed critical habitat for the arroyo toad, although FWS recently excluded it from critical habitat designation for economic reasons (70 FR 70). While no suitable habitat for the arroyo toad is present in Morrell Canyon, maintaining the existing hydrology in San Juan Creek would be an important conservation measure for this species. Implementation of the co-applicants' proposed erosion and sediment control plan would also be protective of aquatic habitats downstream that might support arroyo toads.

Staff Alternative—Riparian habitat at the Decker Canyon site is similar to that at the proposed Morrell Canyon site, but it occurs in narrower bands along the tributary drainages and does not include seeps or springs. No suitable breeding or dispersal habitat for the arroyo toad or California red-legged frog is present at the Decker Canyon site.

Like Morrell Canyon, Decker Canyon is located in the headwaters of San Juan Creek. Collection and conveyance of flows under the reservoir and return of these flows to the stream would be important in maintaining hydrologic support for arroyo toad habitat lower in the watershed.

No suitable habitat for the arroyo toad or California red-legged frog is present at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

No suitable habitat for the arroyo toad or California red-legged frog is present along the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment where it crosses Temescal Wash or along the central segment of the line. Suitable habitat is present at Los Alamos Canyon and Tenaja Creek crossings, where the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment is the same as the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment. For these two crossings, a total of about 0.5 acre of upland habitat needed by arroyo toads would be removed. No suitable habitat for the California red-legged frog would be affected, but construction would occur within designated critical habitat. As described above for the proposed transmission alignment, helicopters

(or existing roads) would be used to construct transmission lines at these crossings, and towers would be placed outside riparian habitat.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No suitable habitat for the arroyo toad or California red-legged frog is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Arroyo Toad and California Red-legged Frog

Co-applicants' Proposal—Helicopters would be used to construct the transmission line at stream crossings that could provide suitable habitat for arroyo toad or California red-legged frog. Helicopters would also be used to perform maintenance. We would anticipate no adverse effects of project operation on these species.

Staff Alternative—No habitat would be removed or altered, and there would be no effects at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

No additional habitat would be removed or altered along the mid-slope transmission alignment, and there would be no additional effects, assuming helicopters (or existing roads) are used to provide maintenance access.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat would be removed or altered, and there would be no effects at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Construction on Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo

Co-applicants' Proposal—Potential habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo in the project area is present at one location along the northern transmission line route (in Temescal Wash) and at one location along the southern transmission line route (Tenaja Canyon). MBA conducted surveys for southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo at both locations but did not observe either species (MBA, 2004).

As mentioned above, the co-applicants propose to place the transmission line towers outside riparian habitat, and do not plan to clear vegetation beneath the line. Helicopters would likely be used to construct the segment of transmission line where it crosses Tenaja Canyon, but access roads may constructed at the Temescal Wash crossing. Constructing transmission line access roads within riparian habitat could result in removal of some suitable habitat, but no designated critical habitat for either the southwestern willow flycatcher or least Bell's vireo would be affected.

Staff Alternative—No habitat for these species is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

No habitat is present in the vicinity of Temescal Wash where the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would cross it, so no effects would occur as a result of either tower installation or road construction. No habitat is present along the central segment of the line. Suitable habitat is present at Tenaja Creek, where the proposed alignment and mid-slope alignment follow a common route. Assuming

helicopters would be used to install transmission towers in this vicinity, no additional habitat would be removed for road construction.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo

Co-applicants' Proposal—No habitat for these species would be affected.

Staff Alternative—No habitat for these species is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks site.

No habitat would be removed or altered during project operation. Helicopters used for maintenance could cause temporary, localized noise disturbance, if southwestern flycatcher or least Bell's vireo were present near Tenaja Creek.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat is present at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Construction on Bald Eagle

Co-applicants' Proposal—Because of their strong association with large bodies of water, no potential habitat for bald eagles is present at Morrell Canyon, the Santa Rosa powerhouse site, or the proposed substations. Potential nesting or perching habitat is present only in the vicinity of Lake Elsinore.

In Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2005), the co-applicants evaluated bald eagle use of Lake Elsinore and the potential effect of noise disturbance along the shoreline during construction of pumping facilities. The co-applicants consulted with CDFG and FWS and reviewed compilations of data based on observations of a local ornithologist between 1973 and 1977 (McCaskie, 1977–1973, as cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004c) and breeding bird surveys conducted between 1966 and 2003 (USGS, 2004, as cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004c).

CDFG and FWS biologists indicated no reports of nesting activity at Lake Elsinore. McCaskie did not record the presence of bald eagles at any time of year. The co-applicants state that the USGS breeding bird survey database includes records of eagles using the lake for winter migration stop-overs and winter foraging.

The co-applicants concluded that bald eagle use of Lake Elsinore is infrequent because of low food availability, and conducted no field surveys for this species. While bald eagles may forage in Lake Elsinore upon occasion, the co-applicants assume they would likely overwinter at Lake Skinner or Lake Mathews, which the co-applicants describe as being more productive.

As described in section 3.3, *Terrestrial Resources*, consistent with USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 35, the co-applicants propose to construct a 30-mile-long transmission line according to APLIC et al. (1996) guidelines to minimize the risk of

avian electrocution. Interior 10(a) recommendation no. 1 requests that the co-applicants coordinate with FWS regarding the completion of plans and designs for measures to protect, mitigate damages to, and enhance fish and wildlife resources.

Effects Analysis

There is no suitable habitat for eagles at the Morrell Canyon site. No potential perch or nest trees would be removed for construction of the LEAPS Project at Morrell Canyon or at any other construction site. Construction of the pumping facilities on the west shoreline would not be likely to cause disturbance to bald eagles because they are present so infrequently. The project is not expected to alter fish abundance in Lake Elsinore, or to alter water clarity that could improve sightability of fish prey for bald eagles. The co-applicants do not propose any recreation enhancements that would increase human activity at the lake that could cause disturbance to breeding or wintering eagles, if present.

The proposed transmission alignment would parallel anticipated flight paths along the northwest-to-southeast Elsinore Valley, except where it crosses Temescal Wash. It would not bisect any apparent flight patterns between Lake Elsinore and Lake Skinner and Lake Mathews to the east. Lake Hemet and Bear Lake, where bald eagles winter and breed, are also located to the east. For these reasons, the location of the proposed transmission alignment should pose a minimal risk of collision, and because the co-applicants propose to construct it according to state-of-the-art guidelines, the line should pose a minimal risk of electrocution.

Staff Alternative—No suitable eagle habitat is present at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Construction design would be the same for the mid-slope transmission alignment as for the proposed transmission alignment, and we would anticipate a minimal risk of bald eagle electrocution associated with the transmission line. Like the proposed route, this alternative would parallel anticipated eagle flight patterns northwest and southeast along the Elsinore Valley, except where it crosses Temescal Wash.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat is present at the Evergreen powerhouse.

Effects of Operation on Bald Eagle

Co-applicants' Proposal—No habitat for bald eagles is present at Morrell Canyon, the Santa Rosa powerhouse site, or the proposed substation sites. No large-diameter live trees or snags near Lake Elsinore that could serve as perch or nest trees would be removed and there would be no project-related change in the prey base or recreation use of Lake Elsinore that would be likely to cause disturbance to nesting or wintering birds, if any should begin to use the lake as foraging habitat. As mentioned earlier in this section, bald eagle populations in Riverside County are increasing, reflecting the success of recovery efforts in California and throughout the west. As populations fill high quality

habitat, eagles are likely to take advantage of marginal habitats (Jackman and Jenkins, 2004) and it is possible that bald eagle use of Lake Elsinore will increase in the future. If populations do increase, the risk of adverse interactions with project transmission lines would also increase. Implementation of an Avian Protection Plan, using guidelines developed by APLIC and FWS (2005), as discussed in section 3.3, *Terrestrial Resources*, could be an important measure in protecting bald eagles, if their use of Lake Elsinore does increase.

Staff Alternative—There is no suitable habitat for the bald eagle at the Decker Canyon reservoir site or at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

No habitat would be removed or altered along the mid-slope transmission alignment route during operation. There would be a small risk of electrocution or collision because of the presence of the transmission line. Regular maintenance of the transmission line would cause short-term, localized effects, if eagles were present.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—There is no suitable habitat for the bald eagle at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Construction on Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Co-applicants' Proposal—Suitable habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher in the project area is present in coastal sage scrub along the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment, just south of the point where the alignment would cross Temescal Wash. Lands on both sites of Interstate 15 in this vicinity are within proposed critical habitat (68 FR 79). Additional suitable habitat (outside the proposed critical habitat) is located at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site and along the penstock route leading down the slope to it.

The co-applicants conducted surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher in suitable habitat in 2004, expanding the survey area that was covered in previous years (2001–2003). No coastal California gnatcatchers were observed during any of the surveys (MBA, 2004). The USFS reports it has located gnatcatchers in the vicinity of Temescal Wash several times, and this area is considered occupied habitat (personal communication, K. Winter, Cleveland National Forest Wildlife Biologist, on August 24, 2005). The most recent observations were during each of three survey visits in 2002.

Effects Analysis

No suitable habitat exists at the Morrell Canyon site.

Cover type maps provided by the co-applicants indicate that about 30 acres of coastal sage scrub is present at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. This habitat, (thought to be unoccupied, based on MBA's surveys) would be removed for construction of the powerhouse, although the powerhouse itself is proposed to be located underground. Small amounts might also be removed for construction of the power tunnels and

penstocks, depending on the locations of adits for these project features, which would also be located underground.

Assuming four transmission line towers are needed to traverse areas of coastal sage scrub in the northern section of the proposed transmission alignment and depending on their locations, construction could adversely affect about 1 acre of habitat that is proposed designated critical habitat and is documented as occupied by the coastal California gnatcatcher. Road construction could remove an additional, unquantified amount of occupied habitat.

Staff Alternative—No suitable habitat is present at the Decker Canyon site.

The Ortega Oaks site contains about 5 acres of coastal sage scrub, which would be removed during construction. Based on MBA's surveys, this habitat is unoccupied.

Coastal sage scrub is located at two points along the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment. One of these is at the terminus, where a substation would be constructed, and is located within proposed critical habitat. The co-applicants indicate that 25 acres of non-native grassland would be disturbed for construction of the substation, but cover type maps suggest that a small amount (e.g., 3 acres) of coastal sage scrub is present and could also be affected.

The other area of potential habitat is located just south of Temescal Wash. About two transmission towers would be needed to traverse this habitat and would affect a total of 0.5 acres. This area appears to be outside proposed critical habitat. It is located about 2 miles east of areas surveyed by the USFS that were found to be occupied.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site includes about 20 acres of this cover type, which would be removed during construction. Based on MBA's surveys, this habitat is unoccupied.

Effects of Operation on Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Co-applicants' Proposal—No habitat would be removed or altered after the construction period is complete. Maintenance access, whether by helicopter or road, would cause short-term, localized noise disturbance along the proposed transmission alignment. Adverse effects on coastal California gnatcatcher could be avoided by scheduling maintenance outside the breeding season.

As discussed earlier in this section, helicopters would be employed to build the transmission line wherever steep slopes (e.g., over 15 percent) prevent conventional construction methods. Suitable habitat near Temescal Wash is located in flatter areas, where roads may be used to provide construction access. Although roads would be obliterated and revegetated following the construction period, public access is difficult to control. Public access along roads would increase the risk of OHV use that would cause trampling of vegetation and compaction of soils, introduction of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants, and noise disturbance resulting from traffic and human activity.

Implementation of a road management plan and a noxious weed management plan would reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of adverse effects in occupied habitat.

Staff Alternative—No habitat would be removed or altered, and no disturbance would occur at the Decker Canyon site. No additional habitat would be removed or altered at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site. Project operation could cause noise disturbance if birds were present; however, MBA's surveys indicate that habitat at this site is not occupied.

No habitat would be removed or altered along the mid-slope transmission alignment during operation. Short-term, localized disturbance could occur as a result of transmission line maintenance activities, but effects could be avoided by scheduling maintenance outside the breeding season for this species. Effects of public access along maintenance roads would be the same as those described above for the proposed transmission alignment, but would affect habitat that is not documented as occupied, based on MBA's surveys.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat would be removed or altered during operation. Project maintenance could cause noise disturbance; however, MBA's surveys indicate that California coastal gnatcatchers do not occupy this area.

Effects of Construction on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat

Co-applicants' Proposal—Suitable habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat in the project area is present in grasslands and areas of sparse shrub cover along the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment, and at the proposed site of the northern substation. These areas are located within Riverside County's Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Fee Assessment Area.[46] The co-applicants propose to assume the species is present, rather than to conduct surveys, and to mitigate for potential effects on this species and its habitat by paying $500 per acre (or the current cost as determined by Riverside County) where project features overlap with the fee assessment area.

Effects Analysis

The length of the transmission alignment within the fee assessment boundary measures about 13,000 feet. Assuming 13 transmission towers would be constructed, and that 0.25 acre would be disturbed for each tower, these project features would affect

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[46] Riverside County developed a single-species habitat conservation plan targeting the Stephens' kangaroo rat in 1996. This plan, the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP, is still in effect, separate from the MSHCP. As part of the HCP, Riverside County Ordinance 663 requires payment of a mitigation fee for development within the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP area. The amount of the fee may be adjusted up or down by the county Board of Supervisors, depending on the costs of administering the HCP. For this analysis, we have assumed a per-acre fee of $500.

about 3.25 acres of potential habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat. The substation would occupy another 25 acres, so the total area of effect would be approximately 28.25 acres. No additional habitat would be removed if helicopters are used to build the transmission line. If temporary access roads are constructed, they would affect a maximum of 11.1 acres, but they may be located outside of suitable habitat for this species.

Cover type maps provided by the co-applicants indicate that about 30 acres of coastal sage scrub is present at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. The construction staging area needed for the proposed Santa Rosa site contains about 20 acres of non-native grasslands. The proposed Santa Rosa site and construction staging area are located outside the fee area, but may also support Stephens' kangaroo rat.

The co-applicants' approach to mitigation for effects of removing habitat within the fee assessment area would be consistent with the existing Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP and MSHCP, which uses mitigation fees to acquire and manage large habitat reserves. The co-applicants do not propose mitigation for impacts on habitat that may support Stephens' kangaroo rat outside the fee assessment area. Thus, about 50 acres of habitat impacts would not be addressed under the co-applicants' proposal.

Staff Alternative—No suitable habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat is present at the Decker Canyon site.

The Ortega Oaks site contains about 5 acres of coastal sage scrub and about 53 acres of non-native grasslands. This site is within the fee assessment area.

About 7,000 feet of the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be located within the Riverside County Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Fee Assessment Area. Assuming that seven towers would be needed to allowing for the lines to span this distance, we estimate that approximately 1.75 acres of potential habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat would be affected, with an additional 25 acres being removed to construct a substation at the terminus of the line.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site and construction staging area include about 20 acres of coastal sage scrub and about 55 acres of non-native grassland that may provide suitable habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat. This site is within the fee assessment area.

Effects of Operation on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat

Co-applicants' Proposal—No additional habitat would be removed or altered during project operation. Maintenance activities would cause short-term, localized disturbance. If construction access roads are built and are located in suitable habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat, public access may be difficult to control, even after roads are obliterated and revegetated. Adverse effects of public access would include OHV traffic that may result in trampling of vegetation and compaction of soils; introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants; illegal dumping; increased wildfire

hazard, and disturbance due to traffic and human activity. Implementation of a road management plan and a noxious weed management plan would help to minimize, but would not eliminate, these risks.

Staff Alternative—No habitat would be removed or altered, and no disturbance would occur at the Decker Canyon reservoir site.

No additional habitat would be removed or altered at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site during project operation. Project maintenance could cause disturbance if Stephens' kangaroo rats are present.

No additional habitat would be removed or altered along the mid-slope transmission alignment during project operation. Maintenance activities would cause short-term, localized disturbance. Effects of public use of construction access roads, if any are constructed within suitable habitat for the Stephens' kangaroo rat, would be about the same as described above under the proposed transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No habitat would be removed or altered at the Evergreen powerhouse site during project operation. Project maintenance could cause disturbance if Stephens' kangaroo rats are present.

3.3.5.3 Cumulative Effects

Construction of the LEAPS Project would adversely affect designated critical habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly, proposed designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, and Stephens' kangaroo rat within the boundaries of the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP. Conversion of this habitat to project purposes would contribute to cumulative effects of other past, current, and predicted development in Riverside County that have affected these species. As discussed in section 3.3.7, *Land Use and Aesthetic Resources*, the population of Riverside County is expected to grow dramatically between now and 2020. Most of the construction of homes, businesses, services and infrastructure to serve this population is likely to occur in chaparral and non-native grasslands. These habitats, which provide habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly, coastal California gnatcatcher, and Stephens' kangaroo rat, receive less protection than more rare and sensitive habitats (e.g., wetlands), because they are abundant in the region. Mitigation for habitat losses that result from project construction would be needed to prevent cumulative adverse effects.

Helicopters would be used to construct most of the transmission line. However, as described earlier in this section, public access is difficult to prevent, even after roads have been closed and revegetated. The effects of human activity along roads extend beyond the road itself, and adds to cumulative impacts of disturbance that would be caused by urban development.

3.3.5.4 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

No unavoidable adverse effects on listed steelhead would occur from project construction or operation.

Construction of the project as proposed would convert to project purposes about 1.75 acres of designated critical habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly; about 1.0 acre of proposed designated and occupied habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher; and about 28.25 acres of Stephens' kangaroo rat habitat within the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Fee Assessment Area. The alignment of access roads has not yet been determined. Although access roads would be obliterated and revegetated following construction, public access is difficult to control, once a road has been built. Implementation of a road management plan and a noxious weed management plan would reduce, but would not eliminate, the risk of illegal entry, including OHV activity that could cause trampling of vegetation and compaction of soils; increased dust that could smother vegetation; increased risk of wildfire, illegal dumping, harassment and vandalism; and introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants that have the potential to outcompete native species and reduce wildlife habitat quality.

3.3.6 Recreational Resources

3.3.6.1 Affected Environment

Recreational resources associated with this project provide for a spectrum of uses that are important because of their proximity to a large population center and because the project is located at the interface of lands with urban and wildland characteristics. Located in the densely populated area of southern California, Lake Elsinore has extensive residential development around the reservoir; the reported population of this community in 2000 was approximately 35,000 people. This region also supports recreational uses for the nearby population centers of the city of Riverside with a population in 2000 of 255,166 and other communities within the Riverside County with a countywide population in 2003 of almost 1.8 million residents. Recreational use in this region also likely comes from residents of Orange County, which is located to the west of the project and had a population of 2.9 million people in 2003 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

The most important public land for recreational resources in the vicinity of the project is the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness Area. This 39,450-acre wilderness area is located to the south of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and south and east of the southern portion of the proposed transmission alignment. This wilderness is managed by the Cleveland National Forest and there are trails that provide for non-motorized forms of access. No existing or proposed project facilities are located inside of the existing wilderness area. The USFS has received comments during its current forest planning process requesting wilderness designation for an "unnamed canyon" and that portion of Morrell Canyon that is proposed as the upper reservoir site. The special designation does not currently exist for this area. Although the proposed Morrell Canyon site could be selected as the location for the upper reservoir, it appears unlikely that it

would qualify for wilderness designation because it may lack qualities such as primeval character and natural conditions.

Management of recreation activities in the Cleveland National Forest is achieved by the incorporation of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) into the final Land Management Plan. The ROS is a framework for defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities and experience opportunities within the forest. The opportunities are arranged along a continuum or spectrum divided into classes which define recreation opportunities within various areas of the forest. Table 17 describes the four ROS classes that occur within the northern portion of the Cleveland National Forest near the proposed project.

Table 17. Description of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes. (Source: USFS, 2005a, 1990)

ROS Class	Description of Recreation Opportunity Setting
Primitive (P)	Very high probability of solitude and closeness to nature, challenge and risk; essentially unmodified natural environment; minimal evidence of others; few restrictions evident; non-motorized access and travel on trails or cross county; no vegetation alterations; at least 5,000 acres in size; at least 3 miles from the nearest road or trail with motorized use.
Semi-primitive, Non-motorized (SPNM)	High probability of solitude, closeness to nature, challenge, and risk; natural appearing environment; some evidence of other users; subtle restrictions and controls are evident; non-motorized access and travel on trails; vegetative alterations occur but are widely dispersed and not too evident; at least 2,500 acres in size; at least 0.5 mile from all roads, railroads, or trails with motorized use.
Semi-Primitive, Motorized (SPM)	Moderate probability of solitude, and closeness to nature; high degree of challenge and risk using motorized equipment; predominately natural appearing environment; few users but evidence on trails; minimum or subtle on-site controls; vegetative alterations occur but are few; at least 2,500 acres in size; at lease 0.5 mile from all roads, railroads, or trail with motorized use, but may contain roads that are usually closed.
Roaded Natural (RN)	Some probability of solitude; little challenge and risk; mostly natural appearing environment; moderate concentration of users at developed and dispersed campsites; some obvious site restriction sand user controls are present; access is motorized; vegetative alterations completed to maintain desired visual characteristics; no size restrictions.

In addition to San Mateo Canyon Wilderness Area, several other areas of regional recreational importance are within the vicinity of the project. The Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park and the Starr Ranch sanctuary are located adjacent to the western border of the Trabuco Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest. The Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park is an 8,000-acre park in the western coastal Santa Ana Mountains located on both sides of Ortega Highway between the confluences of San Juan Creek with Bell Canyon and Hot Springs Creek. Orange County owns and operates the wilderness park. Amenities at this park include day and overnight facilities to accommodate family, group, equestrian, biking, and recreational vehicle uses; there are trails and interpretive facilities and programs. Starr Ranch is a 4,000-acre wilderness preserve that the National Audubon Society owns and operates. Starr Ranch is closed to general public access; however, the National Audubon Society provides programs that the public may participate in, such as volunteer docent-led nature walks, programs for adults and children, and university classes.

The lands associated with this project support recreational activities that include hiking, equestrian use, OHV use, scenic driving, camping, wildlife observation, mountain biking, and hang gliding. Urban areas have fields for team sports, gymnasiums, playgrounds, and parks. The wildland areas consist mainly of the public lands managed by the Cleveland National Forest where recreational facilities have a much lower level of development. Because snowfall is rare, winter recreation sports such as skiing, snowmobiling, and snow play do not occur here. Similarly, the relatively low level of precipitation that occurs in this area of California does not produce sufficiently high flowing river systems that could support whitewater boating activities.

Access is also a component of the recreational resources associated with the project. Ortega Highway is a paved, two-lane, east-west route between San Juan Capistrano and Lake Elsinore. This heavily traveled route is popular for scenic driving as well as commuting, and is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway. Another main route of access is Interstate 15, which is located on to the east of the project. Connecting to these main routes of access are paved and unpaved routes that provide access to public lands. South Main Divide Road, a county road, is another important route of access from Ortega Highway that leads to the Morgan Trailhead, which is one of four points of entry for visitors to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness.

No nearby rivers or watercourses in the vicinity of the project are designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. The USFS has received comments during its current forest planning process requesting Wild and Scenic River consideration for San Juan and San Mateo creeks. Although the project potentially could affect both of these watercourses, the special designation does not currently exist, and it is not known whether the USFS planning process will determine these watercourses to be eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

No nearby trails in the vicinity of the project are designated as National Recreation Trails, and no trails are proposed for inclusion in the current USFS planning process.

There is however a trail managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation as part of the California Trail System—the Whittier to Ortega Trail runs through the Puenta-Chino Hills and the Santa Ana Mountains from Whittier Narrows Regional Park to Ortega Highway, near Lake Elsinore.

Lake Elsinore is an important regional resource for water-based recreation activities. The urban setting has highly developed recreation facilities for boating, day and overnight use, fishing access at parks, RV and tent campgrounds, and resorts. While recreational boating use is significant, Lake Elsinore is not one of the most popular recreational lakes in Southern California. The most important condition affecting recreation use at Lake Elsinore is the reservoir level. The co-applicants report that between 1992 and 1999, the surface elevation of Lake Elsinore fluctuated between 1,229 and 1,259 feet msl, as discussed in greater detail in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*. According to the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Lake Elsinore State Recreation Area Preliminary General Plan, "Lake Elsinore is not blessed with good water quality." According to the Santa Ana RWQCB, at lake levels below 1,240 feet msl the water quality of Lake Elsinore declines significantly and effects recreational use. This poor water quality exists because warm water resulting from lowering lake levels creates excessive algal growth leading to sporadic fish kills. Both the fish kills and abundant algae create unpleasant conditions and potentially unsafe conditions for water contact recreation.

Reservoir levels affect various recreational opportunities. First, warm water resulting from lowering water levels tends to favor fish populations of carp and shad, which anglers do not value highly. Second, the lake level affects the condition of the shoreline, which is an important location for recreational uses. The co-applicants described three areas of the shoreline with public access relative to the effects of existing reservoir levels: (1) Lakeshore Drive and Riverside Drive, (2) Park at end of Chaney Street and (3) Riverside County Park in Lakeland Village. Table 18 shows that the shallow reservoir configuration causes small reservoir fluctuations to noticeably affect the suitability of the shoreline for recreational uses.

Another water body of recreational importance in the region is Canyon Lake, located about 10 miles east of Lake Elsinore. This lake is leased to the local property owners for recreational purposes.

Table 18. Shoreline locations of recreational value potentially affected by lake-level fluctuations. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a).

Shoreline Location	Change in Surface Elevation (feet amsl)	Resulting Horizontal Shoreline Movement (receding shoreline in feet)
Lakeshore Drive and Riverside Drive	1,240 to 1,242	112 feet
	1,240 to 1,247	415 feet
Park at end of Chaney Street	1,240 to 1,242	21 feet
	1,240 to 1,247	81 feet
Riverside County Park in Lakeland Village	1,240 to 1,242	21 feet
	1,240 to 1,247	95 feet

Note: amsl – average mean sea level

Topography near the project and the phenomenon referred to as the Elsinore Convergence provide suitable conditions for hang gliding. Lake Elsinore is known locally, regionally, and internationally for providing high-quality hang gliding and paragliding opportunities. The Elsinore Convergence is the name given to the mixing of the cool, moist ocean air stream from the northwest meeting the warm, dry desert air stream from the southeast. These colliding air streams, or convergence zones, drive air masses up into the atmosphere generally along a defined shear line. Hang glider and parasailing pilots launch into this air space in search of the rising air masses (also known as thermals) that allow pilots to generate ascents of 10,000 to 15,000 feet within minutes of launching.

The technique at Elsinore is to launch toward the east off the ridge, travel about 1,000 feet toward Grand Avenue, working the ridge for uplift and if successful, cross back across the ridge line in search of "house" thermals (or predictable thermal locations where typically there is no water, there are dark surfaces, and ridge lines or spines that cause the thermal to break away from the ground) for a continued flight. Pilots are then afforded the choice of flying in the local area and landing at the Ortega Oaks landing zone or flying "cross country" and landing elsewhere some distance from the launch point. If conditions are not suitable for making it back across the ridge line after launching, a pilot must make preparations for a landing at a suitable site at the bottom of the mountain, typically the Ortega Oaks site; however, depending on where the pilot launched and wind directions, conditions may force the pilot to alternative landing areas such as the school site (Butterfield Elementary School) or other reasonably safe open spaces (personal communication, P. Weslowski, Senior Project Manager, and J. Splenda,

Environmental Planner, Louis Berger, Needham, MA, with C. Mackin, Member, Elsinore Hang Gliders Association, Lake Elsinore, CA, on September 6, 2005). Successful launches occur in about 75 percent of attempted launches across all skill levels (personal communication, P. Weslowski, Senior Project Manager, and J. Splenda, Environmental Planner, Louis Berger, Needham, MA, with C. Mackin, Member, Elsinore Hang Gliders Association, Lake Elsinore, CA, on September 6, 2005).

The Elsinore convergence is fairly consistent, reportedly creating suitable conditions for hang gliding about 300 days a year (O'Malley, 2005). In a letter filed March 24, 2005, Elsinore Testing of Experimental Aircraft Mechanisms Inc. estimates the total annual use at 500 users per year, 100 of which are regular and consistent users. Neither the *California Outdoor Recreation Plan* (2002) nor the *Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California* (2002) has published information about statewide demand, opportunities, participation rates, or attitudes toward hang gliding resources in California. Other known hang glider and paraglider launch sites available to pilots residing in the Inland Empire area (although they may not be of comparable experience) and within an hour drive include Cucamonga, Crestline/Marshall, Soboba, and Blossom. Known launch sites farther away in the Los Angles area (60 to 90 miles) include Kagel, Dockweiler Beach, Mt. Wilson, Ave S, Ave L, and Parker and in the San Diego area (60 to 90 miles) include Torrey Pines, Horse Canyon, Mt. Laguna, Big Black, Little Black, and Otay Mesa.

The privately owned land near the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site has been historically used as a landing site for hang gliders and paragliders. Launching areas include nine locations along South Main Divide Road in the vicinity of the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites. At two of the sites located near the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, the Cleveland National Forest authorizes a local user group to maintain two hang glide and paraglide launch sites under a special use permit. The two sites are known as: (1) Edwards Launch Site and (2) E Launch Site. The E Launch Site is across the South Main Divide Road from the Morgan Trailhead, and the Edwards Launch Site is about 1 mile east of the Morgan Trailhead, also along the South Main Divide Road. Figure 16 shows the approximate location of these sites. Under the terms of the authorization, the permit holder provides a portable restroom, trash removal, traffic control structures, and a bulletin board on which visitor information is posted. The Cleveland National Forest also issues authorizations to use these sites for special events such as hang gliding or paragliding competitions. In addition to providing suitable launch sites, these locations also afford expansive views to the northeast, and users visit these areas to sightsee (personal communication, C. Efird, Recreation Specialist, Louis Berger, Oakhurst, CA, with V. Mink, Recreation Special Uses Manager, Cleveland National Forest, Corona, CA, on July 12, 2005).

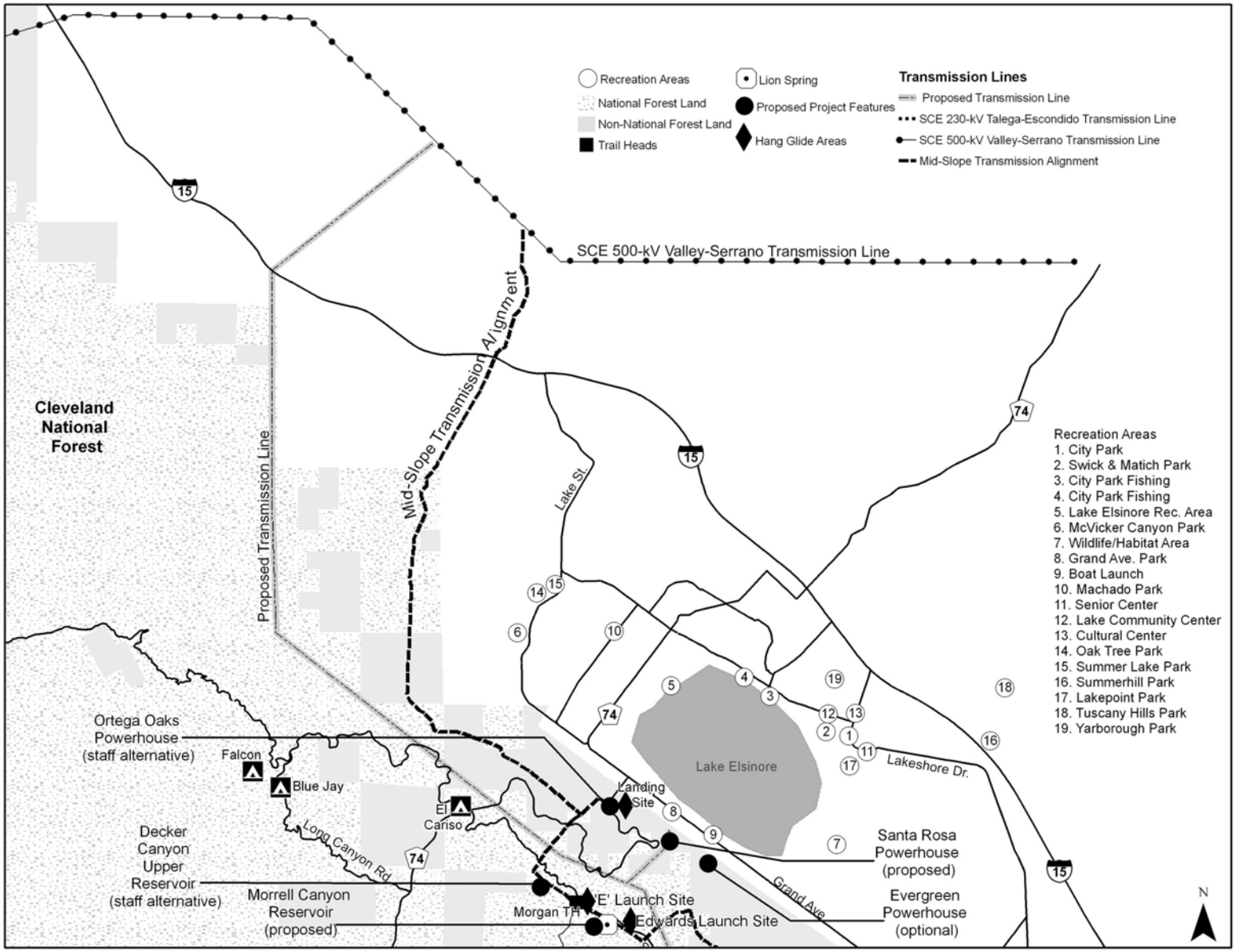

Figure 16. LEAPS Project—Existing recreational facilities (page 1 of 2). (Source: Staff)

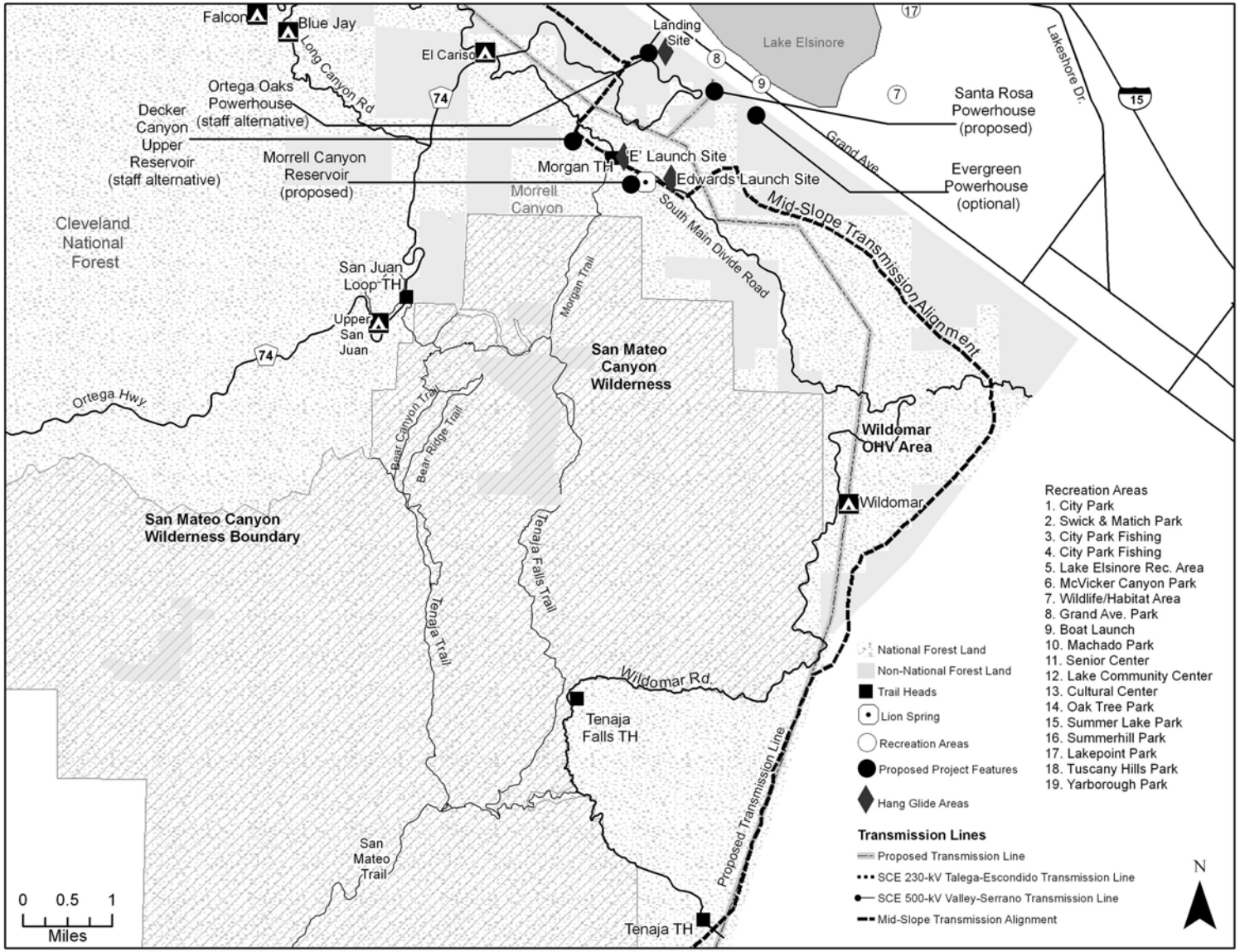

Figure 16. LEAPS Project—Existing recreational facilities (page 2 of 2).

Existing Facilities

The existing recreational facilities near the project include facilities that federal, state, county, and local agencies and private commercial recreation providers own, operate, and maintain.

The recreational facilities available in the Cleveland National Forest provide for day and overnight use, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, wildlife observation, OHV use, and hang gliding. The USFS-operated campgrounds in the vicinity of the project include Blue Jay (55 sites) and Falcon (3 group sites), located west of Ortega Highway on Long Canyon Road; El Cariso North (24 sites), located west of Ortega Highway near South Main Divide Road; Upper San Juan (18 sites), located along Ortega Highway and southwest of Decker Canyon; and Wildomar (12 sites), located east of the area of Rancho Capistrano and south of Elsinore Peak. The Cleveland National Forest also provides 327 miles of trails for non-motorized use and 54 miles of designated routes for OHV use. The Wildomar OHV area, located at the end of South Main Divide Road south of Elsinore Peak, is a 360-acre area designated for OHV use with 8 miles of trails and a nearby campground (Wildomar). Four trailheads provide parking and restrooms for visitors to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness: San Juan Loop Parking Area, Morgan Trailhead, Tenaja Falls Trailhead, and Tenaja Trailhead. The San Juan Loop and Morgan trailheads are the first- and second-most heavily used trailheads, respectively, for accessing the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness.

The Morgan Trailhead parking area is a paved loop with approximately 10 spaces where visitors can park to begin their trip into the wilderness. There is a bulletin board on which visitor information is posted. A picnic table and trash receptacle also are provided. The trailhead is accessible year-round, and the Cleveland National Forest staff reports that approximately 2 to 3 vehicles are usually observed at the trailhead on peak use weekends (personal communication, C. Efird, Recreation Specialist, Louis Berger, Oakhurst, CA, with V. Mink, Recreation Special Uses Manager, Cleveland National Forest, Corona, CA, on July 12, 2005).

State-operated recreational facilities are not located in the project vicinity. The closest facilities to the project are Lake Perris State Recreational Area, located 12 miles northeast of Lake Elsinore and Chino Hills State Park, located 20 miles northwest of Lake Elsinore. Two other state parks, Doheny State Beach and San Onofre State Park, are located along the coast in the proximity to San Juan and San Mateo creeks, respectively.

County agencies operate recreational facilities in the project vicinity; these facilities generally provide for recreational needs of residential communities. Riverside County operates the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve, located west of the city of Murrieta, and the 640-acre Kabian Park, near the city of Perris. Orange County operates the Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Area.

The city of Lake Elsinore provides several recreational facilities at Lake Elsinore (table 19).

Table 19. City of Lake Elsinore recreational facilities. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a)

City of Lake Elsinore Recreational Facility and Amenities	Approximate Acreage	Community Center	Gymnasium	Restroom	Concession	Parking	Baseball/Softball	Football	Soccer	Volleyball	Tennis	Horseshoes	Sports Lighting	Shade Structure	Play Equipment	Drinking Fountain	Benches	Public Area/Shelter	Barbeques
City Park	4			●	●	●						●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Lake Community Center	--	●	●	●		●				●							●●		
Swick & Matich Park	7			●	●	●	●	●	●				●	●		●	●		
Cultural Center	--		●	●												●			
Yarborough Park	3			●		●	●							●	●	●	●	●	●
Tuscany Hills Park	5			●		●	●						●		●	●	●		
Summerhill Park	5			●		●		●	●							●		●	
Lakepoint Park	12.5			●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Senior Center	--			●		●						●		●		●	●		
Public Fishing Beach	--			●		●								●					
Public Beach	5			●		●				●				●	●			●	●
Machado Park	5			●		●		●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●
Summerlake Park	16			●		●		●	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	
Oak Tree Park	2																		
McVicker Canyon Park and Skate	26			●	●	●							●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Boat launches are provided at the City Public Launch (operated by the city of Lake Elsinore) and at as many as nine commercial launches associated with the privately owned resorts and campgrounds. Boating on Lake Elsinore has a limited capacity of 500 active boats-at-one-time. In 2000, 41,484 annual boating passes were sold for Lake Elsinore.

Commercial recreation providers round out the complement of recreational facilities near the proposed project. As many as 12 commercial businesses provide campgrounds and resorts for recreational vehicles, tent, and group use; some of these facilities have boat launching facilities.

Estimated visitor use at Lake Elsinore in 2000 included approximately 41,250 recreation visitor days from local residents, and 177,300 visitor days from out-of-area visitors. Trips from both groups of users were mainly boating-related, and only 5 to 20 percent of the estimated use was associated with angling. Nearby, on public lands managed by the Cleveland National Forest, recreational use during 2001 was estimated at 790,000 National Forest visits +/– 31 percent. There were 830,000 site visits, an average of 1 site visit per National Forest visit. Included in the site visit estimate are 31,616 wilderness visits (USFS, 2002a). It should be noted that this level of use is attributed to the entire 567,000-acre Cleveland National Forest, which includes areas not in the vicinity of the project.

As discussed above, there are recreational resources of regional and local importance located in the area of the proposed project features. Figure 16 shows the locations of the features proposed by the co-applicants, both preferred and alternative, in relation to areas of recreational importance.

3.3.6.2 Environmental Consequences

Construction Effects on Lake Elsinore Recreation

Co-applicants' Proposal—At Lake Elsinore, construction activity would occur within the reservoir—the tailrace, intake/outlet structure, and other infrastructure necessary to operate the project would be installed and a cofferdam would be constructed in the reservoir to allow for this activity. According to the proposed construction schedule, this activity would take place over a period of about 3 years.

Effects Analysis

Construction activities would have temporary effects on reservoir-based recreation activities at Lake Elsinore. The portion of the lake surface where the cofferdam and access road would be located would need to have public boating access restricted for public safety reasons. Although the co-applicants' proposal does not specify the amount of lake surface that would require navigational restrictions, it is possible to estimate area from information provided in the general project description, which states that a temporary access road would be constructed between the powerhouse and intake/outlet

structure. The lengths of the proposed tailrace tunnels are estimated to be 1,950 feet from the proposed Santa Rosa, powerhouse site. From the conceptual drawings, it appears that two-thirds of the tunnel could extend into Lake Elsinore. Assuming there would be a 200-foot navigational restriction along the entire length of the tailrace that extends into the lake during construction, this would cause a loss of up to 6 acres of boatable surface.[47] During construction, the reservoir would probably be lower than the high water mark, so this calculated area would represent a high-end estimate of boatable surface loss. If the lake were drawn down during construction to approximately 1,236 feet msl,[48] Lake Elsinore would have a surface area of 2,892 acres. Under this assumption, there would be a loss of less than 0.5 percent of the surface area for boating originating at boat ramps usable at this elevation.[49] This minimal effect would occur throughout the 3-year construction period. Also, water draw-down of the lake below 1,240 feet msl during construction would negatively affect water quality.

Aesthetic effects on recreation, such as noise associated with construction and the visual effects of seeing construction equipment and vehicles, are discussed in section 3.3.7, *Environmental Consequences,* in *Land Use and Aesthetic Resources,* and section 3.3.10, *Environmental Consequences* in *Air Quality and Noise*, respectively. According to the monthly usage data for the boat launches in 2000, it appears the boating use is at its highest levels from May through August. The co-applicants reported monthly usage estimates between 6,916 and 8,270 boating days occur during this time, representing about 75 percent of the annual use. The cofferdam and associated construction activities would require restricted public boating access for up to 3 years. The aesthetic effects (noise and visibility of construction activities) would not continue beyond the 3-year construction phase of the project.

Staff Alternative—Construction activities at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not affect reservoir-based recreation because this site is not sited within the water surface of Lake Elsinore; however, the location of the powerhouse dictates the design of the tailrace. Construction of the tailrace and intake/outlet structure would have a small effect on the boatable surface area. The length of the proposed tailrace tunnels is estimated to be 2,600 feet from the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site. This would result in the reduction of 7.6 acres of boatable surface area from the development of the from the Ortega Oaks site.

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[47] Acreage calculated by multiplying 2/3 of the tailrace lengths by 200 feet and converting square footage to acreage.

[48] Assumes that the lake would need to be drawn down below the minimum operating level of 1,240 feet amsl.

[49] The city-owned boat ramp at the the Lake Elsinore campgrounds and recreation boat ramps on the north side of Lake Elsinore allows access to the water at elevation 1,235 feet msl (North County Times, 2005).

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction activities at the Evergreen powerhouse site would not affect reservoir-based recreation because this location is not sited within the water surface of Lake Elsinore; however, the location of the powerhouse dictates the design of the tailrace. Construction of the tailrace and intake/outlet structure would have a small effect on the boatable surface area. The length of the proposed tailrace tunnel is estimated to be 1,770 feet from the Evergreen powerhouse site. This would result in the reduction of 5.4 acres of boatable surface area from the development of the Evergreen site.

Effects of Project Operation on Lake Elsinore Recreation

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to use Lake Elsinore as the lower reservoir in a pump-storage design, which would result in daily changes in surface elevation as water is cycled for electricity production purposes. For public safety reasons, boating access would be restricted on Lake Elsinore in the vicinity of the tailrace and intake/outlet structure during proposed project operations.

Because of safety considerations related to fluctuation of water depths resulting from generation and pumped storage operations, no water-related recreational activities would be provided at the proposed or alternative upper reservoir; the reservoir would be fenced to prohibit public access. Consequently, project operations would not affect reservoir-based recreation at the proposed Morrell or Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites. The co-applicants' proposal also would include working with CDFG and FWS to support a fish stocking program in Lake Elsinore consistent with the Fisheries Management Plan as discussed in section 3.3.3, *Aquatic Resources*.

Effects Analysis

As discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*, the co-applicants would operate the project between 1,240 and 1,247 feet msl consistent with the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project. The co-applicants would pay a management fee to the Elsinore Valley MWD for make-up water to maintain Lake Elsinore at a minimum water surface elevation of 1,240 feet msl or above. Maintenance of reservoir levels by the Elsinore Valley MWD would provide a predictable surface area for boating, which, as analyzed earlier, would be higher than historical summer lake elevations. Stabilized lake levels also would improve the availability of beaches for swimmers and anglers. Lake Elsinore would no longer retreat to levels where there are wide expanses of exposed and muddy shoreline. Under the co-applicants' proposal, water levels would fluctuate 1 foot daily and 1.7 feet weekly. There would be a small decrease in boatable area on Lake Elsinore from the public boating access restrictions that would need to be imposed at the tailrace and intake/outlet structure. The boatable area lost to the navigational restriction

at the inlet/outlet structure would be less than 1 acre,[50] assuming boating would be restricted to within 100 feet of the intake/outlet structure, and be offset by the proposed higher lake elevations

Improvements to water quality (as discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*) would provide positive benefits to the recreational experience for water contact recreation users and anglers (also discussed in section 3.3.3, *Aquatic Resources*). The stocking of desirable sport fish in Lake Elsinore would benefit the local recreation fishery. Lake Elsinore visitors would welcome improved angling opportunities resulting from the stocking program and improved conditions that would be more desirable for fish species.

The reduction of algae blooms would improve conditions for boating and water contact recreation. Visitors would not have to avoid areas of the lake where algae cover the water surface, and there would be fewer instances of entangling boat propellers in the algae.

Construction Effects on Developed Recreational Facilities

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to site construction staging areas so as not to unreasonably restrict access to near-site recreational facilities. A 20- to 40-acre laydown area would be needed in the vicinity of the proposed upper reservoir. Prior to commencement of construction operations, the co-applicants would provide the USFS with a detailed site plan depicting both the extent of ground-disturbing activities in the vicinity of the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites and delineate the boundaries of the associated construction laydown areas. The site plan would delineate existing recreational facilities within and adjacent to those areas that could be affected by construction activities and construction staging operations. The plan would include a contingency for closing or restricting public access and having the co-applicants provide alternative, comparable facilities outside of the boundaries of the construction activity for recreational use.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 13 specifies that the co-applicants provide a safety during project construction plan to identify potential hazards near public roads, trails, and recreational facilities, and measures necessary to protect public safety. Under the plan, the co-applicants would conduct daily inspections, documented in writing, of affected National Forest System lands and the co-applicants' adjoining fee title property during construction for fire plan compliance, public safety, and environmental protection.

The proposed transmission alignment would be a linear feature extending approximately 30 miles, mostly over National Forest System lands. Laydown areas

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[50] Assumes the restricted area for navigation would have a circular configuration with a diameter of 230 feet.

would be necessary and construction activities would take place over the first and second year of construction.

Effects Analysis

The Morgan Trailhead and Morgan Trail are located in the vicinity of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site. The co-applicants' proposal indicates that the footprint of the reservoir would not include the trailhead, so there would be no direct effects on the trailhead during construction. Regardless, increased traffic on South Main Divide Road and noise associated with construction of the upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site would be apparent to visitors using the Morgan Trailhead. The increased construction traffic may cause visitors to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness to select one of the other three trailheads to begin their trip. According to the co-applicants' construction schedule, construction traffic and high levels of noise would likely affect visitors during the third year of construction. Considering the low visitation to the trailhead, the public safety requirements that would be implemented as part of the safety during construction plan, and the provision to provide alternative sites for recreational access, there would be minimal effects on trailhead visitors during construction.

Because the footprint of the reservoir would be close to and even possibly include portions of the Morgan Trail, the trail would need to be at least temporarily re-routed to protect the public during construction; the trail could potentially need to be permanently re-routed depending on the as-built conditions. The combination of construction activities and changing the trail location could cause visitors to avoid using this point of entry to the wilderness. This use would likely be shifted to one of the other three trailheads during the third year of construction. The effects on the Morgan Trail would be minimal because, as previously mentioned, this trail receives low levels of use, public safety requirements would be implemented as part of the safety during construction plan, and there would be a provision to provide alternative sites for recreational access during construction.

No developed recreational facilities are located in the vicinity of the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, so construction activities would not affect these facilities.

Under the co-applicants' proposal, no developed recreational facilities would be located near construction activities that would take place at Lake Elsinore. Most of the developed recreational facilities are located on the east side of the reservoir and construction activities would occur in the vicinity of the southeast portion of the reservoir shoreline. Although there would be a general increase in vehicular traffic on local roads, construction activities would not directly affect developed recreational facilities at Lake Elsinore.

Aspects of constructing the proposed transmission alignment that could affect developed recreational facilities would likely relate to vegetation clearing, traffic, and noise. The only developed recreational facilities immediately adjacent to the proposed transmission alignments are the Wildomar OHV area and campground. If the alignment

were constructed along this route, these facilities would most likely be closed during the first and second year of construction.

Staff Alternative—No developed recreation facilities are located in the vicinity of the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site. The Decker Canyon upper reservoir site is located northwest of the Morgan Trail and would not require any temporary or permanent re-routing of Morgan Trail. Regardless, increased traffic on South Main Divide Road and noise associated with construction of the upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would be apparent to visitors using the Morgan Trailhead. According to the co-applicants' construction schedule, construction traffic and high levels of noise would likely affect visitors during the third year of construction. Considering the low visitation to the trailhead, the public safety requirements that would be implemented as part of the safety during construction plan, and the provision to provide alternative sites for recreational access, there would be minimal effects on trailhead visitors during construction.

No developed recreational facilities are located near the Ortega Oaks powerhouse locations, so construction activities would not affect these facilities.

Aspects of constructing the mid-slope transmission alignment that could affect developed recreational facilities would likely relate to vegetation clearing, traffic, and noise. Areas where construction of the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment could disturb developed recreation sites include the Morgan Trailhead and Trail and the El Cariso campground. Tower placement activities would most likely require the temporary closure of the trailhead parking area for public safety reasons if the towers are located in proximity. These effects would likely last less than 1 year. If the towers are placed at considerable distance from the trailhead, then stringing of the transmission lines may require short-term closures. These effects would likely last less than 6 months. The mid-slope transmission alignment would avoid any direct effects on the El Cariso campground; however, construction activities around the OHV and Wildomar campground could result in limited, reduced or restricted use of these areas. Increased traffic and noise associated with right-of-way clearing, tower construction, and line installation could cause secondary effects, in the form of periodic disturbances, on nearby visitors at these sites during the first 2 years of construction. These effects would be minimal considering the temporary nature of these events, the distance of the line construction activities from the developed recreational facilities, and the measures implemented as part of the safety during construction plan (USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 13).

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—No developed recreational facilities are located near the Evergreen powerhouse location, so construction activities would not affect these facilities.

Effects of Project Operation at Developed Recreational Facilities

Co-applicants' Proposal—Public access to the proposed 76-acre Morrell Canyon or Decker Canyon upper reservoir would be prohibited for public safety concerns by installing a fence around the reservoir at either location. If it becomes necessary for public safety and after consultation with the USFS, the access road could also be fenced to prohibit public access.

Developed recreational facilities would not be provided at the reservoir although information signs could be provided to inform the public about the project, cultural, or natural resources. The co-applicants also propose to provide an ancillary structure that would complement the USFS firefighters' memorial along Ortega Highway. The USFS has suggested that a visitor information center would be appropriate.

Following construction, the co-applicants propose several treatments of the 20- to 40-acre reservoir construction laydown area such as grading, seeding, and surface treatment to reduce dust to allow development of a recreational facility or administrative site. In their December 15, 2005, filing of alternative preliminary 4(e) conditions, the co-applicants request that the USFS allow the option of providing a recreational facility at another site in the vicinity of the upper reservoir. At the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, or at the Evergreen powerhouse site if selected, the co-applicants propose to convey a 20- to 30-acre portion of the laydown area adjacent to the powerhouse to the county, local parks district, a county service area, or city of Lake Elsinore for development of a recreational facility. The co-applicants suggest that this area would be suitable for recreational development such as baseball or multi-purpose fields, basketball courts, tennis or handball facilities, or a picnic area with on-site parking. Within 3 years of commencement of operations, park improvements would be finalized and funded by the co-applicants. The co-applicants' also propose to develop a botanical garden at either the Santa Rosa or Evergreen powerhouse sites to promote public awareness of water conservation and use of drought tolerant and native plant species and locally collected seeds. The recreational facility would be developed as a joint-use facility with the adjacent Butterfield Elementary Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School.

If the Evergreen powerhouse site were selected, the co-applicants propose to engage in planning efforts with the appropriate local agency to develop the construction laydown area into a neighborhood or community park. The co-applicants suggest that this area may be suitable for recreational development such as baseball or multi-purpose fields, basketball courts, tennis or handball facilities, or a picnic area with on-site parking. The co-applicants also proposed a botanical garden at the Evergreen powerhouse site to promote public awareness of water conservation and use of drought-tolerant and native plant species as well as locally collected seeds. Within 3 years of commencement of operations, recreational improvements would be finalized and funded by the co-applicants.

If the powerhouse would be built at the alternative Ortega Oaks site, the co-applicants propose that a 5-acre hang glider landing site and a community park could be included in the final design plans in lieu of a botanical garden. If, after consultation with the appropriate local agencies, it is determined that the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not be suitable for a neighborhood or community park, the co-applicants would be willing to pursue a similar development on areas associated with either the proposed Santa Rosa or Evergreen powerhouse sites. If either of these sites were selected for development of a neighborhood or community park, the co-applicants would still provide a formal a hang glider landing site at the Ortega Oaks site.

In his letter dated December 7, 2003, Mr. Hilberath of the Elsinore Hang Glider Association states that the proposed 5-acre park dedicated to hang glider landing and staging needs would not be a sufficient space for safe landings. Mr. Hilberath recommends a landing area of 12 acres as being sufficient to accommodate landings. A 12-acre site would preserve additional open space, potentially safeguarding pilot safety from navigational hazards during landings when the project is operational. The features of a park of either size have not been finalized. The co-applicants do not propose to provide funding for operating and maintaining any developed recreational facilities and expect that O&M would be funded by taxes and fees, unless the facilities remain in public ownership and are located on National Forest System lands. The co-applicants are open to retaining ownership and being responsible for O&M activities subject to a determination whether such ownership and operation would be authorized under the Elsinore Valley MWD's existing special district authority for developments not in public ownership and not located on National Forest System lands.

Under the co-applicants' proposal, educational tours of the powerhouse would be provided to the public, regardless of the site selected.

The co-applicants do not propose to develop any additional recreational facilities at Lake Elsinore in their application and suggest that additional development would be initiated by the private sector or by other public entities independent of the proposed project.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 28 specifies that the co-applicants file a recreation facility development plan for a day-use recreation facility at the upper reservoir laydown area.

Preliminary 4(e) conditions do not include recommendations for recreational development at Lake Elsinore as part of the project.

The proposed transmission alignment appears to include areas within or immediately adjacent to the Wildomar OHV Area and campground.

Effects Analysis

Co-applicants' Proposal—The area inundated at the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site would not include the Morgan Trailhead, but it may include portions of the Morgan Trail. Even if the trail is not inundated, trail users would be affected by the sight of the chain link fence, impoundment, dam, and other appurtenant project features. These effects could be alleviated by re-routing the trail away from the fence and reservoir and providing interpretive signage to explain the project to visitors at points where the project would be viewed from the trail.

The proposal to provide the USFS with an ancillary structure such as a visitor information center along the Ortega Highway could be directly related to the project operation by providing an interpretive venue, which would enhance interpretive resources for the public in the general vicinity of the project.

A day-use site with visitor information center near Ortega Highway would accommodate visitors who are coming to the area, potentially visiting the upper reservoir and/or viewing Lake Elsinore. Currently, no day-use facilities are located near the proposed upper reservoir, so visitors park in many informal turnouts along South Main Divide Road. Providing a formal recreation day-use area near the reservoir would reduce pollution by providing visitors with facilities to dispose of trash and human waste, protect vegetation and soil by controlling the locations where vehicles may travel and park, and reduce the potential for fires by providing cleared areas for parking. Since day-use facilities do not currently exist in this area, this facility would meet the needs of visitors who are coming to the project by providing a few basic conveniences while protecting natural resources from the effects of wide-spread dispersed recreational use.

Because developed recreational facilities do not exist at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, project operations associated with the powerhouse would not affect existing developed recreational facilities.

The co-applicants' proposed developments for recreation at the powerhouse would provide excellent opportunities that do not currently exist in the vicinity of the project. Considering the powerhouse would be located in proximity to an urban setting, interpretive tours of the project would be readily available to large numbers of people. Additionally, the concept of creating a joint-use facility with the adjacent school would be a public benefit.

A botanical garden would increase public awareness regarding water conservation. This could cause residents and visitors to the project to be conscious of actions they could take to minimize water consumption and how to use native plants to landscape their property. The co-applicants' proposal would cause a secondary beneficial effect of reducing water consumption.

If a powerhouse were constructed at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the area currently used for landing hang gliders at the Ortega powerhouse site would continue to be available for recreation enhancements.

The co-applicants' proposal discusses options for securing O&M funding for recreational facilities developed as part of the project. However, relying on funding that may or not be available to local agencies would not provide certainty that the facilities would be properly maintained through the period of the license.

At Lake Elsinore, the only developed recreational facilities that would potentially be directly affected by project operations would be boat docks. Project operations would require that water levels at Lake Elsinore be maintained within a relatively narrow range (1,240 to 1,247 feet msl) as compared to conditions prior to implementation of the Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project (1,229 to 1,259 feet msl). Because lake levels are more stable, boat docks can remain in the water longer, a beneficial effect of the project, and docks are available to users year-round. The co-applicants' investigation determined that even at the lowest possible reservoir elevation under project operation (1,240 feet msl), project-induced fluctuations in water elevation in Lake Elsinore would not adversely affect existing recreational facilities now operating at Lake Elsinore.

Considering the high-density residential development at Lake Elsinore and the extensive and diverse types of existing private, state, and local recreational developments at the reservoir, there are adequate numbers and types of existing developed recreational facilities to support existing and future reservoir-based recreation at Lake Elsinore.

Aspects of operating the proposed transmission alignment that could directly affect developed recreational facilities would likely relate to clearing vegetation under the right-of-way and the visible presence of the towers, conductors, and cleared land. The only developed recreational facilities immediately adjacent to proposed transmission alignments are the Wildomar OHV area and campground. These facilities would be directly affected if the footprint of the proposed transmission alignment crosses the boundaries of the OHV area or campground. The effects could include a reduction of land available for OHV use and camping. The cleared area under the proposed transmission alignment could be attractive to OHV users, potentially encouraging unauthorized OHV use outside of the designated area; this would be an indirect secondary effect of operating the transmission alignment in the proposed corridor.

If the proposed route were implemented, the quality of recreational experience at the OHV area and campground facilities also could be diminished. As proposed, the alignment would, at a minimum, be visible from these facilities, and it could potentially even traverse portions of the OHV area.

Staff Alternative—Public access to the Decker Canyon reservoir site would be prohibited by installing a fence around the reservoir because of public safety concerns. If it is determined necessary for public safety and after consultation with the USFS, the access road also could be fenced to prohibit public access.

Developed recreational facilities would not be provided at the reservoir although information signs may be provided to inform the public about the project, cultural, or natural resources. The co-applicants also propose to assist the USFS with the development of an ancillary structure, such as a visitor information center along Ortega Highway.

Following construction, the co-applicants propose several treatments to the 20- to 40-acre upper reservoir construction laydown area, such as grading, seeding, and surfacing, to reduce dust for the development of a recreational facility or administrative site, or they would provide a recreational facility at another site near the upper reservoir. The USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 28 that the co-applicants file a recreation facility development plan for a day-use recreation facility at the upper reservoir laydown area used to construct the upper reservoir.

It appears that the area inundated at the Decker Canyon site would not include the Morgan Trailhead or Morgan Trail; therefore, there are no existing developed recreational facilities that would be affected by developing a reservoir at this site.

The proposal to assist the USFS with a visitor information center along Ortega Highway would enhance interpretive opportunities for the public in the general vicinity of the project and can include information on proposed project operations.

Because developed recreational facilities do not exist at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, project operations would not affect existing developed recreational facilities.

The co-applicants' proposed community park and powerhouse tours at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would provide excellent opportunities that do not currently exist in the vicinity of the project. Considering the powerhouse would be located in proximity to an urban setting, interpretive tours of the project would be readily available to a large number of people.

If the Ortega Oaks powerhouse were selected, the area available for landing hang gliders would be diminished and this would be a direct effect of the project. Providing a formal 5-acre landing area would preserve a portion of the existing informal landing area, but may be too small to ensure safe use of the site. Designating a permanent 12-acre park for landing hang gliders as proposed by Mr. Hilberath would preserve the space necessary to safely land and ensure that the sport could continue safely at this site into the future. In combination with a transmission alignment that would avoid direct conflicts with hang gliding launch sites, a formal landing areas of sufficient size would enable hang gliders to continue to use the area's unique atmospheric resources that are necessary for the sport to exist. The co-applicants' proposal discusses options for securing O&M funding for recreational facilities developed as part of the project. However, relying on funding that may or not be available to local agencies would not provide certainty that the facilities would be properly maintained through the period of the license. This potential effect could be avoided if the co-applicants were required to submit a recreation plan for

the facility development that included financial commitments to provide O&M funding in the event that intended sources of O&M funding are either insufficient or unavailable.

The mid-slope transmission alignment appears to include an area within or immediately adjacent to the Wildomar OHV Area and campground. Aspects of operating this transmission alignment that could directly affect developed recreational facilities would likely relate to clearing vegetation under the right-of-way and the visible presence of the towers, conductors, and cleared land. The only developed recreational facilities immediately adjacent to the co-applicants' proposed transmission alignment are the Wildomar OHV area and campground; however, the mid-slope transmission alignment would avoid these areas.

Aspects of operating the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment that could directly affect developed recreational facilities would likely relate to clearing vegetation under the right-of-way and the visible presence of the towers, conductors, and cleared land. The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment may require the towers to be placed or span across lands designated and managed in the USFS Land Management Plan as having ROS classifications of Semi-primitive, Non-motorized (SPNM) and Roaded Natural (RN). Visitors using the Morgan Trailhead and Trail would be able to readily see the towers and transmission lines almost directly overhead, which would likely lower their level of experience while using the site; however, the towers and lines would not interfere with parking or access to the trail. The towers and lines, if placed within the SPNM classified areas, may be inconsistent with that designation.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Effects associated with the Evergreen powerhouse site would be the same as with the Ortega Oaks powerhouse sites with a couple of exceptions.

A botanical garden (at the Evergreen powerhouse site) would increase public awareness regarding water conservation. This could cause residents and visitors to the project to be conscious of actions they could take to minimize water consumption and how to use native plants to landscape their property. The construction of the powerhouse at the Evergreen powerhouse site would cause a secondary beneficial effect of reducing water consumption.

If the powerhouse were located at the Evergreen site, the undeveloped area currently used for landing hang gliders at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would continue to be available. However, this site combined with either the co-applicants' proposed transmission alignment or the mid-slope transmission alignment would substantially curtail hang gliding because either alignment would run between the launch sites and the existing informal landing area.

Construction Effects on Dispersed Recreation

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants do not propose any specific measures for dispersed recreation. The project as proposed by the co-applicants could affect

dispersed recreational use at the wilderness area, hang gliding launch sites, Lion Spring Trail, powerhouse site, and hang gliding flight paths and landing areas. Project effects as they relate to dispersed recreation at Lake Elsinore are discussed under the previous section titled *Construction Effects on Lake Elsinore Recreation*.

The proposed transmission alignment would traverse National Forest System land designated under the Cleveland National Forest Management Plan as SPNM, Semi-primitive, Motorized, RN, and Rural (R). Laydown areas would be necessary and construction activities would take place over the first and second year of construction.

The USFS specifies in preliminary 4(e) condition no. 13 that the co-applicants provide a safety during construction plan, which would identify potential hazard areas and measures necessary to protect public safety including public roads, trails and recreation areas and require daily inspections, documented in writing, of affected National Forest System lands and the co-applicants' adjoining fee title property during construction.

Effects Analysis

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site is within approximately 1,000 feet of the wilderness boundary. A portion of the Morgan Trail appears to pass within 200 feet of the proposed Morrell Canyon site.

Disturbance to visitors hiking into and within the San Mateo Wilderness would likely occur.

The proximity of this project feature to the wilderness would likely compromise the quality of the wilderness experience for visitors. Although the facility would be located outside[51] of the wilderness, its presence would be noticeable from within the wilderness, and this would likely degrade the values of solitude and the lack of human influence. These effects of construction would begin in the first year and continue throughout the remaining period of construction.

Hang gliders launch from nine various points along South Main Divide Road in the vicinity of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and the proposed construction laydown area. Increased traffic on South Main Divide Road associated with construction activity at the upper reservoir may disturb some users. Construction activities would directly affect both of the two sites that are operated for hang glider launch sites under a special use permit from the USFS. Because the E Launch Site is located directly across South Main Divide Road from the reservoir site, it is likely that this area would need to be closed to the public during construction for safety reasons. The Edwards Launch Site would likely be affected by the proposed construction trailer site, which would be located adjacent to this launch site. The other seven sites used for

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[51] The ROS designation for lands within the potential reservoir sites is RN.

hang glider launches along South Main Divide Road would remain available to the public and would not be directly affected by upper reservoir construction activities. Displaced users could potentially use alternative launch sites during construction activities; however, the two sites operated under special use permits are the most suitable locations for this activity, so construction of the upper reservoir at this site would cause considerable effects on hang gliders. The construction of a reservoir at Morrell Canyon would eliminate a series of (over 3) known house thermals (or thermal origination points, where solar heated air masses break away from the earths surface) along the ridge to the south west of Morrell Canyon.

The conceptual plan for the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site[52] indicates that Lion Spring and a portion of the trail leading to the spring would be inundated by the reservoir. This direct effect would eliminate an important recreational component of the area. The immediate area around Lion Spring offers visitors an enjoyable waterside setting with cool shade from mature oak and sycamore trees, and Lion Spring has easy access from a major road. This small area stands in stark contrast to the surrounding expansive arid hillsides of chaparral vegetation. The inundation of this small area would be a notable loss of dispersed recreational opportunities because this type of setting is not abundant in the general area.

It would be necessary to close an area greater than the footprint of the powerhouse and laydown area for public safety reasons, causing a direct loss of public access to National Forest System land at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

For hang gliding pilots not affected at the launch sites, project construction could potentially alter the flight quality. Construction of the proposed transmission lines would require construction equipment and possibly roads along the east facing side of the mountains. These construction related features would encroach into areas where known house thermals exist and may reduce their quality. Construction activities would disrupt the earth's surface and the characteristics that are responsible for generating the consistent thermal uplift. Aside from disrupting the actual origination points, pilots may avoid known thermals near construction when flying at low elevations because of the uncertainty associated with the quality of the thermal and the ability to make a safe landing should a historically known thermal be compromised. Under the proposed project, 9 or 10 mapped house thermals across the upper mountain ridge could be directly affected by construction activities.

Aspects of constructing the proposed transmission alignment that could affect dispersed recreational opportunities would include creating routes of access, vegetation clearing, traffic, and noise. These effects would most likely be acceptable for National

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[52] Conceptual Plan-Instream and Seepage Collection and Delivery System, Morrell Canyon Upper Reservoir, dated October 2004.

Forest System lands designated as R and RN; however, these activities would not be consistent with ROS SPNM and SPM settings.

In areas designated SPNM, access is via non-motorized trails or non-motorized primitive roads or cross-country. There is a low contact frequency with other visitors, and high probability of solitude and natural-appearing environment are present. The effects of constructing roads, clearing rights-of-way, and installing tall towers with lines of conductors may be inconsistent with the ROS classifications and scenic integrity objectives (SIOs) designated for these areas (see section 3.3.7, *Land Use and Aesthetics*, for more on the effects on aesthetics). Portions of the proposed route affecting lands with this designation are located in the northernmost part of the route, beginning generally north of Lake Elsinore and continuing north to its terminus, and at the portion of the proposed route located in the vicinity of Wildhorse Canyon.

In SPM areas, access is via motorized trails or primitive roads or cross-country where terrain and regulations permit. Low to moderate contact frequency with other visitors can be expected. The environment may have moderately dominant alterations but these do not dominate views from trails or primitive roads in the area. Transmission towers, conductors, and cleared rights-of-way across the landscape would dominate views. Portions of the proposed transmission alignment route affecting lands with this designation are located east of Trabuco Peak.

Staff Alternative—The direct effect on dispersed recreation of constructing a reservoir at this site would include the loss of public access to the area necessary for construction activities. The area lost to public access would include the 120-acre reservoir footprint and the 20- to 40-acre construction laydown area.

The Decker Canyon reservoir site is within approximately 0.5 mile of the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness boundary. There would not likely be effects on wilderness values because the site would be located at sufficient distance from the wilderness.

The effects of construction activities (staging areas, increased traffic) at the Decker Canyon powerhouse site on the launching of hang glides would be similar to those at Morrell Canyon.

Construction activities at the Ortega Oaks site would probably eliminate or diminish hang glider landing opportunities at this location during powerhouse construction in the second or third year of construction. Because this is one of the most suitable and highly used sites for landings, construction activities at this site would substantially affect hang gliders. Construction of any permanent hang glider park in the current landing zone would completely eliminate landing during park construction. Recreation enhancements would be completed during the final year of construction.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would include lands designated under the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan ROS as RN, R, SPNM, and SPM. Laydown areas would be necessary, and construction activities would take place over the first and second year of construction. Aspects of constructing the mid-slope transmission

alignment that could affect dispersed recreational opportunities would include creating routes of access, vegetation clearing, traffic, helicopters, and noise. These effects would most likely be acceptable for National Forest System lands designated as R and RN; however, these activities are not consistent with SPNM and SPM ROS settings.

Construction of the towers with the use of helicopters could negatively affect hang gliders. The presence of helicopters in the air space near the launching and landing sites could reduce the number of hang glider launches as the two uses of air space may be incompatible. This conflict would last for the duration of constructing transmission line towers in the vicinity of the launch and landing sites during the first and second year of project construction.

Pilots able to launch their hang gliders would experience fewer effects on flight quality resulting from encroaching construction activities near house thermals then under the co-applicants' proposed alignment; however, even if the lines are not planned directly over a house thermal, the clearing of vegetation and road construction may affect the conditions that produce the consistent thermal up lift. Under the mid-slope transmission alignment, two to three known house thermal sites near the toe of the mountain could be affected by construction activities.

Lands potentially affected by the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment (shown in figures 16 and 17) are classified in the current Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan as having an ROS setting of RN. Effects of the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment on recreational resources would be similar to the mid-slope transmission alignment, except for effects on hang gliding.

Construction activities on the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would occur at the very margin of hang glider launching areas and flight paths so that hang gliders may continue to use the sites almost continually throughout the construction process assuming access to launch and landing facilities would also be available. The duration of these effects is estimated at 2 years, the entire construction phase process of setting the towers and running the lines.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—It would be necessary to close an area greater than the footprint of the powerhouse for public safety reasons, causing a direct loss of public access to National Forest System land at the Evergreen powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Dispersed Recreation

Co-applicants' Proposal—The effects of operating the project as they relate to dispersed recreation at Lake Elsinore are discussed under *Effects of Operations on Lake Elsinore Recreation*.

The proposed transmission alignment would include lands designated under the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan ROS classification as SPNM, SPM, RN, and R. Laydown areas would be necessary and construction activities would take place over the first and second year of construction.

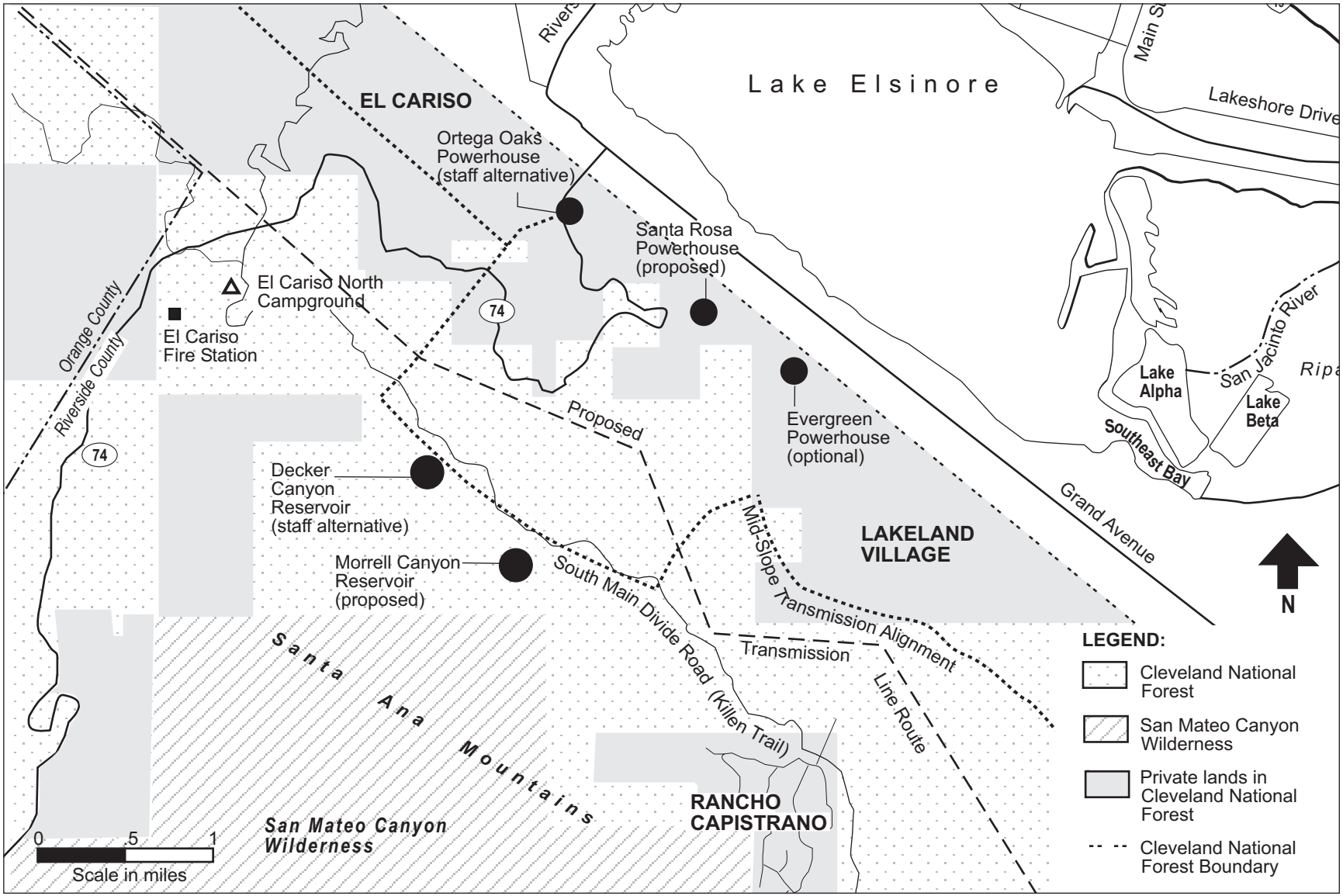

Figure 17. LEAPS Project—Land uses and communities near proposed and alternative reservoir sites. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Effects Analysis

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site is within approximately 1,000 feet of the wilderness boundary. A portion of the Morgan Trail appears to pass within 200 feet of the proposed Morrell Canyon site; therefore, disturbance to visitors hiking into and within the San Mateo Wilderness would likely occur.

The proximity of this project facility to the wilderness would likely compromise the quality of the wilderness experience for visitors. Although the facility would be located outside[53] of the wilderness, its presence would be noticeable from within the wilderness and this would likely degrade the values of solitude and the lack of human influence.

Project operation at the upper reservoir would not affect any of the nine launch sites for hang gliders.

The area necessary for operating the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse would need to be closed to public access for safety reasons, causing a direct loss of public access to National Forest System land corresponding to the as-built footprint of the powerhouse.

Aspects of operating the proposed transmission alignment that could affect dispersed recreational opportunities would include maintaining routes of access, and vegetation clearing.

The most significant potential effect on dispersed recreation would be effects related to the presence of the transmission lines near hang glider launch sites and in the vicinity of the flight paths used by hang glider pilots; generally the area south and west of Lake Elsinore (see figure 16). Tall towers and transmission lines installed along the ridgeline west of Lake Elsinore would present insurmountable safety hazards to hang gliders and would eliminate all hang gliding opportunities in this area. Operation of the project as proposed would cause a significant loss of hang gliding opportunities considering the popularity of this activity at Lake Elsinore resulting from the combination of unique atmospheric and geographic conditions. The closest comparable hang gliding alternative could be considered Crestline/Marshall in San Bernardino about 50 miles away.

Staff Alternative—The direct effect on dispersed recreation of constructing a reservoir at the Decker Canyon reservoir site would include the loss of public access to approximately 100 acres necessary for project operations.

The Decker Canyon reservoir site is within approximately 0.5 mile of the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness boundary, so there would not likely be effects on wilderness values because the site would be located at sufficient distance from the wilderness.

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[53] The ROS designation for lands within the potential reservoir sites is R.

Project operation at the upper reservoir would not directly affect the two sites that are operated for hang glider launch sites under the USFS special use permit. The seven other sites used for hang glider launches along South Main Divide Road would remain available to the public and would not be directly affected by project operations at the upper reservoir.

Development of the Ortega Oaks site would eliminate a small portion of the site from public use; however, the co-applicants' proposed development of a formal landing site would probably enhance hang glider landing experience at this location since currently no developed facilities exist at this site. This would be a beneficial effect of the project because this is one of the most suitable and highly used sites for landings. The co-applicants propose a 5-acre hang glider park if the Ortega Oaks site were selected; however, development of a permanent hang glider park at Ortega Oaks should preserve the space necessary to ensure the sport could continue at Lake Elsinore while potentially mitigating the negative effects on the sport imposed by the presence and operation of the transmission lines. Development of a 12-acre park as suggested by Mr. Hilbreth would increase the safety of pilots during landing by affording more open space, which would be necessary when landing in less than ideal conditions.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would include lands classified under the Cleveland National Forest Management Plan ROS as RN, R, SPNM, and SPM. Aspects of operating the transmission line that could affect dispersed recreation opportunities would include maintaining routes of access, vegetation clearing, and their overall presence. If the mid-slope transmission alignment were to be implemented, the amount of lines traversing USFS ROS, SPM, and SPNM lands would be less than the co-applicants' proposal. Increased noise associated with managing vegetation within the right-of-way may cause secondary effects in the form of periodic disturbances to nearby visitors during project operation. These effects would be short term.

The most significant potential effect on dispersed recreation would be those effects related to the presence of the transmission line in the vicinity of hang glider launching and flight paths.

The mid-slope transmission alignment could preserve more hang gliding resources in the area than the co-applicants' proposed transmission alignment. The mid-slope transmission alignment would remove high voltage transmission lines in between the take-off and landing paths currently used by hang glider pilots. The mid-slope transmission alignment would allow for more useable days of the hang gliding resources throughout the year. Figures 16 and 17 show the lines are routed around the hand gliding launching and landing sites and this alignment would allow pilots continued use of the Elsinore convergence with minimal loss of days or launching sites.

Proposed project operations could negatively affect house thermals in areas near transmission alignments. Under the southern segment of the mid-slop transmission alignment, two to three thermal origination points (areas where air masses break away

from the surface) are expected to be affected by the operations aspect of the proposed project in the vicinity of South Main Divide Road.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—A powerhouse and substation at the Evergreen site in combination with either the co-applicants' proposed transmission alignment or the mid-slope alignment would place high voltage lines between the launch and landing sites, substantially curtailing hand gliding use in the project area.

The cost estimates pertaining to the recreational measures and transmission alignments are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis,* and final measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

3.3.6.3 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

Construction of the upper reservoir in Morrell Canyon would have a long-term unavoidable adverse effect on hang gliding activities and a short-term adverse effect on the use of the Morgan Trail. Construction of the upper reservoir in Decker Canyon would also have a long-term adverse effect on hang gliding activities, but to a much lesser extent. Construction of the intake/outlet structure and operation of the pumped storage project would slightly reduce the boatable surface of Lake Elsinore.

3.3.7 Land Use and Aesthetic Resources

3.3.7.1 Affected Environment

Land Use

Land Use in the Project Area

The proposed and alternative locations of project facilities, including upper reservoir sites, powerhouse sites, and transmission alignments, are located within or near the Cleveland National Forest (figure 2). The Cleveland National Forest encompasses the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites, the construction laydown areas for the proposed and alternative upper reservoirs, the proposed Santa Rosa and Evergreen powerhouse locations, all or portions of the penstocks from the upper reservoir to the powerhouse (depending on the selected sites), and portions of the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments.

As described by USFS (2003), this area of the Cleveland National Forest is almost entirely surrounded by urban development, serving as a scenic backdrop valued by its urban communities for neighborhood communities and providing a mountainous background to motorists traveling between Los Angeles and San Diego along Interstate 15, and from Riverside to Orange County along Ortega Highway (see figures 1 and 2). The area includes both east-facing and west-facing slopes of the Santa Ana Mountains. Communities on the east-facing slope in the area include El Cariso, located southwest of Lake Elsinore and west of Ortega Highway, and Lakeland Village, located south of Lake Elsinore and east of Ortega Highway (figure 17). On the west-facing slopes, small

residential communities include Rancho Capistrano, located on a private in-holding in the Cleveland National Forest. The proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments cross primarily undeveloped lands characterized by forests, chaparral, and coastal sage habitats (see section 3.3.4.1, *Terrestrial Resources*), sometimes in the vicinity of single-family homes or other land uses, such as clay products mining facilities.

Land Use Within and Adjacent to the Proposed Project Boundary

Upper Reservoir Sites and Construction Laydown Areas—Both the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites are located on forested areas of the Cleveland National Forest (figure 17). The area around the proposed upper reservoir is used primarily for recreation associated with hiking on the Morgan Trail. Both upper reservoir sites are located near hang gliding launch sites along South Main Divide Road, which also serves as the sole access road to the homes at Rancho Capistrano (approximately 4 miles southeast of Ortega Highway) and the Wildomar OHV area (approximately 9 miles southeast of Ortega Highway). Slightly farther east is Elsinore Peak, where the USFS has issued a special use permit for operation of telecommunications facilities, currently comprising six towers and five buildings. West of the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites, nearby land uses include the USFS El Cariso fire station, an adjacent visitor information facility, and a campground (figure 17).

Powerhouse Sites—The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, and the Ortega Oaks and Evergreen sites are located at the base of the mountains in the developed area along the south shore of Lake Elsinore, south of Grand Avenue (figure 17). The area along Grand Avenue is characterized by a mix of single-family residences, small commercial establishments, multi-family residential development, and vacant property. New single-family residential developments are filling in some of the vacant properties.

The proposed 30-acre Santa Rosa powerhouse site is located within the Cleveland National Forest boundary, adjacent to the unincorporated community of Lakeland Village. The construction laydown area proposed for this site is nearby, abutting Grand Avenue, but outside the Cleveland National Forest boundary. The proposed powerhouse site is located southwest of the southwesterly extension of Santa Rosa Drive and northwest of the southwestern extension of Magnolia Street. With the exception of numerous dirt roads that crisscross the property, the site is vacant. Figure 18 indicates the types and locations of nearby land uses. These include multi-family residential properties such as the Santa Rosa Mountain Villa apartments fronting along Santa Rosa Drive, the Butterfield Elementary Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School on Grand Avenue, and single-family homes along Magnolia Street and other nearby streets. Single-family homes along Grand Avenue in this vicinity have direct access to Lake Elsinore.

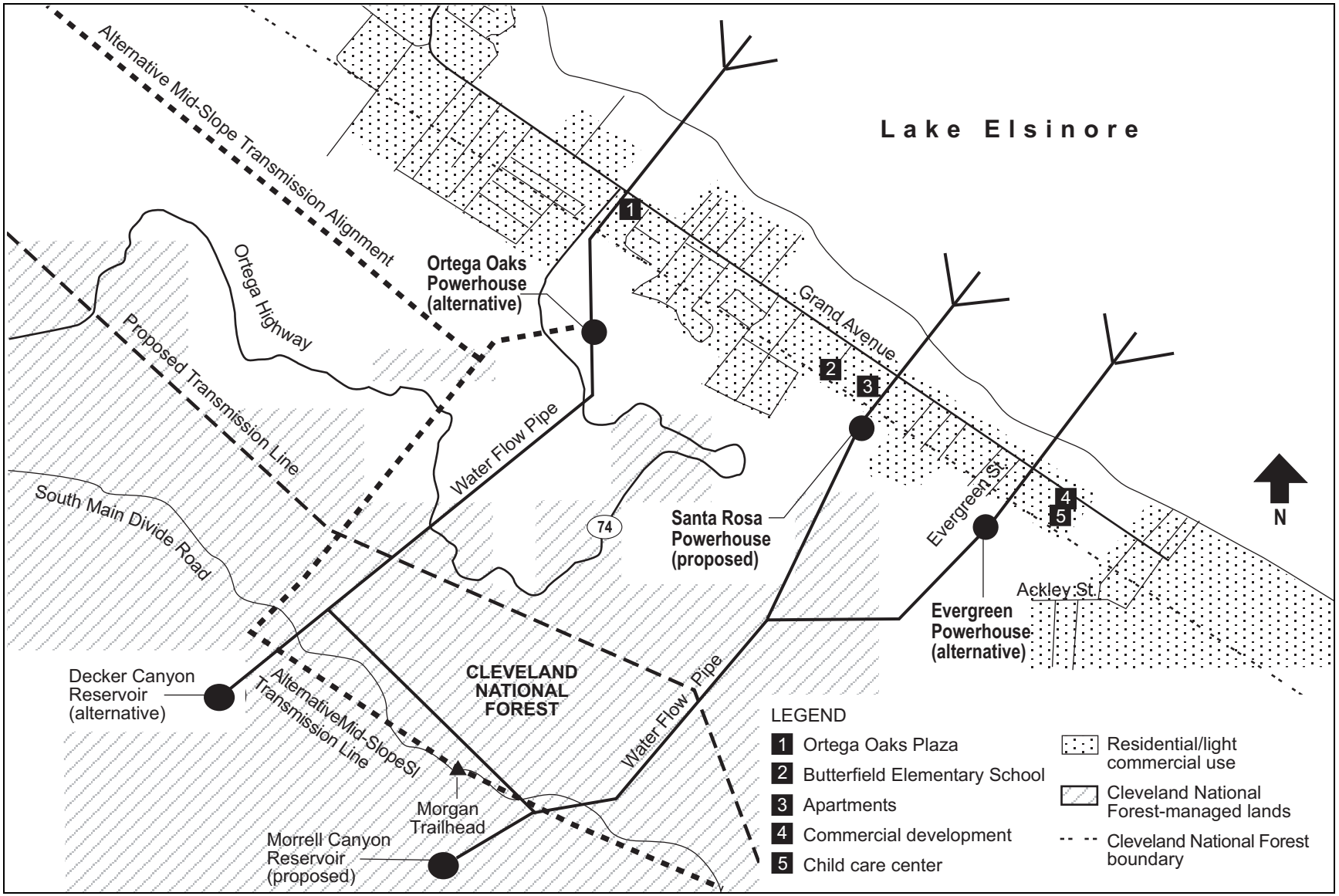

Figure 18. LEAPS Project—Land uses near proposed and alternative powerhouse sites. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

The 75-acre Evergreen powerhouse site is also within the Cleveland National Forest boundary, adjacent to Lakeland Village, while the associated 30-acre construction laydown site is outside the Cleveland National Forest, abutting Grand Avenue. The Evergreen powerhouse site is located southeast of the southwesterly extension of Evergreen Street, southwest of Akley Street (figure 18). The site is vacant except for numerous crisscrossing dirt roads and evidence of a former orchard. There are an existing single-family residence and other outbuildings just northeast of the site, within the abutting construction laydown area. Also located nearby, but outside the Cleveland National Forest boundary, is a small, multi-tenant commercial development, the Lakeland Village Plaza, that includes a childcare center. Other land uses in the immediate vicinity include single-family homes and vacant land. Like the Santa Rosa site vicinity, nearby homes along Grand Avenue have direct access to Lake Elsinore.

The 58-acre Ortega Oaks powerhouse site lies east of Ortega Highway and south of Grand Avenue, fronting on both roads. The associated construction laydown area is within the powerhouse site. Although the site is located in unincorporated Riverside County, lands within the city of Lake Elsinore are adjacent to the site to the east, north, and west (figure 18). Although vacant, this site and adjacent vacant property are used as a hang glider landing zone. North of the property, fronting on both Ortega Highway and Grand Avenue are a currently vacant former gasoline station and the Ortega Market. The Riverside County Transportation Commission has identified the market's parking lot as a park and ride lot. Ortega Oaks Plaza, a neighborhood-serving development with commercial uses (e.g., beauty salon, donut shop) at the first level and residential units on the second floor, lies east of the Ortega Market. Multi-family residential units are located further east along Morro Way and Grand Avenue. Single-family residences lie north and east of the site along several residential streets. The land south of the site is primarily undeveloped hillside, with limited scattered residential development and an enclosed Elsinore Valley MWD-operated reservoir located to the south-southeast. West of the site, across Ortega Highway, is a new single-family housing development. To the northwest are an existing commercial use and several new single-family homes.

Tailrace Tunnel—The tailrace tunnel sites are between the powerhouse sites and Lake Elsinore. The tailrace tunnels from the proposed Santa Rosa site or Evergreen site would cross vacant land, go under Grand Avenue, and cross residential property(ies) to the lake. The tunnel from the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would go through or near the Ortega Oaks Plaza parking area, under Grand Avenue, and through vacant property to the lake.

Transmission Alignments—Most of the proposed and the mid-slope transmission alignments are located within the Cleveland National Forest boundary. From Elsinore Peak on the east to an area east of Ortega Highway on the west, the central section of the proposed alignment is below the ridgeline, traversing a popular hang-gliding area above Lakeland Village, Lake Elsinore, and the city of Lake Elsinore (refer to section 3.3.6, *Recreational Resources*). From this central area, the proposed alignment traverses primarily undeveloped areas. Development within 0.5 mile of the proposed transmission

alignment (starting from the central point and moving north or south) includes the following:

- Proposed northern transmission alignment—El Cariso fire station, scattered single-family homes, the Glen Eden Policy Area, Interstate 15, and nearby commercial properties; and
- Proposed southern transmission alignment—single-family homes in Rancho Capistrano and Lakeland Village, Wildomar OHV area, scattered single-family homes, single-family homes in the La Cresta area, USFS Tenaja guard station, scattered ranch houses, and USFS landing strip.

The central section of the mid-slope transmission alignment lies more-or-less parallel to, but downslope (east) of, the proposed alignment, except in the vicinity of the upper reservoir site where it runs west of the proposed transmission alignment. Development within 0.5 mile of the mid-slope transmission alignment (starting from the central point and moving north or south) include the following:

- Mid-slope northern transmission alignment—homes and commercial areas between Grand Avenue/Lake Elsinore and the foothills, scattered single-family homes, single-family home developments (near the Amarose Street and Lincoln Street areas in the city of Lake Elsinore), scattered single-family homes, Pacific Clay Products mining facilities, Interstate 15 and nearby commercial properties, including a cement products industrial property; and
- Mid-slope southern transmission alignment—single-family homes in Rancho Capistrano and Lakeland Village, scattered single-family homes, single-family homes in the La Cresta area, USFS Tenaja guard station, scattered ranch houses, and USFS landing strip.

Future Land Uses

Prospective future land uses in the vicinity of the proposed project vary. In the absence of project development, the USFS would manage the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon reservoir sites and the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments across National Forest System lands according to current management direction. The proposed Santa Rosa, Ortega Oaks, and Evergreen powerhouse sites, all vacant lots, would likely be developed as single-family or multi-family residences or as small commercial developments, similar to those in the surrounding area along Grand Avenue.

Land Ownership

Within and adjacent to the project site are lands owned and/or administered by a number of governmental agencies. The lands and administering agencies include the following:

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service—Several of the proposed project sites are on USFS lands within the Cleveland National Forest boundary, including the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites and portions of both the proposed and alternative northern and southern transmission alignments[54]. The USFS has the authority to impose permit conditions on the project components on USFS lands.
2. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management—A portion of the proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments traverses lands administered by the BLM. BLM has the authority to impose permit conditions on the project components on BLM lands.
3. U.S. Department of the Navy, Marine Corps—Portions of the proposed southern transmission alignment are located within Camp Pendleton.
4. California Department of Transportation—Portions of the proposed penstock and electrical transmission systems cross above and/or beneath Ortega Highway and the Interstate 15 corridor. Easements from the California Department of Transportation would be required to cross those rights-of-way.
5. Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency—Between a proposed substation site and SCE's existing 500-kV Valley-Serrano transmission line are lands within the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve and the boundaries of the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat HCP area. Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency, MWD, BLM, and CDFG jointly own the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve.
6. Riverside County—Portions of the proposed northern transmission alignment; each of the proposed northern electrical substations; segments of the proposed and alternative penstocks, tailrace, and intake structures; the proposed Ortega powerhouse site; those portions of the Evergreen and Santa Rosa powerhouse sites that are located on private lands within the Cleveland National Forest boundary; and the construction laydown areas for the all three of the proposed and alternative powerhouse sites are located in unincorporated areas of Riverside County, within the sphere of influence of the city of Lake Elsinore.
7. San Diego County—The segment of the proposed southern transmission alignment generally south of Tenaja Canyon and each of the proposed southern electrical substations are located in San Diego County.

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[54] Although the proposed Santa Ana, alternative Ortega Oaks, and optional Evergreen powerhouse sites are within the Cleveland National Forest boundary, they are privately owned.

8. City of Lake Elsinore—The city of Lake Elsinore owns the geographic area comprising the proposed lower reservoir (that is, Lake Elsinore). Elsinore Valley MWD, however, owns the waters that comprise the lake.

Plans

Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan—The sites of several proposed and alternative project facilities occur on lands managed by the USFS according to the vision, strategy, and design criteria laid out in the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan (USFS, 2005b). Part 1 of the Land Management Plan describes the desired conditions the USFS is striving to realize on the national forest. Part 2 defines and describes each of the land use zones, which are the on-the-ground manifestation of the desired conditions and are the primary tools used by the USFS to describe the management intent and suitable uses for various areas of the national forest. The activities that are allowed in each zone are expected to result in progress along the pathway toward the realization of the desired condition for that zone. Part 3 of the Land Management Plan includes the design criteria that the USFS follows in implementing projects and activities over time. The following four land use zones are relevant to the LEAPS Project:

Developed Areas Interface (DAI). This zone includes areas adjacent to communities or concentrated developed areas with more scattered or isolated community infrastructure. The level of human use and infrastructure is typically higher than in other zones. The characteristic Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) objectives are Rural (R) and Roaded Natural (RN) and the zone is managed for motorized public access. While this zone may have a broad range of higher intensity uses, the management intent is to limit development to a slow increase of carefully designed facilities to help direct use into the most suitable areas. USFS managers expect that there will be some road construction, but anticipate no more than a 5 percent net increase in road mileage.

Back Country (BC). This zone includes areas that are undeveloped, with few roads. The level of human use and infrastructure is generally low to moderate. The characteristic ROS objective is Semi-primitive, Motorized (SPM), with limited areas of RN, and the zone is managed for motorized public access on designated roads and trails. A network of low standard Back Country roads provide access for a wide variety of dispersed recreation opportunities in remote areas, and some new trails may be constructed to improve opportunities between trails on the existing system. Although this zone generally allows a broad range of uses, the management intent is to retain the natural character inherent in the zone and limit the level and type of development. USFS managers expect to manage the zone for no increase or a very low level of increase in the national forest road system in this zone.

Back Country (Motorized Use Restricted) (BCMUR). Like the Back Country zone, this zone includes areas that are undeveloped, with few roads. Few facilities are found in this zone, and the level of human use and infrastructure is low to moderate. The

characteristic ROS objectives are SPM and Semi-primitive, Non-Motorized (SPNM), and the zone is managed for non-motorized (mechanized, equestrian, and pedestrian) access. The zone allows for a range of low intensity land uses, and the management intent is to retain the natural character of the zone and limit the level and type of development. Some roads may be constructed and maintained, but the intent is to manage the zone for no increase or a very low level of increase in road system development.

Back Country (Non-Motorized) (BCNM). This zone also includes areas that are undeveloped with few, if any, roads. The characteristic ROS objective is SPNM. Developed facilities supporting dispersed recreation activities are minimal and generally limited to trails and signage. The level of human use and infrastructure is low. This zone is managed for a range of non-motorized uses that include mechanized, equestrian, and pedestrian public access. Administrative access, usually for community protection, is allowed by exception for emergency situations and for short duration management purposes, such as fuel treatment. The intent is to use temporary routes while management is occurring and then close or remove the route. Access to authorized facilities and to private land is not anticipated, but may occur by exception when there are existing rights to such access. Except for trails, facility construction is generally not allowed, but may occur in remote locations where road access is not needed for maintenance. Temporary facilities are expected to be removed when they are no longer needed.

Other Plans—Except where otherwise precluded, those portions of the project sites not located on public lands may be subject to the jurisdiction of the local land use entity (that is, the city of Lake Elsinore, Riverside County, or San Diego County). Because the proposed project would be undertaken by a public entity and would be licensed by a federal agency (if approved), the proposed project would not necessarily be subject to the land use authority (city, county, or other jurisdiction) that would otherwise govern. Nonetheless, we set forth below the land use policies that generally govern land use decisions within these jurisdictions.

County of Riverside Comprehensive General Plan. Riverside County's Comprehensive General Plan, adopted October 7, 2003, provides a countywide framework for planning. It includes a General Plan that covers the unincorporated portions of the county and 19 more detailed Area Plans. The thrust of the General Plan is to manage the overall pattern of development in the county more effectively. The Area Plans are designed to provide "a clear and more focused opportunity to enhance community identity within the County and stimulate quality of life at the community level" (County of Riverside, 2005). The Elsinore Area Plan, which encompasses most of the proposed and alternative project sites, is the detailed Area Plan that is most relevant to the proposed LEAPS Project. The Southwest Area Plan is relevant to a segment of the proposed southern transmission alignment that appears to coincide with the boundary separating the Elsinore Area Plan from the Southwest Area Plan.

The General Plan Land Use Element functions as a guide to planners, the general public, and decision makers concerning the general pattern of development. Since the Land Use Element governs how land is to be used, many of the issues and policies contained in other plan elements are linked in some degree to the Land Use Element. According to the General Plan, the population of Riverside County is expected to double between 2000 and 2020, growing by approximately 1.4 million people (County of Riverside, 2005). Thus, the General Plan and the Land Use Element focus primarily on growth-related issues such as community design, project design, and ways to achieve an integrated and coordinated land use, open space, and transportation system. The preferred pattern is to focus growth into strategically located centers or into existing developed areas to minimize development pressures on rural, agricultural, and open space areas. The Land Use Element acknowledges the importance of infrastructure and public facilities in supporting an increase in population, but it does not directly address regional facilities such as the LEAPS Project. It accommodates support services such as governmental facilities, utility facilities (including public and private electric generating stations and corridors), landfills, airports, educational facilities, and maintenance yards with the Public Facility Area Plan Land Use Designation, which is designed to provide for adequate public facilities with the county while ensuring compatibility with surrounding land uses. The policies for public facilities state, in part, that the Public Facilities Land Use Designation is to:

1. accommodate the development of public facilities in areas appropriately designated by the General Plan and area plan land use maps;
2. require new public facilities to protect sensitive uses such as schools and residences from the effects of noise, light, fumes, odors, vehicular traffic, parking, and operational hazards;
3. require that public facilities be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding areas; and
4. require that development and conservation land uses do not infringe upon existing public utility corridors, corridors, fee owned rights-of-way, or permanent easements whose true land use is that of public facilities. This policy is to "ensure that the 'public facilities' designation governs over what otherwise may be inferred by the large-scale general plan maps" (County of Riverside, 2005).

The General Plan addresses parks, recreational and scenic resources, seismic and geologic hazards, and other specific environmental topics in Chapter 5, the "Multipurpose Open Space Element" (County of Riverside, 2005). These topics, as they would pertain to the LEAPS Project, are addressed for the Elsinore Area Plan in the Lake Elsinore Environs Policy Area section.

Elsinore Area Plan. Like the Riverside County General Plan of which it is a part, the Elsinore Area Plan was adopted in October 2003. The Elsinore Area Plan describes

the area setting and various communities, policy areas, hazard areas, and other attributes. Those most relevant to the LEAPS Project include the following:

1. Unique Features—Unique features include the Cleveland National Forest and the Temescal Wash. As noted previously, many of the proposed and alternative project facility sites are located within the Cleveland National Forest boundary. The proposed northern transmission alignment crosses the Temescal Wash, which serves as an outlet for Lake Elsinore and serves as a linkage for animals between the Santa Ana Mountain and Gavilan Hill habitats on either side of the wash.
2. Unique Communities—The Elsinore Area Plan lists five unique communities, a designation that includes unincorporated areas that may be annexed to one or more cities or special districts, incorporated as a new city, or designated as an Unincorporated Community. The proposed and alternative powerhouse sites are located in the Cleveland Ridge (Lakeland Village) community, while the northernmost end of the proposed northern transmission alignment terminates near the Warm Springs community.
3. Incorporated Cities—The proposed lower reservoir (Lake Elsinore) is within the boundaries of the city of Lake Elsinore.
4. Policy Areas—The Elsinore Area Plan lists eight special policy areas designed to address important locales that have special significance to the residents in that part of the county. Three of these are relevant to proposed or alternative project sites. As noted above, the northernmost end of the proposed northern transmission alignment terminates near the Warm Springs area, which has policies to "protect the life and property of residents and maintain the character of the Gavilan Hills" through adherence to various elements of the General Plan. The area of the Temescal Wash that is within the 100-year flood plain is a designated policy area, with policies to encourage the maintenance of the wash in its natural state. The wash is crossed by the proposed northern transmission alignment. The third policy area relevant to the LEAPS Project is the Lake Elsinore Environs Policy Area, which is along the west shoreline of the lake, encompassing the 100-year floodplain and an existing W-1 zoning prohibiting the development of structures. The proposed and alternative sites for the water flow pipes from the powerhouse to the lake cross this policy area.
5. Multi-purpose Open Space—The Elsinore Area Plan indicates that the area contains significant oak woodland areas that should be protected to preserve habitat and the character of the area. This plan component is relevant to the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites and the proposed and alternative southern transmission alignments.

6. Hazards—The plan sets forth local hazard policies with respect to flooding, wildland fire hazard, seismic faults, and slope instability, indicating which hazards should be avoided entirely and which can be mitigated by special building techniques. All of these factors may be relevant to the LEAPS Project.

County of San Diego General Plan. The San Diego County General Plan divides San Diego County into a number of community planning areas. The Pendleton-De Luz Community Planning Area encompasses the area directly south of Riverside County where a portion of the proposed southern transmission alignment is located. Under the current plan, the area of the proposed southern transmission alignment is designated national forest and state parks, with some forest conservation initiative areas. There is currently no adopted plan text for that region. A new plan, referred to as General Plan 2020, is currently being developed by the county.

Aesthetics

The Lake Elsinore Project area lies on the eastern edge of the Elsinore Mountains, the southern extension of the Santa Ana Mountain range in southern California. These mountains rise above the coastal foothills east of the cities of Mission Viejo and San Juan Capistrano, reaching a peak of 3,500 feet (Elsinore Peak) near the proposed project and then abruptly descending to Lake Elsinore (long-term lake elevation between 1,240–1,249 feet msl), a depression in the geologic landscape between the Santa Ana-Elsinore coastal range and the inland hills (figure 1). The landscape character of this area can be characterized by two general descriptions: the mountainous zone and the Lake Elsinore zone.

The mountainous zone, the majority of which consists of National Forest System land as discussed above, provides a natural area with limited development surrounded by densely populated, urbanized areas all less than an hour drive away. The mountainous landscape of ridges cut by intermittent streams is covered mostly with chaparral vegetation, and the low-lying streambed areas are populated with riparian and oak woodland type communities. The short wet season followed by a lengthy warm and dry season dictate the colors and textures of the plants and hillsides within the mountainous zone. Views from the proposed project in the north-south direction include the mountains and rock outcroppings while views to the east from the ridgeline provide striking views over Lake Elsinore in the foreground and the hills beyond. Residential houses along South Main Divide Road are generally hidden from public view. Throughout the mountainous zone, intermittent streams, occasional springs, exposed rock outcrops, spring wildflowers, pockets of oak-pine woodland, and dense chaparral are common. Colors in this area vary from tans, browns, golds, grays and dull greens in the summer to bright greens and patches of flowers in the late winter/early spring mixed with the sandstone hardscape. The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and the northern and southern portions of the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments would be within this zone.

The Lake zone comprises the urban area of Lake Elsinore and the unincorporated area of Lakeland Village surrounding Lake Elsinore, which is situated between Interstate 15 to the east and the mountain zone to the west. This zone also includes the areas north and south of Lake Elsinore along the Interstate 15 transportation corridor. The local landscape is characterized by residential, commercial, some light industrial and mining development surrounding Lake Elsinore interspersed with patches of non-native grasslands and bare ground. Light colored stucco buildings, darker asphalt roadways, and planted landscapes are major elements in the urban and residential color scheme and texture typical of southern California, although the overall color scheme highlights the neutral colors (i.e., beige, tan, sandstones, some greens, and interspersed red tile). The larger viewscape from this zone includes the east slope of the Elsinore Mountains up to the ridgeline of the mountainous zone. The mountains are the dominant feature of the distant visual landscape while Lake Elsinore, where visible through the residential development, is the dominant feature of this visual landscape. At times from the Lake zone, both the lake and mountains are visible, making for a striking aesthetic setting of the steep mountains descending into Lake Elsinore. The proposed generation facilities, the low voltage distribution lines (115-kV) and Lake Elsinore (lower reservoir), would be within this landscape zone.

USFS Scenery Management System

The USFS Scenery Management System provides a framework for the inventory and analysis of the aesthetic values on USFS lands and is a tool for integrating the benefits, values, desires, and preferences regarding aesthetics and scenery for all levels of land management planning. Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) have been designated for all areas of the national forest (see figure 19). At the project level, all national forest activities are subject to review of the SIOs. SIOs are the objectives that define the minimum level to which landscapes are to be managed from an aesthetics standpoint. The Land Management Plan assigns five SIOs to lands within the Cleveland National Forest close to proposed project areas or lands potentially influenced by project operations. The SIOs include Very High, High, Moderate, Low, and Very Low. The four SIOs that apply to the proposed project area are further described in table 20, and locations of the various SIO designations for lands within the proposed project area or lands influenced by proposed project operations are shown in figure 19 and discussed in table 21.

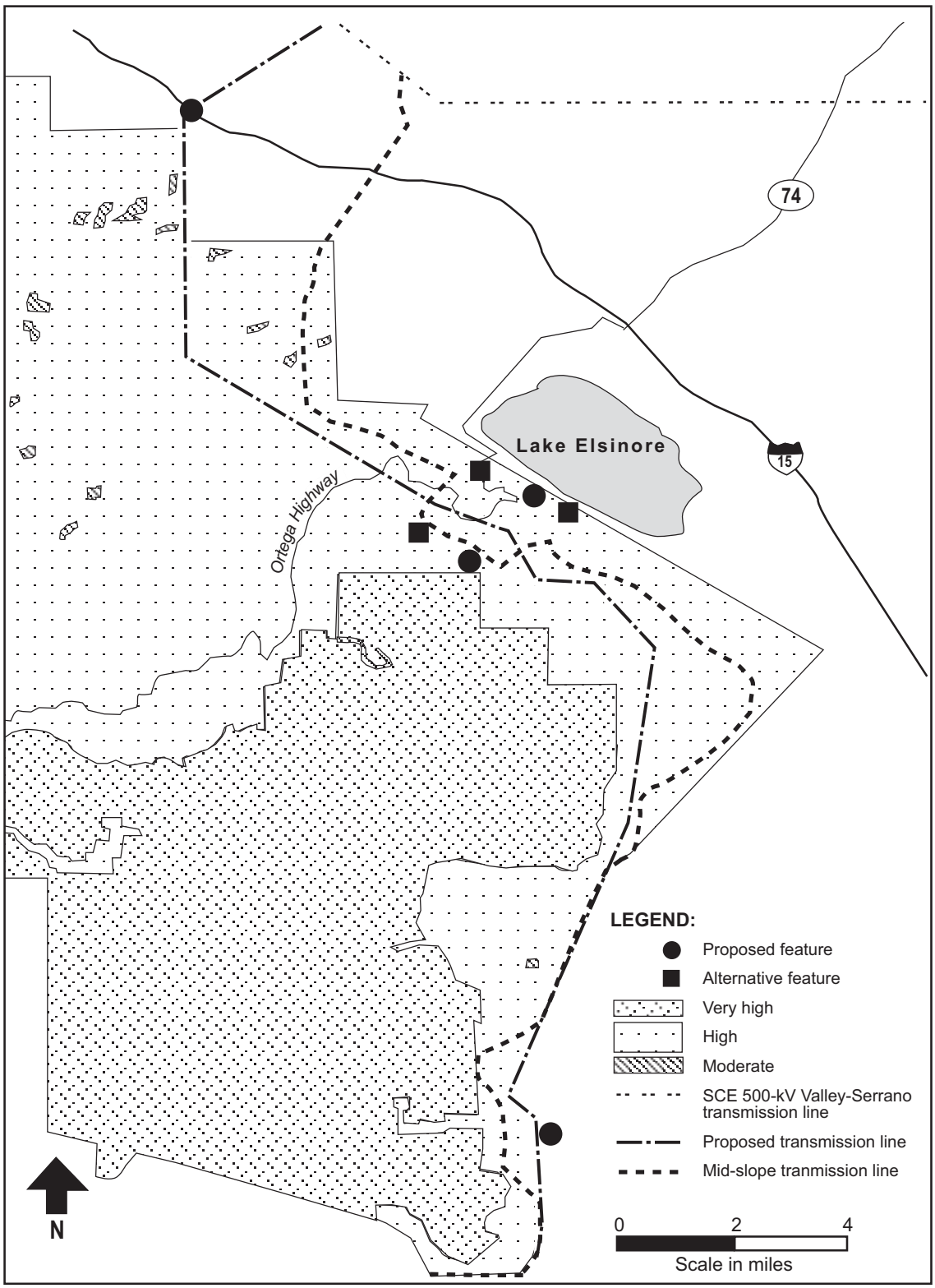

Figure 19. LEAPS Project—Scenic integrity objectives in the Cleveland National Forest and San Mateo Wilderness area. (Source: USFS, 2005a, as modified by staff)

Table 20. Description of SIO designations and guidelines for National Forest System lands. (Source: USFS, 2005a, as modified by staff)

SIO Designation	Definition
Very High	This classification generally provides for ecological changes only. This refers to landscapes where the valued (desired) landscape character is intact with only minute, if any, deviations. The existing landscape character and sense of place is expressed at the highest possible level. The landscape is unaltered. This is synonymous with the Preservation Visual Quality Objective under the original Visual Management Plan.
High	This classification provides for conditions where human conditions are not visually evident. This refers to the valued (desired) landscape character "appears" intact. Deviations may be present but must repeat form, line, color, texture, pattern and scale common to the characteristic landscape. The landscape appears unaltered. This is synonymous with the Retention Visual Quality Objective under the original Visual Management System.
Moderate	This classification refers to landscapes where the valued (desired) landscape characters "appears slightly altered." Noticeable deviations must remain subordinate to the landscape character being viewed. The landscape appears slightly altered. This is synonymous with the Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective under the original Visual Management System.
Low	This classification refers to landscapes where the valued (desired) landscape characters "appears moderately altered." Deviations begin to dominate the valued landscape character being viewed, but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge, effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative-type changes or architectural styles outside the landscape being viewed. Deviations must be shaped and blended with the natural terrain (landforms) so that elements such as unnatural edges, roads, landings, and structures do not dominate the composition. The landscape appears moderately altered. This is synonymous with the Modification Visual Quality Objective under the original Visual Management System.

Table 21. SIO designations for lands within the proposed project area or lands influenced by project operations. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Project Feature	SIO Designation
Upper reservoir	The SIO for the lands where the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and staging areas would be located is High. The SIO for the San Mateo Wilderness, located approximately 0.5 mile from the west side of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, is Very High.
Transmission Lines	The SIOs for those lands on which the northern portion of the proposed transmission alignment would cross the National Forest System lands are designated High, while lands on which the southern portion of the proposed transmission line would cross lands designated both High and Moderate.
Proposed powerhouse sites	The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site and the Ortega Oaks and Evergreen powerhouse sites are outside the USFS jurisdiction and are not designated.

In addition to the Scenery Management System SIOs, the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan emphasizes place-based programs and goals and considers visual character and quality of an area as key attributes when identifying a place. The proposed project would be located within the Elsinore Place, which described in the plan as:

> …one of the most visible landscapes on the national forest and is maintained as an undeveloped island in the rapidly developing southern Riverside County and a natural appearing urban backdrop to the Interstate 15 corridor. The valued landscape attributes to be preserved over time are the undeveloped quality and character of the urban backdrop, including the natural appearing skyline silhouette of the Santa Ana Mountains, and the scenic integrity of areas visible from the Interstate 15 and Ortega Highway corridors.

BLM Visual Resource Management System

Because a short portion of the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment traverses public land managed by BLM, a separate set of visual resource objectives is used to evaluate the aesthetic resources on BLM lands. BLM's visual resource objectives are set forth in the Visual Resource Management Program, which evaluates the quality of existing scenery by accounting for the distance from which scenery is viewed and peoples' sensitivity to changes in the landscape. The seven "key factors" used in the BLM rating procedure are landform, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity, and cultural modifications. Table 22 shows BLM's system

ratings and the corresponding factors. Table 23 shows the scores for the various areas of potential effect under the proposed project derived from the use of the inventory/ evaluation criteria.

Table 22. BLM scenic quality scoring and evaluation criteria. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Feature	**BLM Scoring and Evaluation Rating Criteria**		
Landform	5: High vertical relief (e.g., prominent cliffs, spires or massive rock outcrops) or severe surface variation or highly eroded formation including major badlands or dune systems, or detailed features, dominant and exceptionally striking and intriguing (e.g. glaciers).	3: Steep canyons, mesas, buttes, cinder cones and drumlins; or interesting erosional patterns or variety in size and shape of land forms, or detail features present and interesting though not dominant or exceptions.	1: Low rolling hills, foothills or flat valley bottoms. Interesting, detailed landscape features few or lacking.
Vegetation	5: A variety of vegetative types in interesting forms, textures, and patterns.	3: Some variety of vegetation, but only one or two types.	1: Little or no variety or contrast in vegetation.
Water	5: Clear and clean appearing, still, or cascading white water, any of which are a dominant factor in the landscape.	3: Flowing or still, but not dominant in the landscape.	0: Absent or not noticeable.
Color	5: Rich color combinations, variety or vivid color; or pleasing contrast in the soil, rock, vegetation, water or snow fields.	3: Some intensity or variety in colors and contrasts of the soil, rock and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element.	1: Subtle color variations, contrast or interest, generally muted tones.
Adjacent Scenery	5: Adjacent scenery greatly enhances visual quality.	3: Adjacent scenery moderately enhances overall visual quality.	0: Adjacent scenery has little or no influence on overall visual quality.

Feature	BLM Scoring and Evaluation Rating Criteria		
Scarcity	6: One of a kind; or unusually memorable. Chance for exceptional wildlife or wildflower viewing.	2: Distinctive, though somewhat similar to others within the regions.	1: Interesting within its setting, but fairly common within the region.
Cultural Modifications	2: Free from aesthetically undesirable or discordant sights and influences or modifications add favorably to visual variety.	0: Scenic quality is somewhat depreciated by inharmonious intrusions, but not so extensively that they are entirely negated; or modifications add little or no visual variety to the area.	–4: Modifications are so extensive that scenic qualities are mostly nullified or substantially reduced.

Table 23. Existing scenic quality based on BLM Visual Resource Management inventory/evaluation criteria. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff).

BLM Indicator	Transmission Alignment
Landform	1
Vegetation	3
Water	3
Color	1
Adjacent Scenery	3
Scarcity	1
Cultural Modifications	0
Total	12
Scenic Quality Class Rating	B

Notes: Category A scores – 19 to 33 points
Category B scores – 12 to 18 points
Category C scores – 1 to 11 points

Existing Site-specific Aesthetics

Upper Reservoir Sites and Construction Laydown Areas—Both the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites are canyons in the headwaters of the San Juan Creek Watershed (see figure 17). Lion Spring, an intermittent flow of

perched groundwater, is located in Morrell Canyon and supplies water to a diverse plant community (see section 3.3.4, *Terrestrial Resources*). The Morgan Trail follows Morrell Canyon, and lush growth in the canyon bottom contrasts with the typically dry, hot conditions that prevail on the trail outside the canyon.

The view of Morrell Canyon from South Main Divide Road consists of dense stands of oak trees and other riparian vegetation in the canyon bottom surrounded by mountain tops with chamise-dominated chaparral vegetation and rock outcroppings. The view of Decker Canyon from South Main Divide road is similar to Morrell Canyon; however, the landscape lacks the mature trees and entirely comprises chaparral-chamise vegetation communities. The construction laydown area would be on the east side of South Main Divide Road in an area that is currently partially barren and used for the launching of hang gliders. Maximum viewable distances across Morrell and Decker canyons from South Main Divide Road terminate at interior mountains higher than the view point in the San Mateo Wilderness about 0.5 mile away. A portion of the view from the top of Decker Canyon extends northwest toward the confluence of Decker and San Juan Creek Canyons about 5 miles away; however, vegetation, canyon topography, and at times, atmospheric haze largely obstruct the view. Views from the construction laydown area to the west are similar to those adjacent to Morrell Canyon because of proximity while views to the east overlook Lake Elsinore, the Interstate 15 corridor, and (depending on the amount of haze in the air) beyond to more mountain ridges on the horizon.

The USFS Land Management Plan designates both the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites and the construction laydown areas with a High SIO, based on the naturally appearing landscape. Human-made alterations exist (e.g., South Main Divide Road, Morgan Trailhead, some residential houses on private in-holdings within the forest); however, the scale of these features is not out of context for the landscape, and the overall sense of the landscape when viewed from South Main Divide Road is that it is mostly unaltered.

Powerhouse Sites—The proposed Santa Rosa, the Ortega Oaks, and the Evergreen and Ortega Oaks powerhouse sites would be located at the base of the mountains within the Cleveland National Forest boundary just west of Grand Avenue in the unincorporated area of Lakeland Village. The parcels identified for the powerhouses are on private in-holdings within the forest and, as such, do not have a SIO designation under the most recent *Land Management Plan*.

The land uses along Grand Avenue dictate the aesthetic feel of the area, which includes single-family residences, small commercial establishments, multi-family residential development, and vacant property. The parcel associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site consists primarily of non-native grasses with occasional shrubs, bare land, and numerous trails or dirt roads traversing the area. Unique features visible from this parcel (other than the neighboring housing development) include the mountains to the west and partial views of Lake Elsinore, where visible, to the west

through the development and landscaping. The general character of this parcel is considered open space within an urban environment. This characterization is derived from the parcel's fairly large size and lack of development; however, it is surrounded by the urbanized areas of Lakeland Village and is subject to informal recreation uses (numerous dirt trails and roads traversing the parcel and visual evidence of illegal dumping). The landscape and visual aesthetics of this site are not unusual, but they are accentuated by the parcel's proximity to the mountains and the striking backdrop they provide to all parcels along the Grand Ave. corridor. The Evergreen and Ortega Oaks powerhouse sites exhibit similar aesthetic qualities in that they are both currently vacant parcels within the Cleveland National Forest boundary and west of Grand Ave in Lakeland Village; they possess the same vegetation, offer the same views of the mountains to the west and obstructed views of Lake Elsinore, and are traversed by multiple dirt trails and roads. The proposed Ortega Oaks powerhouse site is somewhat different from the other two powerhouse sites in that it has less visual appeal because dispersed recreational use has exposed bare soil and the site appears considerably disturbed. Ortega Oaks parcel shares road frontage with Ortega Highway and as such is also more visible to drivers on the Highway.

Views of the foreground and middle ground (0 to 0.5 mile [foreground] and 0.5 to 5 miles [middle ground]) to the west from the proposed and alternative powerhouse sites look directly at the base of the mountains and up to the ridge line. Viewable distances to the east are obscured by residential influences and are not more than 0 to 0.5 mile in total distance.

Transmission Alignments—The majority of the northern and southern portions of the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments would be located within the Cleveland National Forest. The central portion of the proposed transmission alignment as well as the southern portion of the northern transmission alignment and the northern portion of the southern transmission alignments would parallel the eastern side of the mountains, an area of steep, chaparral vegetated slopes between the developed areas of the Interstate 15 corridor including Lakeland Village (Lake Elsinore) and the mountain peaks. From this central portion, the lines would extend north and south over undeveloped National Forest System lands. The aesthetic character of these lands is described above in the context of the Mountainous zone. Overall, the National Forest System lands offer views of undeveloped natural landscapes, which are a welcome contrast to the surrounding residential developments located at the base of the mountains at Lake Elsinore.

The Land Management Plan designates almost all of the forest lands the proposed and mid-slope transmission alignments would traverse with a High SIO. The ridgeline and front slope (side facing Lake Elsinore and Interstate 15) is almost entirely void of human developments that contrast with the landscape character, and the mountains appear as a natural backdrop to the city of Lake Elsinore and the Interstate 15 corridor.

A short segment of the northern portion of the proposed transmission alignment would cross BLM lands northeast of Interstate 15 near the small impoundment of Temescal Wash called Lee Lake. The lands here are adjacent to the interstate and are generally steep hills with chaparral vegetation. Overall, the BLM scenic quality class of these lands within the proposed transmission alignment is B and subordinate in quality to the lands above Lake Elsinore.

Key Viewpoints Associated with the Project

Many of the features associated with constructing the proposed project would be visible from public travelways that adjoin the proposed project site. Changes to the landscape would be most visible to the public who use South Main Divide Road, Ortega Highway, and Grand Avenue. Other important areas with views of the proposed project features would include the Wildomar Road, Morgan Trail, and Interstate 15.

South Main Divide Road is a two-lane, paved, county-maintained road. This route is a highly traveled route where there are areas that receive concentrated scenic viewing use. The Ortega Highway is a two-lane, paved, state highway connecting Riverside and Orange counties. This heavily traveled route is popular for scenic driving as well as commuting, and is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway. Grand Avenue is a street located at the south west end of Lake Elsinore in an area of dense residential and commercial development. Wildomar Road is a USFS road that extends across National Forest System lands to the south of South Main Divide Road and provides access to the Wildomar Campground and OHV Area. The Morgan Trail is a non-motorized trail that provides access to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness. The trail originates at a trailhead located on South Main Divide Road. Interstate 15 is a federal highway located to the east of Lake Elsinore; this route receives heavy commercial use as well as non-commercial travel use.

3.3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

Change of Land Use

National Forest System lands in southern California have been under increasing pressure to provide recreational amenities, mineral resources, and forest product resources to growing populations. Demand for these amenities can, at times, lead to conflicting uses. Change in land use from forest to utility uses can displace hunters, bikers, hang gliders, hikers, and other users from the property. Construction of hydroelectric project elements in forested areas can affect visual resources by adding new visual elements, including new roads and road cuts, clearings for transmission lines and penstocks, and other new structures, that contrast with traditional land uses.

At the same time, private land in southern California's rural areas and small towns are under increasing development pressure as people search for more affordable housing than can be found in larger cites, and as people seek rural settings for their primary residence or for weekend/retirement property. Development of utility features such as

powerhouses, switchyards, and transmission lines contrasts with the visual setting and precludes other types of development that might have been planned for the same land.

Effects of Construction on Change of Land Use

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants assessed land use within and adjacent to the proposed project boundary and concluded that construction of the proposed development would have some minor to locally significant effects on land use in the area. The co-applicants proposed the following site-specific measures to address these effects:

- At the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, reroute Morgan Trail, if necessary, to go around the upper reservoir.
- At the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site and laydown area, purchase the property and demolish the nearest residence, the Santa Rosa Mountain Villa apartments.
- At the Ortega powerhouse site, develop a formal hang glider landing site, provide for a community park, and use a northern transmission alignment.
- At the Evergreen powerhouse site and laydown area, purchase the laydown area property and demolish an existing single-family house and outbuildings, and purchase Lakeland Village Plaza and either demolish the building or use the building in ways that would be compatible with nearby construction.
- Prepare a plan to avoid or minimize disturbances to the quality of the existing visual resource of the project area.

Effects Analysis

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site is designated Conservation—Habitat on the Riverside County General Plan (General Plan) map (County of Riverside, 2005). Upper reservoir construction at the proposed Morrell Canyon site would eliminate the site's current forest habitat and replace it with a water body dedicated to power generation. As described in section 3.3.6.2, *Environmental Consequences, Construction Effects on Dispersed Recreation*, construction of the upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site would permanently change the land use from forest habitat and dispersed recreation to a utility use. The co-applicants' proposal to reroute the affected portion of Morgan Trail would provide for continuation of the recreational use nearby.

The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan map (County of Riverside, 2005). Although currently vacant, the site is crisscrossed by several dirt roads that suggest it may be used for dispersed recreation. Construction at the Santa Rosa site would replace any current use of the site with a utility (power generation) land use, including an underground powerhouse and aboveground substation, permanently changing the land use to a utility use. It would also prevent the currently vacant property from being developed for other uses, such as the residential use designated in the General Plan. Noise and dust during

construction would likely affect those residing nearby, although the effects would be temporary and within applicable standards, as described in section 3.3.10.3, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Air Quality and Noise.*

The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse construction laydown area is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan map (County of Riverside, 2005). The site is a vacant parcel near the Butterfield Elementary Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School and multi-family residences. The co-applicants' planning area for the site encompasses both the proposed 20-acre laydown area and the privately-owned parcels that separate the laydown area from the school. The co-applicants state that inclusion of the privately-owned parcels in their planning area "is intended to ensure appropriate site planning and to allow for the subsequent acquisition of those properties, if such acquisition is deemed warranted for environmental and/or access reasons" (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a). During construction, the laydown area would contrast with the neighboring land uses in the scope and scale of the waste materials, soil piles, and equipment storage. These impacts on neighboring properties would be ongoing until the co-applicants reclaim the site. The co-applicants' proposal to purchase and demolish the 12-unit apartment complex, known as the Santa Rosa Mountain Villa apartments, nearest the site would increase the distance of the construction site to the nearest residence, reducing residents' exposure to construction impacts. Long term use of the proposed Santa Rosa construction laydown area is uncertain because the co-applicants' have not indicated definitively whether the site would be maintained as vacant property or developed at a later date.

The proposed tailrace tunnel from the Santa Rosa powerhouse site to Lake Elsinore would be constructed underground, across currently vacant land. Construction of the tunnel would require clearing and the use of heavy equipment in the otherwise undisturbed mix of vacant, residential, and commercial properties. It is likely that dust and noise would be generally dispersed above the developed areas along Lake Elsinore. Construction of the tunnel would displace recreational users of Lake Elsinore to the remainder of the lake, as described in section 3.3.6.2, *Environmental Consequences, Construction Effects on Lake Elsinore Recreation.*

The northern and southern segments of the proposed transmission alignment are located on undeveloped lands, and no homes or buildings would need to be razed or moved to accommodate transmission line construction along the alignment. As with the construction of other project features, noise and dust during construction would likely affect those residing nearby, although the effects would be temporary and within applicable standards, as described in section 3.3.10.3, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Air Quality and Noise*. The potentially affected residents include those residing near the 3.6-mile-long segment where the proposed transmission alignment nears the edge of the La Cresta area. Potential effects on recreational use of the area, particularly hang gliders' use of the airspace between the launch sites and landing sites, is addressed in section 3.3.6.2, *Environmental Consequences, Construction Effects on Dispersed Recreation*. Along the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment, use of the existing

range allotments would likely be curtailed during construction, and animals would need to be provided with alternative grazing sites. This topic could be addressed as part of a road and land management plan for the project.

Staff Alternative—Upper reservoir construction at the Decker Canyon site, which is designated Conservation-Habitat in the Riverside County General Plan (County of Riverside, 2005) would have effects similar to the co-applicants' proposal.

The 58-acre Ortega Oaks powerhouse and construction laydown site is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan map (County of Riverside, 2005). The site is currently vacant, but is used as a hang glider landing site. Construction at the Ortega Oaks site would replace any current use of the site with a utility (power generation) land use, including an underground powerhouse and aboveground substation and would provide a formal hang gliding site.

Construction of the powerhouse and substation at the Ortega Oaks site would permanently change the land use to a utility use. It would also prevent the selected property from being developed for other uses, such as the residential use designated in the General Plan. The co-applicants' proposal to provide a community park and to provide powerhouse tours would provide for a recreational use of the property in the long term.

Construction effects on the mid-slope transmission alignment would be similar to the co-applicants' proposal, with the exception that there are more residential uses near the mid-slope alignment. The northern and southern segments of the mid-slope transmission alignment are located on undeveloped lands; no homes or buildings would need to be razed or moved to accommodate transmission line construction along the alignment. However the mid-slope alignment would cross more private lands, particularly in the LaCresta area where 6.6 miles of the mid-slope alignment lies in or near the La Cresta area, compared to 3.6 miles of the proposed transmission alignment. Noise and dust during construction would likely affect those residing nearby, although the effect would be temporary and would not exceed applicable standards, as described in section 3.3.10.3, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Air Quality and Noise.* Potential effects on recreational use of the area, particularly hang gliders' use of the airspace between the launch sites and landing sites, is addressed in section 3.3.6.2, *Recreation, Environmental Consequences, Construction Effects on Dispersed Recreation.* Transmission line construction along the mid-slope transmission alignment, if the Ortega Oaks site is used, would reduce the conflict with hang gliders compared to the proposed alignment.

Where the northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment crosses an existing clay products quarry site, construction could disrupt existing operations if the transmission alignment crosses an area of active quarry operations.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The 75-acre Evergreen powerhouse site is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan map (County of Riverside, 2005). Although currently vacant, the site is crisscrossed by several dirt roads that suggest it may be used for dispersed recreation. Construction at the Evergreen site would replace any current use of the site with a utility (power generation) land use, including an underground powerhouse and aboveground substation.

Construction of the powerhouse and substation at the Evergreen site would permanently change the land use to a utility use. It would also prevent the selected property from being developed for other uses, such as the residential use designated in the General Plan. The co-applicants' proposal to establish a botanical garden on the property and to provide powerhouse tours would provide for a recreational use of the property in the long term.

The 30-acre Evergreen powerhouse construction laydown area is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan map (County of Riverside, 2005). Use of this land during construction would contrast and possibly conflict with neighboring land uses, by adding heavy industrial activity near residential and commercial areas. These impacts would be ongoing for the full construction period and would be mitigated once the co-applicants reclaim the area. The co-applicants' proposal to purchase and demolish the existing single-family home and outbuildings and demolish or convert the use of Lakeland Village Plaza would increase the distance of the construction site to the nearest potentially affected users, reducing others' exposure to construction impacts

Effects of Operation on Change of Land Use

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants assessed land use within and adjacent to the proposed project boundary and concluded that operation of the proposed development would have some minor effects on land use in the area. The co-applicants propose the following site-specific measures:

- At the proposed Santa Rosa or Evergreen powerhouse sites, establish a botanical garden at the site once the powerhouse and substation are in place, and provide tours of the powerhouse.
- At the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, provide for a community park and develop a formal hang gliding landing site.

Effects Analysis

For the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and any substation sites, the land use would remain altered as long as the facilities were in place. This also applies to the proposed transmission line's effect on hang gliding, because the presence of the line would eliminate use of the area for hang gliding. At other proposed project sites, construction would not preclude other land uses during subsequent project operation.

The co-applicants propose to prepare a plan to avoid or minimize disturbances to the quality of the existing visual resource of the project area and to mitigate for project effects on visual resources and to reduce the contrast between the project and the surround landscapes. Creating a botanical garden and providing powerhouse tours at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, as proposed by the co-applicants, would allow for ongoing recreational use of the utility site. The construction laydown area associated with the Santa Rosa powerhouse site could be developed as residential property, as it is designated in the General Plan.

Once landscaped, the powerhouse would receive regular use by the co-applicants' personnel, but on a scale consistent with neighboring commercial uses. If the co-applicants make a concerted effort to landscape the buried powerhouse site and the surrounding property, the site would blend with neighboring uses. The co-applicants' proposal to establish a botanical garden on the property and to provide powerhouse tours would provide for ongoing recreational use of the property of a different character than currently exists.

The northern and southern segments of the proposed transmission alignment, left undisturbed, could return to their use as wildlife habitat and/or grazing lands. Operation of the transmission line along the northern and southern segments of the proposed alignment could affect future development of nearby lands, although the extent of this potential effect cannot be determined. For the most part, the proposed transmission alignment avoids lands that are designated for residential development (generally with 5- to 20-acre lot size restrictions) under the General Plan, crossing or paralleling about 3.6 miles of such lands primarily near the edge of the La Cresta area. Some sites near the transmission alignment could be less desirable for development, although development pressures in the area suggest that all developable lands may ultimately be developed (see section 3.3.8, *Socioeconomic Resources*).

Staff Alternative—Similar to the co-applicants' proposal, the Decker Canyon upper reservoir would permanently alter the land use from forest habitat to utility use. The construction laydown area associated with the Decker Canyon site could be rehabilitated for future recreation or habitat use.

Use of the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would provide a formal site for a hang gliding.

The northern and southern segments of the mid-slope transmission alignment, reclaimed, could return to their use as wildlife habitat and/or grazing lands. Where the northern segment of the mid-slope alignment crosses the existing clay products works, proper design of the transmission line, including both tower placement and height of the conductors above the ground, should allow for safe and unimpeded operation of the site following construction. Operation of the transmission line along the mid-slope alignment would allow the current use of the area for hang gliding to continue.

As with the co-applicants' proposal, operation of the transmission line along the northern and southern segments of the mid-slope transmission alignment could affect future development of nearby lands, although the extent of this potential effect cannot be determined. The mid-slope transmission alignment would cross or parallel about 8.2 miles of land designated for residential development (generally with 5- to 20-acre lot size restriction) under the General Plan including about 6.6 miles in or near the edge of the La Cresta area. Some sites near the transmission alignment could be less desirable for development, although development pressures in the area (see section 3.3.8, *Socioeconomic Resources*) suggest that all developable lands may ultimately be developed.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—As with the co-applicants' proposal, a botanical garden and powerhouse tours at the Evergreen powerhouse site would allow for recreation use of the site. The construction laydown area associated with the Evergreen powerhouse site could be developed as residential property, as it is designated in the General Plan.

County Infrastructure

Construction for utility purposes in developed areas, especially underground construction such as that associated with the proposed powerhouse and tailrace canal, can disrupt existing storm-water drainage systems or put them at risk. Further, the project, including transmission lines, would be located within two miles of the Skylark Airport, which could interfere with approach and take-off patterns in the area.

Effects of Construction and Operation on County Infrastructure

A county-maintained storm drain facility is located at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse construction laydown area, and the co-applicants have indicated that project construction could adversely affect one or more Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (FCWCD) facilities, such as the Ortega debris basin. The co-applicants propose additional consultation with the Riverside County FCWCD and indicate that the co-applicants will formulate detailed plans to ensure that the proposed project does not adversely affect existing county facilities and that project-related drainage is fully mitigated both during construction and during the project's operational life.

In its April 28, 2005, letter to the Commission, Riverside County states that the any work that involves Riverside County FCWCD rights-of-way, easements, or facilities would require an encroachment permit from the Riverside County FCWCD. Additionally, the Riverside County indicates that any facility construction within a road right-of-way that could affect Riverside County FCWCD storm drains should be coordinated with the Riverside County FCWCD.

The co-applicants do not propose any specific measures to address project-related activities on the Skylark Airport. No stakeholders expressed specific concern about the

effects of construction or operation activities on the Skylark Airport. However, in its April 28, 2005, letter to the Commission, the Riverside County indicated that the project would require Airport Land Use Commission review if any part of the project is taller than 200 feet. In response to the letter, the co-applicants indicate that the transmission towers would be 120 to 170 feet tall and would lie below the ridgeline in the area between Elsinore Peak and the airport.

Effects Analysis

The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse could affect the storm drain system, both from runoff associated with new impervious surfaces and from the laydown area. The co-applicants' proposal to consult with the Riverside County FCWCD and prepare a drainage plan would help prevent adverse construction-related effects on flood control and drainage facilities associated with the Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

The proposed transmission line would include towers approximately 170 feet tall within two miles of the Skylark Airport. Towers of that height and the conductors strung between the towers would not be high enough to pose a safety hazard to aircraft operating according to standard flight rules. Thus, although it would be built within two miles of the Skylark Airport at its nearest point, the southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment would not interfere with or cause a safety hazard with respect to airport operations. Nonetheless, consultation with the airport before and during construction would help ensure that project features would not interfere with flight patterns in the area.

The co-applicants have not included enough detail in their proposal for staff to assess construction-related effects on the airport. For example, cranes, towers or helicopters may be needed to install the transmission towers, which may interfere with flight patterns or other aspects of operating the airport. Consultation with the airport prior to constructing any transmission facilities within two miles of the airport would help alleviate construction-related effects on the airport.

Staff Alternative—As with the co-applicants' proposal, construction and operation of the Decker Canyon upper reservoir is unlikely to affect the county's storm drainage system.

Powerhouse construction at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site could affect the county's storm drain system, although the potential conflict does not appear to be of the same magnitude as at the proposed Santa Rosa site. Consultation with the county and preparation of a storm water drainage plan should alleviate effects on the county storm drain infrastructure.

As with the proposed transmission alignment, the mid-slope transmission alignment would be unlikely to affect the county storm drain system. Nonetheless, consultation with the county and preparation of a storm water drainage plan would alleviate any potential effects on the county storm drain infrastructure.

The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be constructed about 1.5 miles from the Skylark Airport at its nearest point. The mid-slope alignment would not be expected to pose a safety hazard to aircraft operating according to standard flight rules. As with the co-applicants' proposal, consultation with the airport prior to constructing any transmission facilities within two miles of the airport would help alleviate construction related effects on the airport.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Powerhouse construction at the Evergreen powerhouse site could affect the county's storm drain system, although the potential conflict does not appear to be of the same magnitude as at the proposed Santa Rosa site. Consultation with the county and preparation of a storm water drainage plan should alleviate effects on the county storm drain infrastructure.

Consistency with Land Management Plan

The Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan identifies uses, including road construction, that are considered suitable for each land use zone. Utility structures alter the setting and may conflict with the intended condition of some zones. New roads affect land use by providing public access in areas that are otherwise difficult to reach. Further, new roads can add new visual elements to the landscape, such as road cuts and tree clearing, that contrast with traditional land uses.

Effects of Construction and Operation of Project Facilities, Including Temporary Roads

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants indicate that new, temporary roads may be needed for construction and installation of transmission facilities within the Cleveland National Forest. The co-applicants propose that temporary construction roads would be installed only subject to USFS approval and in accordance with USFS policies, where environmental impacts could be effectively mitigated. The co-applicants also indicate that, except where the USFS authorizes continued use of the roads for transmission line maintenance, the co-applicants would remove the roads following completion of construction, would recontour the roads to prevent future unauthorized use, and would landscape the area with native plants.

In its April 28, 2005, letter to the Commission, USFS recommends three standard 4(e) conditions and one specific 4(e) condition that are relevant to the co-applicants' management of any temporary construction roads on National Forest System lands. The standard conditions reserve the right of the United States to have unrestricted use of any roads on the National Forest (standard condition no. 10); indicate that the co-applicants must confine all project vehicles to roads or specifically designed access routes and that the USFS may close any routes where damage is occurring to the soil or vegetation (standard condition no. 11); and indicate that the co-applicants must maintain all of the project improvements on National Forest System lands to standards of repair, orderliness, neatness, sanitation, and safety acceptable to USFS (standard condition no. 12). Specific condition no. 27 recommends that the co-applicants prepare and file with the

Commission a USFS-approved Project Road and Traffic Management Plan that would, among other elements, have the co-applicants consult with the USFS in advance of performing any road construction, realignment, maintenance, or closure involving USFS roads; cooperate with the USFS on the preparation of a condition survey and proposed maintenance plans subject to USFS approval; maintain affected non-USFS roads to the appropriate state and/or county standard; and identify the co-applicants' responsibility for road maintenance and repair costs commensurate with their use and any other project-induced use.

Effects Analysis

The co-applicants do not address the consistency of their proposed project features with the Land Management Plan. Table 24 summarizes the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan description of suitable land uses that are relevant to the LEAPS Project.

Table 24. Suitable uses by land use zone. (Source: USFS, 2005b)

Activity or Use	Developed Areas Interface	Back Country	Back Country Motorized Use Restricted	Back Country Non-Motorized
Authorized motorized use	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	By exception
Major utility corridors	Designated areas	Designated areas	Designated areas	Not suitable
Road construction or re-construction	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable for authorized use	Not suitable
Developed facilities	Suitable	Suitable	By exception	Not suitable

Note: By exception – conditions that are not generally compatible with the land use zone but may be appropriate under certain circumstances.

The Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site is located in the Developed Areas Interface zone, which allows for developed facilities. The proposed road around the reservoir would also be suitable for this zone.

The issue of compatibility with the Land Management Plan and construction of new, temporary roads is most relevant to the proposed and alternative transmission line routes. Given the issues associated with road construction on steep slopes (for example, accelerated erosion and the visual effects of large cut-and-fill slopes), it is assumed that

the co-applicants' proposal with respect to temporary roads would be applicable only for sections of the transmission alignment where slopes are less than 15 percent. On slopes greater than 15 percent, helicopter construction would be required and no roads would be constructed. Table 25 provides an estimate of the miles of transmission line that would occur on slopes greater than and less than 15 percent, by land use zone. Table 25 indicates that only 17 percent of the co-applicants' proposed alignment is on slopes less than 15 percent and is eligible for possible road construction. For purposes of analysis, it is assumed that the miles of road constructed in areas with slopes less than 15 percent would equal 1.5 times the miles of transmission line.

Table 25. Transmission line mileage by slope and land use zone. (Source: Staff)

Cleveland National Forest Land Use Zone	**Total (miles)**	**Slope Less Than 15% (miles)[a]**	**Slope Less than 15% (percent)**	**Road Miles**
Co-applicants' Proposal				
Developed areas interface	6.8	.5	7%	.7
Back country	9.3	2.7	19%	4.0
Back country motorized use restricted	3.9	.3	9%	.5
Back country non-motorized	5.4	.7	14%	1.1
Outside Cleveland National Forest	4.1	.8	21%	1.3
Total	29.5	5.1	17%	7.6
Mid-slope Transmission Alignment				
Developed areas interface	8.8	1.0	11%	1.4
Back country	9.0	2.1	23%	3.1
Back country motorized use restricted	4.3	.8	17%	1.1

Cleveland National Forest Land Use Zone	Total (miles)	Slope Less Than 15% (miles)[a]	Slope Less than 15% (percent)	Road Miles
Back country non-motorized	2.8	.8	30%	1.2
Outside Cleveland National Forest	4.1	1.6	39%	2.4
Total	30.7	7.8	23%	10.3

[a] Each entry in this column represents miles of transmission line. Miles of new, temporary road would equal 1.5 times this number.

In terms of consistency with the Land Management Plan, the proposed transmission alignment would include the following attributes:

- Suitable uses—4.7 miles of road in the Developed Areas Interface and Back Country zones (although road construction is not encouraged in these zones);
- Uses suitable in designated areas—20.0 miles of major utility corridor in the Developed Areas Interface, Back Country, and Back Country Motorized Use Restricted zones;
- Uses suitable for authorized use—0.5 mile of road in the Back Country Motorized Use Restricted zone (although road construction is not encouraged in this zone); and
- Not-suitable uses—5.4 miles of transmission line and 1.1 mile of road in the Back Country Non-Motorized zone.

For the proposed transmission alignment, the co-applicants' proposal would introduce a permanent utility corridor and developed facilities into areas where they do not currently occur. The co-applicants' proposal to remove temporary access roads, recontour road beds to follow the original contour, and replant with native landscaping after construction would help prevent new public access to remote areas. Further, the proposal would help mitigate for the visual effects of road scars.

The USFS' preliminary 4(e) conditions would improve upon the co-applicants' proposal and would further assure that the co-applicants adequately rehabilitate temporary roads by closing roads where resource damage is occurring, maintaining roads to USFS standards, and developing and implementing a road management plan for USFS roads within the project boundary. These measures, in combination with the co-applicants' proposal, would help reduce the potential for long-term visual and land use issues that may occur from construction. Over time, the temporary construction roads associated with transmission line construction could return to use as wildlife habitat

and/or grazing lands after the co-applicants implement their proposed recontouring and revegetation program. Nonetheless, the co-applicants' proposed transmission line would not be consistent with the Land Management Plan land use zones insofar as 5.4 miles of transmission line and 1.1 mile of road would be routed through the Back Country Non-Motorized zone. A Land Management Plan amendment would be required before construction could occur on the proposed alignment. Avoiding the Back County Non-Motorized zone would not be feasible because the alignment is along the Cleveland National Forest boundary in those areas, and any re-routing would require either a major increase in the length of the line or shifting the alignment onto private land that has been and is continuing to be developed for residential uses.

Staff Alternative—As with the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site, the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site is located in the Developed Areas Interface zone, and would be a suitable land use for the zone.

The mid-slope transmission alignment crosses slightly more area of slopes less than 15 percent and would therefore allow for slightly more temporary road construction (9.3 miles) compared to the proposed route (7.6 miles). In terms of consistency with the Land Management Plan, the mid-slope transmission alignment would include the following attributes:

- Suitable uses—4.5 miles of road in the Developed Areas Interface and Back Country zones (although road construction is not encouraged in these zones);
- Uses suitable in designated areas—22.1 miles of major utility corridor in the Developed Areas Interface, Back Country, and Back Country Motorized Use Restricted zones;
- Uses suitable for authorized use—1.1 miles of road in the Back Country Motorized Use Restricted zone; and
- Not-suitable uses—2.8 miles of transmission line and 1.2 miles of road in the Back Country Non-Motorized zone.

Like the proposed transmission alignment, the mid-slope alignment would introduce a permanent utility corridor and developed facilities into areas where they do not currently occur. The effect of the co-applicants' road management plan and the USFS road management recommendations would be similar to those described for the co-applicants' proposal. While the mid-slope transmission alignment would reduce the number of miles of transmission line within the Back Country Non-Motorized zone (2.8 miles compared to 5.4 miles under the co-applicants' proposal), this alternative would still not be consistent with the Land Management Plan land use zones. As with the co-applicants' proposed alignment, a Land Management Plan amendment would be required before construction could occur on the mid-slope transmission alignment. Avoiding the Back Country Non-Motorized zone would not be feasible for the same reason cited for the co-applicants' proposal.

The cost estimate for road and traffic management plans is presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis,* and measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

Aesthetic Resources

Effects of Construction on Viewsheds

Construction and operation of the proposed project and alternatives would introduce new visual elements into the viewsheds of the Cleveland National Forest, San Mateo Wilderness Area, BLM lands, and the small villages along the western shore of Lake Elsinore. These would include views of pooled water at the upper reservoir, dams, power lines, and fences, graded landscapes and buildings.

Co-applicants' Proposal—Prior to any ground disturbing activities the co-applicants propose to file with the Commission plans to mitigate and minimize the effects of construction activities on the aesthetic environment. Additionally, the co-applicants propose to clear and re-vegetate the construction lay down area consistent with their intention to provide the USFS with a cleared and graded site that could then be developed for a future recreational use. The co-applicants also plan to landscape the face of the dam once construction is completed.

Effects Analysis

Overall, construction of the proposed upper reservoir, laydown area, and associated structures would directly affect approximately 150 acres of lands and would require about 3 million cubic feet of earthwork. Excavation of the water conduit tunnels would likely result in of the temporary storage of earthen materials at the 20- to 40-acre laydown area near the powerhouse. The upper reservoir construction activities would be limited to a single canyon near the point of entry into the Cleveland National Forest, which is at the urban-forest interface. Views of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site from South Main Divide Road would first appear to the public in the middleground (0.5 to 4 mile) and transition to the foreground (0 to 0.5 mile). Hikers on the Morgan Trail would have foreground views of the proposed upper reservoir.

Constructing the proposed upper reservoir at Morrell Canyon would negatively affect aesthetic resources by eliminating a natural appearing canyon with oak woodland vegetation and replacing it with a reservoir, perimeter dike, and chain link fence, as shown in graphic simulations prepared by the co-applicants (appendix D). Construction would entail using vehicles, trailers, equipment, materials, laborers, earthen debris, and fencing along South Main Divide Road near Morrell Canyon. The area would be de-vegetated, re-graded, leveled, barricaded, lined, and filled. Effects from construction on the visual resources would last for up to 3 years. This construction activity, while isolated to the single canyon, would be a condition where human alterations would be

extremely visually evident, which would be inconsistent with the High SIO set by the Cleveland National Forest for this area.

Geographic information system (GIS) viewshed modeling results for the finished dike, reservoir, and dam indicate that views from the foreground would see the structure while almost none of the middle ground viewpoints would capture views of it. Results indicate that about 12 to 24 percent of the upper reservoir could be seen from further distances (the majority east of Grand Avenue) (as shown in appendix D). The analysis also indicates that portions of the reservoir would be visible from within select areas of the San Mateo Wilderness in proximity to the site. It is unlikely that the number of people viewing the proposed reservoir from areas where the model would expect one to see over 60 percent of it is very high due to the remote, mountainous nature of those areas.

Construction would significantly alter the landscape character along South Main Divide Road and would dominate the foreground views along the road between Decker Canyon and Rancho Capistrano. Appendix D shows the complete GIS modeling analysis for the proposed reservoir and identifies the percentage of the reservoir visible from surrounding areas within 5 miles of the project area.

Traffic estimates provided by the co-applicants registered 515 vehicles on a single day in July 2002 at the intersection of South Main Divide Road and Ortega Highway. It is likely that the majority of these vehicles originate from the Rancho Capistrano residential community, located beyond the proposed upper reservoir site and these people would see the construction work on a daily basis for period of up to 3 years.

Because of its location on the ridge top and unobstructed setting, a portion of construction activities at the staging area and the perimeter dike would be visible from significant portions of the Lake Elsinore area and potentially from as far away as Interstate 15. The potential effect of these construction activities on noise levels in the project area are discussed in section 3.3.10.

Construction activities around the proposed powerhouse site would involve the excavation of approximately 776,000 cubic yards of soil from the water conduits, penstock, powerhouse cavern and shaft, transformer gallery, surge shaft, draft tubes, tailrace tunnels, and intake/outlet structure (see section 2.3.2, *Construction Sequence*, in *Co-applicants' Proposal*). Construction activities would also affect about 30 acres of the powerhouse site and another 20 acres for staging construction activities. The landform in this area would be leveled, excavated, and built into and transformed from open space to a functioning underground powerhouse with above ground switchyard and associated features. Effects from construction would be the presence of large excavation work, earthen debris, an open construction site and dust, noise and construction related traffic (discussed further in section 3.3.8, *Land Use*). These effects would last for the duration of the construction of these facilities (about 3 years). Excavation of the sediments to tunnel the inflow/outlet pipes to the powerhouse would occur within a cofferdam separating the

working area from the lake water, minimizing any effects to water resources as described in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*.

Construction of 30 miles of transmission lines and an estimated 167 towers would require access roads that have yet to be planned or surveyed. Constructing the access roads would cause visible scars, especially where there is side-casting of waste materials along the roads and where trees are felled. The presence of road cuts and transmission line would introduce linear elements into the predominately natural appearing mountain sides within the Cleveland National Forest. Furthermore, the vegetation type consists of generally low, brush type shrubs whose effectiveness at screening these tall and linear features would be marginal. The use of helicopters to install the transmission line towers would the effects of roads cut on scenic resources to about 6 miles. Appendix D shows the GIS modeling analysis that identifies the areas surrounding the proposed project that would afford views to portions of the proposed transmission alignments.

From the base of Lake Elsinore, except for those observers located in proximity to the proposed transmission alignment, views of the proposed transmission alignment would generally be in the middleground and in the background. Along Interstate 15, Ortega Highway, South Main Divide Road, and Wildomar Road, segments of the proposed transmission alignment are close to or cross these travelways. Consequently, there are numerous points where the transmission towers and corridors would be visible in the foreground, middleground, and background. The greatest amount of transmission line would be visible from the eastern shore of Lake Elsinore (see appendix D, figure 3). Construction activities within the Cleveland National Forest would result in features that conflict with the High SIO.

Construction of the proposed transmission alignment across BLM lands would introduce some cultural modification into the landscape, but not enough modification to justify a lower class rating.

Staff Alternative—The construction activities at the Decker Canyon site would be essentially the same as those proposed at the proposed Morrell Canyon site.[55] The existing aesthetic resources within Decker Canyon are similar to Morrell Canyon; however, the canyon lacks the landscape character of the mature trees present at Morrell Canyon. Construction of the upper reservoir at Decker Canyon would require a perimeter dike surrounding the site with a top elevation of 2,850 feet. At this elevation, portions of the dike would be about 50 feet above the surface grade of South Main Divide Road; however, the local topography consists of a peak adjacent to the site east of South Main Divide Road near the Edwards Launch Site that would block a considerable amount of the feature from viewers to the east. GIS viewshed modeling of the dike indicates that it would be less visible than the proposed Morrell Canyon site from vantage points east of

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[55] Appendix D presents visual simulations of the completed alternative upper reservoir that the co-applicants prepared.

Lake Elsinore and within the Interstate 15 corridor (see appendix D). Decker Canyon is more similar to San Juan Creek Canyon model results, indicating that a far greater amount of the reservoir would be visible from the west than the proposed Morrell Canyon site. Given the considerable distance and the relatively small size of the viewable amount of the feature compared to the whole mountain range, it is uncertain exactly what a viewer would perceive. If a viewer knew where and what to look for, the flat top of the dike would make it recognizable from such distances. Again, due to the remote nature and mountainous terrain it is unlikely that these areas receive large numbers of viewers. Modeling results of the dam indicate that the face would be potentially visible from a section of Ortega Highway to the northwest. Development of the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site would avoid the mature oak-woodland riparian area at Lion Spring.

Construction of the powerhouse at the Ortega Oaks site would result in similar effects on the aesthetic resources as described above with respect to the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site. Construction activity at the Ortega Oaks site would be visible from Ortega Highway and a small portion of Grand Avenue in Lakeland Village, two prominent viewpoints to commuters in the area. The co-applicants conducted a traffic analysis and counted 11,000 vehicles passing on Ortega Highway near this site on a single day in July. Construction work would be visible in the near and potentially middle grounds from viewers along Grand Avenue and would be clearly visible from vistas along South Main Divide Road within the forest above.

Construction of the mid-slope transmission alignment, as shown on figure 5, would result in similar construction related effects on the aesthetic resources as the proposed transmission alignment. The mid-slope alignment would be situated almost entirely within the High SIO. Transmission lines would be placed lower on the mountains, reducing the amount of access roads necessary to place the towers that, in turn, would reduce the amount of visible scarring of the mountain side from road construction. The use of helicopters to install transmission line towers where slopes are greater than 15 percent would further limit the amount of access roads necessary to construct the transmission line and the effects of new road cuts on scenic resources. Transmission lines would be clearly visible from vistas along South Main Divide Road. Viewshed model results indicate slightly fewer viewable areas as compared to the proposed transmission alignment with the most significant percentage of the feature visible from the east part of the lake and shoreline (appendix D).

Construction of the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would involve the same construction techniques as building the rest of the 27 or so miles of line; however, transmission lines would run directly up the face of the mountains, parallel the top of the mountains just west of the ridgeline, and descend the mountains behind a prominent ridgeline, which connects with either the proposed or mid-slope alternatives. Because portions of this route would traverse both the face and near the top of the ridgeline, construction activities would be visible from almost all key observation points (within the forest, Lake Elsinore, and along the Interstate 15 corridor). Viewshed modeling was performed on the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission

alignment, but because it is only a segment, it is difficult to directly compare the results with the proposed alternatives. This alternative's position on the ridgeline affords the viewer sightlines to a significant portion of the structure from areas surrounding Lake Elsinore. Construction activities would last for about 2 years.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction of the powerhouse at the Evergreen site would result in similar effects on the aesthetic resources as described above with respect to the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

Effects of Operation on Viewsheds

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose a design for the upper reservoir at Morrell Canyon that calls for a water surface elevation slightly higher than the nearby South Main Divide Road. The perimeter dike would be fenced along the top.

The co-applicants propose to fill the upper reservoir at night and use the stored water during daylight hours to meet regional electricity needs. The upper reservoir would be at its fullest on a Sunday and lowest on a Friday. The upper reservoir would fluctuate approximately 40 feet per day, exposing the geo-membrane liner system.

The co-applicants propose to prepare a plan to avoid or minimize disturbances to the quality of the existing visual resources of the project area.

Effects Analysis

Under the co-applicants' proposal, the upper reservoir, dam, dike, spillway, fencing, and additionally related structures would introduce industrial elements into the natural appearance of Morrell Canyon and be visible from South Main Divide Road for approximately 0.25 to 0.5 mile in either direction of the project.[56] Views of the reservoir would be visible from portions of the Morrell Canyon Trail just inside the San Mateo Wilderness Area boundary and from points off South Main Divide Road with appropriate vantage points. The proposed upper reservoir would introduce line, colors, and textures into the landscape that do not currently exist, and this would not be consistent with the High SIO. The reservoir surface would fluctuate throughout the day and the geomembrane liner would be visible at the top 40 feet of the reservoir at maximum drawdown. As discussed above, the presence and operation of the upper reservoir would alter the landscape character along the forest-urban interface with the alteration of the naturally appearing environment.

The Morgan Trail would be re-aligned around the proposed dam, giving hikers clear line of sight of the earthen dam and surrounding dike. Recreation estimates

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[56] It should be noted that the water within the reservoir may not be readily visible from directly adjacent to the reservoir from South Main Divide Road because of the constructed berm that rises above the road grade blocking views of the reservoir surface.

mentioned in section 3.3.6, *Recreation Resources*, indicate that the trail receives very low use levels (typically 2 vehicles in the trailhead parking lot on peak weekends).

The upper reservoir would be most visible in the foreground and middle ground distances with diminished visibility proportional to distance. As mentioned above, viewshed analysis results indicate that the perimeter dike would be visible from areas below the mountain ridge (far ground), but the modeling does not take into account the quality of the object at each distance. Given the distance between the Interstate 15 corridor and the obstructed view of the upper reservoir, it is unlikely that the majority of the public would be able to discern the feature with the naked eye. The visual contrast the dam would pose to the canyon and surroundings would be minimally reduced by the co-applicants' proposed planting of the front of the dam with native vegetation. Designing a perimeter dike that would incorporate native vegetation similar to the surroundings could work in concealing its purpose to viewers beyond the mountain ridge (far ground). Regardless, the proposed upper reservoir would still introduce line, colors, and textures into the landscape that do not currently exist and would not be consistent with the High SIO designation.

The majority of the constructed powerhouse would be located underground, minimizing the visibility of the structure from neighboring areas. Re-vegetating the parcel as proposed by the co-applicants would restore the landscape to pre-construction conditions. It is expected that implementation of a re-vegetation plan developed in consultation with the USFS would result in post-construction landscape that would have the potential to improve the aesthetic resources over the existing conditions, depending on the level of effort put into landscape design. The switchyard would be fenced and most visible within the neighborhood (foreground and middle ground); however, due to the residential developments, it would not likely be visible from great distances that share similar elevations. The switchyard would be visible from vistas along the ridgeline in the same way that buildings are visible below.

Project operations would cause the surface of Lake Elsinore to fluctuate by 1 foot per day and 1.7 feet per week, which would result in the exposure of up to 120 acres of shoreline. Project operations could change the composition of shoreline vegetation and the water quality as discussed in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources,* and 3.3.4, *Terrestrial Resources,* respectively, which would also affect the aesthetics of the shoreline. The presence of buoys placed in Lake Elsinore to warn boaters of the intake/output structures would be a new feature to the water surface. The lake currently has six axial turbines floating on the surface as part of a water quality enhancement project, which are much larger than warning buoys. The buoys would be visible from the water and portions of the shoreline closest to them.

The presence of the proposed transmission alignment and associated access roads across the landscape would be visually evident from numerous viewpoints. This alteration would strongly affect the landscape character. The transmission alignment would be most visible from the vistas off of South Main Divide Road (almost directly

into the lines) and routes within Lake Elsinore and Lakeland Village. GIS modeling indicates the alignment would be visible from much of the Interstate 15 corridor as well, but what is not clear is at what definition, considering the distance, irregular background, and atmospheric haze, which develops throughout much of the year. Over the term of the license, maintenance crews would maintain a fire break below the lines, and these fire breaks also would be apparent as a scar across the native vegetation. The linear features of the lines would contrast with the mountain and, within the Cleveland National Forest, would be in conflict with the SIOs. The towers, conductors, and resulting footprint of the corridor would be visible from highly traveled roadways (Ortega Highway, South Main Divide Road, and Interstate 15) as well as from points around the densely populated community of Lake Elsinore.

Staff Alternative—Views of the dike, perimeter fence, and dam would be clearly visible from South Main Divide Road. The top of the dike would be about 50 feet above the road surface adjacent to the reservoir making views into it from such close proximity nearly impossible. Views into the reservoir would only be possible from portions of South Main Divide Road and within the San Mateo Wilderness above the dike line of sight (foreground and middle ground views). Construction of the upper reservoir at Decker Canyon would introduce line, colors, and textures into the landscape that do not currently exist and this would not be consistent with the High SIO. As mentioned above under construction effects, viewshed modeling results indicate that a portion would be visible over the ridgeline to viewers on Interstate 15. If the perimeter dike were vegetated with native flora similar to the surroundings, it would be difficult to distinguish it at points along Interstate 15.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be located underground and out of obvious view to vehicles passing on adjacent roads. The switchyards, however, would be fenced above ground and visible. Operations at the Ortega Oaks site would be more visible in general because of the proximity of and sight lines from Ortega Highway west of its intersection with Grand Avenue. Any additional noise or effects of noise on the audible environment are discussed in section 3.3.10, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Air Quality and Noise*.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would produce similar effects to those discussed above under construction and operation of the proposed transmission alignment; however, because the alignment would be lower down on the mountain, it would require less road development, reducing the human alteration of the landscape. In some areas, the mid-slope transmission alignment would be outside the forests SIOs altogether avoiding potential conflict between the lines presence and SIO management. Because the mid-slope transmission alignment would be closer to the communities of Lakeland Village and Lake Elsinore, vegetation may obstruct sight lines from the foreground.

The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be visible to most viewpoints along Grand Avenue and Interstate 15. The linear nature of the lines

going up the ridgeline to the top of the mountains would be a contrast to the existing character; however, the presence of Ortega Highway and the linear nature of the road cutting across the mountains would be the other most noticeable alteration in the area. The transmission alignment would parallel South Main Divide and even traverse it for about 0.5 mile before descending a ravine to the south to tie into the proposed alternative. The mid-slope transmission alignment would not be in direct view from South Main Divide Road vistas looking east. The lines on top of the mountains would likely be visible from the Interstate 15 corridor if conditions cooperate.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site would be located underground and out of obvious view to vehicles passing on adjacent roads. The switchyards, however, would be fenced above ground and visible. Any additional noise or effects of noise on the audible environment are discussed in section 3.3.10, *Environmental Consequences*, in *Air Quality and Noise*.

Effects of Construction on Odors

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants' proposal would require work to be performed in Lake Elsinore and the removal of 200,000 cubic yards of bottom sediments in order to place the intake/outflow structure. These activities could potentially release unpleasant odors. The decomposition of organic material in the lower water column and sediments in oxygen-free conditions would be the likely source of foul-smelling gasses originating from the lake. Disturbance of the water column or sediment could release enough gasses to cause a noticeable smell in the air.

Effects Analysis

The disturbance of bottom sediments could potentially release unpleasant smelling gasses into the water column that could escape into the atmosphere. Lake Elsinore is a highly eutrophic lake that experiences large algae blooms. When the algae die, they sink to the bottom where they decompose. The decomposition occurs more quickly in the presence of oxygen but the lake often becomes stratified and the bottom waters become anoxic (oxygen starved). Under these conditions, decomposition occurs at a much slower rate so the sediments become filled with organic material faster than it can be broken down. The organic matter and gasses associated with its breakdown become trapped at the bottom. Exposing the sediments and bottom material to the atmosphere would allow the material to breakdown. The removal of the sediments from the water to the shore would expedite the off-gassing process, possibly producing a concentrated or objectionably smelling gas plume. These effects are expected to be short term because they could only last as long as construction activities were needed or at sometime before that as the sediments released all the poor smelling gasses. The communities adjacent to the construction would be at the most risk to receive unpleasant odors from this portion of the project; however, distant communities even across the Lake could potentially be affected, depending on the wind patterns and concentrations at the time of gas release.

Although the air may become poor smelling, these gasses are not expected to be toxic in anyway.

Construction of the proposed upper reservoir site and proposed transmission alignment is not expected to cause any nuisance odors.

Staff Alternative—Construction of the upper reservoir at Decker Canyon is not expected to cause any nuisance odors.

Nuisance odors would originate from the disturbance and storage of Lake Elsinore bottom sediments. Storage of these materials at the Ortega Oaks construction laydown area could potentially affect a much larger population of individuals who commute along Ortega Highway each day as the pile of debris off-gasses. The level of effect would depend on the amount of organic material stored in the sediments and the wind patterns.

Construction of the mid-slope transmission alignments is not expected to cause any nuisance odors.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The potential effects of odor at the Evergreen powerhouse site would be similar to the other powerhouse locations.

Effects of Operations on Odors

Co-applicants' Proposal—As mentioned in section 3.3.4.1, participants during scoping identified the potential for the proposed upper reservoir to cause unpleasant odors, especially when empty, as a resource issue that should be addressed in the EIS. Operation would require the transfer of Lake Elsinore water, which historically has had nuisance odors, to the upper reservoir areas, which are currently void of any large-scale sources of unpleasant odors.

Effects Analysis

Foul smelling odors have been associated with Lake Elsinore water many times throughout the past. The odor most likely originates when the water column turns over meaning that the bottom waters are mixed and brought to the surface releasing gasses with unpleasant odors. The breakdown of organic matter under oxygen-free conditions often found at the bottom of the Lake during the summer is the most likely source of the gases.

The potential for water within the upper reservoir to release unpleasant odors in the future is minimal due to lake stabilization and enhancement efforts, water quality improvement programs, and operations of the proposed project. The Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project is designed to eliminate conditions that promote the growth of algae in Lake Elsinore, and allow low DO conditions to persist at the lake bottom. The water quality improvement efforts are designed to introduce more oxygen into lake waters and control the amount of nutrients entering the lake. Operation of the project would additionally mix the lake waters preventing conditions that would allow the odors to set up. Together these efforts would benefit the water quality (as discussed in

greater detail in section 3.3.2, *Water Resources*), which would have a positive effect on the aesthetics by reducing the risk of unpleasant odors. For these reasons unpleasant odors would not be released from Lake Elsinore or the upper reservoir due to operations.

Electromagnetic Field Effects

The term electromagnetic field (EMF) is used to describe the combination of electric and magnetic fields that are created by electric voltage and electric currents. As electric currents move through electrical devices such as those used in households and work places, magnetic fields are created. Electric fields are then created by the potential voltage or electrical pressure that is applied on an object. Electric fields can exert force on other electrical charges at a given distance, becoming stronger when near a charged object and diminishing when moved away, with the electric field measured by the change in voltage over distance (volts per meter, V/m). Because of the relationship between electric current and magnetic fields, exposure to magnetic fields is common wherever electricity is used.

In the United States, most equipment used for generating, transmitting, or distributing electrical power produce extremely low frequency magnetic and electric fields (60 Hertz [Hz]). The electric and magnetic energy given off by power lines and substations is comparable, if not equivalent, to that given off by standard household appliances. However, some studies have purported to find a positive relationship between electromagnetic fields and certain diseases or conditions in animals, including humans (World Health Organization, 2002).

In January 1991, the California Public Utility Commission began an investigation of the potential health effects that their electric utility power lines might cause by generating EMFs. The study considered potential health effects that included childhood cancer and chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Although the California Public Utility Commission found little supporting evidence, in 1993, the California Public Utility Commission adopted seven interim measures to address public concern and research programs about EMF. Similar studies conducted by the National Research Council, Commission on Life Sciences (1997), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS, 1998) and Department of Health Services (DHS) (2002) had equally inconclusive findings, which led the U.S. Department of the Interior (2003) to state, "[t]here is a consensus among the medical and scientific communities that there is insufficient evidence to conclude EMF causes adverse health effects."

Regardless of these findings, which indicate a lack of evident harm not only to people but to animals and plants as well, the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that there is "sufficient evidence" to apply a "precautionary principle" to both power and high-frequency electromagnetic fields to help protect from uncertain risks. WHO supported its position by stating:

> …If the risk is eventually found not to exist, it may be that any measures undertaken will not have protected health and some

resources will have been spent unnecessarily. However, this outcome is often more acceptable than one where public health measures were delayed or neglected because a risk was thought not to exist, but was eventually shown to be both real and substantial.

Effects of Operation on EMF

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants do not propose any measures to address EMF associated with project operation.

As part of scoping, Lake Ellsinore Unified School District commented that the Commission should evaluate potential effects of the project on EMFs created from the generation and transmission of electricity from the project.

Effects Analysis

Operation of the proposed project would contain several elements that would generate EMFs, including the proposed powerhouse and substation at the Santa Rosa site, the transmission line along the northern and southern segments of the proposed transmission alignment, and the proposed substations along the proposed transmission alignment. The EMF strengths that would be generated would be typical for similar generation and transmission facilities.

The area near the Upper Reservoir would not produce any substantial EMF, as there would only be low voltage electricity supply to power lights and simple machinery at the reservoir.

EMF intensity would be more substantial at the Santa Rosa powerhouse, where generators would produce project electricity, the substation would adjust voltage to the transmission system, and the transmission system would carry electricity to the grid. However, much of the transmission facility, as well as the powerhouse, would be underground, which would help to contain magnetic fields. As described in section 3.3.7.1, *Affected Environment, Land Use*, the area surrounding the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse and substation site is characterized by a mix of single-family and multi-family residences and an elementary school. Single-family residences and various commercial, industrial, and transportation uses occur within 0.5 mile of the northern and southern segments of the proposed transmission alignment. Because the literature to date provides little evidence supporting the contention that EMFs from high-voltage transmission lines or electrical generating facilities have adverse effects on wildlife, plants, or humans, we would expect that there would be no adverse effects associated with the EMF intensities at the proposed powerhouse, substations, or transmission line.

The proposed transmission alignment would cross private residences near the project development and then enter more rural and undeveloped lands associated with the Cleveland National Forest. The high-voltage transmission line could produce EMF through the right-of-way. However, because the literature to date provides little evidence supporting the contention that EMFs from high-voltage transmission lines have adverse

effects on wildlife, plants, or humans, we would expect that there would be no adverse effects associated with the EMF intensities at the proposed transmission alignment.

Staff Alternative—Operation of the upper reservoir at the Decker Canyon site would have no effect on EMF.

Land uses near the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site include single- and multi-family residences, commercial properties, and vacant land. For the same reasons noted above, we would expect that there would be no adverse effects associated with the EMF intensities at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse and substation.

Land uses along the mid-slope transmission alignment are similar to those along the proposed alignment; that is, single-family residences and various commercial, industrial, and transportation uses. For the same reasons note above, we conclude that there would be no adverse effects associated with the EMF intensities of the high-voltage transmission lines if they were located along the mid-slope transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—We would expect that there would be no adverse effects associated with the EMF intensities at the Evergreen powerhouse and substation.

Traffic Circulation and Management

The Lake Elsinore area is accessible by Interstate 15 from the north and south and by Ortega Highway from the west. Orange County has designated Ortega Highway as a primary arterial highway and the state of California has designated Ortega Highway as a CA Legal Advisory Route—Kingpin to Rear Axle (KPRA) not to exceed 30 feet. This state determination allows for CA Legal trucks only; however, travel is not advised if KPRA length is over the posted value. The proposed upper reservoir site would be accessed via South Main Divide Road, a county-maintained, paved, two-lane road with access off of Ortega Highway. The intersection of South Main Divide Road and Ortega Highway is stop-sign controlled. South Main Divide Road provides access to the upper mountainous areas within the Cleveland National Forest as well as to the residents who live in the Rancho Capistrano (Morrell Potero) residential community and other unincorporated areas. The paved road continues south along the mountain ridge to the upper reservoir site. Beyond Elsinore Peak the road becomes a single-lane, dirt road and continues to the community of Tenaja. This portion of South Main Divide Road would be used for vehicular access to the southern transmission alignment.

The proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site and Evergreen powerhouse site would be primarily accessed via smaller side streets, all leading upslope from Grand Avenue, which generally runs north-south along the western edge of Lake Elsinore through Lakeland Village. Grand Avenue is divided by a two-way left turning lane. Ortega Highway intersects Grand Avenue less than 1 mile north from the proposed powerhouse at an all way stop control. The posted speed limit just north of this intersection is 40 mph. Grand Avenue connects with roadways that provide access to and from the

Interstate 15 and Lake Elsinore. The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would be located just off the Ortega Highway, upslope of Grand Avenue.

Access to the proposed transmission lines south of Ortega Highway could use portions of the South Main Divide Road but complete installation would require the construction of new road spurs. Access to the proposed transmission lines north of Ortega Highway could be via Interstate 15, Forest Route 3S04, local and county roads, and roads constructed for the project. All project-related traffic would access the project area via the two aforementioned highway routes and would then continue to either the upper reservoir along South Main Divide Road or to the powerhouse via Grand Avenue.

The co-applicant conducted a traffic analysis and reported recent traffic volumes for the five road segments and one intersection potentially affected by the proposed project (segments near Ortega Highway-South Main Divide Road and Ortega Highway-Grand Avenue). Two key findings of this traffic analysis were:

1. Under existing conditions, the street (and highway) segments that would be affected by the proposed project are currently all operating at acceptable level of service (LOS) during both morning and evening peak hours. The Grand/Ortega intersection currently warrants installation of a traffic signal, which if installed would result in acceptable LOS.
2. Under the existing conditions plus ambient growth scenario (assessed by applying a growth rate of 2 percent per year [compounded] to existing traffic volumes over the 7-year period from 2003 to 2010), the five street segments are expected to maintain their acceptable LOS. The Ortega Highway-Grand Avenue intersection worsens to a LOS rating of "E," however, indicating that the intersection would require improvement beyond the addition of the traffic signal.

The co-applicants' construction traffic analysis was based on assumed trip generation and distribution patterns up to year 2010 conditions. The co-applicants have stated that their analyses are not for one specific project scenario but rather there is a split in trip assignments between various sites to account for "varying construction scenarios." Trip generation analyses within the study assumed that 76 trucks (38 in and 38 out) or 152 passenger vehicles could be accommodated during any particular hour, by the projected year 2010 conditions on the surrounding road system, without a drop in LOS below "C." The above analysis does not assign trip distributions nor does it account for concurrent truck traffic. In other words, only theoretical maximum truck traffic was calculated against the LOS rating system.

Existing roadway design capacities, volumes, and proposed construction trip generation numbers for each of the five road segments for both morning and evening peak hours are shown in table 26. The study used these maximum trip numbers without a drop in LOS as the baseline for trip assignments. Although a 25 percent buffer was added to create a conservative, worst-case scenario, this analysis does not entirely assess the likely traffic created by specific construction activities such as the clay import needs or hauling of excavated soils off site.

Table 26. Trip assignments for each of the five road segments analyzed by the co-applicants. (Source: Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a, as modified by staff)

Road Segment	Hour	Capacity	Existing + Ambient Growth Volume	Estimated Project Related Increase in Volume	Projected LOS
Ortega Highway east of South Main Divide Road	a.m. peak	2,000	1,417	140	"C"
	p.m. peak	2,100	1,187	140	"B"
Ortega Highway west of South Main Divide Road	a.m. peak	2,000	1,417	10	"C"
	p.m. peak	2,100	1,187	0	"A"
Ortega Highway west of Grand Avenue	a.m. peak	2,300	1,438	140	"B"
	p.m. peak	2,300	1,115	140	"A"
Grand Avenue south of Ortega Highway	a.m. peak	2,300	1,239	110	"A"
	p.m. peak	2,500	1,587	110	"B"
South Main Divide Road south of Ortega Highway.	a.m. peak	2,100	36	150	"A"
	p.m. peak	2,500	59	150	"A"

Note: LOS – level of service

Effects of Construction on Existing Traffic Circulation, Patterns, and Congestion

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose that there would be a balance between the excavated and fill material throughout the project site. To achieve this balance, material excavated at the lower project sites would be transported by trucks to the upper reservoir to construct the impoundment dam. To mitigate potential effects on the traffic resources at the Grand Avenue/Ortega Highway intersection, the co-applicants propose either of the following: (1) add a second left turn lane to the Ortega

Highway intersection approach to address the high number of left turns on to Ortega Highway from Grand Avenue, or (2) add a through lane on Grand Avenue (for a total of two) in both directions, at the Grand/Ortega intersection.

The co-applicants also propose to prepare traffic management and control plans addressing both construction traffic and access to and from the construction sites. Affected public agencies would approve the plans prior to filing them with the Commission. Plans would identify signs, striping, barricades, flagmen, roadway modifications, and other safety measures. At all times, traffic access along South Main Divide Road would be maintained. If limited distance single-lane traffic is required, appropriate one-way traffic control would be implemented.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 27, *Road and Traffic Management Plan*, specifies that the co-applicants develop and implement a plan for the management of all USFS and unclassified roads required by the co-applicants to access the project area. The plan would include provisions for the following: (1) the identification of such roads; (2) a map of such roads with digital spatial data accurate to within 40 feet; (3) a description of each such road segments; (4) cooperation with the USFS in the preparation of a condition survey and proposed maintenance; (5) maintenance of roads to appropriate state or county standard; (6) appropriate authorizations for access; and (7) determination of the co-applicants' responsibility for road maintenance and repair costs commensurate with the co-applicants' and project-induced use.

Effects Analysis

During construction, a wide range of vehicles, including heavy trucks used to transport materials and equipment between the powerhouse and the upper reservoir sites, would use South Main Divide Road, Ortega Highway and Grand Avenue as well as other auxiliary roads depending on final design plans. The co-applicants state there would be temporary construction-related traffic effects from the estimated 2,460 person-years of employment during construction; however, the co-applicants' also note that they are unclear on which alternative project configuration would be constructed and do not state their assumptions in deriving this estimate of person-years.

The largest portion of construction traffic would involve the transport of soil and rock material excavated from proposed project features for use in the upper dam and dike construction. This material would be generated by excavation activities associated with the powerhouse, conduit, penstocks, tailrace tunnel and intake structure. Because the co-applicants propose to achieve a balance between excavation and fill at the project site, fill material would need to be hauled to the upper reservoir site. Depending on the final dam design, clay may also need to be hauled in from off-site locations.

The co-applicants estimate that the roadways could accommodate up to 38 trucks in each direction during peak driving hours and not experience a drop in LOS. Under the co-applicants' proposal, the 590,000 cubic yards of extra fill material not used for back

fill around the powerhouse would need to be trucked to the upper reservoir (see section 2.3, *Co-applicants' Proposal*). Because Ortega Highway is designated CA-Legal KPRA-30, truck traffic is regulated by California Vehicle Code that specifies allowable gross weight limits for trucks by the distance between the first and last axles. This analysis assumes the distance between axles is 27 feet. At 27 feet, the maximum gross weight allowed is 56,950 pounds (Caltrans, 2005a). Assuming an empty hauling truck weighs 40,000 pounds, the haul load could weigh 16,950 pounds. Assuming the excavated earth weighs 2,100 pounds per cubic yard[57], each truck would haul about 8 cubic yards of material. This equates to approximately 73,750 truck loads, which using the co-applicants' volume estimates for peak hour times for the entire day, the maximum number of one-way trucks available to haul material away would be at 288 truck loads[58] per day. As such, it would take about 256 days to haul the material from the bottom sites to the upper reservoir area. Total truck traffic would be twice this amount because trucks would likely be running both directions.

It should be noted that the co-applicants' study did not evaluate the co-applicants specific proposal, effects on pavement, effects on the side streets that lead to the Santa Rosa powerhouse site, or to the likely construction staging area on the shoreline of Lake Elsinore. Furthermore, the study was based on traffic counts from a single day in July and may not capture an accurate picture of traffic volume and patterns (e.g., lack of school-related traffic patterns).

If the co-applicants were to excavate an additional 10 feet from the upper reservoir for necessary fill requirements rather than transport material from the lower excavations, the co-applicants would not need to haul the 590,000 cubic yards of material up Ortega Highway. Instead, the excavated material could be staged at the powerhouse area for removal to disposal sites accessible from Interstate 15. By stockpiling the material at the staging area, the timing to remove the material would not be as critical. Additionally, Decker Canyon has negligible overburden, so soils could easily be excavated to greater depths to satisfy fill requirements

Ortega Highway between Grand Avenue and Interstate 15 is level and has multiple lanes and does not have any special restrictions on truck lengths. Using a truck with an axle to axle length of 40 feet (middle of the truck spectrum), the gross weight limit would be 60,000 pounds[59]. Assuming an empty hauling truck weighs 40,000 pounds, the haul

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[57] Dry excavated earth weighs about 2,100 pounds per cubic yard (Reade Advanced Materials, 2005, as modified by staff).

[58] This assumes a one-way peak-hour maximum of 36 trucks for every hour in an 8-hour work day.

[59] The California Vehicle Code Axle Group Weight Chart uses 40 feet for a 3-axel configuration as the distance (in feet) between the extremes of any group of two or more consecutive axles.

load could weigh 20,000 pounds, so each truck could haul about 9.5 cubic yards of earthen material. At this removal efficiency, it would take about 62,000 truck trips. Again, assuming traffic flow would not decrease below LOS "C" at 288 trucks per day, it would take about 215 days of steady truck traffic (8 hours a day, 7 days a week) to remove the excavated material from the powerhouse-staging area site. This route uses streets that are level and have more than one lane to allow other vehicles to pass. Total truck traffic would be twice this amount because trucks would likely run in both directions.[60]

The co-applicants state that an impervious clay core may be required for upper reservoir construction. The source of the material is specified by the co-applicants as the Pacific Clay site in Alberhill, northeast of the project area; however, the quantity of clay fill is not stated. Therefore, for the purposes of assessing truck trips and traffic, it is assumed that clay would make up 5 percent of the total fill volume. Thus, the upper reservoir sites would require at most 150,000 cubic yards of clay product delivered to the site. An additional option proposed by the co-applicants would be to import bentonite clay and mix it with materials present at the site (at an unspecified ratio) to produce an impervious core. For this assessment, a worst-case assessment of clay importation from Alberhill is assumed, and the effects of importing bentonite to the site would be less. Once fill sources, volumes, and dam designs are finalized, better trip generation estimates could be made.

Assuming clay is required to line the bottom of the upper reservoir and using the same 288 number of one way trips, it would take about 21,500 hauling trips to get 150,000 cubic yards from Alberhill to the upper reservoir[61] (accounting for the return trip would double this number). This equals about 75 days and could be completed within the co-applicants' proposed construction schedule. If 36 trucks were allowed to pass through each segment an hour that would equate to 1 truck almost every 2minutes. If it took each truck 20 to 30 minuets to get from the Grand Avenue/Ortega Highway intersection to the

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[60] This estimate is consistent with the co-applicants' proposal construction schedule for excavating the tunnel/powerhouse and preparing the upper reservoir as provided in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro (2004a, exhibit c).

[61] The California Vehicle Code specifies allowable gross weight limits for trucks by the distance between the first and last axles. Because Ortega Highway is designated CA-Legal KPRA-30, the analysis here assumes the distance between axles is 27 feet to account for the difference between the kingpin and axel. At 27 feet, the maximum gross weight allowed is 56,950 pounds (Caltrans, 2005a). Assuming an empty hauling truck weighs 40,000 pounds, the haul load could weigh 16,950 pounds. A mix of wet and dry excavated clay weighs about 2,500 pounds per cubic yard (Reade Advanced Materials, 2005, as modified by staff), so each truck would haul about 7 cubic yards of clay material.

South Main Divide Road/Ortega Highway intersection there would be about 10 to 15 trucks on the highway (in both directions) at the same time during construction hours. Existing truck traffic information is not contained within the co-applicants' study for comparison with this potential effect.

Adherence to the co-applicants' traffic control plan that specified priority hauling times and controlled traffic volume necessary to haul the clay material to the site would help alleviate congestion along Grand Avenue, South Main Divide Road, and Ortega Highway (including beyond the intersection with Grand Avenue to the Interstate 15). According to the Caltrans Highway Design Manual as cited in the *SR-74 Ortega Highway Safety Improvements IS/EA*, the definition of LOS "C" for two-lane highways is "stable traffic flow, but less freedom to select speed, change lanes, or pass" and an operating speed of 45 mph (Caltrans, 2005b). Ortega Highway is a steep, winding, two-lane highway and having 10 to 15 fully loaded trucks on the highway at the same time would undoubtedly reduce drivers' freedom to select speed. Implementation of a traffic plan that sets clear travel limits as to the quantity and timing of allowable truck travel would help minimize construction interruptions along the various routes allowing nearby residents to proceed with limited delay.

Residents of Rancho Capistrano would be subject to truck traffic and could experience delays or regulated travel depending on final construction and traffic plans. Effects from construction would last throughout the construction phases for an estimated 4 years. There would be some very minor traffic effects from the arrival and departure of employees.

Traffic along Grand Avenue could be affected if special handling of lakebed materials is needed. Excavations from the bottom of Lake Elsinore could produce sediment material with toxic properties. If special handling of the material is required, this could generate additional effects on traffic resources depending on the final disposal site and preferred route.

Construction of transmission lines and associated substations would also have some traffic-related effects. However, given the relatively remote location for these activities and the use of helicopters to install transmission towers, traffic capacity of affected roadways is not anticipated to be a critical issue. However, the size/logistics of the materials and trucks to transport the construction materials for the construction of the transmission lines and substations would be the primary traffic resource factor to address.

Effects of Construction on Road Pavement

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants acknowledge and a number of individuals commented that the construction traffic associated with building the proposed project could affect pavement. The co-applicants state that if affected agencies determine that the project's construction is required to address effects on the pavement due to construction truck traffic, it should be addressed through some form of program that assesses all pertinent vehicles contribution to the overall pavement impacts.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 27, *Road and Traffic Management Plan*, would require the co-applicants to develop and implement a plan for the management of all USFS and unclassified roads required by the co-applicants to access the project area. As mentioned above, the plan would include provisions for such items as inventorying preconstruction road conditions; maintenance of roads to appropriate state or county standard; and a determination of the co-applicants' responsibility for road maintenance and repair costs commensurate with the co-applicants' and project-induced use.

Effects Analysis

Although grading quantities in the areas of the proposed upper reservoir have been designed to be balanced, there could potentially be a significant number of trucks hauling dirt between the proposed powerhouse to the upper reservoir site and to other off-site locations. Based on the potentially large number of heavy truck trips generated by the proposed actions, the effects on pavement could be substantial—particularly on smaller roads such as South Main Divide Road and roads used for transmission line installations that are not engineered for substantial, repetitive, heavy truck traffic. Potential effects could begin as breaks in the pavement, which when combined with continued heavy use and precipitation, could exacerbate the roads conditions.

A road management plan, as specified by the USFS, would help document current (pre-construction) road conditions within the context of ensuring that the roads would be maintained for users after construction. The details of how each bulleted item would be satisfied are expected to be part of the overall plan.

Staff Alternative—The effects related to roads and traffic for the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site are essentially the same as the co-applicants' proposal. The one exception is that the Decker Canyon site is located slightly closer to Ortega Highway, and therefore the total number of miles traveled on South Main Divide Road by construction traffic would be less. In addition, a slightly shorter distance of South Main Divide Road pavement would be affected by construction traffic.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse location would produce less traffic through the Grand Avenue-Ortega Highway intersection because the site is located up the Ortega Highway to the west. Therefore, a signal and improvements at the Grand Avenue-Ortega Highway intersection may not be needed. However, loaded trucks leaving the site will be entering the Ortega Highway (westbound) from a complete stop. Because the Ortega Highway maintains a relatively steep and consistent gradient, it would seem that loaded trucks will be moving much slower than through-traffic at this location, making it potentially difficult for the trucks to enter the roadway. Further, because of the sustained grade, the trucks would require some distance to get up to speed. Adoption of a traffic control plan or signal with provisions to manage truck traffic leaving the Ortega Oaks site would help traffic flow. In addition, truck traffic to and from the tailrace construction

area would still utilize the Grand Avenue-Ortega Highway intersection and assessment of this incremental portion of total truck traffic would still need to be evaluated.

The effects of construction for the mid-slope transmission line corridors would be essentially the same as that of the co-applicants' proposal. The only exception may be a somewhat greater reliance on county and private roads for the construction of the transmission lines, and a concurrent decrease in the need for use of USFS roads. Therefore, traffic effects may be increased for residents living off these county and private roadways, and decreased through the forest road network. This conclusion is a generalization made absent a specific proposal for transmission line access road locations by the co-applicants, and could be different based on final designs if a license were issued.

The majority of effects from construction of the southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment would be the same as those under the above-mentioned transmission alignments; however, tower and line placement along South Main Divide Road would use the existing road and not require new road construction. New road construction (where accessible) would be required to the north and south of this segment of this alternative to construct the transmission lines.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction of the Evergreen powerhouse would produce many of the same effects as the co-applicants' proposal. Effects on the pavement would be the same for South Main Divide Road and through the Grand Avenue-Ortega Highway intersection. Therefore, a signal and improvement analysis at the Grand Avenue-Ortega Highway intersection would be required. Because the Evergreen powerhouse site is the most southerly site along Grand Avenue, trucks would have to drive a longer stretch of Grand Avenue than under the proposed action as effects on the pavement caused by truck traffic would occur over a greater length of road.

Effects of Operation

Traffic generated during project operations would be minor. There would be few employees and/or other traffic generators associated with actual project operations. If licensed, once the project begins operating, the approximately 20 project employees would generate only minimal traffic mostly related to periodic trips by supply and maintenance vehicles. Traffic generated during operation of the proposed hydropower project and any associated effects would be minor. Increases in traffic from recreation use at the lower powerhouse park site (or any lake access areas) are anticipated to be minimal.

The cost estimates pertaining to the road management and traffic plan are presented in section 4.0, *Developmental Analysis,* and measures included in the staff alternative are discussed in section 5.2, *Discussion of Key Issues.*

3.3.7.3 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

The presence of the transmission line along either the co-applicants' proposed alignment or the alternative alignments would permanently alter the condition of Cleveland National Forest land use zones, and would be inconsistent with the Land Management Plan insofar as they cross the Back Country Non-Motorized zone.

3.3.8 Socioeconomic Resources

3.3.8.1 Affected Environment

All proposed and alternative project facility locations except for portions of the transmission alignments would be in Riverside County, the fourth largest county in California. Portions of the proposed and alternative transmission alignments would extend into northern San Diego County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).

Population and Population Trends

Riverside County measures almost 200 miles from east to west, encompassing more than 7,300 square miles (4,612,740 acres) of land. The 2000 census reported the county population at 1.5 million residents, or approximately 4.6 percent of all state residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000d). The county is one of the fastest growing counties in California, with most of the growth and associated development occurring in the western portion of the county that includes the city of Lake Elsinore, the Lakeland Village Census Designated Place[62] (CDP), and the LEAPS Project area. Table 27 compares the pace of growth for California, Riverside County, San Diego County, and the city of Lake Elsinore, indicating that Riverside County is growing faster than the state, and the city is growing faster than the county. Other data indicate that rapid population growth and rapid job growth have mirrored one another in California's Inland Empire, which includes the western portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties (Public Policy Institute of California, 2002).

San Diego County encompasses more than 4,500 square miles (2,081,739 acres) and had a 2000 population of 2.8 million, or approximately 8.3 percent of all state residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000e). In contrast to Riverside County and Lake Elsinore, San Diego County's growth rate has been slightly below that of the state.

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[62] A census designated place, or CDP, is a statistical entity defined for each decennial census according to Census Bureau guidelines, comprising a densely settled concentration of population that is not within an incorporated place, but is locally identified by a name. CDPs are delineated cooperatively by state and local officials and the Census Bureau, following Census Bureau guidelines. The proposed and alternative powerhouse locations are in the unincorporated CDP of Lakeland Village. Not all census data are reported by CDP; this draft EIS includes data for Lakeland Village where it is available.

Because little of the proposed project development would take place in San Diego County, its socioeconomic characteristics are not discussed further.

Table 27. Population, 1990, 2000, and 2003 (estimate). (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a)

Year	State of California	Riverside County	City of Lake Elsinore	Lakeland Village CDP	San Diego County
Population 1990	29,760,021	1,170,413	18,285	NA	2,498,016
Population 2000	33,871,648	1,545,387	28,928	5,626	2,813,833
Population 2003 (est.)	35,484,453	1,782,650	34,914	NA	2,930,886
Percent Change, 1990–2000	13.6	32.0	58.2	NA	12.6
Percent Change, 2000–2003	4.8	15.4	20.7	NA	4.2

Note: CDP – census designated place
NA – not available

The Southern California Association of Governments has forecast population growth for the seven counties that comprise southern California, which includes San Diego County and the six Southern California Association of Governments -region counties (including Riverside County) (SCAG, 1998). The forecast is for the Riverside County population to grow by 1,128,200 people between 2000 and 2020, representing a 66.6 percent increase in the county population over that period. Of the seven southern California counties, Riverside County would be the second fastest growing in terms of both percent growth and growth in absolute numbers.

Race and Ethnicity

Approximately 59.5 percent of California's population identified themselves as White in the 2000 census, compared to 65.6 percent in Riverside County and the city of Lake Elsinore, and 79.0 percent in Lakeland Village CDP (table 28). Those identifying themselves as Black or African American constituted the largest racial minority group in all four areas, although those percentages are less than 7 percent in the state and county and less than 2 percent in Lake Elsinore and Lakeland Village. People of Hispanic or Latino origin, who may be of any race, range from 31.0 percent of the population in Lakeland Village to 38.0 percent of the population in the city of Lake Elsinore.

Table 28. Race and ethnicity, 2000. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000f)

	Percent of Total Population			
Racial/Ethnic Group	**State of California**	**Riverside County**	**City of Lake Elsinore**	**Lakeland Village CDP**
Total Population	33,871,648	1,545,387	28,928	5,626
White	59.5	65.6	65.6	79.0
Black or African American	6.7	6.2	1.3	1.8
Some Other Race	29.0	23.9	22.6	15.4
Two or More Races	4.7	4.4	5.2	3.8
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	32.4	36.2	38.0	31.0
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	46.7	51.0	51.4	63.3

Employment

Employment information for 2000 indicates that the city of Lake Elsinore was comparable at that time to the state of California in terms of the percent of persons 16 and older who are in the labor force (62.3 and 62.4 percent, respectively) and whether they were employed (62.0 and 61.8 percent, respectively) (table 24). In Riverside County as a whole, a smaller percentage of the population was in the labor force (58.2 percent), and a smaller percentage was employed (53.6 percent).

Later data indicate a changing job market at the state, county, and local level, with unemployment rates down slightly in 2001 compared to 2000, then peaking in 2002 or 2003 and falling thereafter. California Employment Development Department data indicate that March 2005 unemployment rates in the state (5.7 percent), Riverside County (5.0 percent), Lake Elsinore (4.7 percent), and Lakeland Village (8.0) were all slightly lower than they were in March 2000 (CEDD, 2005).

In terms of occupation, the state average for management, professional, and related occupations (36 percent) is much higher than in the county (27.8 percent) or the city of Lake Elsinore (21.9 percent) (table 29). Lake Elsinore has a substantially higher percentage of jobs in the construction, extraction and maintenance occupations (5.0 percent) and the transportation and moving occupations (17.6 percent) than either the state or the county.

Table 29. Total employment by sector, 1990 and 2000. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b)

	State of California		Riverside County		City of Lake Elsinore	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Employment Status						
Population 16 years and older	25,598,144	100.0	1,124,807	100.0	19,701	100.0
In labor force	15,977,879	62.4	654,387	58.2	12,268	62.3
Civilian labor force	15,829,202	61.8	651,952	58.0	12,218	62.0
Employed	14,718,928	57.5	602,856	53.6	11,352	57.6
Unemployed	1,110,274	4.3	49,096	4.4	866	4.4
Armed forces	148,677	0.6	2,435	0.2	50	0.3
Occupation						
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,295,069	36.0	167,739	27.8	2,488	21.9
Service	2,173,874	14.8	105,466	17.5	1,806	15.9
Sales and office	3,939,383	26.8	163,095	27.1	3,300	29.1
Farming, fishing, and forestry	196,695	1.3	9,499	1.6	67	0.6
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	1,239,160	8.4	70,974	11.8	1,698	15.0
Production, transportation, and moving	1,874,747	12.7	86,103	14.3	1,993	17.6
Industry						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	282,717	1.9	13,063	2.2	101	0.9
Construction	915,023	6.2	55,751	9.2	1,415	12.5

	State of California		Riverside County		City of Lake Elsinore	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Manufacturing	1,930,141	13.1	72,837	12.1	1,899	16.7
Wholesale trade	596,309	4.1	21,400	3.5	493	4.3
Retail trade	1,641,243	11.2	76,466	12.7	1,657	14.6
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	689,387	4.7	31,683	5.3	636	5.6
Information	577,463	3.9	13,956	2.3	244	2.1
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	1,016,916	6.9	34,348	5.7	469	4.1
Professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management services	1,711,625	11.6	51,577	8.6	836	7.4
Educational, health and social services	2,723,928	18.5	113,407	18.8	1,574	13.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services	1,204,211	8.2	59,131	9.8	981	8.6
Other services, except public administration	761,154	5.2	30,166	5.0	721	6.4
Public administration	668,811	4.5	29,071	4.8	326	2.9

Differences in local vs. county- and state-level jobs are evident as well in the distribution of jobs among industries (table 29), where the average percentage of workers employed statewide is higher in industries such as finance, insurance, and real estate; professional, scientific, management, and administration; educational, health, and social services; and public administration than they are in the city of Lake Elsinore. By contrast, workers in Lake Elsinore are more likely than the statewide average to be found in the construction, manufacturing, and retail trade sectors. Due to the rapid growth that is occurring in Lake Elsinore and much of Riverside County, the county-wide average of 9.2 percent of workers employed in the construction industry is almost 50 percent higher than the statewide average of 6.2 percent, and the Lake Elsinore value of 12.4 percent is double the statewide average.

Income and Poverty

Census data for 1999 indicate that at that time, household and per capita income in Lake Elsinore and Lakeland Village were lower than the state and county averages, while the percentage of the population below the poverty level was higher (table 30). The Public Policy Institute of California (2002) reports that during the past 3 decades, the economic well-being of California's regions, as measured by income, has diverged. In 1969, the wealthiest region of the state (the Bay Area) had a per capita income about 10 percent higher than the state as a whole, while the poorest region (San Joaquin Valley) had a per capita income about 20 percent lower than the state average. By 1999, the gap had grown tremendously, with an average Bay Area income almost 40 percent higher than the state average and the San Joaquin Valley having a per capita income more than 30 percent below the state average. Between 1989 and 1999, inflation-adjusted per capita incomes grew in California and in all regions of the state except the San Joaquin Valley and the Inland Empire, which includes Riverside County. The greatest decline in per capita incomes occurred in the Inland Empire during that period (California Department of Finance, 2002).

Table 30. Per capita incomes and percent of individuals below poverty level, 1999. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000c)

	State of California	Riverside County	City of Lake Elsinore	Lakeland Village CDP
Median Income in 1999 (dollars)				
Households	47,493	42,887	41,806	34,136
Per capita	22,711	18,689	15,408	14,922
Individuals below poverty level (%)	14.2	14.2	17.0	16.5

3.3.8.2 Environmental Consequences

Socioeconomic issues associated with the proposed project and alternatives include potential effects on socioeconomic conditions of the affected communities; potential effects on property owners and future development in the vicinity of proposed and alternative project features; whether or not, and to what extent, the proposed project and alternatives would have growth-inducing effects; and whether the proposed project and alternatives would have disproportionately negative effects on poor or minority populations.

Socioeconomic Conditions—Employment and Earnings

Project construction and operations would contribute directly to the economy by providing employment and earnings, which also contribute indirectly to the economy through employee purchase of goods and services. The creation of jobs associated with the project would contribute positively to the region's socioeconomic conditions. At the same time, project construction and operations could reduce or eliminate employment and earnings associated with activities that would be precluded by the presence of the project.

Effects of Construction on Employment and Earnings

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants do not propose any specific measures to address employment and earnings. However, employment associated with the co-applicants' proposal is expected to equal about 2,460 work years, or about 550 full-time equivalent jobs per year over the 4.5-year construction period, not including employment associated with the transmission line.

The co-applicants' estimate of construction requirements by year, not including employment associated with constructing the proposed transmission line, would equal 385 full-time equivalent jobs in year 1 (15.7 percent of the total construction-period employment), 535 in year 2 (21.7 percent), 515 in year 3 (20.9 percent), 585 in year 4 (23.8 percent), and 440 in year 5 (17.9 percent). This would equal 2,460 work-years of employment over the construction period, or an average of 546 full-time equivalent jobs per year for 4.5 years. Roughly 55 percent of the jobs would be for skilled trades, 30 percent for general labor, and 15 percent for supervisory and support staff (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a).

The co-applicants did not provide an estimate of employment associated with constructing the proposed transmission alignment. Our review of other transmission line projects indicates that about 28 full-time equivalent work-years would be required to construct 30 miles of 500-kV transmission line in the type of terrain located along the proposed transmission alignment. Adding this estimate to the co-applicants' employment estimate yields a total estimate of 2,488 work-years of employment for the complete project, or approximately 553 full-time equivalent jobs per year for 4.5 years.

The co-applicants estimate payroll for the non-transmission line construction workers to be $126.1 million over the 4.5-year construction period, ranging from a low of $18.6 million in year 1 to a high of $31.2 million in year 4[63]. We estimate a payroll of $1.4 million for construction of the proposed transmission alignment, bringing the total payroll associated with the co-applicants' proposal to about $127.5 million.

Effects Analysis

As indicated in section 3.3.8.1, *Affected Environment*, Riverside County has been and is projected to remain one of the fastest growing counties in California. In 2000, the 602,856 people employed in Riverside County included 55,751 (9.2 percent) in the construction sector, while the city of Lake Elsinore's employed population of 11,352 people included 1,415 (12.4 percent) in construction (see table 24). Given the large construction labor pool currently existing in the county, we conclude that the existing area-wide work force would be sufficient to accommodate project-related construction needs. Only a limited number of specialty construction contractors, such as earth boring machine operators and support personnel, might need to relocate to the project area from elsewhere during the construction period. With very few construction personnel needing to relocate to the project area, there would be no substantial in-migration of people, no excessive demand for rental housing, little or no increased demand for permanent housing, and little or no increased demand for government facilities or services associated with the construction workforce.

The project-related construction employment and payroll would have a positive short-term effect on the local economy, although the effect would be small in relative terms because of the overall size of the economy. The 553 full-time equivalent jobs on an average annual basis associated with project construction would equal about one-tenth of one percent of Riverside County's 602,856 employment level in 2002. The effect of the project-related payroll of $127.5 million would be comparable to employment; that is, positive but relatively small compared to the size of the current economy.

Staff Alternative—The scope of the construction effort and the effects on employment and earnings for the alternative sites would be similar to the co-applicants' proposed development.

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[63] The co-applicants' payroll estimate is based on 2003 data from the California Economic Development Department and the 2002 data from the Riverside County Economic Development Department. The co-applicants used the "high" wage rates by trade from those sources and assumed a 40-hour work week and 50-week work year, with no overtime rates included (California Department of Health Services, 2003, as cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a).

Effects of Operation on Employment and Earnings

About 20 employees would be needed to manage, operate, and maintain the proposed project. The total staff would include 2 management personnel, 7 operating staff, and 11 maintenance personnel. Additional contractors and independent labor would be hired to fulfill specific functions, such as qualified monitors to conduct water quality monitoring and groundskeepers, arborists, and horticulturalists to maintain the project landscaping. The co-applicants indicate that locally available independent firms, consultants, and contractors would be employed to perform these and other functions. Because of the small size of the operations work force compared to the size of the local economy, there would be no substantial in-migration of people and little or no increased demand for rental housing, permanent housing, or government facilities or services associated with the operations workforce.

The estimated payroll for the 20 regular project employees would be about $1.0 million annually, which, compared to the construction phase, would have a relatively small but positive long-term effect on the local economy.

The increase in employment and earnings associated with the continuing presence of project features would have some negative effects on the economy as well. The proposed powerhouse site, once devoted to the powerhouse and substation, would not be available to support other businesses or residential construction that might have occurred in the absence of project development. Further, the presence of the transmission line along the proposed alignment would reduce or eliminate hang gliding in the area, which in turn would reduce or eliminate the income of employees and businesses that serve the sport, including retail outlets and restaurants, lodging establishments, and other service providers that cater to out-of-town visitors who are currently drawn to the area by the opportunity to hang glide. Although hang gliding business representatives have made estimates of the magnitude of this negative effect on the three glider-related businesses and other service providers (letter from F. Hoffman, Attorney, Elsinore Testing of Experimental Aircraft Mechanisms, Inc., Garden Grove, CA, to FERC, Washington, D.C., September 26, 2005), we conclude that the payroll associated with loss of the hang gliding activity would be less than the $1.0 million in annual earnings associated with proposed project operations. Non-payroll expenditures associated with project operations or hang gliding businesses are not known.

Staff Alternative—The number of employees needed for any of the alternative project configurations would likely be the same as for the co-applicants' proposal. However, the potential negative effect on businesses associated with hang gliding would be avoided by use of the mid-slope transmission alignment.

Property Values and Development

Research has shown that the effect of utility projects on nearby property values varies considerably from site to site. Many studies show that projects have either no effect or a negative effect on property values; the estimates of negative effects generally

range from 1 to 10 percent but are sometimes considerably greater. For the LEAPS Project, the greatest potential for negative effects on property values lies with the aboveground substation at the powerhouse site and with the transmission line.

Effects of Construction and Operation on Property Values and Development

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants assessed project effects on values and development patterns associated with the project. Although they reach the conclusion that the project would not significantly affect property values either near the powerhouse site or near the transmission alignment, the co-applicants acknowledge that there is a potential for some residential and/or business displacement and propose to purchase certain properties to help offset this effect. At the construction laydown area associated with the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the co-applicants propose to purchase the 12-unit Santa Rosa Mountain Villa property and demolish the existing residential units. With respect to the proposed transmission alignment, the co-applicants identified potentially affected properties and property owners, but have not yet identified which specific properties might need to be acquired.

The co-applicants propose to acquire properties in several ways. The majority of the project's proposed sites are on National Forest System lands, for which the co-applicants propose to acquire special use permit for a 50-year leasehold interest. Established USFS procedures would be followed to acquire that real property interest. Similarly, the co-applicants propose to follow procedures established by other public entities—including BLM, Caltrans, the city of Lake Elsinore, and Elsinore Valley MWD—that have jurisdiction over any properties that would be needed for project construction, operation, or maintenance.

For the limited number of privately owned properties that could be affected by the proposed project, the co-applicants propose to acquire fee simple or leasehold interests on those lands through voluntary sale or conveyance. If a negotiated sale or conveyance could not be realized, the Elsinore Valley MWD has eminent domain authority, meaning

that they could acquire property interests through condemnation following payment of just compensation to the owner.[64]

Effects Analysis

In response to comments on the preliminary permit and initial state consultation document recommending that the Commission require the co-applicants to study the effect the project would have on property values of residences near the project, the co-applicants state that the project would have little effect, noting the following quote from the California Department of Health Services: "developers of planned residential areas often express concern that their property would have little appeal and market value if an energy facility were built nearby. While considerable anecdotal evidence has been put forward for such an impact, there is little solid evidence indicating actual impact" (California Department of Health Services, 2003, as cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a). The co-applicants reviewed a number of studies of energy project effects on nearby property values, and specifically concur with two of the findings relevant to the proposed powerhouse site and proposed transmission alignment, as discussed further below.

The proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site is on National Forest System lands, with no adjacent private properties. Construction of the upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site should not affect private property values or require the purchase or lease of any private property interests.

With respect to the powerhouse site, the co-applicants cite the California Department of Health Services regarding a study of the effects of wind power developments on properties within view of the wind turbines. The study cited by the Department found that wind projects do not harm viewshed property values (California Department of Health Services, 2003, as cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a), and the co-applicants indicate that the same findings would apply to a facility like the proposed powerhouse. At the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site, the

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[64] As outlined in the California Code of Civil Procedure, an agency empowered with the right of eminent domain may acquire private property for public purposes, if the following criteria are established: (1) the public interest and necessity require the proposed project (Section 1240.030[a]); (2) the proposed project is planned or located in the manner that will be most compatible with the greatest public good and the least private injury (Section 1240.030[b]); (3) the property that the agency intends to acquire is necessary for the proposed project (Section 1240.030[c]); and (4) an offer for the full amount of the agency's appraisal has been made to the owners of record (Section 7267.2). In an effort to establish uniform treatment of all people affected by any public project, the State of California passed the Uniform Acquisition and Relocation Act and Eminent Domain Law, which guides land acquisitions of state and local public agencies.

co-applicants' proposal to purchase and raze the nearest residences (that is, the Santa Rosa Mountain Villa apartments) would reduce the potential adverse effects on that property owner, as long as just compensation is paid for the property. The resulting open space buffer between the powerhouse substation and other nearby properties would reduce the potential adverse effect on the nearby properties because negative effects on property values generally decline as the distance from the power facility increase (see discussion below).

With respect to the proposed transmission alignment, the co-applicants cite a USFS conclusion regarding a proposed 765-kV transmission line that would cross both National Forest System lands and non-federal lands in Virginia. The USFS concluded:

> Although the specific studies of 765 kV lines in Virginia do not suggest the possibility of property value impacts, the available research and court rulings suggest that some unknown (and therefore, unquantifiable) effect on property values is possible from implementation of the proposed project. The exact magnitude of this potential impact cannot be predicted for several reasons. First, effects on specific properties can vary widely because of many other factors such as physical desirability, lot size and configuration, exact location of the line or tower relative to the remaining parcel, distance from the line, and overall market conditions in the area. Second, effects also vary with type of land use (e.g., residential, agricultural, commercial). Because the precise alignment for the proposed project has not been established, conclusions about potential property value effects would be speculative and premature. In general, significant property value effects are considered unlikely because most of the Proposed Corridor and alternatives traverse rural acreage (which tends to be less affected in property value) (USFS, 2002b, cited in Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a).

The co-applicants state that those same conclusions are applicable to the proposed project transmission alignment.

A wealth of research is available concerning the potential adverse effects of transmission lines on nearby property values, although the results are highly variable and site specific.[65] From the 1950s to the late 1980s, almost all reported research concluded that transmission lines have little or no effect on property values. More recent studies

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[65] The research summary presented in this section is taken primarily from the *Methow Transmission Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (Tetra Tech FW, Inc., 2005). Some of the same research results were included, united, in the co-applicants' license application, exhibit E.5, *Report on Socio-Economic Impacts* (Elsinore Valley MWD and Nevada Hydro, 2004a).

tend to support the idea that proximity to transmission lines may affect the value of residential property (Colwell, 1990; Delaney and Timmons, 1992; Hamilton and Schwann, 1995; Cowger et al., 1996). Some observers have linked this general change in perspective to increased concerns for EMF-related health effects (see section 3. 3.7.2, *Environmental Consequences, Electromagnetic Field Effects*), but a nationwide survey of real estate appraisers suggests that for the most part, potential negative effects on property values tend to be related to the visual effect of transmission line facilities (Delaney and Timmons, 1992).

Studies based on both survey and market data have reached similar conclusions. Delaney and Timmons (1992), reporting on a nationwide survey of real estate appraisers, found that 84 percent of the surveyed appraisers believed that transmission facilities negatively affected the value of nearby properties, with an average decrease in value of 10 percent. Hamilton and Schwann (1995) studied 12,907 residential real estate transactions in Vancouver, British Columbia, and concluded that properties adjacent to a transmission line lost 6.3 percent of their value. They also found that the effect decreased with distance, with more distant properties losing about 1 percent of their value. Colwell (1990) found that properties within 50 feet of a transmission line had property values that were 6 to 9 percent lower than comparable properties included in the study. He also found that this reduction in value decreased over time.

Other studies have reported smaller negative effects, no effects, or even positive correlations between residential property values and proximity to transmission lines. A Bonneville Power Administration study found that properties near transmission lines in King County, Washington, were valued about 1 percent lower than comparable properties that were not near transmission lines, but that the opposite was true in the Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington area, where properties near transmission lines were worth about 1.5 percent more than comparable properties not near transmission lines (Cowger et al., 1996). An updated study of the same areas in 2000 found similar results (Bottemiller et al., 2000).

The studies discussed above suggest that proximity to electric transmission lines can have negative effects on residential property values, with the estimates generally ranging up to 10 percent. The findings also suggest that the negative effect diminishes with distance and tends to decline over time. The co-applicants note other studies that have found, for example, negative effects of 0 to 10 percent for single-family residential property but greater negative effects on rural vacation home developments, and negative effects of 18 to 53.8 percent on vacant lot values. According to Cowger et al. (1996), most studies have concluded that other factors, such as location and size of property, type and condition of improvements, and the level of real estate activity, are more important in determining the value of property than is proximity to a transmission line.

Based on our review of these and other studies, we conclude that the northern segment of the proposed transmission alignment could adversely affect residential property values for a distance of about 2.1 miles where the alignment crosses private

property designated for residential development at densities ranging from 5- to 20-acre minimum lot size. The southern segment of the proposed transmission alignment could adversely affect residential property values for a distance of about 1.4 miles in Riverside County where it crosses private property designated for residential development at the same densities, as well as an undetermined number of properties in San Diego County. The magnitude of the potential effect cannot be determined at this time but would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Staff Alternative—Like the proposed Morrell Canyon site, the Decker Canyon site is on National Forest System lands and would not affect any private property values.

Construction and operation of an underground powerhouse and aboveground substation at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site is not expected to adversely affect nearby residential property values because of the distance between the nearest residential properties and the site.

The northern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment could adversely affect residential property values for a distance of about 4.1 miles where the alignment crosses private property designated for residential development at densities ranging from 5- to 20-acre minimum lot size. The southern segment of the mid-slope transmission alignment could adversely affect residential property values for a distance of about 4.1 miles in Riverside County where it crosses private property designated for residential development at the same densities (including the LaCresta area), as well as an undetermined number of properties in San Diego County. The magnitude of the potential effect cannot be determined at this time but would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—If the Evergreen powerhouse site and construction laydown area were selected for project construction, the co-applicants propose to acquire the property and demolish an existing single-family house and outbuildings at the laydown area. Because construction could be disruptive to the continued operation of the Lakeland Children's Center and the Child Care Center at nearby Lakeland Village Plaza, the co-applicants propose to acquire that property and either demolish the existing commercial center, retain the building and any tenants that could co-exist with construction activities, and/or use the building as construction offices during all or part of the construction period. Regardless of the ultimate use of the building, the child-related businesses would be displaced.

Growth-Inducing Impacts

Construction and operation of the project under any alternative is not expected to induce growth in Riverside or San Diego counties. As discussed above under the topic of *Socioeconomic Conditions—Employment and Earnings*, neither project construction nor project operation would induce any appreciable in-migration of construction or operations personnel. The project's power would be used to meet both local and regional power needs and, therefore, would not improve the availability or cost of power in the

project area relative to any other places in the region in a way that would favor growth in the project area

Effects on Poor and Minority Populations

Poverty statistics provide insight into how reductions in economic output and job losses can be absorbed by the county. Communities with high levels of poverty are typically less able to absorb reductions in economic output, reductions in wages, or job losses.

Effects of Construction and Operation on Poor and Minority Populations

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants do not propose any specific measures to address project effects on poor and minority populations.

Effects Analysis

Project construction and operation are likely to contribute short-term and long-term jobs to the community, which would have a minor but positive benefit for the county's socioeconomic conditions. As such, it is unlikely that construction or operation of the project under any alternative would have a disproportionate adverse effect on poor populations. Although the percentage of individuals living below the poverty level in 1999 was slightly higher (16.5 percent) in Lakeland Village CDP, where the proposed and alternative powerhouse sites are located, than it was in Riverside County (14.2 percent) or California as a whole (14.2 percent), it was comparable to the city of Lake Elsinore (17 percent). The proposed and alternative transmission alignments do not cross or parallel residential areas that have higher than average numbers of people living below the poverty level.

Construction and operation of the project are not expected to have a disproportionate adverse effect on minority populations. Lakeland Village CDP has a lower percentage of African Americans and Hispanics (of any race) than the rest of Riverside County and California as a whole. The proposed and alternative transmission alignments do not cross or parallel residential areas that have higher than average minority populations.

3.3.8.3 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

Project construction is likely to adversely affect property values of an unknown number of properties near the selected powerhouse site and transmission alignment. Construction and operation of the transmission line along the proposed transmission alignment would reduce or eliminate the economic activity associated with hang gliding in the project area.

3.3.9 Cultural Resources

3.3.9.1 Affected Environment

Definition of Cultural Resources, Historic Properties, and Area of Potential Effects

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations define historic properties as cultural resources that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Historic properties represent things, structures, places, or archeological sites that can be either Native American or European-American in origin. In most cases, cultural resources less than 50 years old are not considered eligible for the National Register unless they possess exceptional importance. Cultural resources also must have enough internal contextual integrity to be considered historic properties. For example, dilapidated structures or heavily disturbed archeological sites may not have enough contextual integrity to be considered eligible.

Archeological resources refer to both prehistoric and historic artifact scatters and historic architectural ruins. Historical resources refer to architectural and structural features that are not in ruins.

Area of Potential Effects

Pursuant to Section 106, the Commission must take into account whether any historic property within the project's APE could be affected by the licensed project. The APE is defined as the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. In this case, the APE for LEAPS Project encompasses the following:

- The locations of the proposed and alternative upper reservoir sites, the designs for each site, and associated construction laydown areas required for the staging of equipment, materials and personnel during construction;
- Fifty-foot-wide corridors within which the low-head (tailrace) pipelines from the lake to the powerhouse would be constructed;
- The possible locations of the proposed and alternative powerhouse sites, including switchyards and construction laydown areas;
- A 600-foot-wide corridor (the location of which has not yet been determined) within which the overhead high-voltage transmission lines, associated transmission towers, staging areas and/or access roads would be located;
- The community of Alberhill, situated immediately south of Interstate 15;

- The rights-of-way of local streets within which several low-voltage overhead distribution lines carried on existing, modified or newly-erected power poles, which would extend from the powerhouse to two existing local substations; and
- Approximately 100 acres within which the project's electrical substations would be placed, once their locations have been determined.
- The shoreline around Lake Elsinore (the lower reservoir) to the upper limit of the zone of daily fluctuation expected from the project.

Cultural History Overview

Prehistory

The prehistory of Southern California is divided into three temporal periods: Paleo-Indian, Archaic, and Late Prehistoric. The Paleo-Indian period, dating from 12,000 years to 8,000 years B.P. is typified by artifact assemblages of the San Dieguito complex. This complex is represented almost exclusively by flaked stone technology. Artifacts include large projectile points, choppers, and scrapers. This complex is also marked by the absence of milling technology. The Paleo-Indian complex was superseded by the Archaic approximately 8,000 years ago.

The Archaic period (8,000–2,000 B.P.) in southern California is typified by the La Jollan and Early Milling Stone Horizon cultural traditions. While the Archaic is generally aceramic, the reduction of projectile point sizes and the appearance of milling technology imply a shift from a hunting-based subsistence strategy to a broad-based subsistence pattern that utilized a wide variety of plant products.

The Late Prehistoric period is marked by the appearance of arrow points, ceramics, bone tools and various ornaments are also common. Habitation sites vary from small camps to large sites that exhibit extensive occupation. Sites are found primarily on plateaus and creek terraces in or near bedrock outcroppings.

Human occupation in southern California extends as far back as 10,000 years before present (BP). However, evidence for such early Paleoindian occupation is very sparse consisting of mostly of isolated finds of distinctive projectile points. Such occupations probably represented small groups of mobile hunter gatherers (Wallace, 1978). The earliest well-documented predecessors of the Luiseno and Juaneno occurs in the Archaic period, identified as "Millingstone" peoples, who were scattered over much of southern California from as early as 6000 BC. The La Jolla and Pauma archeological complexes of San Diego County represent early food gathering economies associated with this Millingstone horizon (Wallace, 1978; Moriarty, 1967; True, 1958). These peoples were principally seed and root gatherers who seldom developed large settlements or occupied a single area on a year-round basis. Around 1500 BC, at the beginning of a period archaeologists call the "Intermediate" era, the Native peoples in the area began to

use stone mortars and pestles to process acorns. Some archaeologists believe that sometime between AD 500 and AD 1000, during the Late Prehistoric period, Shoshonean-speaking peoples moved into southern California from the Great Basin, absorbing or decimating the indigenous populations, in a movement known as the Takic Spread.

Ethnography

The project is situated midway between the historic territories of the Juaneno (Acjachemen) and Luiseno[66] aboriginal groups, who spoke closely related Shoshonean dialects. When the Spanish arrived in the late eighteenth century, the homeland of the Juanenos was centered around modern San Juan Capistrano and extended west to Aliso Creek. The Luiseno territory included much of western Riverside and northern San Diego Counties, but anthropologists believe that most of the Luisenos who visited the Elsinore Mountains resided in the region of Lake Elsinore. Prehistorically, these aboriginal groups resided in both permanent villages and seasonal camps. According to O'Neil and Brown (2003), "the villages consisted of 35 to 300 persons of a single lineage in the smaller villages and of a dominant clan with other families in the larger settlements." White (1963, as cited in O'Neil and Brown, 2003), noted that the Acjachemen and Luiseno (their neighbors to the east) village communities were autonomous of each other.

The village political structures were probably similar to other Southern California Tribes in that they consisted of localized patrilineal groups who were generally exogamous and patrilocal (Gifford, 1973, as cited in O'Neil and Brown, 2003). As noted above, a village usually had one clan or lineage that dominated, with lineages or single families of other clans residing there as well. These ranged in size from 35–50 individuals to as high as of 250–300 depending on the resource base (O'Neil and Brown, 2003). Marriage was used as a mechanism of politics, ecology and economics and the important lineages were allied by marriage.

According to O'Neil and Brown (2003), only men were initiated in to the mysteries of the religion, which included the use of Jimson Weed, but both boys and girls were involved in rites of initiation around the age of puberty. The center of the Acjachemen religion was Chinigchinich, the last of a series of heroic mythological figures. The Acjachemen generally cremated their dead. The work was done by Ritual Specialists who were paid for their services. Among groups living in the interior, plant foods were the largest part of the traditional diet with acorns being one of the highest ranked. The principle game animals were deer, rabbit, jackrabbit, wood rat, mice, ground squirrels, deer, antelope, and water fowl. Fish and other marine animals were also

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[66] The name "Luiseno" was given by the Spanish to the Native American groups who lived in the area under the influence of the Spanish Mission San Luis Rey.

exploited by groups living at or traveling to the coast. Food resource localities were the property of local clans who kept a watchful eye on them. According to O'Neil and Brown (2003), the Juncus Meadow is within an area that was, among other things, a large acorn gathering location that would have belonged to a specific lineage or clan. Non family members could camp and collect in the area if permission was obtained by the owners.

Both the Luiseno and Juaneno resided in permanent villages and seasonal camps. They built "pit houses," constructed by excavating a shallow hole, erecting a frame over the hole, and then covering the frame with branches and earth. They built sweathouses in a similar manner.

The Luiseno and Juaneno used bedrock milling stations (mortars, metates, or slicks), usually located on boulder outcrops near creek beds and oak stands, to grind and otherwise process acorns and other foods. They made chipped stone tools for cutting, and for shaping and removing plant fiber and also made arrow and dart points from this material. These peoples also made pottery (known as "Tizon Brown Ware") of coiled, reddish clay fired in an open hearth.

Stems and leaves of native plants, such as sedges, sumac, and yucca, were used in combination and woven to make baskets, women's caps, and large bins for storing acorns. The Juaneno and Luiseno also manufactured a wide variety of ornaments, including beads from the shells of olivella and other marine shell species as well as from stone.

The Spanish Period (1769–1821)

The Spanish period represents exploration; establishment of the San Diego presidio and the San Diego, San Luis Rey, and San Juan Capistrano missions; the introduction of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, corn, wheat, olives and other agricultural goods and implements; and a method of building construction and architectural style. Spanish influence continued beyond the year 1821, when California came under Mexican rule, because the missions continued to operate as they had in the past although with reduced funding and support. Laws governing the distribution of land were also retained for a period of time. Forest lands were only occasionally penetrated during this period because of the relatively small numbers of Spaniards, a colonial settlement pattern that focused on coastal missions and presidios, and the resistance of inland/mountain native peoples to Spanish intrusion. In 1776, the Spanish established San Juan Capistrano Mission for the purpose of converting the Juaneno to Christianity and, in the process, turning them from foraging to European-style agriculture. The Juaneno provided most of the mission's labor force, erecting buildings under Spanish supervision, learning to raise livestock and to grow crops. The San Luis Rey Mission, established in 1798, exerted similar "authority" over the Luiseno. Poor living conditions and disease led to rapid declines in Native populations. By the end of the Mission Period (1769–1834), Luiseno were

scattered throughout southern California. Nonetheless, they were able to maintain traditional beliefs and lifeways well into the nineteenth century.

The first non-mission European settlement in the region occurred in 1818, when Leandro Serrano settled in Temescal Canyon. The Trabuco area was also used for grazing and hunting, as well as for accessing the hot pools in the canyon.

The Mexican Period (1821–1846)

The Mexican period includes the retention of Spanish laws and practices until shortly before secularization of Mission San Gabriel, Mission San Luis Rey, Mission San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Diego de Alcala in the 1830s, over a decade after Spanish rule had ended. Although several Spanish grants of land were made prior to 1834, after secularization, vast tracts of land were granted and the Rancho era began.

Cattle ranching prevailed over other agricultural activities and development of the hide and tallow trade increased during the early part of this period. The Pueblo of San Diego was established, Los Angeles and San Gabriel became major settlements, and transportation routes expanded. The Mexican Period ended as a result of the Mexican-American War in 1846-48.

While the Mexican landowners pushed further into the interior hills and mountains than had the Spaniards, settlement and extensive land use still focused on the coastal plain and nearby inland valleys.

In 1844, Julian Manriquez received a grant to Lake Elsinore, but the lakeshore was not "settled" until arrival of Don Augustin Machado and his family in 1858. Machado established a ranch that also served as a regular stopping place for Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoaches. Later homesteading families, such as the Stewarts and Morrells, established ranches in the area and ran stock in the mountains above the lake.

The American Period (1848–Present)

The American period began when Mexico ceded California to the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. In direct violation of that treaty, the California Lands Commission was created by the State of California in response to the Act of 1851 that provided a means of validating land ownership throughout the state through settlement of land claims. Few Mexican ranches remained intact because of legal costs and a lack of what Americans considered to be sufficient evidence to provide title claims. Much of the land that once constituted rancho holdings became public land, available for settlement by emigrants to California.

The influx of people to California and the Orange County/San Diego region was the result of various historical and economic forces. These forces include the discovery of gold in the state, conclusion of the Civil War and subsequent availability of free land through passage of the Homestead Act, and importance of the area as an agricultural area

supported by the construction of connecting railways. The growth and decline of towns occurred in response to an increased population and the economic "boom and bust" period of the late 1880s.

In the 1880s, both settlers and tourists came to the area, greatly facilitated by the California Southern Railroad's construction of a spur line within two miles of the new town of Elsinore, which grew up on the northeast shore of the lake around hot mineral springs. By 1888 the town had a population of around 2000, and boasted two banks, two hotels, two bathhouses, a schoolhouse, three churches and a water supply system. The lake became a major regional recreation center in the 1910s and 1920s, primarily for vacationers from Los Angeles. Ortega Highway, constructed between 1929 and 1934 from the lake to San Juan Capistrano, further connected the previously remote area to larger population and market centers. It also provided access to the mountains from both north and south, and offered public campgrounds, built along the highway by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The lands now contained within the Cleveland National Forest possessed imagined, and real, potential for lumber, gold, silver, and perhaps most importantly, water. As result of increasing population pressures placed on the land, the Cleveland National Forest was one of the first areas of reserved land created under the Forest Reserve Act passed in 1891. This act repealed the unenforceable Timber Culture Act of 1873 that granted settlers land in exchange for tree cultivation to promote timber growth on the western prairies.

Administered by Interior's General Land Office, Forest Reserves around the region first appeared in 1893 with the 50,000-acre Trabuco Canon Forest Reserve in the Santa Ana Mountains, set aside by President Harrison and named for the prominent peak and canyon within its borders. The 70,000-acre San Jacinto Forest Reserve, named for the mountain range and peak at the entrance to the Colorado Desert, was created by President Cleveland in 1897 and more than doubled two years later (Descanso Ranger District, n.d.; Cleveland National Forest 1972).

Because of the economic depression, beginning in the early 1930s, President Roosevelt proposed the creation, under the Emergency Conservation Act, of the Civilian Conservation Corps to employ young mean from the ages of 17 to 24 to work on both state and federal land. The Civilian Conservation Corps built truck trails, fires breaks, fire stations, and recreation campgrounds within the boundaries of the forest. The program began in 1933 and last until 1941.

During the past 50 years, Cleveland National Forest has been increasingly used by hikers, campers, and other recreationists. Construction of major highways across, and near, the Forest lands has increased ease of access and a national ethic based on experiencing the wilderness and on sharing the outdoor experience has placed pressures

on the Forest to develop and maintain facilities. The development and sales of off-road vehicles have posed special challenges for land use and resource managers.

Archaeological Resources

Archaeological investigations in association with the Lake Elsinore Project, originally proposed in 1994, were conducted in 1996 and 1997. Nearly 6 years then passed before project planning, and therefore cultural resources work, was resumed. As a result of design changes, additional investigations were necessary. A records search for identified cultural resources in the APE identified by the co-applicants, conducted in January and February 2005, yielded 13 prehistoric sites, 4 historic-period sites, and one Traditional Cultural Property located within or directly adjacent to the Lake Elsinore project APE, among them two sites that had been identified during the 1996 to 1997 field survey. Intensive field surveys conducted in early 2005 identified two more sites (Dobson-Brown et al., 2005). To date, the APEs of the proposed Morrell Canyon and Decker Canyon upper reservoir sites, the proposed Santa Rosa and Ortega Oaks powerhouse sites, and the water conduit route have been surveyed. The APEs for the Evergreen powerhouse site, both the proposed and alternative transmission alignments, and access roads remain to be surveyed.

The records searches, coupled with the field survey completed to date, have identified 14 prehistoric and 5 historic archaeological sites in the overall project APE. Archaeologists have recommended three of the sites as potentially eligible for the National Register. These sites are a village site with bedrock features and midden (RIV 271), historic-period rock alignment (RIV 3580H/FS 52-82), an occupational site (RIV 4045). Four additional sites on USFS land are considered by that agency as potentially eligible pending any future investigation that would indicate otherwise. These sites are a flake scatter with bedrock mortars (RIV 1082/FS 52-14), bedrock milling features with artifact scatter (RIV 2205/FS 52-55), a site containing pictographs and milling features (RIV 3836/FS 52-78), and a site with bedrock mortars and artifact scatter (SDI 9579/FS 52-32). Archaeologists also have recommended that two historic period sites representing remains of dwellings are not eligible (RIV 5870H, RIV 5871H). The remaining sites have not been evaluated by archaeologists, and the SHPO has not reviewed any of the sites recorded in the APE.

Historical Resources

Nine historic period buildings have been identified in the APE near Lake Elsinore. Eight of these (a former country club and seven dwellings) range in date from 1903 to 1929, and are associated with the early twentieth century growth of the area as a locus of recreation and tourism. Architectural styles include Mediterranean/Spanish Revival (33-7217, 33-7222), adobe (33-7223), and bungalow/Craftsman (33-7117, 7218, 7219, 7220, and 7221). The ninth dwelling is a cottage of unspecified style dated to 1948 (33-13990). Surveyors evaluated the former country club (33-7217) and one of the bungalows (33-

7218) as potentially eligible for the National Register. The remainder are currently evaluated as "significant locally."

Traditional Cultural Properties

Traditional cultural properties (TCP) are properties eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of their association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that: (1) are important to that community's history, and (2) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. TCPs can be archeological sites or other special activity areas that often lack artifacts or other obvious signs of human occupation. TCPs in general reflect places used traditionally for generations within one or more tribal communities.

Lake Elsinore (33-11009) was recorded in the state inventory in 1982. It is the only potential TCP to have been identified thus far in the APE. It is important to the Pechanga Band of Luisano Mission Indians and the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians (Acjachemen Nation) as a part of their traditional homeland and its presence in Luisano creation songs. The co-applicants have contacted and consulted with a number of Tribes in the region, providing copies of its ISCD and draft and final license application for comment to the Juaneno, Pauma, and Pala bands of Mission Indians, the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians of the Pechanga Indian Reservation, the Indian Council of San Juan Capistrano, and the Council of Elders–Payomik.

3.3.9.2 Environmental Consequences

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of any proposed undertaking on properties listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register. If the agency official determines that the undertaking may have adverse effects on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register, the agency official must afford an opportunity for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to comment on the undertaking. The licensing of the LEAPS Project is considered an undertaking and the Commission acts as the agency official.

Effects of Construction on Historic Properties

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants' proposed measures to address the potential effects on historic properties during the construction and operation of the proposed project are discussed under the *Historic Properties Management Plan* section below.

Under the co-applicants' proposal, four prehistoric archaeological sites (RIV-1082, -2205, -3836 and –7659) would be damaged or destroyed during the construction of a reservoir at the proposed Morrill Canyon upper reservoir site. Construction of a powerhouse at the proposed Santa Rosa site would directly affect two historic sites and one prehistoric site (RIV-5877H, -7858H, and 5878, respectively). Ground-born

vibration from construction could potentially affect historic period buildings (33-7177 and -7221) adjacent to the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site.

The co-applicants also propose to extend a pipeline from the powerhouse through a developed area into Lake Elsinore. There is currently insufficient information about this potential TCP to determine whether this aspect of the proposed project would alter any characteristics contributing to the importance or cultural values of this resource.

Effects Analysis

Extension of a pipeline from the powerhouse through a developed area into Lake Elsinore would not likely adversely affect this potential TCP; it would not alter any characteristics that may contribute to the importance or cultural values of this potential TCP.

The construction of the northern portion of the proposed transmission alignment could potentially affect two prehistoric sites (RIV-1091 and RIV-1311) and two historic period sites (RIV-5870H, -5871H). The southern portion of the proposed transmission alignment would not affect any known archaeological resources; however, one prehistoric site (SDI-9579) could be affected by construction of the proposed southern substation.

The sites noted above were identified during review of state inventory files. Other unsurveyed areas (e.g., transmission alignment and access roads) within the APE may contain historic properties not yet identified that could be lost or damaged during construction.

Staff Alternative—Archaeological surveys identified no historic or prehistoric archaeological resources in the APE of the Decker Canyon upper reservoir site, and no such resources have been previously recorded in that area. Construction of a reservoir in Decker Canyon would therefore not affect any known archaeological sites. Unsurveyed areas within the APE of this alternative site may contain historic properties not yet identified that could be lost or damaged during construction.

Construction of a powerhouse at the Ortega Oaks site would directly affect one prehistoric site (RIV-4045) located in the vicinity of the proposed tailrace. There is currently insufficient information about Lake Elsinore as a potential TCP to determine whether construction of pipelines from a powerhouse at this location into the lake would alter any characteristics contributing to the importance or cultural values of this resource. Construction of pipelines from Ortega Oaks site through developed areas into Lake Elsinore would unlikely alter any characteristics that may contribute to the importance or cultural values of Lake Elsinore, a potential TCP.

Surveys have not been completed for the mid-slope transmission alignment. Unsurveyed areas within the APEs of each of the mid-slope transmission alignment may contain historic properties not yet identified that could be lost or damaged during construction.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Construction of a powerhouse at the Evergreen site could affect as yet unidentified historic properties. There is currently insufficient information about Lake Elsinore as a potential TCP to determine whether construction of pipelines from a powerhouse at this location into the lake would alter any characteristics contributing to the importance or cultural values of this resource.

Effects of Operation

Co-applicants' Proposal—Installation of a double liner in the upper reservoir would protect any portion of historic properties that remain after construction, and no additional effect is anticipated. Vegetation and facility maintenance, particularly along conduits and transmission lines, have the greatest potential to affect archaeological resources during operation of the project. Access roads to project facilities and the reservoir also may make archaeological sites vulnerable to inadvertent or purposeful destruction. However, historic buildings within the APE would be unlikely to experience any effects once the project is constructed.

Staff Alternative—Operation of a reservoir in the Decker Canyon reservoir site would not affect any known archaeological resources or TCPs. If any historic properties (archaeological sites or TCPs) were located in the fluctuation zone of a reservoir in the Decker Canyon site, they could be protected from damage from fluctuation-induced erosion by the double liner. Access roads to the reservoir could also make archaeological sites vulnerable to inadvertent or purposeful destruction.

Vegetation and facility maintenance along conduit routes could result in damage to any archaeological resources that may be present at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site. Access roads to such facilities also may make archaeological sites vulnerable to inadvertent or purposeful destruction. However, historic buildings within the APEs of either location would be unlikely to experience any effects once the project is constructed.

Vegetation maintenance as well as facility maintenance along any of the mid-slope transmission line alignment could affect archaeological resources during operation of the project. Access roads also may make archaeological sites vulnerable to inadvertent or purposeful destruction.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—Vegetation and facility maintenance along conduit routes could result in damage to any archaeological resources that may be present at the Evergreen powerhouse site. Access roads to such facilities also may make archaeological sites vulnerable to inadvertent or purposeful destruction. However, historic buildings within the APEs of either location would be unlikely to experience any effects once the project is constructed.

Historic Properties Management Plan

By letter of February 18, 2005, the co-applicants filed a revised draft HPMP (February 2005) that specifies a variety of measures for protection and management of historic properties both during construction and during subsequent operations and maintenance over the term of the license. The co-applicants sent copies of this revised draft HPMP to the Tribes, the USFS, BLM, and Camp Pendleton for review and comment. In the HPMP, the co-applicants propose to:

- Consult with the USFS in advance of any construction or cultural resources monitoring or survey on USFS land.
- Monitor construction and/or conduct pre-construction archaeological surveys to locate and identify resources in portions of the APE that have not been investigated due to lack of access and/or because locations of project facilities (e.g., transmission lines, flow lines) and access routes have not yet been determined. This would include locations with potential to contain deeply buried archaeological deposits.
- Consult with the USFS, SHPO, and Tribes, as appropriate, concerning the need for intensive survey to evaluate the National Register eligibility of archaeological sites or TCPs that would be adversely affected by construction or operation and determine appropriate treatment for any adversely affected eligible resources.
- Retain a qualified archaeologist to advise construction and maintenance Field Superintendents and the co-applicants' appointed staff cultural resources coordinator regarding the need for monitoring during construction and for protecting known sites from inadvertent construction damage.
- Appoint a staff Tribal liaison to serve as the co-applicants' point of contact with the Tribes and consult with the Tribes regarding construction monitoring, archaeological survey, and resource protection measures.
- Arrange for a civil structural or geotechnical engineer to determine whether peak ground acceleration from construction exceeds a peak vertical particle velocity of 72.0 millimeter per second in the vicinity of any historic building and recommend treatment of any building for which this threshold is exceeded.
- Arrange for an architectural historian to monitor construction sites after trenching and blasting to ensure that vegetation and any other significant landscape features associated with historic buildings have been returned to their pre-construction state.
- Develop and implement an archaeological monitoring program, including notification to the USFS of monitoring on USFS land, to identify site degradation or damage to archaeological resources. For the first 5 years, monitoring would be conducted annually during the mid-late autumn prior to

the rainy winter season. Site conditions would be recorded with photographs and/or video documentation for comparison with previous years' conditions. The co-applicants would send a report on the monitoring to the SHPO and the USFS within 2 months of each annual monitoring effort. At the end of 5 years, sites that have experienced no significant effects would be dropped from the monitoring program.

- Develop a cultural resources public interpretive program in consultation with the Tribes and the USFS within 3 years after project construction.

The draft HPMP also specifies procedures the co-applicants would follow in the event that currently unknown cultural resources are discovered during project construction or project operation. In the event of a discovery, work would immediately cease in the vicinity of the resource. The co-applicants would develop a historic properties treatment plan, in consultation with the SHPO and the USFS, containing procedures and methodologies "to be used in the eligibility evaluation process for the specific site types that may occur in the Project Area". No work would resume in the vicinity of the resource until the resource had been evaluated in accordance with the Historic Properties Treatment Plan and any adverse effects had been mitigated. Work would then resume in the presence of an archaeological monitor. The co-applicants would submit a report describing the fieldwork and analysis to the SHPO and the USFS.

Regarding paleontological resources, the co-applicants propose to:

- Conduct paleontological monitoring of earth-moving activities on a part-time basis in locations that are sensitive for paleontological resources.
- Prepare any recovered fossil remains to the point of identification, and prepare them for curation by the Los Angeles County Museum or San Bernardino County Museum.

Resource Agency Measures

USFS preliminary 4(e) condition no. 29 specifies that the co-applicants to file, within 1 year after license issuance, a heritage resources management plan[67] prepared in consultation with the SHPO, Tribes, the USFS, and other applicable agencies and approved by the USFS. The Heritage Resource Management Plan would define the APE and provide measures to mitigate effects on heritage resources, including any effects arising from the co-applicants' implementation of other Section 4(e) conditions. The Heritage Resource Management Plan would also contain procedures in the event of discovery of previously unknown cultural, historical, archaeological or paleontological "items of value" during ground-disturbing activities associated with project operation.

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[67] The USFS' Heritage Resources Management Plan is equivalent to a HPMP. The USFS uses the nomenclature "heritage resources" in place of "historic properties."

On April 7, 2005, BIA filed comments on the co-applicants' draft HPMP. BIA recommended that the APE should encompass all of Lake Elsinore, including the fluctuation zone. BIA also provided its opinion that additional ethnographic research and consultation with the Tribes may be necessary to determine the Lake's eligibility for the National Register as a TCP.

Effects Analysis

The co-applicants' proposal to complete archaeological surveys once transmission alignments and access roads are determined and the co-applicants obtain any necessary right of entry would ensure that significant archaeological resources would be identified, evaluated, and appropriately mitigated in the event they would be affected by project construction or operation. Archaeological monitoring during construction would ensure that inadvertent discoveries were promptly evaluated and appropriately treated as well. The co-applicants' proposed archaeological monitoring program during at least the first 5 years of operation would ensure that adverse effects on significant archaeological resources were identified and resolved. The revised draft HPMP also provides for the possibility of inadvertent discovery during the course of project construction and operation, with measures to ensure that adverse effects on discoveries are appropriately mitigated. Provisions for notification of and consultation with the USFS and the Tribes regarding all archaeological survey, monitoring, ground disturbance, or other activities during construction and then during operation recognize the obligation of the USFS to ensure that cultural resources on USFS land are adequately protected.

Nevertheless, the HPMP would benefit from certain revisions staff has developed in consultation with the USFS as follows:

Chapter 1, *Project Setting*—The text discussing proposed and existing project components needs to contain references to maps in appendix D for all components, including alternatives. These maps need to include the locations of all construction staging areas as well as project components, and also need to correspond with the APE descriptions in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2, section on *Area of Potential Effect*—The shoreline of Lake Elsinore included in the APE needs to be revised from "the lake's projected minimum operating level (1,240 feet msl)" as currently stated in the draft HPMP to encompass the anticipated zone of daily fluctuation. Further, in the section titled *Inventory Study Areas*, the person or firm performing each of the record searches described in this section needs to be identified to avoid confusion.

Chapter 3, *General Management Measures*—This chapter needs to be reorganized to discuss the following: (1) measures specific to protection of cultural resources during the construction process (including archaeological survey in areas of the APE that have not yet been surveyed); (2) measures to be implemented for treatment and protection over the license term; and (3) other measures (e.g., public interpretation). This chapter also

needs to include provisions for coordinating monitoring, accidental discovery, and any other actions on USFS land in advance of implementation and the use of fencing where appropriate to protect sites during construction. Additionally, the section on Native American participation needs to be revised to indicate that the USFS initiated the December 2004 consultation with the Tribes and that disposition of human remains and items of cultural patrimony would follow established federal processes and procedures developed for compliance with NAGPRA. Finally this chapter needs to indicate explicit protocols through which appropriate tribal liaison will coordinate with USFS regarding communication and consultation with the Tribes.

Chapter 4, *Site-Specific Management Measures*—This chapter needs to have an introduction explaining the chapter's purpose and organization. The discussion of site-specific measures needs to be limited to those sites for which effects are known and for which management proscriptions are warranted. Sites for which effects of the project have not been determined need to be grouped by site type, with a statement that management proscriptions for these sites would be developed as effects of construction and/or operation become known. All individual site discussions need to be presented as follows: site number, site description, National Register status, effects, and management proscriptions. Management of standing buildings and structures need to include Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Records recordation as a potential mitigation measure. Finally, the discussion of site 33-11009 (Lake Elsinore) needs to be revised to indicate that USFS considers this property eligible for the National Register and that management measures for this property would be developed in consultation with the USFS, Tribes, BIA, and the SHPO.

Chapter 5, *Schedule for Implementation*—This chapter needs to contain a timeline that includes a listing of all proposed measures and actions, and time frame(s) for initiation and completion of these measures and actions.

Appendices—The project overview map in appendix A needs to have a legend and should indicate land ownership. Appendix F needs to contain a map locating the existing project facilities. Effects of the project on site RIV 271 need to be clarified: the table in appendix I states that site RIV 271 would not be affected by the project, but the site-specific discussion of RIV 271 in Chapter 4 implies that it could in fact be affected, requiring data recovery.

Although paleontological resources generally are not considered Historic Properties subject to the National Historic Preservation Act, the co-applicants' proposal for monitoring and subsequent treatment of such resources would address USFS and state of California concerns regarding these resources.

Finalization and implementation of the co-applicants' HPMP in consultation with the SHPO, Tribes, the USFS, BIA, and Camp Pendleton would ensure that adverse effects on historic properties arising from project construction, project operations or project-related activities over the term of the license would be avoided or satisfactorily

resolved. The HPMP would include specific measures to resolve any potential adverse effects arising from license requirements.

In the event of licensing and pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, the Commission would execute a programmatic agreement with the SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (if they choose to participate) to implement a final revised HPMP with one year of license issuance as a condition of any license for this project. The co-applicants, Tribes, and the USFS would be invited to participate in the programmatic agreement as concurring parties.

3.3.9.3 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

The execution of the programmatic and implementation of an HPMP would ensure proper protection and management of significant cultural resources within the APE of the project and also provide satisfactory resolution of any project-related adverse effects.

3.3.10 Air Quality and Noise

3.3.10.1 Air Quality

According to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), air pollution is one of the state's most serious problems (CARB, 2005a). CARB, as part of the California Environmental Protection Agency is the state board responsible for achieving and maintaining healthful air in California. Local air districts along with EPA also share this responsibility. The reasons for the state's air quality problems include the following: (1) a large population (approximately 37 million and growing), which translates into a high number of vehicle miles traveled and associated vehicle emissions; (2) a geography with the most heavily populated areas of the state being valleys or basins hemmed in by mountains; and (3) a climate of hot, stagnant summer air that traps air pollutants in heavily populated basins and valleys. High temperatures catalyze photochemical production of ozone from precursor air pollutants, and ozone is an unhealthful constituent of smog. Sources of air emissions in California include stationary sources (e.g., commercial facility operations), area-wide sources (e.g., fugitive dust, residential fireplaces), mobile sources (e.g., on-road vehicles and trucks, aircraft, boats, trains), and natural sources (e.g., biogenic and geogenic hydrocarbons, natural windblown dust, wildfires).

To maintain acceptable ambient air quality and protect public health, both California and the federal governments have adopted ambient air quality standards for criteria or indicator air pollutants. An ambient air quality standard establishes the concentration above which the pollutant is known to cause adverse health effects to sensitive groups within the population such as children and the elderly. The goal is for localized project effects not to cause or contribute to an exceedance of the standards. Ambient air quality standards are classified as either "primary" or "secondary" standards. Primary standards define levels of air quality, including an adequate margin of safety, necessary to protect the public health. National secondary ambient air quality standards

define levels of air quality necessary to protect the public welfare from any known or anticipated adverse effects of a pollutant. The criteria pollutants for which standards have been established are carbon monoxide, lead, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) and sulfur dioxide. Brief descriptions for the three criteria pollutants of most relevance to the proposed project are provided below.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is directly emitted as a byproduct of combustion. The principal sources of carbon monoxide emissions are motor vehicles, and the highest concentrations of this gas occur under cold, stagnant weather conditions. Carbon monoxide is harmful because it is absorbed through the lungs into the blood stream and reduces the ability of the blood to transport oxygen. As a result, the blood supply to the heart, lungs and other tissues is reduced, with potentially critical consequences for the sick and elderly.

Particulate Matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$)

Particulate matter is a mixture of different substances including metals, carbon, nitrates, sulfates, organic compounds, and complex mixtures such as diesel exhaust and soil. Particulate matter has been classified as either PM_{10} or $PM_{2.5}$ material. PM_{10} particulates, which have an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns or smaller, are referred to as "respirable" material because they are small enough to penetrate into inner regions of the lungs where they can be harmful to human health. $PM_{2.5}$ particulate matter, which is even finer (aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 microns or smaller), can deposit deeper in the lungs when inhaled. Exposure to particulate matter aggravates respiratory illnesses and is especially harmful to people with pre-existing heart and lung diseases. Particulate matter (including PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) can either be directly emitted (e.g., dust or soot) or formed in the atmosphere from precursor gaseous emissions, including nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides and ammonia. Based on EPA estimates, the largest contributor to PM_{10} levels nationwide is fugitive dust, which accounts for 89 percent of the total particulate matter. EPA also estimates that approximately 14 percent of fugitive dust is attributable to construction activities and 9 percent to re-suspension on paved roads.

Ozone

Ozone is a colorless, odorless gas that constitutes the main component of urban smog. Ozone is not directly emitted as a pollutant, but is formed when precursor hydrocarbon and nitrogen oxides emissions react photochemically in the presence of sunlight. Stagnant air or low wind speeds and warm temperatures provide optimum conditions for ozone formation. Ozone irritates the lungs and damages the respiratory system.

For most of the criteria air pollutants, California State standards are more stringent than the federal standard because of inferences from different health effects studies and incorporation of a higher margin of safety to protect sensitive individuals. California and

federal (i.e., EPA) ambient air quality standards for criteria pollutants are presented in table 31.

Table 31. California and federal ambient air quality standards. (Source: CARB, 2005b)

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standards	Federal Standards	
			Primary	Secondary
Ozone (O_3)	1 hour	0.09 ppm (180 $\mu g/m^3$)	0.12 ppm (235 $\mu g/m^3$)	Same as primary standard
	8 hour	--	0.08 ppm (157 $\mu g/m^3$)	
Respirable Particulates (PM_{10})	24 hour	50 $\mu g/m^3$	150 $\mu g/m^3$	Same as primary standard
	Annual mean	20 $\mu g/m^3$	50 $\mu g/m^3$	
Fine Particulates ($PM_{2.5}$)	24 hour	No standard	65 $\mu g/m^3$	Same as primary standard
	Annual mean	12 $\mu g/m^3$	15 $\mu g/m^3$	
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	8 hour	9 ppm (10 mg/m^3)	9 ppm (10 mg/m^3)	None
	1 hour	20 $\mu g/m^3$ (23 mg/m^3)	35 $\mu g/m^3$ (40 mg/m^3)	
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Annual mean	--	0.053 ppm (100 $\mu g/m^3$)	Same as primary standard
	1 hour	0.25 ppm (470 $\mu g/m^3$)	--	
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	Annual mean	--	0.03 ppm (80 $\mu g/m^3$)	--
	24 hour	0.04 ppm (105 $\mu g/m^3$)	0.14 ppm (365 $\mu g/m^3$)	--
	3 hour	--	--	0.5ppm (1,300 $\mu g/m^3$)
	1 hour	0.25 ppm (655 $\mu g/m^3$)	--	--

In addition to the criteria pollutants, CARB monitors the emissions of 10 toxic air contaminants that have been identified to pose the greatest outdoor ambient public health risks. These air contaminants are acetaldehyde, benzene, 1.3-butadiene, carbon tetrachloride, hexavalent chromium, para-dichlorobenzene, formaldehyde, methylene chloride, perchloroethylene, and diesel particulate matter. The California Health and Safety Code defines a toxic air contaminant as an air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or in serious illness or that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. The 10 toxic air contaminants are all carcinogenic. Unlike the criteria pollutants for which adverse health effects are not expected to occur

below the ambient air quality standards (i.e., concentrations), there is no threshold concentration that does not pose health risks for any of the ten toxic air contaminants. Of the 10 toxic air contaminants, CARB considers diesel PMs to pose the greatest health risks. Diesel particulate matter is not a single substance, but a complex mix of hundreds of substances emitted by diesel-fueled internal combustion engines and influenced by engine/fuel type and operating characteristics. Because there are no standards for toxic air contaminants, CARB is charged with the responsibility for identifying substances as toxic air contaminants, setting priorities for control, and promoting alternative processes/materials. Table 32 presents a summary of the unit cancer risk factors[68] associated with the 10 toxic air contaminants.

Table 32. California toxic air contaminants unit risk factors. (Source: CARB, 2005a)

Toxic Air Contaminant	Unit Risk per Million People
Acetaldehyde	2.7
Benzene	29
1,3-Butadiene	170
Carbon Tetrachloride	42
Chromium, Hexavalent	150,000
Para-Dichlorobenzene	11
Formaldehyde	6
Methylene Chloride	1
Perchloroethylene	5.9
Diesel Particulate Matter	300

Note: The unit risk represents the number of excess cancer cases per million people continuously exposed to 1 ug/m3 of the toxic air contaminants over a 70-year lifetime

Existing Air Quality

To better manage common air quality problems, California is divided into 15 air basins, each of which is associated with an Air Quality Management District (AQMD). According to CARB, an air basin generally follows political boundary lines and is defined to include both source areas and receptor areas. However, because air masses can move freely from basin to basin, interbasin transport of pollutants is unavoidable.

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[68] A unit risk factor is expressed as the probability (cases per million people) of contracting cancer as a result of constant exposure to ambient concentration of 1 ug/m^3 over a 70-year lifetime.

The LEAPS Project area is located within Riverside County, but the proposed transmission alignments extend to Orange and San Diego Counties. Riverside County is partitioned into three air basins: South Coast Air Basin, Salton Sea Air Basin, and Mojave Desert Air Basin. The LEAPS Project is located principally within the South Coast Air Basin. Orange County is entirely located within the South Coast Air Basin, while San Diego County is located within the San Diego Air Basin

State and National Area Designations

Both the California and federal governments use ambient air monitoring data to classify areas according to their attainment status with respect to the criteria pollutants. The designations are used to identify areas with air quality problems and help determine whether project emissions would be considered significant under the NEPA and California Environmental Quality Act assessments. The three basic designation categories are:

- Attainment—indicates that ambient air quality is not in violation of the established standard for the specific criteria pollutant
- Non-attainment—indicates that the ambient air quality violates the ambient air quality standard for the specific air pollutant.
- Unclassified—indicates that there is currently insufficient data for determining attainment or non-attainment.

In addition to the above three designations, the state of California includes a subcategory of the non-attainment designation, called:

- Non-attainment-transitional—this designation is given to non-attainment areas that are making progress and nearing attainment

Overall, based on CARB 2004 monitoring data, the air basins within the LEAPS Project area are in attainment for nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, non-attainment for ozone and PM_{10}, and mixed classification for carbon monoxide and $PM_{2.5}$. The state attainment classifications for the criteria pollutants and "visibility reducing particulates" for the component air basins are summarized in table 33.

Table 33. California State area designations for criteria air pollutants. (Source: CARB, 2004)

Component Air Basin	CO	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	O_3	NO_2	SO_2	VRP
South Coast Air Basin (Riverside County)	A	N	N	N	A	A	U
South Coast Air Basin (Orange County)	A	N	N	N	A	A	U
Salton Sea Air Basin (Riverside County)	A	N	N	N	A	A	U
Mojave Desert Air Basin (Riverside County)	U	N	N	N	A	A	U
San Diego Air Basin (San Diego County)	T[a]	N	A	N	A	A	U

Notes: A – attainment
CO – carbon monoxide
N – non-attainment
NO_2 – nitrogen dioxide
O_3 –ozone
$PM_{2.5}$ – fine particulate matter
PM_{10} – respirable particulate matter
SO_2 – Sulfur dioxide
T – non-attainment-transitional
U – unclassified
VRP – visibility reducing particulates

[a] CO monitoring for San Diego Air Basin stopped in 1992.

Local Emissions and Air Quality Regulations

The LEAPS Project is located principally within Riverside County and in the South Coast Air Basin, although the proposed transmission lines may extend into Orange and San Diego Counties. Besides South Coast Air Basin, Riverside County also includes portions of Mojave Desert Air Basin and Salton Sea Air Basin. South Coast Air Basin is the state's largest metropolitan region. Because of the geography (surrounding mountainous terrain), warm climate, and stagnant air conditions, the South Coast Air Basin area is particularly prone to air quality problems. To ensure continued progress toward clean air and compliance with state and federal requirements, the South Coast AQMD in conjunction with CARB and the Southern California Association of Governments develops and updates Air Quality Management Plans that contain tactics and strategies for reducing air pollutant emissions. The 2003 Air Quality Management Plan proposes policies and measures to achieve federal and state standards for healthful air in the Southern California Association of Governments and those portions of the Salton Sea Air Basin that are under South Coast AQMD's jurisdiction (i.e., Coachella Valley). Relevant rules and regulations incorporated in the Air Quality Management Plan include:

- Rule 402—requires implementation of dust suppression techniques to prevent fugitive dust from creating a nuisance off site.
- Rule 403—requires use of best available technologies to reduce the amount of particulate matter (dust) entrained in ambient air as a result of anthropogenic (human-made, e.g., construction) activities
- Rule 1402—limits asbestos emissions from building demolition or renovation activities.

The Mojave Desert AQMD pertinent air quality rules are similar to the South Coast AQMD rules. Both Mojave Desert AQMD Rules 402 and 403 address nuisance dust suppression. Mojave Desert AQMD Rule 403.2 (Fugitive Dust Control for Mojave

Desert Planning Area) is intended to ensure that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for PM10 will not be exceeded due to anthropogenic sources of fugitive dust within the Mojave Desert Planning Area and to implement the control measures contained in the Mojave Desert Planning Area Federal PM_{10} Attainment Area. Similarly, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District Rule 51 (Nuisance) regulates the discharge of nuisance air contaminants including dust. It should be noted that the Riverside County portion of Salton Sea Air Basin is under the jurisdiction of South Coast AQMD. Also, Orange County is entirely under SCAB and therefore is subject to South Coast AQMD rules and regulations.

3.3.10.2 Noise

Noise is defined as unwanted sound. It is emitted from many sources including airplanes, factories, railroads, power generation plants, and highway vehicles. The magnitude of noise is described by its sound pressure. Because the range of sound pressure varies greatly, a logarithmic scale is used to relate sound pressures to some common reference level, the decibel. Sound pressures described in decibels are called sound pressure levels.

Sound levels measured using an A-weighted decibel scale are expressed as dBA. Throughout this analysis, all noise levels are expressed in dBA. Several examples of noise pressure levels in dBA are listed in table 34.

Table 34. A-weighted (dBA) sound levels of typical noise environments. (Source: FICON, 1992, as modified by staff)

A-Weighted	Overall Level	Noise Environment
120	Uncomfortably Loud (32 times as loud as 70 dBA)	Military jet takeoff at 50 feet
100	Very loud (8 times as loud as 70 dBA)	Jet flyover at 1,000 feet
80	Loud (2 times as loud as 70 dBA)	Propeller plane flyover at 1,000 feet; diesel truck 40 mph at 50 feet
70	Moderately loud	Freeway at 50 feet from pavement edge; vacuum cleaner (indoor)
60	Relatively quiet (1/2 as loud as 70 dBA)	Air condition unit at 10 feet; dishwasher at 10 feet (indoor)
50	Quiet (1/4 as loud as 70 dBA)	Large transformers; small private office (indoor)

A-Weighted	Overall Level	Noise Environment
40	Very quiet (1/8 as loud as 70 dBA)	Bird calls; lowest limit of urban ambient sound
10	Extremely quiet (1/64 as loud as 70 dBA)	Just audible
0	Threshold of hearing	

Note: dBA – A-weighted decibel scale

The degree of disturbance or annoyance of unwanted sound depends essentially on three things:

- the amount and nature of the intruding noise;
- the relationship between the background noise and the intruding noise; and
- the type of activity occurring where the noise is heard.

In considering the first of these factors, it is important to note that individuals have different sensitivity to noise. Loud noises bother some people more than others, and some patterns of noise also enter into people's judgment of whether or not a noise is offensive.

With regard to the second factor, individuals tend to judge the annoyance of an unwanted noise in terms of its relationship to noise from other sources (background noise). The blowing of a car horn at night when background noise levels are approximately 45 dBA generally would be more objectionable than the blowing of a car horn in the afternoon when background noises might be 55 dBA.

The third factor is related to the interference of noise with activities of individuals. In a 60-dBA environment, normal work activities requiring high levels of concentration may be interrupted by loud noises, while activities requiring manual effort may not be interrupted to the same degree.

The sound level at a particular instant does not provide a good representation of a level of sound, which varies with time over a wide range. To provide a better assessment of time-varying sound levels, time-averaged descriptors are employed. The three most common noise descriptors used in community noise surveys are the equivalent sound level (L_{eq}), percentile distributions of sound levels ($L_{\%}$), and the day-night average sound level (L_{dn}).

The L_{eq} is an energy-averaged sound level that includes both steady background sounds and transient short-term sounds. The L_{eq} is equivalent in energy to the fluctuating sound level over the measurement period. The L_{eq} is commonly used to describe traffic noise levels, which tend to be characterized by fluctuating sound levels.

The $L_{\%}$ indicate the sound level exceeded for a percentage of the measurement period. For example, the L_{90} is the sound level exceeded for 90 percent of the measurement period and is commonly used to represent background sound levels. The L_{10} is the sound level exceeded for 10 percent of the measurement period and represents the peak sound levels present in the environment.

The L_{dn} is another descriptor used to evaluate community noise levels. The L_{dn} is a 24-hour average sound level, which includes a 10 dBA penalty added to nighttime sound levels (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) because people tend to be more sensitive to noise during the nighttime. The day-night average sound level is commonly used to describe aircraft and train noise levels.

For the state of California, noise intensity is also discussed in terms of Community Noise Equivalent Level, which presents a weighted average noise level that increases the relative significance of evening and nighttime noise. The Community Noise Equivalent Level descriptor is used to evaluate community noise levels, which includes a 5 and 10 dBA penalty added to evening (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) and nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) sound levels, respectively, in consideration of people's increased sensitivity to noise during the evening and nighttime periods.

Existing Noise Environment

The predominant noise sources in the Lake Elsinore area, as documented in a similar environmental documentation conducted recently (Lake Elsinore Stabilization and Enhancement Project Draft Program EIS), are mobile sources, particularly motor vehicles. Interstate 15, Ortega Highway, and several arterial roadways expose portions of the Lake Elsinore area to high noise levels, especially in areas immediately adjacent to the noise sources. General aviation aircraft operations from Skylark Airstrip (a private dirt airstrip located in the southeast portion of the city), ultra light operations over the lake, and frequent power boat operations also contribute to the noise environment. Power boat and jet ski activities on the lake create intermittent spikes of noise at many residences along the lake. Other sources include industrial and commercial facilities. The noise environment in Lake Elsinore is generally typical of a rural setting, except at locations affected by transportation, recreational, and industrial sources.

Noise Standards

Riverside County

Construction noise standards for Riverside County are documented in Title 15.04.020 of the Riverside County Code. Although the code does not set noise level limits, it restricts construction activities within a 0.25 mile of an occupied residence (property line) to the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. during the months of June through September. During the months of October through May, such construction activities are restricted to the hours of 7:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m.

In terms of operational noise, the County Department of Industrial Hygiene set worst case noise levels for stationary sources projected to the property line of an occupied residential property at 45 dBA between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (nighttime standard; and 65 dBA between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. (daytime standard).

In the General Plan (County of Riverside, 2003), noise sensitive land uses are defined to include schools, hospitals, rest homes, long-term care facilities, mental care facilities, residential uses, places of worship, libraries, and passive recreation areas. The Riverside County General Plan (County of Riverside, 2003) discourages these sensitive land uses in areas with background noise greater than 65 dBA.

City of Lake Elsinore

The city of Lake Elsinore Zoning Code, Chapter 17.78, *Noise Control*, prohibits construction on weekdays between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. or at any time on weekends or holidays. The zoning code also states "where technically and economically feasible," construction activities shall be conducted in such a manner that the maximum noise levels at affected properties will not exceed those listed in table 35.

Table 35. City of Lake Elsinore construction noise standards. (Source: City of Lake Elsinore Zoning Code Chapter 17.78)

	Maximum Noise Levels at Affected Properties (dBA)			
	Residential Properties (daily, except Sundays and legal holidays, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.)			**Business Properties (all days, all hours)**
Type of Equipment	**Single-family**	**Multi-family**	**Semi-residential/ Commercial**	
Mobile Equipment—Non-scheduled, short-term operation (less than 10 days) of mobile equipment	75	80	85	85
Stationary Equipment—Repetitively scheduled and relatively long-term operation (periods of 10 days or more) of stationary equipment.	60	65	70	75

Note: dBA – A-weighted decibel scale

In the city of Lake Elsinore General Plan (1990), noise sensitive land uses are defined to include residences of all types, hospitals, rest homes, convalescent hospitals, places of worship and schools. An exterior standard of 60 L_{dn} (day-night average sound level) is recommended in order to preserve the rural, natural and desired environment of

Lake Elsinore. The City General Plan (1990) discourages residential development in areas with background noise greater than 65 L_{dn}.

San Diego County

In San Diego County, similar construction noise restrictions (San Diego Municipal Code Section 59.5.0401 through 0406) are required between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on Mondays through Saturdays and anytime on Sundays or any legal holidays with few exceptions. San Diego County also set a construction noise limit of 75 dBA during 12-hour period between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. at residential properties. For operational noise, a set of noise level limits is provided in the same code based on a 1-hour average noise level for various land uses, including residential, commercial, and manufacture properties. For example, the noise limits for residential R-1 properties are 50 dBA between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., 45 dBA between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., 40 dBA between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., respectively.

Orange County

In the Division 6 of Orange County Codified Ordinance, similar construction noise restrictions are required between 8:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on Mondays through Saturdays and any time on Sundays or holidays. In addition, operational noise level limits, based on short-term periods ranged between 1 to 30 minutes, are provided for residential land uses. The noise limits in 30-minute period for residential properties are 55 dBA between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. and 50 dBA between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., respectively.

State of California

Based on CERES (1998), the LEAPS Project would substantially affect noise levels if it resulted in:

- exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.
- exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels.
- a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.
- a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.
- for a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles or a public airport or public use airport, exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

- for a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

3.3.10.3 Environmental Consequences

Air Quality

Effects of Construction

Co-applicants' Proposal—Constructing an upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site and a powerhouse at the proposed Santa Rosa site would result in air emissions, including carbon monoxide and other gaseous emissions associated with heavy equipment, delivery and dirt hauling trucks, worker vehicles, paints and coatings and dust from grading, surface preparation and earth-moving equipment.

No agency or other entity proposed any measures to address potential effects on air quality.

Effects Analysis

Development of the project would result in air emissions from construction equipment, earth moving activities, construction workers commutes, material deliveries and earth hauling. Based upon a description of construction activities presented in section 2, *Proposed Action and Alternatives*, the following parameters were estimated for the construction phase: types and number of construction equipment, number of construction personnel, and number of material delivery trips. Using these parameters and emission factors from South Coast AQMD (2005, 1993), air emissions from each component were calculated. The construction period and operational period is not anticipated to overlap.

Peak day emissions are the sum of the highest daily emissions from employee vehicles, fugitive dust sources, construction equipment and transport activities. For CO, VOC, NO_x, and SO, the emissions from the following construction activities were added: construction workers' commutes, use of delivery, hauling, and work trucks; and construction equipment use. For PM_{10}, the emissions from the following construction-related activities have been added: fugitive dust emissions from vehicle travel on paved and unpaved roads, earth moving operations, earth loading and unloading, and wind erosion of stockpiles and disturbed areas; and tailpipe emissions from construction workers' commutes; delivery, hauling and work trucks; and diesel-fueled construction equipment.

As shown in tables 36 and 37, there would be a short-term increase in fugitive dust and air emissions from construction activities during the construction period. However, air emissions during construction would not exceed the South Coast AQMD significance threshold.

Table 36. Estimated air emissions from construction activities. (Source: South Coast AQMD, 1993)

	Peak Day Emissions (pounds/day)				
Emission Source	**NO_x**	**VOC**	**CO**	**SO_2**	**PM_{10}**
On-road Emissions	524	35.8	251.9	5	10.3
Off-road Emissions	308.3	30.3	118.5	46.5	17.0
Fugitive Dust	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.3
Total Emissions	832.3	66.1	370.4	51.5	36.6
South Coast AQMD Significant Thresholds	1,542	75	26,203	150	304
Significant	No	No	No	No	No

Table 37. Estimated air emissions from construction activities associated with alternate powerhouse locations. (Source: South Coast AQMD, 1993)

	Peak Day Emissions (pounds/day)				
Emission Source	**NO_x**	**VOC**	**CO**	**SO_2**	**PM_{10}**
On-road Emissions	524	35.8	251.9	5	10.3
Off-road Emissions	355.1	34.7	134.4	54.5	19.4
Fugitive Dust	NA	NA	NA	NA	10.7
Total Emissions	879.5	70.5	386.3	59.5	40.4
SCAQMD Significant Thresholds	1,542	75	26,203	150	304
Significant	No	No	No	No	No

In addition, construction activities (i.e., blasting and other activities) could result in temporary effects on surrounding air quality and meteorological conditions. Although none of these temporary effects is anticipated to have a significant effect on surrounding air quality, these activities may result in temporary restrictions in the use of nearby

recreational activities due to reduced visibility caused by fugitive dusts and smoke. No agency or other entity proposed any measures to address potential effects on visibility.

Staff Alternative—The facilities for Decker Canyon reservoir, the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site, and the pump-generating and ancillary equipment would be similar to those described previously for the co-applicants' proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir and Santa Rosa powerhouse site. The Ortega Oaks powerhouse and construction laydown area would be a 58-acre site.

Because the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would have a greater footprint, fugitive dust emissions and emissions from off-road vehicles would increase as discussed in the previous section. Selection of the Ortega Oaks powerhouse sites would not result in a substantial difference in pumping requirements for the project.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would not affect air emissions because construction effects would be similar to those associated with the proposed alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site would be a 75-acre site with a construction laydown area on a 30-acre immediately to the northeast, between the Evergreen powerhouse site and Grand Avenue.

Because the Evergreen site would have a greater footprint, fugitive dust emissions and emissions from off-road vehicles would increase as discussed in the previous section. Selection of the Evergreen powerhouse site would not result in a substantial difference in pumping requirements for the project. These additional emissions are presented in table 37 for the Evergreen since it has the largest potential effect due to the footprint. The additional emissions from this site would remain below SCAQM significance levels.

Effects of Operation

Co-applicants' Proposal—Project operation would result in minor vehicle trips and electrical power consumption for O&M of proposed facilities as described below.

Class I Area Effects[69]

Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) and New Source Review (NSR) regulations require an analysis of Class I visibility impacts and increment consumption for any source located within 100 kilometers (km) of a federal Class I area. The following five mandatory federal Class I Areas are located within 100 km of the proposed site location in the town of Lake Elsinore, Riverside County, California: the Agua Tibia Wilderness Area, the San Gorgonio Wilderness Area, the Joshua Tree Wilderness Area,

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[69] Lands designated as Class I Areas under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 are afforded the highest level of protection from air pollutants in the nation. These lands consist of national wildernesses (Forest Service), parks (National Park Service) and wildlife refuges (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) in existence at the time the amendment was passed. All other lands in the nation are designated as Class II.

the San Jacinto Wilderness Area and the Cucamonga Wilderness Area. The main concern in these areas would be the potential impact of the project on visibility and vegetation primarily due to fugitive dust emissions. It is anticipated that the air quality and visibility impacts of the proposed operation would be well below levels at which visibility and/or air quality impacts in a Class I area would be affected, however due to the proximity of the site to these areas, a detailed impact analysis would need to be included in the permit application.

Effects Analysis

Air pollutant emissions associated with these O&M activities would be minimal and result in a slight increase over no build conditions, and would not exceed South Coast AQMD significance thresholds for operation described previously.

As previously discussed, the maximum pumping load to refill the proposed upper reservoir would be about 600 MW with typical operation closer to 500 MW, generally consumed during off-peak periods at night and on weekends. Pumping energy requirements would exceed generation, resulting in an average annual net generation deficit of approximately 312,000 MWh. This energy deficit would need to be offset by other forms of electrical generation. The typical generation mix for electric generation in California is presented in table 38.

Table 38. Typical electric generation mix for California. (Source: South Coast AQMD, 1993)

Generation	**Overall (percent)**
Natural Gas	41.90
Nuclear	12.90
Large Hydro	14.80
Coal	19.80
Renewable	10.60
Total	100

Most of these resources are committed during off-peak periods. However, it is likely in the future that coal- and natural gas-fired generation would be available at the margin and likely bracket the environmental effects of off-peak generation to supply pumped storage and represent reasonable options for such generation barring secure contracts with other resource types.

The overall emissions from the operation of the proposed action have been evaluated based upon best and worse-case emission scenarios—the best-case emission scenario being all electric generation supplied by gas-fired combined cycle turbines and the worst-case emission scenario being coal fired generation with operation of the pumps

(1,872,000 MWh). Annual emissions for a no-action alternative have also been estimated assuming gas-fired generation using a simple cycle turbine. A simple cycle turbine plant was assumed because it is considered "state of the art" and is the most easily permittable and thus most likely generation source in the case of no-action. For the no-action alternative, annual emissions were calculated assuming that the generated (1,560,000 MWh) would need to be offset by the construction of a new facility. These emissions have been calculated using emissions factors from two sources: (1) state average emission factors presented in EPA's Emissions & Generation Resource Integrated Database (eGRID) for emissions of NO_x and SO_2 (EPA, 2005a), and (2) worst-case emission factors by source type presented in EPA (1995) for other pollutants. Based upon this methodology, emissions from the proposed action (both scenarios) and no-action alternative are presented in table 39.

Table 39. Comparison of emissions between the co-applicants' proposal and no action. (Source: EPA, 2005b)

Scenario	Generation Technology	Annual Generation (MWh)	Annual Emissions (tons/year)				
			CO	VOC	NO_x	SO_2	$PM_{10}/PM_{2.5}$
No Action Alternative	Gas-fired Simple Cycle Turbine	1,560,000	113.7	15.9	560.8	15.6	90.9
Proposed Action—Best Case	Gas-fired Combined Cycle Combustion Turbine	1,872,000	1,36.4	19.1	673.0	18.7	1,09.1
Proposed Action—Worst Case	Coal-fired Generation	1,872,000	120.6	8.0	6,250.6	6,354.9	2,653.6

Based upon the worst-case or coal-fired generation scenario, the proposed action would produce approximately 7 tons per year more carbon monoxide than the no-action alternative, about half the VOC emissions and considerably greater emissions for NO_x, SO_2 and $PM_{10}/PM_{2.5}$ assuming the no-action alternative used gas-fired simple cycle turbine generation technology.

Based upon the typical generation mix of California electric generation facilities, the proposed action would produce less CO emissions than the no action alterative based upon a natural gas combined cycle facility and all pollutants for the no-action alternative based upon a coal fired plant.

Staff Alternative—The Decker Canyon reservoir site would consist of a lined upper reservoir having a 240-foot-high main dam (60 feet higher than the proposed Morrell Canyon site) and a perimeter dike ranging up to 50 feet high (10 feet lower than Morrell Canyon). Since operation of the upper reservoir does not have associated air emissions, operation of an upper reservoir at this location would not affect air emissions. The Decker Canyon location is farther away from the hang gliding launch sites than the Morrell Canyon and we would expect the effects on wind pattern to be slightly less.

Because the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would have a greater footprint, fugitive dust emissions and emissions from off-road vehicles would increase as discussed in the previous section. The co-applicants' proposal and the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not result in a substantial difference in pumping requirements for the project. Therefore, air emissions from operations at this site would not be affected.

Because operation of the mid-slope transmission alignment would not result in emissions of air contaminants, it would not affect air emissions.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The effects of the Evergreen powerhouse site would be the same as those described for Ortega Oaks powerhouse site.

Noise

Effects of Construction on Noise

Construction noise represents a temporary effect on ambient noise levels. The dominant source of noise from most construction equipment is the engine, usually diesel, without sufficient muffling. In a few cases, such as rock drill or pavement breaking, noise generated by the process dominates (FTA, 1995).

Co-applicants' Proposal—The co-applicants propose to conduct all construction activities in accordance with the Noise Element of the *County of Riverside Comprehensive General Plan* (County of Riverside, 2005), city of Lake Elsinore construction noise standards, and any applicable codes or standards. The co-applicants propose to conduct blasting in a highly controlled manner involving time delays between numerous small microblasts to fracture rock without injecting material and to minimize noise effects on nearby residents.

Effects Analysis

According to aerial photographs of the region, it is evident that there are not many sensitive land uses, such as residences, schools/churches, parks, etc., as defined in the local noise codes and general plans, in the proximity of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site. Most areas are mountainous and desolate, except for a few small housing developments and ranch homes, which are located approximately 1,000 feet or more from this site. The area surrounding the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site comprises residential communities to the north and northeast and Butterfly Elementary Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School, including a ball park associated with the

school, to the northwest. The closest residential area to the proposed powerhouse site is an apartment complex located approximately 410 feet away. The elementary school and the field/ballpark associated with the school are located approximately 720 feet or more from the site. All other areas to the south consist of forested or undeveloped land.

Construction of the upper reservoir at the proposed Morrell Canyon site and a powerhouse at the proposed Santa Rosa site would result in increase of noise levels from proposed project construction activities in the San Mateo Wilderness Area, where people go for hiking and solitude and at sensitive land uses such as residences, schools/churches, parks, etc. During construction of proposed project components, the highest noise-generating activities are expected to be earth moving, including excavation, grading, and filling. For purposes of this noise effect analysis, based on the expected construction equipment, 88 dBA at 50 feet (operation of movable equipment, i.e., a dozer or a delivery/hauling truck) is assumed to be the most frequent noise levels generated during construction of the proposed project components. In addition, 98 dBA at 50 feet (operation of stationary equipment, i.e., rock drill) is assumed to be the maximum noise levels generated during construction of the proposed project components. At its closest point, the San Mateo Wilderness boundary is more than 400 feet away from the proposed upper reservoir perimeter dike.

Based on an assumed noise emission levels at 50 feet from the construction equipment, a standard acoustical equation[70] was then used to estimate the attenuation of noise with distance from the construction site to the nearest sensitive land uses.

Table 40 presents the estimated construction noise levels that would affect people at the nearest sensitive land uses for each project component site. It should be noted that the estimated noise levels shown in table 40 represent the worst-case scenario because the equation does not account for noise attenuation due to site topography (i.e., difference in elevation between the noise source and the receiver), presence of natural or human-made sound barriers, and ground conditions (hard versus soft surfaces).

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[70] $L_{max2} = L_{max1} - 20 \log (r2/r1)$

where:

L_{max1} = sound level at 50 feet, in dB,

L_{max2} = sound level at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive land use (in dB),

r1 = 50 feet, and

r2 = distance to the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive land use (in feet).

Table 40. Minimum distances (in feet)/construction L_{max} noise levels (in dBA) at sensitive land uses. (Source: Staff)

	Closest Distance to the Sensitive Land Uses	**L_{max} at 50 feet (Rock Drill/Dump Truck)**	**L_{max} at Closest Residence (Rock Drill/Dump Truck)**
Ortega Oaks powerhouse	200–500	98/88	75/65
Proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse	400–500	98/88	80/70
Evergreen powerhouse	200–300	98/88	86/76

Note: dBA – A-weighted decibel scale

The estimated noise levels are compared to the city of Lake Elsinore's construction noise standard for single-family residential properties for mobile equipment (i.e., 75 dBA). (A noise level of 88 dBA at 50 feet from the source attenuates to 76 dBA at 200 feet from the source.) As indicated in table 40, noise levels at the nearest sensitive land uses during construction of the proposed upper reservoir and transmission lines are estimated to be 80 dBA during rock drill and 70 dBA or less during other construction activities associated with construction of the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse. Rock drilling, if necessary, would only generate loud noises during early stages of the construction and will be substantially attenuated when the excavation goes deep into the ground.

Construction of tunnels and electricity generation facilities would all occur underground. Therefore, noise effects associated with construction of the powerhouse would be less than significant. Construction noise attributed to upper reservoir would be substantially attenuated before it reaches people at the sensitive land uses and not result in significant noise effects due to relative desolated receptor site locations and large distances between the receptor and reservoir site.

Based on construction traffic study for the proposed project, the projected increases in truck traffic volumes on Ortega Highway as the results of the construction of the proposed project would be 76 trucks per hour during peak traffic hours. Because the Ortega Highway would carry approximately 1,400 vehicles, including 140 trucks (10 percent trucks), during peak hours, the increase in trucks is approximately 50 percent of those under existing plus ambient condition. The increase in noise levels attributed to the construction trucks is proportional to logarithm of the truck traffic increase. It is estimated that the noise level increase attributed to the construction of the proposed project would be 2 dBA or less. A 2 dBA increase in noise levels is not perceptible to

human ears (FHWA, 1995). Therefore, the construction traffic would not result in significant noise effects (see table 41).

In addition, the construction of the proposed project would likely involve construction of access roads to the proposed upper reservoir, the proposed underground powerhouse, and to the site of the inlet/outlet structure area at Lake Elsinore. The alignment of the access roads has not been determined but they would most likely be within street rights of way through the residential areas southwest of the Lake. Depending on the access road alignment, there may be residences or other sensitive land uses in close proximity to the construction activities.

Construction of the proposed transmission alignment would be along areas farther away from most of the sensitive land uses and would not result in significant construction noise effects.

Table 41. Noise level increase attributed to the construction of the proposed project. (Source: FHWA, 1995[71])

Road Segment	Hour	Capacity	Existing + Ambient Growth Volume Total/Truck	Estimated Project Related Increase in Truck Volume	Projected Noise Level Increase (dBA)
Ortega Highway east of South Main Divide Road	a.m. peak	2,000	1,417/142	76	2
	p.m. peak	2,100	1,187/119	76	2
Ortega Highway west of South Main Divide Road	a.m. peak:	2,000	1,417/142	10	0
	p.m. peak	2,100	1,187/119	0	0
Ortega Highway west of Grand Avenue	a.m. peak:	2,300	1,438/144	76	2
	p.m. peak:	2,300	1,115/112	76	2

Note: dBA – A-weighted decibel scale

Compliance with the Noise Element of the *County of Riverside Comprehensive General Plan* (County of Riverside, 2005), the city of Lake Elsinore construction noise standards, and any applicable codes or standards during construction should minimize the effects on noise levels during construction. It is anticipated that adherence to these

[71] Caltrans' Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol (1998) defines substantial increase criteria as 12 dBA and adopts the FHWA noise abatement criteria (section 2.4.2 of the protocol).

standards would involve notification to residences and schools in the immediate vicinity of the proposed power house site at least 1 week prior to the start of construction, e.g., via flyers. A telephone number for noise complaints would be included in this notification.

The co-applicants' proposal to conduct blasting in a highly controlled manner, involving creating time delays between numerous small micro-blasts so that each small explosion adds incrementally to the crest of the shock wave moving through the rock, would generate less noise and at lower decibels levels than traditional blasting.

Other measures that would reduce the effects of construction on noise levels include equipping all construction equipment with properly operating and maintained noise mufflers and intake silencers, consistent with manufacturers' standards. For construction activities projected to exceed the construction noise standards, the co-applicants could install temporary sound walls or acoustic blankets with a height of no less than 8 feet to reduce the residents' view of the construction effort. These sound walls or acoustic blankets should be designed to achieve a Sound Transmission Class (STC) of 27 or greater. The surface of the sound walls or acoustic blankets should present a solid face from top to bottom without any openings or cutouts.

Staff Alternative—Similar to the proposed project, construction noise attributed to upper lake reservoir associated with the Decker Canyon reservoir site would be substantially attenuated before it reaches the sensitive land uses and not result in significant noise effects. Any noise effects on users of the San Mateo Wilderness Area would be less at the Decker Canyon location because the site is located farther away from the San Mateo Wilderness Area.

The immediate area surrounding the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site primarily consists of mountainous terrain to the south and some residential developments to the north, northeast, and northwest. The closest residential community would be located at an approximate distance of 720 feet. According to recent photographs and satellite imagery of the area, there are no parks, schools, or other sensitive land uses. As indicated in table 40, noise levels at the nearest sensitive land uses during construction of the alternative powerhouse site are estimated to be 75 dBA during rock drill and 65 dBA or less during other construction activities.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would not have any noise-related effects because construction activities would be at least 1,000 feet away from the most of the sensitive land uses and would only lasted for short periods before proceeding to other locations along the mid-slope transmission alignment.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The land use in the adjacent to the Evergreen powerhouse site is primarily residential to the north. In fact, the closest residential community is approximately 205 feet from the center of the Evergreen powerhouse site. To the immediate northwest, there is some undeveloped land along with a small commercial area and a child care/school facility. This site is approximately 820 feet or

more from the school. All other areas surrounding the Evergreen powerhouse site are forested/undeveloped lands. As indicated in table 40, noise levels at the nearest sensitive land uses during construction of the Evergreen powerhouse site are estimated to be 86 dBA during rock drill and 76 dBA or less during other construction activities.

Effects of Operations

Co-applicants' Proposal—

Effects Analysis

The operation of the proposed project would result in minimum increase in road traffic. The stationary noise source at the proposed Santa Rosa powerhouse site would be an overhead crane and auxiliary equipment, which would be designed with sufficient attenuation to meet County standards (i.e., 65 dBA in daytime and 45 dBA in nighttime) at the boundary of the nearest residential properties. The major machinery such as pumps/turbines, transformer, etc., associated with the powerhouse operations would be placed underground and would not affect noise levels on the surface. Therefore, noise effects associated with operation of the proposed project would not be significant after implementation of mitigation measures.

Not many sensitive land uses would be in the proximity of the proposed Morrell Canyon upper reservoir site and the proposed transmission alignment. As noted above, most these areas are mountainous and desolate, except for a few small housing developments and ranch homes that are at least 1,000 feet away.

Under wet weather conditions, high-tension transmission lines may generate audible noises. The audible noise emitted from high-voltage lines is caused by the discharge of energy that occurs when the electrical field strength on the conductor surface is greater than the "breakdown strength" (the field intensity necessary to start a flow of electric current) of the air surrounding the conductor. This discharge is also responsible for radio noise, a visible glow of light near the conductor, an energy loss known as corona loss, and other phenomena associated with high-voltage lines. The degree or intensity of the corona discharge and the resulting audible noise are affected by the condition of the air—that is, by humidity, air density, wind, and water in the form of rain, drizzle, and fog. Water increases the conductivity of the air and so increases the intensity of the discharge. Also, irregularities on the conductor surface such as nicks or sharp points and airborne contaminants can increase the corona activity. Aging or weathering of the conductor surface generally reduces the significance of these factors.

The higher voltages at which modern transmission lines operate have increased the noise problem to the point to which they have become a concern to the power industry. Consequently, these lines are now designed, constructed, and maintained so that during dry conditions they would operate below the corona-inception voltage, meaning that the line would generate a minimum of corona-related noise. In foul weather conditions,

however, corona discharges can be produced by water droplets, fog and snow. For AC lines and voltages above 400-kV noise levels of 60 dBA or less at the edge of "right of way" can be annoying to the receptors nearby. However, it is estimated that corona noise would be decreased substantially and to the level of 40 dBA or less at most of the sensitive land uses, which are at distances of 1,000 feet or more from the proposed transmission alignment. For the people using trails in Cleveland National Forest, the noise from corona effects may be audible, but would only be temporary in nature and would not result in significant effects.

Staff Alternative—The effects of project operations on noise levels at the Decker Canyon site would be similar to the effects of operations at the proposed Morrell Canyon site and would not result in any noticeable effects on noise levels.

The Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would have similar design layout and equipment usage; therefore, similar operation characteristics and noise levels would be expected. Noise effects associated with the operation at the Ortega Oaks powerhouse site would not be significant.

The mid-slope transmission alignment would have effects similar to the proposed transmission alignment and would not result in any noticeable effect on noise levels.

Optional Evergreen Powerhouse—The Evergreen powerhouse site would have similar design layout and equipment usage; therefore, similar operation characteristics and noise levels would be expected. Noise effects associated with the operation at the Evergreen powerhouse would not be significant.

3.3.10.4 Unavoidable Adverse Effects

None.

3.4 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Irreversible effects are those that cannot be reversed except in the extreme long-term. Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources within the project area would be as follows:

- Construction of the project would eliminate about 15 acres of southern coastal oak woodlands.
- The visual impacts of the project structures and road/transmission alignments would be irreversible.

3.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES AND LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

The proposed LEAPS Project is intended to provide a north to south interconnection between major east-west 500-kV transmissions in southern California and electrical peaking power generation for the duration of the license that would be

granted for the project. There is also an option for relicensing the pumped storage project after the end of this term. The pumped storage project's potential effect on long-term productivity involves the conversion of about 368 acres of undeveloped forest lands, private in-holdings, and private lands and certain vegetative habitats into a developed industrial use. This conversion would diminish habitat values within these areas over the long run.