

4.14 SOCIOECONOMICS

4.14.1 Impact Criteria and Methodology

NEPA provides no specific thresholds of significance for socioeconomic impact assessment. Significance varies, depending on the setting of the proposed action (40 CFR 1508.27[a]), but 40 CFR 1508.8 states that indirect effects may include those that are growth inducing and others related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate. CEQA guidelines exclude discussion of significance criteria for economic impacts, which in themselves are not considered effects on the environment, and thus no significance criteria are established. Addressed in this section are socioeconomic impacts, with respect to CEQA, that could be considered direct effects on the environment, such as changes to population and housing, and that are separate from strictly economic impacts, such as a loss of revenue.

As set forth in the Marin County environmental guidelines, factors considered in determining whether an alternative would have significant adverse socioeconomic impacts include the extent or degree to which its implementation would result in the following:

- Induce growth or concentrations of population that exceed official regional population projections or that conflict with population projections in the Marin Countywide Plan;
- Induce substantial growth in an area, either directly or indirectly (e.g., through projects in an undeveloped area or extension or major infrastructure);
- Conflict with housing projections and policies set forth in the Marin Countywide Plan;
- Generate student enrollment that exceeds the capability of responsible authorities to accommodate;
- Displace existing housing, especially affordable housing;
- Disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community; or
- Cause a decrease in local or ROI employment.

Adverse environmental justice effects would result if minority or low-income populations were disproportionately affected by the project.

To estimate potential socioeconomic effects, the baseline conditions for the factors described above were compared qualitatively to the anticipated changes that would result from the proposed project alternatives.

4.14.2 Riparian Alternative

Less than Significant Impacts

For the Riparian Alternative, dredging/construction is considered to be a temporary action. Dredging and disposal would occur for approximately three months per year over nine years. A large number of construction workers are not expected to be required for this project, and those required would be hired locally. Therefore, dredging activities would not constrain the immediate area's housing availability or demand. Because these workers would be local and would commute to work, no socioeconomic effects on the area would result from this aspect of the Riparian Alternative.

The Riparian Alternative would not result in construction that would increase population or induce growth. Excavation along Highway 1 would result in lane closures potentially for three months during the fall and summer. Due to periodically high traffic volumes, the flow of traffic and, consequently, access to businesses along Highway 1 could be disrupted over this time. Over an extended period, a decline in economic activity could result in employment reductions at these businesses or closing of some business with further employment reductions. To avoid these potential adverse effects, excavation would be timed to minimize traffic delays and disruption. Because excavation along Highway 1 would be temporary, no long-term adverse impacts are expected.

Excavation along Dipsea Road would not inhibit access to Seadrift community housing or divide the Seadrift community because Dipsea Road is a loop, providing access from either end of the road. Access would be maintained throughout the excavation/construction period.

Dredging could disrupt recreational activities around Bolinas Lagoon, and the presence of the pipeline and barge, as well as tugboat and barge movements, could limit recreation, recreational fishing, and possibly commercial fishing in Bolinas Bay for the duration of the dredging activities. Stinson Beach derives much of its income from recreation and tourism. Businesses that rely heavily on these visitors include two kayak shops that provide boat rentals and guided tours of the lagoon, a theater, motels and hotels, gift shops, and restaurants. Several businesses within Bolinas also rely on recreation and tourism. The pipeline would cross the beach but would not block access; however, temporary impacts could occur while it is being placed. Those using Bolinas Bay for recreation and commercial fishing would have to avoid the barge and tugboat, but use of the bay would continue throughout dredging and disposal activities. In addition, many parks and other recreational resources (discussed in Section 3.6) draw tourists and locals to these areas. Because these activities would be limited to approximately three months of each of four to seven years, these effects would be temporary.

As described in the recreation analysis, the location of the disposal pipeline in Bolinas Lagoon might have an impact on commercial kayaking in the lagoon, but this impact would be mitigated by submerging the pipeline as it crosses the Main Channel to allow free access to other areas of the lagoon.

The potential effects identified in the previous paragraphs would occur during the dredging/construction phase of the proposed project and would not constitute long-term impacts once dredging/construction was completed.

4.14.3 Estuarine Alternative

The potential effects on socioeconomics from the Estuarine Alternative are identical to those expected from the Riparian Alternative.

4.14.4 No Action Alternative

Less than Significant Impacts

Under the No Action Alternative, the sediment would be allowed to continue building up and filling in open water areas within the lagoon. This sedimentation would decrease the extent of tidal inundation, diminish water quality, and degrade habitat values. No direct socioeconomic impacts would result, based on the significance criteria presented above; however, indirect socioeconomic impacts could result from the No Action Alternative. As the sediment accumulates in the lagoon, the diversity of wildlife would decrease, which could alter or diminish recreational uses. The primary sources of income within the areas surrounding Bolinas Lagoon are recreation and tourism. A potential decrease in recreation expenditures could be considered adverse, but not significant, because there are many parks and other recreational resources (discussed in Section 3.6) that draw tourists and locals to these areas. Additionally, the sediment buildup in the lagoon would interfere with the activities of commercial fishers who are based in Bolinas Lagoon because it would become increasingly difficult for them to enter and leave the lagoon. The eventual complete closure of the lagoon would effectively prevent the use of the lagoon as a base for commercial fishing, and these fishers would have to stop fishing altogether or relocate to another harbor or marina, such as Bodega Bay to the north.