CHAPTER 9.0 SHORT-TERM USES VS. LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1502.16) an Environmental Impact Statement must consider the relationship between short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. Similarly, Section 15126(e) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines instructs that a Programmatic EIR should be prepared in a manner that addresses the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and that special attention should be given to impacts that narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment or pose a long-term risk to human health or safety.

Dredged material is a valuable resource that has many potential beneficial uses. Under past and present practices, the majority of Bay Area dredged material is being managed as a waste to be disposed of so that its potential is not being realized. As explained in Chapter 2, a primary goal of the LTMS is to shift the current dredged material disposal practice from one that focuses on short-term, project-specific uses of the environment (i.e., unconfined aquatic disposal, primarily in-Bay) to a more productive long-term distribution of dredged material that would provide for increased beneficial reuse and avoid long-term environmental impacts. Implementation of any one of the three action alternatives (presented in Chapter 6) would result in a fundamental change in the way material dredged from the Bay is disposed, while providing a long-term increase in upland/wetland reuse of dredge material.

Increased upland/wetland reuse would include habitat restoration, levee repair and maintenance, and uses at landfills. This would offset the need for other sources of fill material to accomplish these uses, representing a long-term productivity gain for the regional environment. This long-term productivity gain would be a sharp contrast to the current short-term dredged material disposal practices that result in environmental impacts without achieving environmental benefits.

Beneficial reuse of dredged material would, however, include some short-term uses of the environment including barge and truck traffic, and short-term increases in noise and air quality impacts associated with construction and operation of specific rehandling facilities or reuse sites. In addition, there would be some short-term impacts associated with habitat conversion. However, these impacts are not expected to be significant and would be more than offset by long-term habitat gains. These short-term uses would not occur at the expense of long-term productivity, as is the case with the current practice of unconfined aquatic disposal. Further, with the implementation of the policy-level mitigation measures presented in Chapter 5 of this EIS/EIR, many of the environmental impacts associated with upland beneficial reuse could theoretically be reduced to insignificant levels.