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### FINDINGS OF FACT AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS PURSUANT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT For the NIPOMO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT WATERLINE INTERTIE PROJECT

The Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo considers and relies on the Final Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse Number 2005071114) for the Nipomo Community Services District Waterline Intertie Project in determining to agree that the Nipomo Community Services District will create an Assessment District to fund the proposed project. The Final Environmental Impact Report consists of the Draft Environmental Impact Report, the responses to comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report, a list of persons and agencies commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Report and the Mitigation Monitoring Program (collectively referred to as the Final Environmental Impact Report). The Board of Supervisors has received, reviewed, considered and relied on the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report, as well as information provided at hearings and submissions of testimony from official participating agencies, the public and other agencies and organizations.

Having received, reviewed and considered the foregoing information, as well as any and all information in the record, the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo hereby makes these Findings pursuant to, and in accordance with, Section 21081 of the Public Resources Code, as follows:

#### **BACKGROUND**

The proposed Nipomo Community Services District Waterline Intertie extends from a proposed pipeline connection and pump station site at the intersection of West Taylor Street and North Blosser Road approximately one mile south of the Santa Maria River in the City of Santa Maria. A proposed pipeline extension will run north on Blosser Road to the Santa Maria River levee. At that point, a pipeline will be placed under the levee, extended toward the bank of the river through an agricultural area, then directionally drilled beneath the Santa Maria River to a point on the Nipomo Mesa. Connection will be made to an existing pipeline on Orchard Road near Joshua Street which runs to Southland Street. This line will connect to an upgraded Nipomo Community Services District water distribution system on Orchard Road (north of Southland Street), Southland Street (east of Orchard Road), South Frontage Road (north of Southland Street), Darby Lane (east of South Frontage Road) and South Oakglen Avenue (north of Darby Lane to Tefft Street). The final project phase, if authorized, would include a pipeline extension from the proposed Pump Station No. 2 at Joshua Street and Orchard Road to the Quad Storage Tanks located at Tefft Street and Foothill Road.

A maximum of two pump stations and two water storage tanks will be constructed to boost the water pressure into the District system and provide operational or emergency water storage as necessary. Several water transmission facilities within the Nipomo Community Services District will be upgraded or replaced. A final element of the proposed project involves the conversion of District water supply wells from chlorination to chloramination treatment in order to provide disinfection that is compatible with the imported water supply.

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The potential importation of a maximum of 6,200 acre-feet of water per year is intended to accomplish several objectives. Approximately 2,500 acre-feet per year will offset current groundwater production in order to avoid further depletion and assist in balancing of groundwater levels of the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. The Phase I increment of 2,000 acre-feet per year of this total will be used to augment water supplies available to the existing customers of the Nipomo Community Services District and the Golden State Water Company thereby replacing/reducing groundwater pumping of the Nipomo Mesa Management Area by that amount.

The second phase (Phase II) increment of supplemental water will total an additional 1,000 acre-feet per year. Half of this total (500 acre-feet each) will be used for the remaining groundwater replenishment for the Nipomo Mesa Management Area (bringing that total to 2,500 acre-feet per year). The additional 500 acre-feet per year in the Phase II delivery of supplemental water will be used by the Nipomo Community Services District to serve future customers on currently vacant land within the existing Nipomo Community Services District boundaries.

The 3,200 acre-feet per year within the third (Phase III) increment of supplemental water could be utilized to serve future development within the Sphere of Influence areas adjacent to the existing Nipomo Community Services District boundaries.

The proposed Nipomo Community Services District Waterline Intertie involves a series of approvals and discretionary actions by the Nipomo Community Services District, as Lead Agency, and other involved regulatory agencies. The proposed project involves the following approvals by the Nipomo Community Services District: 1) certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report; 2) approval of the Mitigation Monitoring Program and 3) review and approval of detailed plans for pipelines, pump stations, storage facilities and other infrastructure for the proposed waterline intertie.

The proposed project may also require the following approvals by other involved regulatory agencies including: 4) Section 404 Permits under the Clean Water Act from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which regulates the discharge of dredged and/or fill material into the "waters of the United States;" 5) Public Resources Code Sections 1601-1603 Streambed Alteration Agreements from the State of California, Department of Fish and Game, which regulates all diversions, obstructions or changes in the natural flow or bed, channel or bank of any river, stream or lake which supports fish or wildlife; 6) a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit to comply with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the State Water Quality Control Board in the event that a Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is required; 7) a Section 401 Water Quality Certification and a General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activities from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board; 8) a Section 7 Consultation or Section 10(a) Permit from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service which allows the "taking" of an endangered species; 9) a Section 7 Permit from or informal consultation with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration which oversees fisheries management in waterways nationwide; 10) a new or amended Domestic Water Supply Permit from the State Department of Public Health (formerly the Department of Health Services) for the introduction of supplemental water into the Nipomo Community Services District system; 11) an Authority to Construct issued by the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District and the Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District in order to allow proposed horizontal directional drilling; 12) easements across the Santa Maria River and along the southern boundary of the river secured from landowners and other entities for right-of-way and construction of either Directional Drilling Options A and B

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and 13) any necessary construction and/or encroachment permits from the County of San Luis Obispo, the City of Santa Maria or the County of Santa Barbara for equipment staging and construction operations.

### **THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

An Initial Study for the Project was prepared by the Nipomo Community Services District in December, 2008, which identified potential environmental impacts attributable to the proposed project. These potential impact areas include land use and planning, population and housing, water, biological resources, aesthetics, cultural resources, geology, traffic, noise and air quality. In addition, the State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines require analysis of Unavoidable Adverse Impacts, Project Alternatives, Growth Inducing Impacts, Cumulative Impacts, and provision of a Mitigation Monitoring/Reporting Program. As a result of the Initial Study, it was determined that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment and an Environmental Impact Report was required.

The Final Environmental Impact Report analyzed both project and cumulative effects of potential environmental impacts noted above. The Final Environmental Impact Report developed and identified a variety of mitigation measures to minimize, reduce, avoid or compensate for the potential adverse effects of the proposed project.

The Final Environmental Impact Report discussed a number of potential alternatives to the proposed project, including the: 1) the No Project Alternative; 2) the Eastern River Crossing Alternative; 3) the Highway 101 Bridge Alternative; 4) the Surface Crossing Alternative; 5) the Existing Pipeline Capacity Alternative; 6) the New Bridge Alternative; 7) the Reduced Pipeline Alternative; 8) Alternative Project Sites and 9) Alternative Water Sources. Alternative water sources that were analyzed included: 1) the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin; 2) the State Water Project; 3) Desalinization; 4) Brackish Agricultural Drainage; 5) the Nacimiento Water Project; 6) Wastewater Recharge and 7) Recycling. Public hearings have been held on the project proposal and its associated environmental impacts by the Nipomo Community Services District Board of Directors prior to the certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report.

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### SECTION 1

#### STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

The Final Environmental Impact Report has identified and discussed significant effects which will occur as a result of the proposed Nipomo Community Services District Waterline Intertie project. With the implementation of the mitigation measures discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Report, these effects can be mitigated to a level of insignificance except for significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the areas of Land Use and Planning, and Population and Housing, as identified in Section 2 of these Findings.

Because the Nipomo Community Services District has reduced the environmental effects of the proposed project by adopting a program to monitor mitigation measures for certain project impacts (as discussed in Section 3 and 4 of these Findings) and having balanced the benefits of the proposed project against the proposed project's potential unavoidable adverse impacts (as noted in Section 2 of these Findings), the County of San Luis Obispo hereby determines that the following benefits of the proposed project outweigh these potential unavoidable adverse impacts based on the following overriding considerations:

1. Slow the depletion of the above-sea-level groundwater in storage beneath the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area of the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin to reduce the potential for sea water intrusion by using supplemental water consistent with the settlement agreement and the judgment related to the groundwater adjudication.
2. Comply with the 2005 groundwater adjudication settlement stipulation and judgment that dictates the need for active management of the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area.
3. Assist in stabilizing the groundwater levels in the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area by reducing pumping in the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area.
4. Augment current water supplies available to the Nipomo Community Services District by a phased delivery of supplemental water. Phase I will supply approximately 2,000 acre feet per year by pipeline from Santa Maria following Phase 1 construction completion. Phase II will supply up to an additional 1,000 acre feet per year by pipeline from Santa Maria (a cumulative total of 3,000 acre feet per year). A third phase (Phase III), if implemented, would supply up to an additional 3,200 acre feet per year (a cumulative total of 6,200 acre feet per year) by pipeline from Santa Maria.
5. Augment current water supplies available to the Woodlands and other water purveyors on the Mesa by 831 acre-feet per year as follows: Woodlands (415 acre feet per year), Golden State Water Company (208 acre feet per year) and Rural Water Company (208 acre feet per year).
6. Increase the reliability of District water supply by providing a diversity of water sources. Avoid the potential use of supplemental water return flows from the District, the Woodlands and the other purveyors, being used to support the water requirements of new development.
7. Comply with Local Agency Formation Commission conditions for securing supplemental water prior to annexation of lands now within the District's Sphere of Influence. This

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supplemental water for annexations shall be in addition to the 3,000 acre feet per year developed by Phases I and II.

8. Avoid multiple waterline crossings of the Santa Maria River and associated environmental impacts, by constructing a single pipeline capable of transporting sufficient water for potential Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area growth consistent with the South County Area Plan (Inland) of San Luis Obispo County's General Plan.
9. Slow the depletion of the above-sea-level groundwater in storage beneath the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area by: providing supplemental water for new development within the current service area of the District and the Mesa's other water purveyors (Golden State and Rural Water) consistent with the South County Area Plan (Inland), facilitating supplemental water delivery for new development within the District's Sphere of Influence consistent with the South County Area Plan (Inland) and the conditions in the Local Agency Formation Commission's 2004 Sphere of Influence Update and providing the basis for the assessment of County Impact Fees upon development outside the District's Sphere of Influence and the service areas of the Mesa's other water purveyors (Golden State and Rural Water Companies).

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### SECTION 2

#### SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE MITIGATED TO A LEVEL OF INSIGNIFICANCE

The County of San Luis Obispo agrees with the Nipomo Community Services District that certain environmental impacts cannot be feasibly mitigated to a level of insignificance. Consequently, in accordance with Section 15093 of the State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, a Statement of Overriding Considerations has been prepared (see Section 1 of these Findings) to substantiate the County of San Luis Obispo's decision to accept these unavoidable adverse environmental impacts because of the benefits afforded by the proposed project.

#### **A. Land Use and Planning**

Impact – The proposed project may indirectly induce changes in land use as a result of the reduction or elimination of a potential constraint upon development within areas served by the increased water supplies provided by the proposed project.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Specific economic, social, legal, technical or other considerations make the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report infeasible.

Supportive Evidence – The proposed project will not directly cause a change in the San Luis Obispo County land use designation or zoning or an increase in the intensity of currently-designated land uses. The proposed project does, however, involve the provision of additional water supplies thereby reducing or eliminating a potential constraint to future development within areas to be served by this additional water. The proposed project involves importation of water in order to reduce the current imbalance of groundwater levels and to serve new development consistent with the South County Area Plan within the current boundaries of the Nipomo Community Services District and its Sphere of Influence areas which are located adjacent to the District boundaries.

The proposed project's potential long-term and cumulative land use and planning impacts resulting from the elimination of a constraint upon future development of areas served by the additional water supplies provided by the proposed project are considered to be significant impacts which cannot be reduced to an insignificant level.

#### **B. Population and Housing**

Impacts – The proposed project may indirectly induce a substantial growth in population as a result of the reduction or elimination of a potential constraint upon development within areas served by the increased water supplies provided by the proposed project.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed

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Findings – Specific economic, social, legal, technical or other considerations make the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report infeasible.

Supportive Evidence – The proposed project will not directly generate any new population or housing. The proposed project does, however, involve the provision of additional water supplies thereby reducing or eliminating a potential constraint to future development within areas to be served by this additional water. The proposed project involves the importation of water in order to reduce the current imbalance of groundwater levels, to serve new development consistent with the South County Area Plan within the current boundaries of the Nipomo Community Services District and its Sphere of Influence areas which are located adjacent to the District boundaries.

The proposed project's potential long-term and cumulative population and housing impacts resulting from the elimination of a constraint upon future development of areas served by the additional water supplies provided by the proposed project are considered to be significant impacts which cannot be reduced to an insignificant level.

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### SECTION 3

#### POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MITIGATED TO A LEVEL OF INSIGNIFICANCE

All Final Environmental Impact Report mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Nipomo Community Services District Waterline Intertie Project. The County of San Luis Obispo agrees with the Nipomo Community Services District that these mitigation measures will result in a substantial reduction of the following impacts which have been mitigated to a level of insignificance.

#### **A. Land Use and Planning**

Impact – The proposed project may impact agricultural land uses in areas adjacent to short-term project construction activities or long-term project operations.

Mitigations –

A-1: For any construction staging or storage proposed on prime farmland, permanent impacts to soil resources can be avoided with the following measures

- A geotextile membrane shall be placed on top of native soils prior to the placement of any stockpile, fill, base materials or construction materials
- Upon completion of the project, native soil will be replaced to its previous condition in terms of soil texture, water holding capacity and soil permeability
- Pipelines will be placed five to six feet below existing grade through agricultural farmland
- All excavated soils will be stockpiled during construction in a manner that protects the soils' physical, chemical and biological characteristics. Biologically active topsoil (A horizon) shall be segregated from deeper soils during construction and replaced in a similar manner upon completion of construction
- At the conclusion of construction, soils will be replaced in a manner that mimics the pre-construction characteristics of the soils, including compacting the soils to the same soil permeability, soil texture and available water holding capacity

A-2: Project construction shall be coordinated with property owners and any farm lessee/operators. Impacts to agricultural use of the property can be avoided or minimized with the following measures

- All existing irrigation systems shall be located in order to avoid damaging buried irrigation lines, wells, risers and other agricultural infrastructure
- Early notice of any planned closures or detours on existing roadways either within the fields or along existing paved roads with regular updates about forthcoming closures or detours shall be provided to area agricultural

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producers so that adequate planning can be made for the movement of agricultural goods and personnel.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – The areas through which the proposed pipeline extension and construction of various infrastructure facilities are located are within an area containing agricultural land uses. The proposed project may represent a short-term conflict with existing agricultural uses during project construction activities.

Mitigation Measures A-1 and A-2 will reduce potentially significant temporary or permanent impacts to agricultural lands to an insignificant level.

### **B. Water**

Impact – The proposed project may result in the creation of water quality incompatibility due to the differences in water treatment employed by the City of Santa Maria and the Nipomo Community Services District.

Mitigations –

C-1: A public awareness program shall be implemented by the Nipomo Community Services District that alerts District customers to the potential harmful effects of chloramines on certain aquatic species and reptiles and to treatment products that are readily available to treat water for fish tanks. Users of ultra-pure water, kidney dialysis patients and chloramine-sensitive manufacturing processes shall also be notified of the addition of chloramine to the District water supplies.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – The Nipomo Community Services District currently employs chlorination water treatment in order to provide disinfection within the District's water distribution system and meet State and Federal drinking water standards. The City of Santa Maria utilizes chloramination to boost chloramine levels in their blended groundwater and imported State Water supplies.

The District has chosen to maintain a chloramine residual throughout the system by converting the free chlorination treatment process at the wells to chloramination. This approach was selected due to the fewest water quality impacts. The use of chloraminated water will reduce trihalomethane generation potential and will result in a reduction in chlorine-related taste and odor, all of which are associated with chloraminated water.

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Maintaining a chloramine residual in the water supply will, according to the project engineer, result in the lowest potential for formation of disinfection by-products and the fewest water quality problems in the water distribution system. In addition, the District will see a reduction in customer complaints related to taste and odor. However, this change in treatment method may affect certain aquatic pet species and reptiles, users of ultra pure water, kidney dialysis patients and chloramine sensitive manufacturing processes. Monitoring and public awareness programs will be required in order to insure that potential water quality incompatibility is a potentially significant but mitigable impact.

Mitigation Measure C-1 will reduce potentially significant impacts related to water quality incompatibility due to differences in water treatment employed by the City of Santa Maria and the Nipomo Community Services District to an insignificant level.

Impact – The proposed project may result in degradation of surface and shallow groundwater quality as a result of underground horizontal directional drilling-related frac-outs.

### Mitigations –

C-2: Construction shall occur during the dry season (i.e., April 15 to November 15) when there is little or no flow in the Santa Maria River in order to reduce potential contact of frac-out fluids with surface waters.

C-3: The Nipomo Community Services District shall complete a preliminary geotechnical investigation along the underground horizontal directional drilling route to further define the stratigraphy and determine the appropriate depth of drilling to avoid frac-outs (i.e., the depth of finest grained sediments) and to determine appropriate methods (i.e., appropriate drilling mud mixtures for specific types of sediments). Drilling pressures shall be closely monitored so that they do not exceed those needed to penetrate the formation.

C-4: The Nipomo Community Services District shall prepare a Frac-out Monitoring, Response and Clean-up Plan that shall be approved by the Regional Water Quality Control Board prior to any underground horizontal directional drilling activities. The Plan shall include the following elements:

- Description of the equipment and procedures for controlling fluid pressures to reduce the risk of hydraulic fracturing.
- Description of monitoring procedures to detect surface exposures of drilling mud in dry areas and in flowing waters or to groundwater.
- Description of equipment and procedures to respond to hydraulic fractures that break out at the ground surface or to the groundwater including overland access routes, containment methods and materials, equipment to be used and availability, environmental protection measures, emergency response plan, and post-containment clean up and restoration.
- Description of equipment, procedures and materials for grouting and abandoning an incomplete pilot hole that cannot be advanced further.
- Evaluation plan and criteria for continuing drilling.
- Agency notification and post-event permitting.

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Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Proposed horizontal directional drilling would occur in relatively coarse-grained sediments beneath the Santa Maria River. Although the exact depth of underground horizontal directional drilling beneath the river channel has not yet been determined, the primary concern associated with this method of construction is frac-outs, which are generally defined as an inadvertent return of drilling fluids to the ground surface. Frac-outs could potentially result in adverse impacts to both surface water quality in the Santa Maria River and the underlying Santa Maria Groundwater Basin.

Frac-outs generally occur in very coarse grained, pebbly to cobbly sands, such as occur within the currently and formerly active channels of the Santa Maria River, to a depth of approximately 130 feet, or in fractured bedrock. Underground horizontal directional drilling in clay, silt, and sand generally does not result in frac-outs, as these types of sediments allow a cohesive mudpack, or filter-pack, to form on the walls of the borehole. The integrity of the mudpack in these types of sediments prevents the drilling mud from permeating the surrounding strata and migrating to the ground surface or groundwater.

The potential for frac-outs also increases with increasing length of the underground borehole. Longer drilling reaches require increased hydraulic pressures for effective drilling at increased distances from the drill rig. Higher pressures also occur with increases in elevation. This increased hydraulic pressure increases the pressure on the surrounding strata, thus increasing the potential for frac-outs. Therefore, the extended length of the proposed bores (up to 2,500 feet) and the generally coarse-grained materials through which drilling would occur would result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measures C-2, C-3, and C-4 will reduce potentially significant water quality impacts related to underground horizontal directional drilling-induced frac-outs to an insignificant level.

Impact – The proposed project may result in degradation of surface water quality as a result of potential construction related spills.

### Mitigations –

C-5: The Nipomo Community Services District shall develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that will include Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent the discharge of construction materials, contaminants, washings, concrete, fuels, and oils. The SWPPP will be reviewed and approved by the Central Coast RWQCB prior to commencement of any clearing or other construction activities. BMPs should include the following measures:

- Properly maintain (off-site) all construction vehicles and equipment that enter the construction area to prevent leaks of fuel, oil, and other vehicle fluids.

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- Conduct equipment and vehicle fueling off-site. If refueling is required at the Project site, it will be done within a bermed area with an impervious surface to collect spilled fluids.
- Prepare a Spill Prevention/Spill Response Plan for the site that includes training, equipment and procedures to address spills from equipment, stored fluids and other materials including disposal of spilled material and materials used for clean up of contaminated soils and materials.
- Place all stored fuel, lubricants, paints, and other construction liquids in secured and covered containers within a bermed area.
- Conduct any mixing and storage of concrete and mortar in contained areas.
- Insure that all equipment washing and major maintenance is prohibited at the project site except in bermed areas.
- Remove all refuse and excess material from the site as soon as possible.
- Channelize storm water to avoid construction equipment and materials, and to divert runoff to existing drainages.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - Concrete work and use of fuels and lubricants associated with the construction equipment could affect water quality in the event that an accidental spill occurred during construction and was washed into nearby drainages or the Santa Maria River. Water quality impacts would be potentially significant, but mitigable.

Mitigation Measure C-5 will reduce potentially significant water quality impacts associated with equipment maintenance and fueling spills to an insignificant level.

### **C. Biological Resources**

Impact – Construction activities within the proposed pipeline alignments, storage tank and pump station locations could adversely affect nesting activities of protected migratory birds and raptors.

Mitigations –

D-1: Pipeline, water storage tank and pump station construction operations shall be conducted prior to, or after, the nesting season (February 15 to September 15) to avoid any potential impacts to nesting birds. This shall include any necessary vegetation and/or tree removals which could disrupt nesting birds. Therefore, construction activities should be conducted between the months of October and January to the extent feasible.

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If the above measure is not feasible, pre-construction surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist two weeks prior to the initiation of construction activities initiated between February 15 and September 15 to identify potential bird nesting sites.

- If active nest sites of common bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (e.g., Northern mockingbird, House finch, etc.) and Fish and Game Code Sections 3503 and 3503.5 are observed within 300 feet of construction activities, then the project shall be modified and/or delayed as necessary to avoid direct take of the identified nests, eggs and/or young.
- If active nest sites of raptors and/or species of special concern are observed within the vicinity of project construction activities, construction shall avoid the nest site or be terminated until the California Department of Fish and Game is contacted and an appropriate buffer zone around the nest site is established. Construction activities in the buffer zone shall be prohibited until the young have fledged the nest or the nest is abandoned.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Raptor and migratory bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the California Fish and Game Code may nest along portions of the pipeline alignments (i.e., eucalyptus woodland) and the areas adjacent to the Santa Maria River and Nipomo Mesa affected by the proposed horizontal directional drilling operations. These include ground nesters (Western meadowlark and Lark sparrow), small tree/shrub nesters (Bushtit, American robin, Northern mockingbird, Loggerhead shrike, House finch, and Lesser goldfinch), freshwater marsh nesters (Red-winged blackbird) and several raptors which require large trees, such as eucalyptus for nesting purposes (Turkey vulture, Red-tailed hawk, Red-shouldered hawk, Great-horned owl and Barn owl). Short-term impacts to these species may occur from vegetation clearing, debris removal, dust deposition and noise disturbance associated with project-related trenching and general construction activities and traffic. Specifically, vegetation removal and grading activities may significantly impact nests, nestlings, or hatchlings of these protected bird species. Scheduling pipeline, storage tank and pump station construction outside the nesting season or conducting pre-construction surveys would result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure D-1 will reduce potentially significant impacts to nesting activities of protected migratory birds and raptors to an insignificant level.

Impact – Construction activities could adversely affect special-status terrestrial and avian species potentially occurring in the project area.

Mitigations –

D-2: All equipment staging and construction crew parking areas shall be located within pre-designated staging areas identified on construction plans which avoid identified sensitive habitats as determined by a qualified biological monitor. This shall include pre-designation of all staging areas, proposed horizontal directional drilling and jack-and-bore operations.

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Additionally, all construction access routes shall be established in previously disturbed areas and/or existing roadways.

D-3: Exclusionary and silt fencing will be erected at the boundaries of the construction areas to avoid equipment and human intrusion into adjacent habitats with emphasis on protection of areas containing special-status species. The exact location of exclusionary and silt fencing for each construction area shall be determined by a qualified biological monitor. The fencing shall remain in place throughout the construction phase for each project component.

D-4: A qualified biological monitor shall conduct a worker orientation for all construction contractors (site supervisors, equipment operators and laborers) which emphasizes the presence and identification of special-status species within the project area, their habitat requirements and applicable regulatory policies and provisions regarding their protection and measures being implemented to avoid and/or minimize impacts.

D-5: If nighttime construction activities are warranted, all equipment lighting shall be shielded away from adjacent wildlife habitat areas and the open sky in order to minimize lighting/glare impacts of wildlife while still providing safe working conditions for construction personnel.

D-6: A dust control program during the construction phase of the project shall be implemented to minimize dust impacts to adjacent vegetation communities and associated special-status species

D-7: A qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-activity survey to determine presence/absence of California horned lizard within and adjacent to the horizontal directional drilling laydown areas and jack-and-bore locations along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River. Surveys shall only be required during the active period of California horned lizards (generally April through September). If California horned lizards are identified adjacent to and/or within work areas, hand rakes or an equivalent method shall be utilized by the biologist in order to scarify the ground surface and encourage the horned lizards (and other wildlife) to vacate the immediate area prior to construction. Alternatively, drift fences shall be used to capture horned lizards. As necessary, the qualified biologist shall physically relocate any California horned lizards to suitable habitat located outside the construction zone(s). Procedures and protocols for relocation shall be based up on pre-project consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game.

D-8: A qualified biological monitor shall be on-site during all vegetation clearing and shall periodically monitor the project area during construction activities in order to inspect protective fencing, equipment staging areas and to physically relocate or remove any special-status wildlife species entering the construction zone (e.g., California horned lizard, etc.). All special-status species shall be relocated to suitable habitat located outside the construction zone by the qualified biologist. Exact procedures and protocols for relocating shall be based upon pre-project consultation with California Department of Fish and Game.

D-9: Nesting bird surveys shall be conducted between February 15 and August 15 to identify nest sites of special-status bird species including Loggerhead shrike, California horned lark, Northern harrier, Cooper's hawk, White-tailed kite and Tricolored blackbird.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the

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County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - The proposed short-term construction activities have the potential to adversely affect terrestrial special-status wildlife species found in the project area. Specifically, the Coast horned lizard may be present within and/or adjacent to the proposed work areas along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River during the construction phase of the project. Construction activities in this area would include both the proposed jack-and-bore and proposed horizontal directional drilling laydown area operations along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River. This species prefers open sandy areas, washes and floodplains with sufficient red-ant populations. Suitable habitat for this species is predominately found along the sandy open areas along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River channel. It is likely that historical disturbance, including agriculture and encroachment of residential development, has resulted in a decreased population of Coast horned lizard within the project area. As such, the number of individuals affected is expected to be very small. However, increased mortality of this species would be expected to affect the overall distribution and/or survival of this species in the region. Therefore, impacts to coast horned lizard are considered to be potentially significant but mitigable.

Special-status bird species such as the Sharp-shinned hawk that have the potential to periodically frequent the project area for the purpose of foraging and may be temporarily affected by construction activities due to the short-term loss of foraging opportunities. However, Loggerhead shrike and California horned lark could potentially be impacted during construction through the disruption of breeding activities and/or short-term loss of foraging opportunities within areas of construction. This would be most applicable within the temporary proposed horizontal directional drilling laydown area along the south side of the Santa Maria River. The Northern harrier could also be affected during the breeding season by the short-term disturbance of the open grassland areas along the south side of the river channel. Further, the White-tailed kite and Cooper's hawk are likely to be affected by the short-term disturbance of both foraging habitat and potential nest sites, including the eucalyptus woodland windrows located along Blosser Avenue. Lastly, the special-status Tricolored blackbird was observed within the agricultural stock pond located directly northeast of the pipeline alignment on the Nipomo Mesa during the 2008 spring survey and could be affected during its breeding period by pipeline trenching and proposed horizontal directional drilling operations at this location. Due to the relatively small area of disturbance and short-term construction period, overall impacts to foraging special-status raptors are expected to be minimal. Surveying of potential nesting habitat of all migratory and special-status bird species in the project area prior to construction will result in potentially significant but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measures D-2 through D-9 will reduce potentially significant impacts to special-status terrestrial and avian species to an insignificant level.

Impact – Pipeline construction activities could adversely affect aquatic and semi-aquatic special-status species within the Santa Maria River, Blosser Road drainage canal, and agricultural stock ponds located along the Nipomo Mesa.

Mitigations –

D-10: Site disturbance and construction activities associated with the Santa Maria River pipeline crossing, including the horizontal directional drilling operations shall not occur during the rainy season (October 15 to April 15). No construction activities shall occur

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during or immediately following a rain event or if water is flowing within the Santa Maria River.

D-11: A qualified biological monitor shall conduct a worker orientation which emphasizes the presence of semi-aquatic, special-status species within the project area (e.g., California red-legged frog, Two-striped garter snake, etc.), their habitat requirements, applicable regulatory policies and provisions regarding their protection and measures being implemented to avoid and/or minimize impacts.

D-12: The Blosser Road drainage canal shall be illustrated on all final construction plans. At no time shall any equipment and/or materials staging be allowed within the bed or banks of the drainage feature. In addition, a row of silt fencing or equivalent shall be installed along the perimeter of the drainage canal during project operations to prohibit CRLF movement into the work zone.

D-13: All work areas within 100 feet of known California red-legged frog habitat shall be surveyed by a qualified biologist each day prior to the initiation of construction activities. As necessary, the qualified biologist shall physically relocate semi-aquatic, special-status species (e.g., Southwestern pond turtle, Two-striped garter snake, etc.) and common semi-aquatic species (e.g., Western toad, Pacific chorus frog, etc.) to suitable habitat areas located outside the construction zone(s). Exact procedures and protocols for relocation of the special-status species shall be based upon pre-project consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game. In the event California red-legged frog is identified in a work area, all work shall cease until the California red-legged frog has safely vacated the work area. At no time shall any California red-legged frog be relocated and/or affected by project operations without prior approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Exclusionary fencing will be erected at the boundaries of the construction areas to avoid equipment and human intrusion into adjacent habitats with emphasis on protection of areas containing special-status species. In addition, silt fencing will be installed around temporary aquatic habitats (i.e. trenches that have perched groundwater) that have formed during project activities, to minimize the potential for migration of CRLF from the adjacent agricultural pond. The exact location of exclusionary and silt fencing shall be determined by a qualified biological monitor. The fencing shall remain in place throughout the construction phase for each individual project component.

D-14: Prior to commencing construction, the Nipomo Community Services District shall prepare the following plans and agency permit applications, and shall implement all plans prior to, during and immediately following construction activities.

- In compliance with the San Luis Obispo County Land Use Ordinance, the District shall prepare an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (ESCP) outlining the measures to address both temporary (i.e., site disturbance, stock piling and horizontal directional drilling activities) and final (i.e., post-construction) methods for stabilizing soil and minimizing soil loss from the proposed project site. All applicable measures shall be included on final construction plans and adhered to throughout the project.
- All project operations shall comply with the requirements under the General Construction Storm Water General Permit, issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. Such requirements will include preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP shall include provisions for the

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installation and maintenance of Best Management Practices to reduce the potential for erosion of disturbed soils at the project site.

- A Spill Contingency Plan (SCP) shall be prepared outlining measures to prevent the release of petroleum and hazardous materials including containment methods for emergency clean-up operations. Prevention measures shall include, but not be limited to identification of appropriate fueling areas away from sensitive habitat areas such as swales and/or drainages, a maintenance schedule for equipment, and a list of appropriate containment and spill response materials to be stored on-site. All vehicles shall be staged only in appropriately marked and protected areas and at no time shall any cleaning and/or refueling of equipment be allowed upslope and/or within the vicinity of any drainages and/or wetland habitat areas, including agricultural stock ponds. If an accidental spill of a hazardous or toxic material occurs, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), the California Department of Fish and Game and California Department of Toxic Substances (CDTS) shall be notified.
- The District shall submit an application for a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) to the California Department of Fish and Game. If required, the final SAA shall be received prior to project construction. All conditions in the final SAA shall be strictly adhered to during construction.
- A Frac-out Contingency Plan (FCP) shall be prepared for horizontal directional drilling operations within the Santa Maria River channel and shall include appropriate measures for containment of spills, agency notifications (including a detailed call-down list of all applicable regulatory agency representatives), clean-up protocols, and procedures for restoring the river channel to pre-disturbance conditions. The “Frac-out” clean-up procedures shall emphasize minimizing and/or avoiding impacts to the main channel and alluvial scrub habitat areas of the Santa Maria River. Lastly, the FCP shall include the conditions by which the boring operation would be abandoned, if applicable, and how many repeated bores may be attempted.

D-15: Prior to commencing project construction, the District shall retain a biological monitor experienced with horizontal directional drilling technology. The biological monitor shall be responsible for conducting field inspections of horizontal directional drilling operations, reporting, and enforcement of all applicable conditions of approval, including any required conditions from the California Department of Fish and Game SAA. Specifically, the qualified monitor shall be on-site to inspect the river corridor and pipeline alignment during drilling activities that have the potential for a spill or “Frac-out” (i.e. pull back operations, etc.) to ensure no impacts occur to the Santa Maria River. In the event of a spill or “Frac-out” within the Santa Maria River corridor, all work shall be halted and the spill shall be contained using the procedures outlined in the FCP.

D-16: Spill containment equipment shall be available on-site during all construction activities. As necessary, this shall include placement of individual spill response trailers at each active work area during project operations.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the

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County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – During proposed site disturbance activities, including pipeline excavations and trenching, levee jack-and-boring and horizontal directional drilling operations beneath the Santa Maria River, down-gradient sediment and incidental spills or leaks of oils or fluids from equipment and machinery may result in a pollutant discharge into the Santa Maria River corridor and floodplain, Nipomo Mesa agricultural stock ponds and associated drainage channels and/or the Blosser Road drainage canal. Such inadvertent spills and/or discharges would have the potential to result in direct impacts to special-status aquatic and semi-aquatic species or result in the degradation of existing wetland/riparian vegetation and overall water quality. Further, mobile semi-aquatic, special-status species, such as the California red-legged frog have the potential to occur within and/or adjacent to proposed project segments containing suitable habitat, including the proposed pipeline alignment along the Blosser Road drainage canal and the proposed horizontal directional drilling laydown area on the Nipomo Mesa. This species is known to travel up to two miles between aquatic sites during the rainy season and therefore could be present anywhere in the project area during this period.

Proposed horizontal directional drilling operations have the potential to result in frac-out into the Santa Maria River which could result in the release of drilling mud, increased turbidity, and localized degradation of riparian vegetation and water quality within the channel. Such water quality and habitat effects have the potential to result in significant impacts to Steelhead and Arroyo chub within the river system.

Impacts to the Arroyo chub, Southern California ESU Steelhead, California red-legged frog, Southwestern pond turtle and Two-striped garter snake are considered to be potentially significant but mitigable with implementation of mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to these species.

Mitigation Measures D-10 through D-16 will reduce potentially significant impacts to special-status aquatic or semi-aquatic species to an insignificant level.

Impact – Construction activities could result in short-term impacts to the sensitive habitat areas of the Santa Maria River, including jurisdictional Waters of the United States and designated critical habitat of the Southern California ESU Steelhead.

### Mitigations –

D-17: In the event that a “Frac-out” occurs within the Santa Maria River channel due to horizontal directional drilling operations, the appropriate permits shall be obtained by the governing regulatory agency to facilitate clean-up and restoration of the affected portions of river channel to pre-project conditions. As necessary, this shall include a 404 Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, a 401 Permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board and Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game.

D-18: The restoration component of the Frac-out Contingency Plan (Mitigation Measure D-14) shall be implemented as necessary to ensure that the affected portions of stream channel and associated sensitive habitat areas are restored to pre-project conditions. The restored portions of stream channel shall be monitored until all performance criteria have been met as specified by the regulatory agency permits.

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Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - Surrounding sensitive habitats include the riparian corridors of Santa Maria River, Nipomo Creek and associated mixed willow series, a sensitive plant community and wetlands under the definition adopted by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Although the riparian corridor of nearby Nipomo Creek and associated mixed willow series habitat areas would be entirely avoided by the project operations through project design, short-term impacts to the sensitive habitats of the Santa Maria River, including alluvial scrub and areas considered Waters of the U.S. may result from temporary horizontal directional drilling operations including heavy equipment operation, temporary materials staging and in the event of a “Frac-out” along the river floodplain (i.e., worst-case scenario). This could result in direct adverse impacts to sensitive habitat of the Santa Maria River channel, including areas under jurisdiction of regulatory agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board and designated critical habitat of the Southern California Steelhead. Implementation of mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive species would result in a potentially significant, but mitigable impact.

Mitigation Measures D-17 and D-18 will reduce potentially significant short-term impacts upon sensitive habitat areas within the Santa Maria River to an insignificant level.

Impact – The proposed project may result in long-term impacts to the large eucalyptus trees located along the proposed pipeline alignment located on Southland Street, Orchard Road, South Frontage Road and Darby Lane. These trees may represent potential habitat for Monarch butterflies or nesting raptors.

### Mitigations –

D-21: The proposed waterline shall be aligned to avoid impacting the root systems of large eucalyptus trees located on Southland Street, Orchard Road, South Frontage Road and Darby Lane. The precise location shall be reviewed by a qualified arborist to insure avoidance of or minimize impacts to the root systems of large trees throughout pipeline alignment at these locations.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – The majority of the proposed waterline extension will occur in areas generally lacking significant biological resources. The pipeline alignment along Blosser Road would also be installed along the east side of the drainage channel away from the root systems of the existing eucalyptus windrow at this location. Further, impacts to biological

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resources located along Orchard Avenue would be minimized by tying the new pipeline alignment(s) into an existing 12-inch pipeline that is located along this roadway. However, large eucalyptus trees located along Southland Street, Orchard Road, South Frontage Road and Darby Lane represent potential habitat for Monarch butterflies or nesting raptors, which could be impacted by proposed trenching activities. Specifically, pipelines installed within the drip line of these trees could result in direct impacts to vital root systems, which may lead to potential long-term impacts such as susceptibility to pests/diseases and/or death. Avoidance of root systems of large eucalyptus trees would result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure D-21 will reduce potentially significant impacts to large eucalyptus trees located on Southland Street, Orchard Road, South Frontage Road and Darby Lane to an insignificant level.

Impact – Long-term impacts associated with the potential generation of silt and sedimentation sources along the pipeline alignments, water storage tank and pump stations could result in adverse effects to adjacent habitat areas and associated special-status wildlife species.

Mitigations –

D-22: Mitigation Measure D-14 includes provisions for stabilizing soils surrounding the water storage tank, pump station sites and pipeline alignments affected by project construction and monitoring. As necessary, this shall include the following:

- Implementation of standard Best Management Practices (e.g., hydroseeding, wattles, and earthen swales, etc.) along the recontoured sites and erosion control monitoring during subsequent rainy seasons to ensure that previously disturbed areas are stabilized.
- Installation of long-term drainage devices at all water storage tank and pump stations, including, as necessary, catchment basins, culverts with down-drains and storm flow energy dissipating devices (riprap or diffusers).

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence- Terrestrial and semi-aquatic, special-status wildlife species potentially present within the pipeline alignments, storage tank and pump stations includes the Coast horned lizard, CRLF, Southwestern pond turtle and Two-striped garter snake. The majority of these species (if present) would be expected to forage and possibly breed within the alluvial scrub and aquatic habitats along the Santa Maria River, the Blosser Road drainage channel and the agricultural stock ponds on the Nipomo Mesa. The proposed project will result in trenching and localized surface disturbance of ruderal, agricultural, and California annual grassland habitat areas throughout the project area. Potential long-term surface erosion of the recontoured pipeline alignments could result in the degradation of adjacent habitat areas over time due to increased silt and sedimentation. Further, uncontrolled runoff from the newly proposed water storage tank and pump stations along Blosser Road and on

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the Nipomo Mesa could result in long-term silt and sedimentation impacts to adjacent drainages and secondary effects to associated aquatic habitats and residing special-status species. Implementation of mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to habitat areas would result in potentially significant but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure D-22 will reduce potentially significant long-term impacts associated with the generation of silt and sedimentation to an insignificant level.

Impact – Pipeline operation and maintenance activities may result in long-term adverse impacts to special-status species.

### Mitigations –

D-23: All water storage tank and pump station facility lighting shall be shielded away from adjacent wildlife habitat areas and sky to minimize lighting/glare impacts of wildlife, to the extent feasible while still providing safe working conditions for facility personnel.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - The proposed project will include the construction of water storage facilities and two pump stations along the pipeline alignments. This would include one pump station along the west side of Blosser Road and another pump station on the Nipomo Mesa near Orchard Avenue. These newly-installed facilities would result in the addition of a permanent noise source to the project area as well as potential additional source of night-time lighting. Specifically, each pump station will contain four, 75 horsepower pumps housed within an enclosed booster station structure. The structures will be designed to insure minimal increase of exterior noise levels due to pump operations. It is anticipated that the facilities would also require periodic inspections and routine maintenance to ensure proper function and operation of the pumps and water storage facilities.

The drainage channel located along Blosser Road provides suitable habitat for the California red-legged frog which was identified in the drainage channel during a 2007 field survey. Further, the rows of eucalyptus trees along Blosser Road provide suitable nesting habitat for a number of migratory birds and raptors. Lastly, the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River provides suitable habitat for the Coast horned lizard, migratory birds, and, when water is present, a number of semi-aquatic, special-status species including, the Southwestern pond turtle and Two-striped garter snake. Although, the new noise source associated with the water storage tank and pump station facilities (including periodic maintenance) is expected to be negligible due to structure design coupled with the current and ongoing level of agricultural activities within these areas, these new lighting sources would have the potential to result in adverse impacts to California red-legged frog and other special-status wildlife due to increased glare. Shielding of facility lighting away from adjacent wildlife habitat areas would result in long-term light and glare impacts that are potentially significant but mitigable impacts. Long-term lighting and glare impacts are considered to be potentially significant but mitigable.

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Mitigation Measure D-23 will reduce potentially significant impacts to special-status species due to long-term pipeline operations and maintenance activities to an insignificant level.

### **D. Aesthetics**

Impact – Project infrastructure facilities may degrade views from adjacent areas.

Mitigations –

E-1: Prior to project construction, a Landscape Screening Plan shall be prepared for the District which provides landscaped screening consisting of trees and/or shrubs adjacent to proposed booster stations or any above ground storage facilities. Trees or shrubs will be provided which will reach six (6) feet surrounding booster stations without sacrificing safety considerations within two years of construction of these facilities.

E-2: Prior to project construction, a Landscape Maintenance Plan shall be prepared which provides a program for growing and maintaining the proposed vegetative screens so that they achieve the two-year growth plan for vegetation. The plan shall also identify the long range maintenance and vegetative replacement plan to insure that said screening will be maintained for 15 years, including replacement of any trees which may die.

E-3: Prior to project construction, a color board will be provided which identifies the exterior colors and materials to be utilized on proposed water storage tanks and booster stations. The colors and materials selected will involve muted tones which match or are comparable with the colors found in the surrounding areas.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - In order to provide adequate storage and accommodate anticipated waterline flows, one 0.5 million gallon underground water storage tank will be constructed at one of three possible locations on the Nipomo Mesa. Since these water storage facilities will be placed underground, the primary design elements to be visible will be security, fencing, employee parking and security lighting. A second water storage tank may be constructed in Phase III.

In addition, a single pressure reducing station will be installed on the existing 12-inch waterline serving the recently-constructed Maria Vista residential development and four pressure reducing stations on Orchard Road, Southland Street, South Frontage Road and South Oakglen Avenue.

While none of these facilities are considered to represent a major addition to the existing visual landscape of the area, several measures including the use of landscaped screening and proper color selection will result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measures E-1 through E-3 will reduce potentially significant aesthetic impacts associated with views of project facilities to an insignificant level.

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Impact – Long-term project operations may result in the generation of light and glare into surrounding areas.

### Mitigations-

E-4: Prior to project construction, an Exterior Lighting Plan shall be prepared for the District which indicates the height, location and intensity of all proposed exterior lighting. All light fixtures shall be shielded so that neither the lamp nor the reflective interior surface is visible from beyond 50 feet of project facilities. All light poles, fixtures and hoods shall be dark (non-reflective) colored. All exterior lighting sources shall be low-level adjusted so that light is directed downward. Security lighting shall be shielded so as not to create glare when viewed from adjacent properties with lighting heights no more than is absolutely necessary. All project lighting shall not be obtrusive to travelers along any adjacent roadways.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Proposed project infrastructure facilities, primarily booster stations and security for the proposed water storage tank will require exterior lighting for security purposes. It is anticipated that such low-level lighting will remain on throughout the evening. While night lighting will be generated by these facilities, travelers on surrounding roadways as well as residents in adjacent areas will not be as sensitive to the presence of night lighting at these locations. This is due to the relatively low level of illumination proposed coupled with existing night lighting emanating from adjacent properties as well as light and glare from nearby roadways, particularly from lighting and traffic on Highway 101.

The extent of visual impacts associated with project lighting is highly dependent upon the type and design of lighting selected for the project. By specifying appropriate lighting fixtures and types of lighting to be utilized, potential light and glare generated by project facilities will result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure E-4 will reduce potentially significant aesthetic impacts due to the generation of light and glare to an insignificant level.

## **E. Cultural Resources**

Impact – Project construction may disturb or materially alter areas containing prehistoric cultural resources which may be related to an identified prehistoric site.

### Mitigations –

F-1: Cultural resource monitoring shall accompany construction trenching and excavation along the South Frontage Road near Grande Avenue (SLO-808), between Division Street and Story Street (SLO-1254) as well as along a 100 meter area on the south side of Southland Street directly south of 641 Southland. A Cultural Resource Monitoring Plan shall be developed and approved by the County of San Luis Obispo which will include project

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review, a pre-construction archeological workshop, Chumash involvement, networking with all involved members of the project and the production of a final monitoring report.

F-2: The vacant lot located southeast of the intersection of Tefft Street and Highway 101 containing SLO-1394 shall not be utilized during any project construction activities including, but not limited to, a staging area for project construction.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – SLO-808 is located in the vicinity of the project. It is unknown if intact cultural deposits of SLO-808 exist beneath the adjacent road. It is possible that displaced and/or intact cultural resources from SLO-808 may be encountered during construction of the proposed project. Given the lack of information concerning intact portions of SLO-808, it is recommended that cultural resources monitoring accompany construction trenching in the area. If any displaced or intact cultural resources are unearthed, work in that area should halt until they can be evaluated by a qualified archeologist and Chumash representative and appropriate recommendations made.

SLO-1254 is located in the vicinity of the project. It is possible that either intact or displaced cultural resources are located beneath the adjacent road and may be encountered during construction. Given the lack of information concerning intact portions of SLO-1254, it is recommended that cultural resource monitoring accompany construction trenching in the area. If any displaced or intact cultural resources are unearthed, work in that area should halt until they can be evaluated by a qualified archeologist and Chumash representative and appropriate recommendations made.

SLO-1394 is located in the vicinity of the project. While the proposed project will not directly impact these resources, the site should not be utilized as a staging area for project construction. Although these elements possibly related to this site are not considered to be a significant resource, a 100 meter long area should be monitored during construction trenching at this site during construction in order to record the distribution and nature of the site elements. If any unusual items are unearthed they can be examined by a qualified principal archeologist and appropriate recommendations made.

For the remainder of the project areas for pipeline routes, facilities and staging areas, no prehistoric cultural materials (chert flakes, weathered shell or other prehistoric materials) or historic cultural materials were noted and no cultural resource monitoring is recommended during construction unless undiscovered cultural materials are accidentally unearthed.

Mitigation Measures F-1 and F-2 will reduce potentially significant impacts due to the disturbance or alteration of prehistoric cultural resources during project construction to an insignificant level.

Impact – Project grading and construction may result in the discovery of currently-unknown cultural resources.

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### Mitigations –

F-3: An archaeological workshop shall be conducted by a qualified archaeologist at the pre-construction meeting for construction personnel to educate them about what types of cultural material may be encountered during construction grading and excavation. A procedure for notification of accidental discovery and communication network shall be developed so that if any suspected cultural materials are unearthed, they can be quickly examined and evaluated by a qualified archaeologist and appropriate recommendations can be made.

F-4: During any grading or excavation associated with the project, if any cultural materials are unearthed, work in that area shall be halted until all cultural materials can be examined by a qualified archaeologist and appropriate recommendations made pursuant to County Title 22 of the San Luis Obispo County Code (Land Use Ordinance Section).

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - Surface walkover surveys did not reveal any prehistoric or historic resources beyond those discussed above. Although no other significant cultural resources were encountered in the area during site surveys, there remains the potential that currently unknown cultural resources may be unearthed during project grading or construction. If any cultural resources are unearthed during project grading or excavation, work will be temporarily halted in that area until the unearthed cultural resources are examined and appropriate recommendations are made. In addition, an archaeological workshop shall be conducted for construction personnel to educate them as to the types of cultural resources that may be encountered during construction grading and excavation. These workshops are effective in preventing accidental damage to significant cultural resources during the construction phase of a project; they also help to reduce unnecessary delays in construction activity. The ability to halt grading or excavation when unknown cultural resources are encountered coupled with the archaeological workshops for construction personnel will result in potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measures F-3 and F-4 will reduce potentially significant impacts related to the discovery of currently-unknown cultural resources during project construction to an insignificant level.

### **F. Geology**

Impact – The proposed project could result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil into the Santa Maria River or other local drainages.

### Mitigations –

G-1: The following shall be included in Final Grading and Drainage Plans to prevent erosion induced siltation of on-site and off-site drainages:

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- The use of temporary berms and sedimentation traps, such as silt fencing, straw bales, and sand bags, to be installed in association with project excavations, grading and underground horizontal directional drilling activities in order to minimize erosion of soils and sedimentation into the Santa Maria River and other local drainages. Sedimentation basins and traps shall be cleaned periodically with silt removal and disposal in a location approved by the District.
- A prohibition against grading during the rainy season (November 1-April 15) unless erosion control measures found adequate by the District are implemented.
- Methods for revegetation of disturbed soils for long-term stabilization.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – The proposed horizontal directional drilling would generate large quantities of drilling cuttings, which must be temporarily stockpiled prior to off-site disposal. Exposure of such soil cuttings could result in erosion-induced siltation of local drainages or the Santa Maria River. Excavating and grading for the proposed pipeline, water tank, pump stations and other facilities could result in potential erosion. Such activities would result in a short-term increase in soils exposed to wind and water erosion. Removal of vegetation, creation of temporary spoil piles, construction of temporary haul roads and excavation and filling operations could also result in disturbance of on-site soils, which would potentially contribute to increased erosion. Pipeline repair activities, such as in the event of seismically induced failure, would involve excavating a portion of the trench to expose the pipe, temporary stockpiling of soil, the use of temporary haul roads, backfilling and compaction operations. These activities could similarly result in erosion-induced siltation of local drainages and the adjacent Santa Maria River, resulting in a potentially significant, but mitigable impact.

Mitigation Measure G-1 will reduce potentially significant impacts associated with erosion induced siltation of the Santa Maria River and other local drainages to an insignificant level.

### **G. Traffic**

Impact – Project construction activities may result in the diversion of traffic creating an unacceptable level of service, insufficient parking, blocking or impeding access to adjacent properties or result in hazards to pedestrians or bicyclists.

Mitigations –

H-1: All project construction sites accessing onto or occurring adjacent to public roadways shall provide adequate signage, barriers and, if necessary, flagmen in order to insure the safe diversion of traffic, bicyclists and/or pedestrians. These measures shall also insure continued access from adjacent properties to local roadways.

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Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Project construction activities may result in the short-term diversion of automobile traffic or farm equipment from adjacent agricultural farmlands on certain local roadways. These roadways may include Blosser Road, West Taylor Street and Atlantic Place south of the Santa Maria River and Joshua Street, Orchard Road, Southland Street, South Frontage Road, Darby Lane, South Oakglen Avenue and Tefft Street north of the Santa Maria River. With the provision of traffic controls or flagmen, where necessary, these impacts to traffic and circulation are considered to be potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Project construction may result in the temporary loss of available parking on roadways. However, most areas of project construction have adequate on- or off-street parking generally in areas with little parking demand. The potential loss of parking is considered to be short-term and, therefore, represents a less than significant impact.

Project construction activities may also result in the temporary blockage of access to adjacent properties or pedestrian or bicycle routes on roadways subject to construction. These blockages are considered to be short-term and with the provision of traffic controls or flagmen, where necessary, are considered to represent potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure H-1 will reduce potentially significant impacts related to the diversion of traffic, impeding access to adjacent properties and potential hazards to pedestrians or bicyclists to an insignificant level.

### H. Noise

Impact – The proposed project will generate construction noise which may impact surrounding areas containing noise sensitive uses.

#### Mitigations –

I-1: All project construction activities shall comply with the County of San Luis Obispo Noise Ordinance Section 22.06.042(d) which limits noise-generating construction activities to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

I-2: All construction equipment utilizing combustion engines shall be equipped with “critical” grade (rather than “stock” grade) noise mufflers that are in good condition. Noise level reductions with the use of “critical” grade mufflers can be as high as 5 dBA. Back up “beepers” will also be tuned to insure lowest possible noise levels.

I-3: All necessary measures to muffle, shield or enclose construction equipment shall be implemented in order to insure that noise levels at the property line of the nearest residence do not exceed an exterior noise level of 60 dBA. During project construction, noise

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monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified acoustical engineer in order to insure the acceptable noise threshold of 60 dBA at the property line of the nearest sensitive receptor.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Noise sensitive uses in the immediate vicinity of proposed locations for construction activities associated with the proposed horizontal directional drilling include residential uses adjacent to Blosser Road and Atlantic Place south of the Santa Maria River and existing residential uses in areas adjacent to Joshua Street and Orchard Road north of the river and the Maria Vista residential tract.

Maximum noise levels from construction equipment associated with the proposed horizontal directional drilling at the southern laydown area to the nearest residence which is located adjacent to Blosser Road or Atlantic Place on the south side of the Santa Maria River (a distance of approximately 1000 feet from the proposed construction area) is 69 dBA. Existing residences on the north side of the river are located no less than 500 feet from the proposed construction area. Noise generated by the installation of a pipeline underneath the southern levee using jack-and-bore construction techniques which may impact residences located adjacent to Blosser Road and Atlantic Place will not generate noise levels that meet or exceed those associated with underground directional drilling. However, the proximity of existing residences adjacent to Blosser Road or Atlantic Place (a distance of approximately 200 feet from the construction area) results in a maximum noise exposure of 83dBA. In all cases, these maximum noise levels would be temporary and represent “worst case” estimates of construction noise. Average noise levels during peak periods of construction are not expected to exceed 60 CNEL.

The County of San Luis Obispo Noise Ordinance requires construction activities and their resultant noise impacts occur during the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition, all project construction equipment utilizing combustion engines will be equipped with mufflers. These construction noise impacts are considered short-term and with mitigation measures represent a potentially significant, but mitigable impact.

Mitigation Measures I-1 through I-3 will reduce potentially significant impacts related to the generation of short-term construction noise to an insignificant level.

Impact – The proposed project will generate increased noise levels due to long-term project operations.

Mitigations –

I-4: Stationary noise sources (i.e. pump stations and other project facilities) shall be located at least 300 feet from any occupied residential dwellings unless noise-reducing engine housing enclosures or other appropriate noise screens are provided in order to insure that exterior noise levels do not exceed 60 CNEL.

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Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence - Noise associated with long-term operations of the proposed project will involve the operation of the pump stations, metering and electrical equipment as well as occasional vehicle trips for maintenance.

Maximum exterior noise levels from equipment within the enclosed pump stations is not expected to exceed 60 dBA. Any stationary noise sources located within 300 feet of any occupied residential dwellings must be contained within a housing enclosure or other appropriate noise screen in order to insure that exterior noise levels do not exceed 60 CNEL. Noise generated by long-term project operations or vehicle traffic is considered negligible. Long-term noise impacts are considered to be potentially significant, but mitigable impacts.

Mitigation Measure I-4 will reduce potentially significant noise impacts associated with long-term project operations to an insignificant level.

### **I. Air Quality**

Impact – The proposed project will result in the generation of air pollutants during project construction activities.

#### Mitigations –

J-1: Water trucks or sprinkler systems shall be used in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving any construction site. Increased watering frequency will be required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 mph. Reclaimed water, if available, shall be used for dust control and other construction-related purposes during project construction.

J-2: All dirt stock-pile areas shall be sprayed daily as needed.

J-3: Exposed ground areas that are planned to be reworked at dates greater than one month shall be sown with a fast-germinating native grass seed and watered until vegetation is established.

J-4: All disturbed soil areas not subject to revegetation shall be stabilized using approved chemical soil binders, jute netting or other methods approved by the APCD.

J-5: All roadways, driveways, sidewalks, etc. to be paved shall be completed as soon as possible. In addition, building pads shall be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used.

J-6: Vehicle speed for all construction vehicles shall not exceed 15 mph on any unpaved surface at a construction site.

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J-7: All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil or other loose materials shall be covered or maintain at least two feet of freeboard.

J-8: Where vehicles enter and exit unpaved roads onto streets, wheel washers or gravel pads shall be installed or trucks and equipment will be washed when leaving the site.

J-9: Streets shall be swept at the end of each day if visible soil material is carried onto adjacent paved roads. Water sweepers with reclaimed water shall be used where possible.

J-10: All material excavated or graded shall be sufficiently watered to prevent excessive amounts of dust. Watering shall occur at least twice a day with complete coverage, preferably in the late morning and after work is done for the day.

J-11: All PM10 mitigation measures required must be included on any grading or building plans. These plans shall indicate the source of reclaimed water to be used for dust control. In addition, the contractor shall designate a person or persons to monitor the dust control program and to order increased watering, as necessary, to prevent transport of particulate matter off site. Their duties shall include holidays and weekend periods when work may not be in progress. The name and telephone number of such persons shall be provided to the APCD prior to construction.

J-12: All construction equipment shall be properly maintained and tuned according to manufacturer's specifications.

J-13: All off-road and portable, diesel-powered equipment, including, but not limited to, bulldozers, grading, cranes, loaders, scrapers, backhoes, generator sets, compressors or auxiliary power units, shall be fueled exclusively with CARB motor vehicles diesel fuel. Such equipment shall be stored within a fenced enclosure during non-working hours in order to minimize potential vandalism.

J-14: Where possible, diesel powered equipment shall be replaced with gasoline, electrical, CNG or LPG powered equipment.

J-15: Diesel equipment used in proposed horizontal directional drilling shall either be certified pursuant to the California Air Resources Board's Portable Equipment Registration Program or will be subject to an Authority to Construct issued by the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (APCD). This permit will allow implementation of Best Available Control Technologies including diesel particulate filters and/or proper fuel selection.

J-16: Prior to any project grading, a geologic analysis will be performed in order to determine if asbestos-bearing serpentine rock is present. If naturally occurring asbestos is found at the project site, an Asbestos Health and Safety Program and an Asbestos Dust Control Plan will be submitted to the Air Pollution Control District for review and approval prior to project grading.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the

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County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes can and should be adopted by such other agency.

Supportive Evidence – Particulate matter in the form of fugitive dust will be generated during the grading required for site preparation of the proposed pump stations and water storage tank as well as for installation of various pipelines. Emissions associated with grading to prepare for construction and/or installation of these facilities are based upon estimates which assume that a maximum probable (“worst case”) impact assessment of project grading impacts include the simultaneous construction of one pump station (Pump Station No. 2), the proposed underground water storage tank and approximately 1,000 linear feet of pipeline at one time. The size of the area to be disturbed with this maximum (or “worst case”) level of project construction is 35,000 square feet or 0.80 acres (10,000 square feet for the pump station, 10,000 square feet for the water storage tank and 15,000 square feet for the pipeline). These estimates also assume 21 working days per month. Construction activities for large development projects are estimated in the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District California Environmental Quality Act Handbook to generate approximately 40 pounds per acre per day, or approximately 0.42 ton per acres per month of disturbed soil. If water or other soil stabilizers are used to control dust, the emissions can be reduced by 50 percent.

This grading activity is estimated to generate a “worst-case” total of 0.168 tons of particulate matter per month or approximately 16 pounds of particulates per day. With implementation of proposed mitigation measures to reduce dust generation during project construction, this total does not exceed the Air Pollution Control District Tier 2 significance thresholds. With these measures, short-term air quality impacts associated with fugitive dust generation during project construction are considered to represent a significant but mitigable impact. It should be noted that the impact due to grading is very localized. Additionally, this material is inert silicates rather than the complex organic particulate matter released from combustion sources which are more harmful to health. In some cases, grading may be near existing development. Care should be taken to minimize the generation of dust. Common practice for minimizing dust generation is watering before and during grading.

Serpentine rock has been identified by the State Air Resources Board as having the potential to contain naturally-occurring asbestos, identified by the Air Resources Board as a toxic air contaminant. Under the Air Resources Board Air Toxics Control Measure for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations, prior to any grading activities at the site, a geologic analysis will be necessary to determine if asbestos-bearing serpentine rock is present. If naturally occurring asbestos is found at the site, an Asbestos Health and Safety Program and an Asbestos Dust Control Plan are required to be approved by the Air Pollution Control District prior to project grading.

Air pollutants will be emitted by construction equipment including equipment necessary for the proposed underground horizontal directional drilling as well as the construction of the proposed pumps stations, a water storage reservoir and other pipeline and water well improvements. During the anticipated period of operation of this equipment, nitrogen oxides, reactive organic gases, sulphur oxides, particulates and carbon monoxide will be emitted. Operation of diesel fueled drilling or trenching equipment may generate pollutants

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that exceed the Air Pollution Control District thresholds of significance. In particular, diesel equipment used in proposed horizontal directional drilling shall either be certified pursuant to the California Air Resources Board's Portable Equipment Registration Program or will be subject to an Authority to Construct issued by the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District. This permit will allow implementation of Best Available Control Technologies including diesel particulate filters and proper fuel selection. According to the County Air Pollution Control District, with implementation of proposed mitigations, total emissions from this equipment is not expected to exceed the calendar quarter Air Pollution Control District emissions thresholds for these pollutants.

Mitigation Measures J-1 through J-16 will reduce potentially significant air quality impacts associated with project construction to an insignificant level.

Impact – The proposed project will generate pollutants associated with long-term project operations.

Mitigations –

J-17: The daily water pumping operations for the proposed projects shall utilize electric-powered pumps; diesel pumps shall be provided for backup (standby) operation to be used only on an emergency basis during power outages or equipment breakdown.

J-18: The District shall investigate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the use of solar power or other alternative energy sources to power water pumps or other project facilities. This analysis shall assess the existing technologies and tradeoffs in order to determine the feasibility of alternate energy sources including solar power. This assessment will be based upon cost constraints, reliability, space requirements and other implementation factors.

Findings – Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Nipomo Community Services District and the not the County of San Luis Obispo. Such changes have been adopted by the Nipomo Community Services District.

Supportive Evidence – Long-term project operations will involve the operation of pump stations, metering and electrical equipment and vehicle trips for District personnel. Long-term operation of 75 horsepower pumps are required in order to handle the anticipated flow rates of the imported water as well as provide backup (standby) service. Pumps will be sized to accept water from the City of Santa Maria water system at Blosser Road and West Taylor Street and boost pressure for transport and to enter the higher pressure Nipomo Community Services District water supply system. The primary pumps used for pumping the imported water will be electrically powered, the backup (standby) pump, to be used only on an emergency basis during power outages or equipment breakdown.

With the exception of nitrogen oxides at the completion of Phase III of the proposed project, these totals do not exceed the Air Pollution Control District Tier 1 significance thresholds of 10 pounds per day. The Phase III generation of nitrogen oxides falls slightly above this threshold, however, the use of electric power combined with other proposed mitigation measures generates pollutants during the operation of pumps which is considered to be a potentially significant, but mitigable impact.

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It should be noted that pollutants generated by electrical use are produced at the power plant rather than at the project site. As such, these pollutants will not be introduced into the local but rather regional air inventory.

Mitigation Measures J-17 and J-18 will reduce potentially significant air quality impacts related to pollutant generation associated with long-term project operations to an insignificant level.

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### SECTION 4

#### POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WHICH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS INSIGNIFICANT

##### **A. Land Use and Planning**

Impact – The proposed project may impact land uses in areas adjacent to short-term project construction activities or long-term project operations.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential direct impacts upon adjacent land uses associated with project construction and operations are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – The areas through which the proposed pipeline extension and construction of various infrastructure facilities are located are within a variety of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial and recreation facilities. The proposed project may represent a short-term conflict with existing uses during project construction activities. These short-term land use conflicts represent a less than significant impact.

##### **B. Population and Housing**

Impact – The proposed project may result in the demand for new housing due to the need for labor during project construction.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential impacts related to increased housing demand associated with project construction activities are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – Construction activities associated with the proposed project are estimated to generate a maximum total of 54 employees over a period of approximately one year for Phases I and III of project construction and up to five months for Phase II of project construction. It is anticipated that many of these employees will reside locally thereby not generating any demand for temporary housing. Those employees residing outside the area will find temporary accommodations in hotels and motels in the area or in short-term rental housing. The general availability of temporary housing in the area is expected to accommodate these workers with no substantial displacement of people or significant affect upon the available housing inventory. As a result, the construction phase of the proposed project will not create the demand for additional new housing. Therefore, the potential for creation of demands for new housing as a result of project construction represents a less than significant impact.

##### **C. Water**

Impact – The proposed project may result in a substantial depletion of the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin supplies, such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level.

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Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential impacts related to the groundwater supplies within the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – The three sources of water to the City of Santa Maria, groundwater from City Wells, the State Water Project (including return flows) and a recharge from Twitchell Reservoir provides a total of 49,710 acre-feet per year of water being introduced into the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin. This water supply is projected to remain relatively constant throughout the year 2030 in order to meet current and projected water demands over that period. Current water demands within the City of Santa Maria are approximately 15,000 acre-feet per year with projected water demands in the year 2020 estimated to be 20,500 acre-feet per year, 25,000 acre-feet per year in the year 2025 and 28,867 acre-feet per year in the year 2030.

The additional demand of 3,000 acre-feet per year (Phases I and II of the proposed waterline intertie project) combined with the current total demand of 15,000 acre-feet per year results in a total demand of 18,000 acre-feet per year or a net surplus of 31,710 acre-feet per year. The additional “worst-case” demand of 6,200 acre-feet per year (completion of Phase III of the proposed project) results in a total demand of 26,700 acre-feet per year by the year 2020, 31,200 acre-feet per year by the year 2025 and 35,067 acre-feet per year by the year 2030. These future water demand levels result in a net surplus of 23,010 acre-feet per year in the year 2020, 18,510 acre-feet per year in the year 2025 and 14,643 acre-feet per year in the year 2030. With the additional water demands associated with the provision of the proposed waterline intertie project, the City of Santa Maria expects to have an available water supply in excess of projected water demands through the year 2030. The impact of the additional water demands associated with the proposed project upon the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin represents a less than significant impact.

However, management of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin has been evaluated and restructured by the Settlement Stipulation and Judgment with specific provisions related to groundwater rights, groundwater monitoring programs and development of plans and programs to respond to potential water shortage conditions. The City of Santa Maria recently entered an agreement, dated July 7, 2005, with other water purveyors in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, which stipulates that a proposed entity will monitor groundwater levels and water quality in the basin, as well as recommend groundwater management actions if needed. Therefore, groundwater extractions would be limited to maintain a safe yield. Any limits set forth by the adjudication could also limit the Nipomo Community Services District deliveries. The City would not be able to provide water to the Nipomo area in excess of limitations of the adjudication. This would act to further protect the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin, resulting in a less than significant impact.

### **D. Biological Resources**

Impact – Construction activities within the proposed pipeline alignments, water storage tank and pump station locations may adversely affect non-listed wildlife occupying adjacent habitats within the Santa Maria River wildlife migration corridors.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

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Findings - Potential impacts upon non-listed wildlife species, the Santa Maria River wildlife migration corridor or foraging bird species are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence - Proposed pipeline alignment, water storage tank and pump station locations would be disturbed by construction-related activities. In addition, the proposed horizontal directional drilling operations would result in short-term construction activity along the southern perimeter of the Santa Maria River and on the Nipomo Mesa.

In general, construction-related disturbance (noise, dust, heavy equipment and truck traffic) may prevent local wildlife species from foraging and breeding within portions of the Santa Maria River and adjacent habitat areas. However, these adverse effects would only affect a small portion of available habitat for a relatively short period. Periods of intense activity would likely be limited to several months at any one project location. Due to the relatively small area of habitat to be affected by project operations and the short duration of overall impacts, no significant impacts upon non-listed wildlife or their foraging or breeding habitats is expected due to project construction activities. Moreover, areas of the proposed pipeline alignments located within existing residential areas would not be expected to result in significant effects to local wildlife because the new pipeline segments would be installed within previously disturbed and/or currently developed areas (i.e., within existing paved roadways, etc.).

Conversely, drilling activities adjacent to the Santa Maria River may reduce the quality of this established wildlife movement corridor by introducing another source of disturbance (noise, dust, human presence, etc.). However, the proposed project has been designed to avoid and/or minimize direct impacts to the Santa Maria River channel and surrounding alluvial scrub habitat areas for only a short period. Due to the small area affected, location of the horizontal directional drilling operations and laydown areas outside the river channel and the short duration of disturbance, impacts to this wildlife movement corridor are considered to be less than significant.

Impact – Horizontal directional drilling operations along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River have the potential to result in the permanent loss of special-status plant species.

### Mitigations –

Although impacts to Blochman's ragwort are considered to be less than significant, the following measures will avoid and/or minimize potential impacts to this special-status plant species during project operations:

D-19: Prior to project construction, a qualified botanist shall complete a focused botanical survey of the pipeline alignment along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River. All Blochman's ragwort identified within 50 feet of the proposed horizontal directional drilling laydown area and pipeline alignment shall be marked with temporary flagging.

D-20: Protective fencing shall be installed around populations of Blochman's ragwort to prevent loss of this special-status plant species. As necessary, this shall include minor modifications of the designated horizontal directional drilling laydown area to avoid Blochman's ragwort to the extent feasible.

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Findings - Potential impacts associated with special-status plant species are also considered to be insignificant, however, Mitigation Measures D-19 and 20 are provided to further reduce these impacts.

Supportive Evidence – The only special-status plant species observed within the project boundaries during surveys conducted was Blochman's ragwort. Specifically, a fairly dense population (less than 100 plants) is located directly north and bordering the proposed horizontal directional drilling laydown area along the southern boundary of the Santa Maria River. This plant has been designated as a List 4 species by the California Native Plant Society, which denotes a plant of limited distribution or infrequent throughout a broader area in California and vulnerability or susceptibility to threat appears low at this time. Therefore, this species is not considered rare or endangered. The proposed project has the potential to result in the loss of only a small number of individuals of this species, however, is not expected to substantially affect the distribution or survival of this species in the region. Therefore, potential long-term impacts to special-status plant species are considered to be less than significant.

### E. Aesthetics

Impact – Project construction may result in the short-term alteration of views from adjacent areas.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings - Potential impacts related to the visual impacts associated with project construction are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – Construction activities associated with the proposed project involve the use of heavy equipment for underground horizontal directional drilling activities or other construction equipment including trucks, graders and bull dozers at various infrastructure sites. These construction activities will result in short-term impacts to views of these areas from surrounding vantage points. Temporary construction impacts will also result during site preparation and construction of proposed infrastructure facilities, primarily water storage facilities, booster stations and waterlines to be installed adjacent to several local roadways. Project construction is expected to commence with construction of facilities at the connection location at the intersection of West Taylor Street and Blosser Road and the pipeline extension along Blosser Road to the Santa Maria River levee which will require 124 to 140 days to complete. Construction involving the crossing of the Santa Maria River (including the installation of a waterline beneath the levee, a waterline extension north to the horizontal directional drilling site and the horizontal directional drilling operations are expected to required 280 to 300 days. Construction of the pump station and underground water storage tank on the Nipomo Mesa is expected to require 300 to 320 days with other Nipomo Community Services District distribution system improvements requiring 200 to 220 days. Several of these construction functions may occur simultaneously thereby reducing the overall longevity of these construction operations.

Construction activities, while usually considered obtrusive, are unable to employ mitigation measures such as those implemented after a project is constructed. While highly visible, impacts to views in surrounding areas are, due to their temporary nature, considered to be less than significant.

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### F. Geology

Impact – The proposed project could expose facilities to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, involving strong seismic ground shaking and associated ground failure, including liquefaction.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings - Potential impacts related to exposure of facilities to seismic ground shaking and associated ground failure are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – Several regionally active faults are capable of producing significant ground shaking in the project area which could damage and/or rupture the proposed pipeline, water tank and related facilities. Other possible types of seismic-related ground failure include lateral spreading, differential settlement, tectonic subsidence and liquefaction. Lateral spreading typically occurs when unsupported stream banks or drainage banks fail laterally during strong ground shaking, resulting in expansion cracks and ground collapse. The proposed pipeline associated with the proposed horizontal directional drilling would be buried well below the ground surface, thus minimizing the potential for lateral spreading impacting these pipelines. However, proposed above ground structures, such as the proposed pump stations, as well as pipelines in trenched areas, would be located at or near the ground surface and would potentially be subject to damage as a result of lateral spreading. Damage to such infrastructure cannot be totally precluded even with implementation of modern engineering and construction practices.

Several design measures are required by the State of California Uniform Building Code to minimize the potential earthquake shaking impacts noted above. A 50-foot setback is required from active faults. In addition, engineering designs must incorporate reinforcement and materials that can withstand seismic activity effects related to known credible ground acceleration factors. Although no active faults are located in the immediate vicinity of the site, all structures would be required to incorporate designs consistent with the Uniform Building Code Seismic Zone IV, corresponding to 0.75 g to 0.80 g. Because these measures are regulated by ordinance, they would be required as part of standard San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building plan check review. Therefore, these regulations would reduce the potential impacts of earthquake ground shaking on proposed pipeline, water tank, pump stations and other related facilities. These potential seismic impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Impact – The proposed project could expose facilities to the risk of landslides.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential impacts related to exposure of facilities to landslides are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – With the exception of the steep, south-facing bluffs of the Nipomo Mesa, the topography along the proposed pipeline alignment is generally gently sloping. Therefore, the potential for landslides is low. The steep bluffs of the Nipomo Mesa generally consist of loose, unconsolidated sand deposits, which are prone to severe erosion and shallow slope failures during prolonged, heavy rainfall events. However, the proposed

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pipeline extension would be bored at a significant depth beneath this slope. Therefore, the potential for landslides, as a result of the proposed project, is low and impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Impact – The proposed project would be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable or that would become unstable as a result of the project and could potentially result in lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential impacts related to locating the project on an unstable geologic unit or unstable soils are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – The proposed pipeline extension is located in an area of potential lateral spreading and liquefaction susceptibility. Lateral spreading and liquefaction-induced ground failure could result in pipeline damage and/or failure. However, several design measures are required by the State of California Uniform Building Code to minimize potential earthquake shaking impacts. Because these measures are regulated by ordinance, they would be required as part of standard San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building plan check review. As a result of these regulations, the potential impacts of earthquake ground shaking on the proposed pipeline, water tank, pump stations and other project facilities are considered to be less than significant.

Impact – The proposed project would potentially result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state and that is delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

Findings – Potential impacts related to the loss of availability of a known mineral resource are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – The Santa Maria River portion of the project area is located in an area designated as MRZ-2. There is a high likelihood that significant deposits of Portland Cement Concrete grade aggregate are located in this area. The proposed horizontal directional drilling traverses the Troesh Ready Mix, Inc. mining claim. However, the pipeline easement would be approximately 10 to 16 feet wide. The quantity of potential aggregate that would be unavailable for mining along this corridor as a result of the proposed project, in comparison to extensive unmined MRZ-2 areas along the Santa Maria River, as well as the area surrounding the City of Santa Maria, would be negligible. Therefore, impacts associated with the potential loss of the availability of mineral resources are considered to be less than significant.

### **G. Traffic**

Impact – The proposed project will generate additional traffic which could result in traffic congestion or unacceptable levels of service on an adjacent roadway or intersection.

Mitigations – No mitigation measures are proposed.

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Findings – Potential impacts related to traffic generation and the potential loss of available parking are considered to be less than significant.

Supportive Evidence – The proposed project will generate a minor amount of traffic during construction activities. The traffic generated by project construction activities will involve automobile trips associated with worker commutes, haul trucks and construction equipment. A maximum total of employees for Phase I project construction is 54 workers. Given its extensive nature, Phase I construction activities represent a maximum probable impact (“worst case”) scenario for traffic impacts during project construction. It should be noted however that this employee total is distributed to five separate locations. The maximum number of employees at any one location is fifteen workers.

Assuming two daily vehicle trips per employee combined with an additional two trips per employee to account for vehicle trips associated with supervisors, haul trucks, construction equipment, etc. results in an estimated maximum of 216 total vehicle trips per day with no individual site generating more than 60 vehicle trips per day. These low daily volumes combined with the short-term nature of construction activities results in a less than significant impact. Regional traffic flows will not be affected by the long-term operation of project facilities.

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### SECTION 5

#### GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126 (g)) require an Environmental Impact Report to discuss how a proposed project could directly or indirectly lead to economic, population or housing growth. A project may be growth-inducing if it removes obstacles or impediments to growth, taxes community service facilities or encourages other activities or sets precedents which cause significant environmental effects. The potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project are discussed below in terms of these criteria.

#### **Economic, Population or Housing Growth**

The proposed project will not directly generate any significant increases in population or housing.

Construction activities associated with the proposed project are estimated to generate a maximum total of 54 employees over a period of approximately one year for Phases I and III of project construction and approximately five months for Phase II of project construction. It is anticipated that many of these employees will reside locally thereby not generating any demand for temporary housing. Those employees residing outside the area will find temporary accommodations in hotels and motels in the area or in short-term rental housing. The general availability of temporary housing in the area is expected to accommodate these workers with no substantial displacement of people or significant affect upon the available housing inventory. As a result, the construction phase of the proposed project will not create the demand for additional new housing.

The proposed project involves the provision of additional water supplies thereby reducing or eliminating a potential constraint to future development within areas to be served by this additional water. However, any increase in residential density or other land use entitlements beyond that allowed by the South County Area Plan and any resultant increase in population and housing will require a General Plan Amendment, zone change as well as other subsequent approvals by the County of San Luis Obispo, for example, a Specific Plan, conditional use permit or tract map. These future discretionary approvals will require preparation and certification of additional environmental documentation to address the potential population and housing impacts of these future approvals.

#### **Removal of an Impediment to Growth**

The County of San Luis Obispo General Plan governs the development of unincorporated land within the South County Planning Area. The County General Plan (South County Area Plan) identifies the type and intensity of development allowed in each of several land use categories for Nipomo and other unincorporated. While service districts, including the Nipomo Community Services District, may provide the County with input regarding land use decisions and water availability, it does not have any authority over land use entitlements. Development projects are sometimes approved by the County contingent upon receiving water and sewer services from a community water system such as the Nipomo Community Services District. It should be recognized that the Nipomo Community Services District does not have authority to approve development, however, the provision of public services such as water and sewer does increase the likelihood that an area may be developed.

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The proposed project does not require any amendments to the South County Area Plan or any other Elements of the County General Plan and does not require any changes to existing zoning. The proposed project would not directly conflict with any environmental plans or policies adopted by agencies with jurisdiction over the project area. Although the proposed project would not directly result in a change in zoning or an increase in the intensity of currently-designated land uses, the proposed project represents a reduction or elimination of a potential constraint upon future development within areas served by the additional water supplies and has the potential to hasten the conversion of areas to more intense urbanized uses over those land uses currently consistent with the South County Area Plan.

The potential importation of a maximum of 6,200 acre-feet of water per year would accomplish several objectives. Approximately 2,500 acre-feet of water per year will offset current groundwater production in order to avoid further depletion of and assist in balancing of groundwater levels in the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. An additional 500 acre feet per year will be used by the Nipomo Community Services District to serve future customers on currently vacant land within the existing Nipomo Community Services District boundaries. An additional 3,200 acre-feet per year could be utilized to serve future development within the current Sphere of Influence areas which are located adjacent to the existing Nipomo Community Services District boundaries. This additional imported water could be used to serve existing and new development within the South County Planning Area that would otherwise be served by groundwater supplies from the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

Any increase in density of change or land use to the South County Area Plan within the area to be served by the additional water supplies would, however, first require a General Plan Amendment and zone change. A General Plan Amendment would study a variety of land use and environmental issues before being approved or denied including community character and compatibility, existing land use policies, traffic and circulation impacts, the provision of public services, etc. This process involves significant public involvement and the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act. These future discretionary approvals will require the preparation and certification of additional environmental documentation to address the potential environmental impacts of these future approvals. Any future development within areas served by the additional water supplies would also require a number of additional approvals including approval of a Specific Plan, conditional use permit or tract map by the County of San Luis Obispo. It should be noted again that the proposed importation of supplemental water is intended to respond to development consistent with the South County Area Plan (Inland).

### **Impact on Community Service Facilities**

Based upon the results of the Initial Study, the proposed project is not expected to significantly impact public services (police protection and fire protection) or utilities (natural gas/electricity, communication systems, water service, wastewater treatment and solid waste).

The importation of additional water as a result of the proposed waterline intertie project will augment current water supplies available to the Nipomo Community Services District as well as supplies available to other local water purveyors. It will also provide a greater diversity of water sources to the District thereby increasing the reliability of water supply to the District through the addition of a constant, non-fluctuating water source which reduces the potential need for groundwater "mining." A portion of these future water supplies will assist in the balancing of groundwater levels in the Nipomo Mesa Management Area by reducing dependence upon the pumping of the groundwater basin and augmenting the groundwater basin through return flows. These additional water supplies will serve new development within the current service area of

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the Nipomo Community Services District as well as the District's Sphere of Influence areas. For these reasons, the proposed project will provide a beneficial impact to groundwater supplies within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

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### SECTION 6

#### FINDINGS REGARDING ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to the proposed project described in the Final Environmental Impact Report were considered. The alternatives discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Report constitute a reasonable range of potential options necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The Final Environmental Impact Report identified the No Project Alternative and the Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative as “environmentally superior” to the proposal project.

#### **A. No Project Alternative**

Description of Alternative: The No Project Alternative would retain the project area in its current condition and could eliminate the City of Santa Maria as a future source of supplemental water to the Nipomo Community Services District.

Comparison of Effects: The No Project Alternative eliminates the significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing that are associated with the proposed project. The No Project Alternative also eliminates the potentially significant but mitigable (i.e. direct) impacts associated with the proposed project identified in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings. It is, therefore, considered an “environmentally superior” alternative. The No Project Alternative will, however, result in additional adverse impacts upon the groundwater supplies within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the No Project Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The No Project Alternative fails to meet all of the proposed objectives related to the avoiding further depletion of Nipomo Mesa Management Area groundwater supplies, compliance with the Groundwater Adjudication, assisting in balancing groundwater levels, augmenting Nipomo Community Services District water supplies, augmenting water supplies to current purveyors, provision of a diversity of water sources, responding to Local Agency Formation Commission requirements for Nipomo Community Services District annexations under the conditions of the 2004 Sphere of Influence Update and provision of supplemental water supplies to the Nipomo Community Services District service area and Spheres of Influence. The No Project Alternative also eliminates the other benefits associated with the proposed project as listed in Section 1 of these Findings. For these reasons, the No Project Alternative was rejected.

#### **B. Eastern River Crossing Alternative**

Description of Alternative: Two options were identified as potential routes for an eastern pipeline alignment beneath the Santa Maria River. Both alignments connect to the proposed 18-inch waterline along Blosser Road near its intersection with Atlantic Place. At this point, the pipeline is extended approximately 300 feet north on Blosser Road and either 4,300 feet or 5,200 feet east along Atlantic Place via open trench construction. At this point, approximately 300 linear

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feet of 24-inch carrier pipe will be installed with a 36-inch steel casing under the river levee using jack-and-bore construction methods. An additional 1,800 linear feet of pipeline will then be installed from the Santa Maria River levee to a horizontal directional drilling site within the riverbed. This open trench construction will either follow the existing abandoned railroad alignment or the abandoned 1917 State Highway alignment. The next 2,500 linear feet of 24-inch waterline will be installed either directly in the ground or within a 36-inch steel casing from the Santa Maria riverbed to the Nipomo Mesa using horizontal directional drilling. This methodology and underground drilling distance is approximately equal to that associated with the pipeline alignment for the proposed project. The pipeline continues as a 24-inch waterline along Hutton Road via open-trench construction approximately 3,800 linear feet to Nipomo Creek where the pipeline transverses the Creek by attachment to the existing bridge. Following this bridge crossing, the pipeline will continue approximately 6,000 linear feet to the proposed water storage tank and Pump Station No. 2 near the intersection of Joshua Street and Hutton Road.

Comparison of Effects: The Eastern River Crossing Alternative has similar significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing as the proposed project. This alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the Eastern River Crossing Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this Alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The Eastern River Crossing Alternative meets all of the project objectives in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project. For these reasons, the Eastern River Crossing Alternative was rejected.

### **C. Highway 101 Bridge Alternative**

Description of Alternative: The Highway 101 Bridge Alternative involves attaching the pipeline to the existing Highway 101 Bridge which spans the Santa Maria River. This alternative alignment connects to the proposed 18-inch waterline along Blosser Road near its intersection with Atlantic Place. At this point, the pipeline is extended approximately 300 feet north on Blosser Road and 5,900 linear feet east along Atlantic Place via open trench construction. At this point, the pipeline is reduced to four parallel 12-inch pipes to be attached underneath the bridge with coring between the girders and through the bridge abutments. The pipeline will be extended approximately 2,100 linear feet attached to the bridge. Following the bridge crossing, the pipeline is consolidated back to a 24-inch pipeline which is extended via open-trench construction approximately 800 linear feet to Hutton Road. The pipeline continues as a 24-inch waterline along Hutton Road via open-trench construction approximately 3,800 linear feet to Nipomo Creek where the pipeline transverses the Creek by attachment to the existing bridge. Following this bridge crossing, the pipeline will continue approximately 6,000 linear feet to the proposed water storage tank and Pump Station No. 2 near the intersection of Joshua Street and Orchard Road.

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Comparison of Effects: The Highway 101 Bridge Alternative will have similar significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing as the proposed project. This alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and Highway 101 Bridge Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this Alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The Highway 101 Bridge Alternative meets all of the project objectives in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project. For these reasons, the Highway 101 Bridge Alternative was rejected.

### **D. Surface Crossing Alternative**

Description of Alternative: Extension of a waterline across the surface of the Santa Maria River channel will involve excavating an open trench. This would involve excavation of a trench approximately twelve feet deep and forty feet wide at the surface as it traverses the Santa Maria River channel. When combined with the open trench construction required to scale and traverse the Nipomo Mesa, involving a 15-foot wide trench, a total surface soil disturbance of approximately 4.55 acres will result.

Comparison of Effects: The Surface Crossing Alternative will have similar significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing as the proposed project. This alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the Surface Crossing Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this Alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The Surface Crossing Alternative meets all of the project objectives in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project. For these reasons, the Surface Crossing Alternative was rejected.

### **E. Existing Pipeline Alternative**

Description of Alternative: Three pipelines cross the Santa Maria River in the vicinity of the proposed project. Conoco Phillips has two pipelines: an 8-inch pipeline immediately downstream from the Highway 101 Bridge and a 10-inch pipeline approximately one mile downstream from the highway. The third pipeline is owned by Sempra Energy and is located between the Conoco Phillips 8-inch line and the Highway 101 Bridge. These pipelines are all

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currently in service, however, the Nipomo Community Services District may be able to negotiate for their future use.

Comparison of Effects: The Existing Pipeline Alternative will have similar significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing as the proposed project. This alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water and biological resources as compared to the proposed project.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the Existing Pipeline Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The Existing Pipeline Alternative meets all of the project objectives in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water and biological resources as compared to the proposed project. For these reasons, the Existing Pipeline Alternative was rejected.

### **F. New Bridge Alternative**

Description of Alternative: The New Bridge Alternative involves an over-river crossing of the pipeline attached to a bridge structure. This new bridge may be a dedicated pipeline bridge that could suspend the pipe across the river or a multi-purpose bridge which could include a pedestrian/bicycle trail. Bridge construction will involve excavation and grading to construct bridge supports and the hauling of materials into the riverbed for bridge construction.

Comparison of Effects: The New Bridge Alternative will have similar significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing as the proposed project. This alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the New Bridge Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The New Bridge Alternative meets all of the project objectives in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative has increased direct impacts in the areas of geology, water, biological resources, aesthetics, traffic, noise and air quality as compared to the proposed project. For these reasons, the New Bridge Alternative was rejected.

### **G. Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative**

Description of Alternative: The Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative involves the provision of a waterline intertie with the capacity of 2,500 acre-feet per year rather than the 6,200 acre-feet per year capacity pipeline that is currently proposed. This reduced capacity would be utilized to avoid further depletion and assist in balancing of groundwater levels in the Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area by augmenting water supplies available to the Nipomo

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Community Services District and provide additional water supplies to other local water purveyors who overlie the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. The additional 3,700 acre-feet per year is required to serve new development within vacant land within the Nipomo Community Services District boundaries as well as the Sphere of Influence areas adjacent to the current Nipomo Community Services District boundaries.

Comparison of Effects: The Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative reduces the significant, unavoidable adverse impacts in the issue areas of land use and planning and population and housing that are associated with the proposed project. The remaining potentially significant but mitigable (i.e. direct) environmental impacts associated with this alternative are similar to the proposed project. It is, therefore, considered an “environmentally superior” alternative. The Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative will, however, result in additional significant adverse impacts upon the groundwater supplies within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

The Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative reduces or eliminates supplemental water availability to certain areas currently proposed to be served by supplemental water supplies. By reducing the amount of supplemental water available to the Nipomo Community Services District and indirectly to the entire Nipomo Mesa Management Area, this alternative reduces the ability of the District and other Mesa water providers to provide area-wide groundwater management and increases the dependence upon pumping of the groundwater basin thereby continuing degradation and potential overdraft of the groundwater basin which would result in an additional significant adverse impact upon these groundwater supplies.

Findings: After comparing the relative impacts and benefits of the proposed project and the Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative, the Nipomo Community Services District did not select this alternative. However, mitigation measures and features incorporated into the proposed project, as described in Sections 3 and 4 of these Findings, will substantially reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project.

Facts: The Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative meets the project objectives related to compliance with the Groundwater Adjudication, augmenting Nipomo Community Services District water supplies and augmenting water supplies to current purveyors in a manner similar to the proposed project. However, this alternative meets the project objectives related to slowing depletion of Nipomo Mesa Groundwater Management Area groundwater supplies, assisting in stabilizing groundwater levels, provision of supplemental water supplies to the Nipomo Community Services District current service area and Spheres of Influence and avoiding multiple river crossings to a level significantly less than the proposed project and meets the project objective related to the provision of a diversity of water sources to a level less than the proposed project. For these reasons, the Reduced Pipeline Capacity Alternative was rejected.

### **H. Alternative Project Sites**

The Nipomo Community Services District considered several project alternatives, including those analyzed within this Environmental Impact Report as discussed in this Section, in order to select the method for traversing the Santa Maria River with the proposed waterline intertie.

The only alternative location for the proposed project that was beyond those previously considered by the District was a pipeline crossing of the Santa Maria River in the vicinity of Suey Road approximately one-mile east (upstream) of the Highway 101 Bridge. This alternative location was not selected due to the additional pipelines necessary to bring water from this crossing location to connect to existing Nipomo Community Services District facilities. Many of

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the impacts associated with the proposed project, including the unavoidable, significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use and planning and population and housing, would remain with a waterline crossing at this alternative location.

### **I. Alternative Water Sources**

The Nipomo Community Services District considered several alternative sources of supplemental water prior to their selection of the proposed waterline intertie project. These options include: 1) Santa Maria Groundwater; 2) State Water Project Water; 3) Desalination; 4) Brackish Agriculture Drainage; 5) Nacimiento Water Project; 6) Wastewater Recharge and 7) Recycling. Their evaluation of these alternative water sources was based upon several factors including: 1) water supply, 2) water quality, 3) reliability of supply, 4) schedule (i.e. timing), 5) institutional (legal and regulatory) constraints and 6) project costs. Provided below is a description of each alternative water source and its reason for rejection.

- **Santa Maria Groundwater**

Santa Maria Groundwater as a water source involves acquiring supplemental water supplies from the City of Santa Maria through the direct pumping of groundwater from the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin at a new well site adjacent to the Santa Maria River. In addition to a new well, this option also requires water treatment, storage and transmission pipelines to deliver water to the Nipomo Community Services District.

The City of Santa Maria has adequate water supplies to provide supplemental water to the Nipomo Community Services District in the quantities currently proposed. However, it is uncertain whether this alternative water source will provide a “new” supply of water to the Nipomo Community Services District or whether it will intercept the existing inflow of groundwater from the Santa Maria Valley Management Area to the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

The hydrogeologic interaction between Santa Maria Valley Management Area and the Nipomo Mesa Management Area is currently not well defined. According to the 2005 Santa Barbara County Groundwater Report, these separate management areas appear to have limited interaction. However, a 2002 Department of Water Resources study notes that groundwater flow from the Santa Maria Valley Management Area to the Nipomo Mesa Management Area may occur and is dependent on groundwater elevation and hydraulic gradients. That report further estimated inflow to the Nipomo Mesa Management Area from the Santa Maria Valley Management Area to be between 1,200 and 5,100 acre feet per year in 1995. There is also the likelihood that extracting groundwater at the location proposed would lower groundwater elevations, thereby reducing the hydraulic gradient between the Santa Maria Valley Management Area and the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. If such a reduction in gradient were to occur, the effect would be to reduce the quantity of groundwater flowing from Santa Maria Valley Management Area to Nipomo Mesa Management Area, and by extension, could also reduce the movement of groundwater from Nipomo Mesa Management Area to the Northern Cities Management Area.

Water quality and reliability were not considered to be significant constraints to the implementation of this option. It is estimated that four to six years would be required to fully implement this alternative water source in comparison to the one year required for construction of Phase I of the proposed project.

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The institutional constraints on this option involve the potential violation of the Stipulated Settlement and Judgment for the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin due to lowering of groundwater elevations and/or impacts upon the hydrologic interaction between the Santa Maria Valley Management Area and the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. This option is also dependent upon the willingness of the City of Santa Maria to pursue this options and a transfer of yield from the Twitchell Reservoir supply.

This alternative water source was rejected by the Nipomo Community Services District due to the fact that pumping groundwater from near the Santa Maria may result in no net gain to the District and that such pumping has significant institutional and legal obstacles which must be resolved in order to implement this option.

- State Water Project

The State Water Project allocates its deliveries in any year among its customers based upon the contracted amounts purchased by these agencies which extend from Santa Maria south to Carpinteria in Santa Barbara County and from Morro Bay to Pismo Beach in San Luis Obispo County. There are several potential scenarios for purchase of State Water Project water including acquisition of unused or excess water supplies, purchase of water from other Central Coast Water Authority participants (similar to the proposed project's purchase from the City of Santa Maria) or direct participation in the State Water Project.

It is estimated that four to six years will be required to fully implement this alternative water source in comparison to the one year required for construction Phase I of the proposed project.

The institutional constraints with the purchase of State Water Project water involve the fact that any transfer of permanent entitlement from one State Water Project customer to another requires multiple jurisdictional approvals. These agencies include the Central Coast Water Authority as well as the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County Boards of Supervisors and the Department of Water Resources. As such, the opinions and goals of these agencies must be addressed and satisfied in order to secure additional State Water Project water. It should also be recognized that there exists competing interests among current State Water Project participants with regard to unused or excess capacity of State Water Project supplies. Finally, a prior voter referendum regarding Nipomo Community Services District involvement in the State Water Project specified that the District would not contract with the State Department of Water Resources for State Water Project supplies. Therefore, the District should require a public vote prior to pursuing any supply option involving the purchase of State Water Project water.

This alternative water source was rejected given the extent of required agency and voter approval necessary to implement this option.

- Desalination

Desalination as a water source involves the desalination of seawater or brackish groundwater in order to provide the Nipomo Community Services District with a reliable water source. Three desalination alternatives have been identified involving either the construction of an Nipomo Community Services District owned facility or the Nipomo Community Services District partnering with either the Nipomo Refinery or with the South San Luis Obispo County Sanitation District in the construction of a desalination plant.

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Desalination would offer an unlimited source of water supply subject to the limits imposed by regulatory agencies. The reliability of this option is also considered to be high with temporary interruptions occurring only in the event of a power outage or required maintenance and repair.

It is estimated that between 6.5 and 10.5 years would be required to fully implement this alternative water source in comparison to the one year required for construction of Phase I of the proposed project.

The institutional constraints involved with desalination involve entering into agreements with other agencies if the District decides to partner in the construction of a desalination plant, approval for construction of supply lines across ocean dunes from regulatory agencies involved in resource protection and approvals from the California Coastal Commission and State Lands Commission.

The timing for implementation of the desalination option combined with the institutional approvals required was the basis for rejection of this option at this time.

- Brackish Agricultural Drainage

The use of Brackish Agricultural Drainage water source involves the treatment of shallow groundwater or agricultural runoff from Oso Flaco Lake and the delivery of treated water to the Nipomo Community Services District distribution system. Oso Flaco Lake is owned by the California Parks Department and is the largest of four small freshwater lakes located in the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes complex. It occupies a surface area of 82 acres and is classified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a "palustrine emergent wetlands". It is considered a valuable wildlife habitat as well as resource for recreational and educational activities.

Oso Flaco Lake represents a limited supply source since its primary water source is agricultural runoff estimated at 968 acre-feet per year. Efforts are currently underway to improve agricultural irrigation efficiency to both reduce the quantity of water applied and the volume of agricultural runoff. Extracting either 3,000 or 6,300 acre-feet per year from the lake or hydraulically-connected shallow aquifer would significantly lower the existing level of the lake. As such, the water supply and reliability of this water source is highly questionable.

The quality of water extracted from the lake requires a water treatment facility to respond to high coliform, nitrate, ammonia and chlorophyll concentrations as well as high Ph, low dissolved oxygen and high toxicity and pesticide levels found in lake water.

It is estimated that between 7 and 10 years would be required to fully implement this alternative water source in comparison to the one year required for construction of Phase I of the proposed project.

The institutional constraints associated with this alternative water source involve the required approval from the California Parks Department who would support the project only if it was demonstrated that it would result in an environmentally beneficial and compatible use of the parkland. Since the Oso Flaco drainage is considered a component of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin, use of this supply would require approval by all signatory parties to the litigation and subsequent management agreements. Use of water from Oso Flaco Lake would, due to its poor water quality, be subject to California Department of Health Services water quality requirements.

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This alternative water source was rejected given the lack of supply and reliability combined with poor water quality and the institutional approvals required to implement this option.

- Nacimiento Water Project

The Nacimiento Water Project is a water transmission project that will convey untreated water from Lake Nacimiento to several San Luis Obispo communities. The initial participants include the Cities of Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo as well as the Atascadero Municipal Water Company, Templeton Community Services District and the Cayucos County Services Area 10A. The project consists of 45 miles of water transmission lines as well as storage reservoirs and pump stations. The pipeline terminates at the City of San Luis Obispo Water Treatment Plant. Use of the Nacimiento Water Project as an alternative water source would require extending a pipeline from the City of San Luis Obispo Water Treatment Plant to the Nipomo Community Services District water system.

Current plans for the Nacimiento Water Project indicate that approximately 2,148 acre-feet of reserve (unsubscribed) entitlement of water would be available at the San Luis Obispo Water Treatment Plant.

Water from the Nacimiento Water Project would require treatment to remove various chemicals, algae and other pollutants or develop an aquifer storage and recovery system.

Reliability of this alternative water source is considered to be good since involved participants are to be provided their total entitlements over an eleven month period with one month set aside for routine maintenance.

This alternative water source was rejected due to the water treatment requirements.

- Wastewater Recharge

The Nipomo Community Services District owns and operates the Southland Wastewater Treatment Facility, located west of Highway 101 at Southland Street and South Frontage Road. The treatment facility provides secondary treatment for a mixture of domestic and industrial wastewater from Nipomo. Existing facility components include four aeration ponds, two sludge-drying beds and eight infiltration basins. The treatment facility has a permitted capacity of 900,000 gallons per day based on the maximum monthly demand. Use of wastewater recharge as an alternative water source involves developing a groundwater recharge program within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area in order to recharge of the groundwater basin with recycled water from Southland treatment facility.

The proposed groundwater recharge alternative is intended to function as a groundwater management program within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. As such, no increase in supply to the District would result because Southland treatment facility discharge is included in the groundwater budget that has been presented during litigation involving the Santa Maria and Nipomo aquifers (i.e., treatment facility groundwater recharge is already considered as "return flows" to the Nipomo Mesa Management Area). As no new supplemental water will be imported from outside the Nipomo Mesa Management Area, there will be no effect on the overall water balance within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. However, there may be some benefit to specific areas of the depressed groundwater basin within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

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Average annual flow rates to the Southland treatment facility are currently 0.59 million gallons per day, equivalent to approximately 662 acre feet per year. These flows are projected to increase to 1,460 acre feet per year (1.3 59 million gallons per day) in the year 2030.

Wastewater recharge as an alternative water source must respond to potential water quality impacts due to high salt and nitrogen levels. The 2007 Draft Groundwater Recharge Reuse Regulations prepared by the California Department of Health Services indicate that recycled water used for groundwater recharge reuse projects must meet the definition of filtered, disinfected tertiary wastewater.

Recycled water is considered a reliable water supply. However, its reliability as it pertains to groundwater recharge is contingent on the Nipomo Community Services District's ability to provide and maintain recycled water quality meeting the Draft Groundwater Recharge Reuse Regulations as well as taking additional necessary measures to mitigate salt accumulation in the groundwater basin. The recharged groundwater will be extracted by existing or new Nipomo Community Services District wells. Therefore, the reliability of the return flows will be approximately the same as the existing groundwater supply. As such, its reliability may be hindered by drought conditions within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area and any further development/expansion of the pumping depressions.

It is estimated that wastewater recharge facilities will require approximately 2 to 4 years to complete in comparison to the one year required for construction of Phase I of the proposed project.

The primary institutional constraint associated with this alternative water source is the fact that wastewater recharge is not considered a new source of supplemental water thereby conflicting with terms of the Stipulated Settlement and Judgment.

This alternative water source was rejected due to its not being a source of supplemental water.

- Recycling

This alternative water source consists of developing a program involving delivery of recycled water from Southland treatment facility for direct use as irrigation in-lieu of groundwater pumping. This alternative provides for disposition of effluent from Southland treatment facility to locations other than the existing percolation ponds. Upgrades to the Southland treatment facility and the provision of transmission lines and pumping facilities will be required to deliver effluent to irrigation locations.

Recycling of treated wastewater is intended to function as a groundwater management program within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. Very little increase in supply to the District would result because the net effect of this type of exchange is much smaller than the volume of water exchanged. Approximately ten percent of the water exchanged is retained within the groundwater aquifer. As no new supplemental water will be imported from outside the Nipomo Mesa Management Area with this option, there will be no effect on the overall water balance within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area. However, there may be some benefit to the specific areas of the depressed groundwater basin within the Nipomo Mesa Management Area.

Recycling may have negative impacts to water quality in the local, underlying aquifer due to salt accumulation. Other water quality constraints associated with the recycling of treated water

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involves the removal of chlorides, nitrogen, total dissolved solids and sodium which may impact agricultural crops.

Recycled water is considered a reliable water supply. However, its reliability is contingent on the Nipomo Community Service District's ability to provide and maintain levels of recycled water quality that meet the applicable water quality standards as well as taking additional necessary measures to mitigate salt accumulation in the groundwater basin.

It is estimated that recycling facilities will require approximately 2 to 4 years to complete in comparison to the one year required to complete construction of Phase I of the proposed project.

The primary institutional constraint associated with this alternative water source is the fact that recycled water will not affect the overall water balance in the Nipomo Mesa Management Area thereby conflicting with the terms of the Stipulated Settlement and Judgment.

This alternative water source was rejected due to its not being a source of supplemental water.

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### **SECTION 8**

#### **FINDINGS REGARDING MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM**

Section 21081.6(a)(1) of the Public Resources Code requires states that:

“The public agency shall adopt a reporting or monitoring program for the changes made to the project or conditions of project approval, adopted in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The reporting or monitoring program shall be designed to ensure compliance during project implementation. For those changes which have been required or incorporated into the project at the request of a responsible agency or a public agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project, that agency shall, if so requested by the lead agency or a responsible agency, prepare and submit a proposed reporting or monitoring program.”

The Nipomo Community Services District has previously adopted a Mitigation Monitoring Program for the changes made to the project as a result of the conclusions of the Environmental Impact Report. In agreeing that the Nipomo Community Services District will create an Assessment District to fund the proposed project, the County of San Luis Obispo has made no changes to the project or added new or additional conditions of approval. Therefore, the County is not adopting a Mitigation Monitoring Program.