

4.14 WASTEWATER

Program-level impacts from an increase in wastewater production will be less than significant. The Community Plan proposes development within and around the wastewater service area for the Los Osos Water Recycling Facility (LOWRF). Development within the LOWRF service area will be connected to the treatment plant, which is anticipated to have sufficient capacity for the proposed project. Areas of development outside the wastewater service area will utilize onsite wastewater treatment systems in compliance with the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

4.14.1 Setting

a. Physical Setting. Development in the community of Los Osos began in the late 19th century as small residential lots, intended primarily for summer homes and retreats. Much of Los Osos is developed in long, narrow (25 to 50 feet by 125 feet) residential lots located on wide (40 to 80 feet) streets generally arranged in a grid. The majority of the community uses septic tanks and leach fields or seepage pits for wastewater treatment and disposal. There is one small neighborhood community wastewater treatment systems, the Monarch Grove development, which will abandon the system and connect to the Los Osos Wastewater Project. Highly permeable soils, high groundwater tables, and dense community development have caused water quality issues. Concerns were compounded due to the fact that the community relies entirely on groundwater for its potable water supply. The RWQCB Basin Plan (adopted in 1971) contained a provision prohibiting septic system discharges in the area after 1974. In 1983 the RWQCB determined that nitrate concentrations in the upper aquifer of the groundwater basin had increased in excess of State standards, and subsequently issued a cease and desist order prohibiting discharges from septic systems within an established Prohibition Zone that covers much of the urban area (effective November 1, 1988, Resolution No. 83-13). The Prohibition Zone effectively stalled development within the area.

Since the Prohibition, there have been several attempts to design and construct a centralized wastewater project. A thorough summary of the history is included in the County of San Luis Obispo Los Osos Wastewater Project Environmental Impact Report (“LOWWP EIR”, Michael Brandman Associates, November 14, 2008). The County of San Luis Obispo recently completed construction of the Los Osos Wastewater Project (LOWWP), which consists of community wastewater collection, treatment and disposal/reuse systems that will serve most of the area within the Prohibition Zone. As of August 2017, 90% of the Prohibition zone are connected. The treatment plant is designed to treat an average annual flow of 1.2 million gallons per day (MGD) and includes primary and secondary treatment, tertiary filtration, and disinfection. The LOWWP is now known as the Los Osos Water Recycling Facility (LOWRF) and is designed for two options: The LOWRF can treat the wastewater to a secondary treatment level for disposal through percolation basins; or treat the wastewater further and produce tertiary disinfected recycled water, which is permitted for urban and agricultural irrigation.

The Community Plan area, Prohibition Zone and wastewater service area for the LOWRF are shown in **Figure 4.14-1**. According to the LOWRF discharge permit (Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R3-2011-00-1, or “WDR”), two areas within the Prohibition Zone were exempted from the Prohibition Zone in March 2000 and will not be connected to the LOWRF: Bayview Heights and Martin Tracts. The WDR also discusses Monarch Grove Development, which is located adjacent to the wastewater service area, this area recently decided (by the Homeowners Association) to be served by the LOWRF. The development consists of approximately 83 residences, which discharge to a wastewater to a treatment plant located in the Sea Pines Golf Course. The WDR notes that it may be connected to LOWRF in the future.

b. Regulatory Setting. The LOCP area falls within the jurisdiction of the Central Coast RWQCB and State Water Resources Control Board Department of Drinking Water (“DDW”, formerly part of California Department of Public Health). RWQCB and DDW ensure that the State’s water resources are protected through federal, state and local legislation. As described above, the LOWWP is designed to remedy the water quality concerns within the Prohibition Zone. The potential environmental impacts associated with the LOWWP have been evaluated in the LOWWP EIR and are not evaluated here.

The LOWRF is regulated under Waste Discharge Requirements Order No R3-2001-0001 (WDR) developed by the RWQCB, which takes into account the Basin Plan, California Code of Regulations, California Water Code, and several other applicable regulations and policies. The WDR provides a flow limit, minimum water quality requirements for the treated effluent based on desired reuse or disposal method, biosolids requirements, and monitoring and reporting requirements to help ensure protection of water quality and public health.

Areas outside the wastewater service area will rely on onsite wastewater treatment systems for wastewater treatment and disposal. These systems are regulated by the RWQCB. The RWQCB’s Basin Plan (March 2016 Edition) adopted the State Water Resources Control Board’s *Water Quality Control Policy for Onsite Siting, Design, Operation and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems* (OWTS Policy).

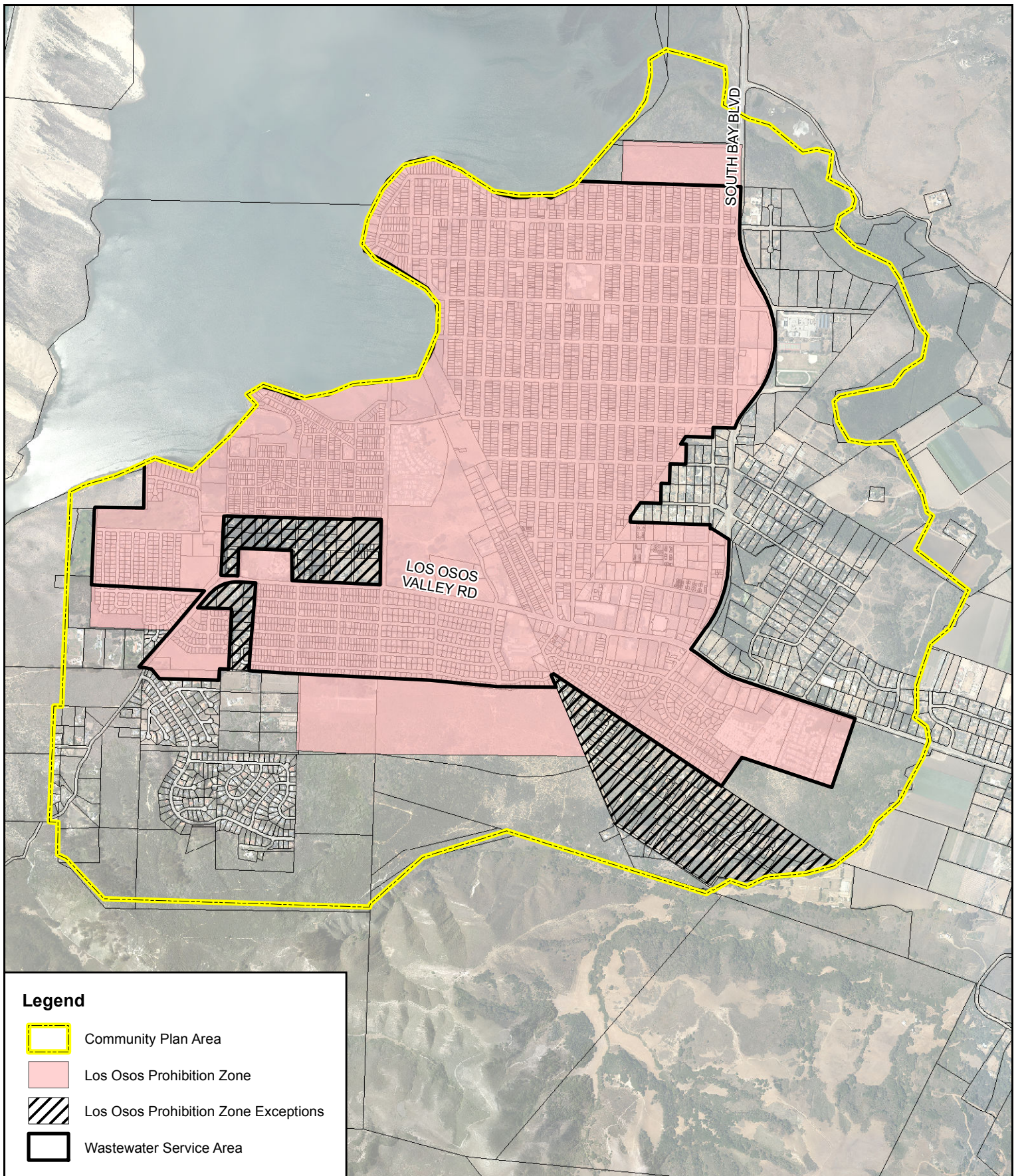


Figure 4.14-1: Los Osos Prohibition Zone and Wastewater Service Area

Note: Basemap data obtained from County of San Luis Obispo GIS

c. Community Goals Related to Water. The “Vision Statement for Los Osos” approved by the Los Osos Community Advisory Council (LOCAC) on June 22, 1995, describes a community where urban development is contained within the existing URL and growth is controlled at rates sustainable by resources and services. The Vision Statement includes the following goals related to wastewater:

- *All land use policies and plans should be based on sustainable development that meets the needs of current population and visitors without endangering the ability of future populations to meet its needs or drawing upon water or others to sustain community livelihood.*
- *Our water is carefully managed on a holistic basis to provide a clean, sustainable resource for the community. Included in this management plan are:*
 - *Aquifer maintenance, management and recharge, preventing over-drafting of the aquifer and salt-water intrusion into the water supply.*
 - *A septic system maintenance district.*
 - *Management of water extraction and delivery systems.*
 - *Wastewater water management, cleansing and restoration of the lower aquifer or upper aquifer with pumping from upper aquifer for domestic use.*
 - *Graywater reclamation, management and recycling*
 - *Conservation of water is an integral part of the management plan.*
 - *Runoff and storm drainage (in excess of that required to sustain the Estuary fresh-water flows) are managed, where possible, through the use of retention/percolation basins which are an integral part of the landscape and used for recreation purposes.*
 - *Current percolation “pits” in the community have been redesigned to provide for landscaping or recreational uses, and are maintained.*
 - *Agricultural and landscape management practices to reduce water usage and pollution from fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.*
- *Our waste water treatment facility(s) is based on a natural biological process rather than mechanical system approach to the highest extent possible. These facilities have become a visual and recreational asset to the community, including development of water supply for agricultural or irrigation purposes, and habitat for wildlife.*

4.14.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds.

Methodology. Impacts to wastewater facilities were assessed by reviewing the LOCP proposed development to the estimated capacity of the existing wastewater treatment facility (currently under construction), and considering the LOCP proposed plans and policies related to wastewater.

Significance Thresholds. In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, impacts would be significant if development under the Community Plan would result in any of the following:

- *Violate waste discharge requirements or Basin Plan criteria for wastewater systems, pursuant to the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board;*
- *Change the quality of surface or groundwater (e.g., nitrogen loading, day-lighting);*
- *Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects; or*
- *Adversely affect the community wastewater service provider*

Proposed Project Wastewater-Related Standards. Chapter 7 of the Draft Community Plan provides the Planning Area Standards. Planning area standards implement the goals and policies of the plan and the Local Coastal Program. The standards are mandatory requirements that apply to new land uses and proposed development. Section 7.3, “Communitywide Standards,” includes the following standards related to wastewater. The numbering and text below has been copied from the LOCP, excluding standards that do not specifically relate to wastewater.

B. Resource Capacity and Service Availability.

1. Verification of water and sewer service. All applications for land divisions and new development shall be accompanied by a letter from the applicable water purveyor and provider of sewer service indicating their willingness and intent to provide service to the new development.

2. Water and Wastewater Service Capacity, Land Divisions. New land divisions, other than condominium conversions, shall not be approved unless the Review Authority makes the following findings:

b. If within the sewer service area, the community sewer system is in operation and has sufficient capacity to serve the development.

c. If outside the sewer service area, the on-site wastewater disposal system has been designed to comply with all requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, including the Central Coast Basin Plan.

For the purposes of the above findings, the Review Authority shall consider not only the water and wastewater demands of the development being proposed, but also the water and wastewater demands from existing development and development of all vacant parcels within the Los Osos Urban Services Line.

Evaluation of Proposed Project Wastewater-Related Standards. The LOCP wastewater-related standards require that proposed development within the sewer (wastewater) service area connect to the LOWRF. Development outside the sewer service area follows the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) requirements for onsite wastewater disposal systems. Standards B1 and B2b require commitment from the sewer service provider for service of new developments and determination of service availability for all land divisions.

The LOWRF has been designed and permitted for a future flow rate of 1.2 MGD based on an estimated buildout population within the wastewater service area of 18,500 (WDR Order No R3-2011-0001). According the WDR, the current population within the service area is approximately 12,500 with 4,800 connections and an estimated wastewater flow of 0.9 MGD. The proposed project anticipates a future population in the Los Osos Community Plan (LOCP) area of 18,000. As shown in **Figure 4.14-1**, the LOCP area is larger than the wastewater service area. The LOCP proposes a similar mix of residential and commercial development to the existing community, although in some cases, land uses will be redesignated to result in less development potential than under the current Estero Area Plan, so loading concentrations (wastewater strength) are anticipated to be similar, if not less. Under the LOCP, the anticipated buildout population within the wastewater service area is anticipated to be no more than 18,000. Therefore, it is anticipated that the LOWRF will have sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed project within the wastewater service area.

Standard B2c requires that areas outside the LOWRF sewer (wastewater) service area utilize onsite wastewater treatment systems in accordance with the RWQCB and the Central Coast Basin Plan. The RWQCB’s Basin Plan (March 2016 Edition) adopted the State Water Resources Control Board’s *Water Quality Control Policy for Onsite Siting, Design, Operation and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems* (OWTS Policy). The OWTS Policy provides a tiered implementation program with requirements based upon levels (tiers) of potential threat to water quality. It includes a conditional waiver for waste discharge requirements for onsite systems that comply with the policy. The OWTS Policy provides minimum requirements for siting, design, and construction of onsite systems. The Policy lays out four categories or “tiers” for OWTS. A summary of the four tiers and assessment of the applicability to the LOCP is provided in **Table 4.14-1**.

Table 4.14-1. Summary of OWTS Tiers under SWRCB OWTS Policy and Applicability to LOCP	
Tier Name and Description	Applicability to LOCP
Tier 0 – Existing OWTS: Existing OWTS that are properly functioning and do not meet the conditions of failing systems or otherwise require corrective actions as specifically described in Tier 4, and are not determined to be contributing to an impairment of surface water as specifically described in Tier 3, are automatically included in Tier 0.	Tier 0 applies to existing, properly functioning OWTS outside the sewer service area (Prohibition Zone).
Tier 1 - Low-Risk New or Replacement OWTS: New or replacement OWTS meet low risk siting, design, and construction requirements as specified in Tier 1, where there is not an approved Local Agency Management Program per Tier 2.	New or replacement OWTS in the LOCP area (outside the sewer service area) will fall under Tier 1, which provides requirements for professional soil and site evaluations, including percolation testing; minimum setbacks from property lines, wells, water bodies, etc.; minimum requirements for permitting agencies; allowable densities per subdivision for OWTS based on average annual rainfall; and minimum OWTS design and construction requirements.

Table 4.14-1. Summary of OWTS Tiers under SWRCB OWTS Policy and Applicability to LOCP	
Tier Name and Description	Applicability to LOCP
<p>Tier 2 - LAMP for New or Replacement OWTS: Local agencies may submit management programs for approval, and upon approval then manage the installation of new and replacement OWTS under that program. A local agency may opt to prepare a Local Area Management Program (LAMP) to address specific local conditions. LAMPs are reviewed and approved by the RWQCB.</p>	<p>There is no LAMP for the Los Osos area. Therefore, this Tier is not applicable to the LOCP at this time.</p>
<p>Tier 3 - Existing, New or Replacement OWTS near Impaired Areas: Existing, new, and replacement OWTS near impaired water bodies may be addressed by a TMDL and its implementation program, or special provisions contained in a LAMP. If there is no TMDL or special provisions, the Policy provides specific requirements for new or replacement OWTS within 600 feet of impaired water bodies listed in Attachment 2 of the OWTS Policy.</p>	<p>No impaired water bodies for San Luis Obispo County are listed in Attachment 2 of the OWTS Policy. This Tier is not applicable to the LOCP at this time.</p>
<p>Tier 4 - OWTS Requiring Corrective Action: OWTS that require corrective action or are either presently failing or fail at any time while the Policy is in effect are automatically included in Tier 4 and must follow the requirements.</p>	<p>As described, Tier 4 applied to any OWTS that requires corrective action. OWTS that is failing will be categorized as Tier 4 until the corrective action is successfully implemented.</p>

The majority of new OWTS constructed under the LOCP will fall into Tier 1. The Policy provides minimum requirements for assessment, siting, design, permitting and construction to help ensure appropriate wastewater treatment and disposal. The County will be responsible for reviewing OWTS applications for compliance with the OWTS policy, which will reduce potential future impacts to groundwater from septic system discharges.

b. Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Threshold: *Would actions under the Community Plan violate waste discharge requirements or Basin Plan criteria for wastewater systems, pursuant to the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board?*

Threshold: *Would actions under the Community Plan change the quality of surface or groundwater (e.g., nitrogen loading, day-lighting)?*

Threshold: *Would actions under the Community Plan require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects)?*

Threshold: *Would actions under the Community Plan adversely affect the community wastewater service provider?*

Impact WW-1 Because the LOWRF has sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected buildout population of 18,000 under the LOCP and onsite systems outside the sewer service area will be regulated through the SCRWCB OWTS Policy, program-level impacts related to wastewater production are consider to be *Class III, less than significant.*

Development under the Community Plan is anticipated to result in a total buildout population of 18,000. As discussed above, developments within the LOWRF service area will be connected to the LOWRF, which is anticipated to have sufficient capacity without exceedances of the treatment requirements or expansion of facilities. Developments outside the area will require onsite wastewater treatment systems that comply with RWQCB regulations and policies. Based on the assessment presented herein, at a policy level, wastewater impacts from the proposed project are considered a Class III Impact, less than significant. As future applications for individual Community Plan projects are submitted at a project level of detail, the precise evaluation of future project cumulative impacts would be coordinated through individual project-level development and environmental review.

Mitigation Measures. Wastewater impacts from the proposed project are considered a Class III Impact, less than significant. No mitigation measures are required.

c. Cumulative Impacts. The LOCP accounts for all of the expected growth in the Los Osos area, as it functions as a General Plan and Local Coastal Plan. Therefore, cumulative wastewater impacts are addressed in the analysis above. As future applications for individual Community Plan projects are

submitted at a project level of detail, the precise evaluation of future project cumulative impacts would be coordinated through individual project-level development and environmental review.

d. Subsequent Environmental Review for Future Development Projects in the Community Plan Area. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183, additional CEQA review is not required for projects that are consistent with the development density established by existing zoning, community plan or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific effects which are peculiar to the project or its site. **Table 4.14-2** describes conditions under which future development in the Community Plan Area would require additional CEQA review, pursuant to Section 15183.

Table 4.14-2. Conditions Under Which Future Development in the Community Plan Area Would Require Additional CEQA Review	
Condition	Impact to Address
<i>The future project is inconsistent with underlying General Plan and zoning designations</i>	WW-1
<i>The future project is inconsistent with Community Plan policies</i>	WW-1
<i>The future project would result in a wastewater collection or treatment impact that is peculiar to the project or parcel. An effect is not considered peculiar if uniformly applied development policies or standards previously adopted by the County would substantially mitigate the environmental effect.</i>	Impact that is peculiar to the project or parcel
<i>The future project would result in an impact or impacts not analyzed above, including off-site or cumulative effects.</i>	Impact other than WW-1
<i>The future project would result in an impact or impacts analyzed above, but at a higher level of severity as a result of substantial new information not known at the time the EIR was certified.</i>	Worsened WW-1