

4.12 RECREATION

This section describes the current recreational uses within a 1-mile radius of the project features (study area) and the potential effects of the implementation of the proposed desalination project on existing recreation facilities. The discussion explores whether the creation or expansion of recreation facilities might be required, having adverse physical effects on the environment.

Public comments received during the scoping period indicated a concern for impacts to Shoreline Park that could result from the project. This section will address those impacts.

4.12.1 Environmental Setting

4.12.1.1 Existing Recreation Facilities

Regional Context

According to the Marin Countywide Plan (adopted 1994; ~~Draft Countywide Plan Updates released in 2005 and 2007~~), nearly half of the land in Marin County is ~~designated preserved as parks and open space, watershed, or parkland area~~, including ~~approximately 500-641~~ miles of trails. City, county, state and national parks and open space areas offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

Marin County is a direct service provider at county-owned parks and coordinates with cities and special districts to identify community park needs and ways to enhance park and recreation services and facilities. Through the development review process, the county must also ensure that new projects provide adequate recreational opportunities for their residents.

Since 1972, the Marin County Open Space District has had a mandate to manage and protect ridglands, baylands and other environmentally sensitive lands targeted for preservation in the Countywide Plan. The district currently controls open space preserves covering more than ~~14,000~~15,500 acres (Marin County 2007a). The Marin County Board of Supervisors governs the district.

In addition to the Marin County Open Space District, the National Parks Service, the county and cities also maintain parks and recreational facilities throughout Marin. County Service Areas and special districts manage additional park facilities.

Project Study Area

The City of San Rafael encompasses nearly two-thirds of the total project area, including key features such as the plant site, outfall site, intake structure, and San Quentin Ridge tank site. The Jacoby Street Pumping Station and northern portion of the proposed pipeline, which would be constructed ~~when-if~~ the desalination plant is expanded beyond ~~the initial~~ 5 MGD capacity, are also in San Rafael. The city has 21 neighborhood parks, six community parks, eight county-owned parks, one state park, and three community centers, for a total of over 150 acres of parkland. Existing public parks in East San Rafael (in the vicinity of the plant site) include Pickleweed Park (17 acres), Schoen Park (0.1 acre), Beach Park (0.4 acre), Canal / Harbor Park (0.1 acre), and Shoreline Park, which has a Bay Trail segment immediately adjacent to the

4.12 RECREATION

proposed plant site. Other than two segments of the trail, the Bay Trail forms a continuous stretch of bayside recreational land in eastern San Rafael (Thompson, pers. comm., 2004). The City of San Rafael strives to maintain a recreation standard of 3 acres of park and recreation facilities per 1,000 residents.

The cities of Larkspur, Corte Madera, Tiburon, and Mill Valley each have their own neighborhood parks, ballfields and sports facilities, and recreational services. Extensive youth programs such as the Twin Cities Youth Little League are available to both Larkspur and Corte Madera through their Recreation Departments. Mill Valley also offers similar resources, along with a public golf course and three parks and two recreation centers. East of Mill Valley, the Strawberry Recreation District is an independent government agency that is responsible for operating and maintaining rental and athletic facilities and parks.

The Marin County Open Space District manages a number of open space preserves within the project area. In southern Marin County, the Alto Bowl / Horse Hill Preserve, Camino Alto Preserve, Tiburon Ridge, and Ring Mountain all fall within 1 mile of the proposed project. The southern portion of the proposed pipeline passes through both the City of Tiburon Open Space area and the Tiburon Ridge Open Space Preserve. ~~The Ridgecrest A tank site and Ridgecrest B (a proposed and an alternative tank site, respectively) also falls within the City of Tiburon Open Space~~ these open space areas. According to the Marin County Open Space District, Tiburon Ridge is a small parcel that is probably the least used but most visible among the district lands. Tiburon Ridge has no direct public access points, but it can be reached via the Ring Mountain Fire Road that runs along the ridge from the Ring Mountain Preserve through the adjacent City of Tiburon Open Space.

To the west, two alternative tank sites (Horse Hill and Chapman) are located in the Alto Bowl / Horse Hill Preserve. This stretch of open space occupies the ridgeland between Corte Madera to the north and Mill Valley to the south. The alternative pipeline also passes through this area.

Further north, the San Pedro Ridge, Santa Venetia, and Santa Margarita Island are Open Space Preserves within the project study area. West of US 101, Blithedale Summit, King Mountain, and Terra Linda / Sleepy Hollow Divide are in the vicinity.

4.12.1.2 Recent and Planned Facility Improvements

San Rafael has a number of new, recently improved, and planned recreational facilities in the project area including new soccer and baseball fields at Pickleweed Park; new sections of the Bay Trail along the Shoreline Park at Schoen Park and at the Marin Rod & Gun Club pier; and expansion of the Pickleweed Park Community Center.

4.12.1.3 Relevant Plans and Policies

Although state law does not require inclusion of a Parks and Recreation Element in ~~the~~ a General Plan, the 2007 Marin Countywide Plan includes sections for open space, trails, and parks and recreation ~~this element~~, serving two important functions: (1) establishing priorities in a time of scarce resources; and (2) helping Marin County increase its inventory of park land through satisfying the requirements of two state laws, the Quimby Act and the Naylor Act. The Quimby Act allows local jurisdictions to require dedication of land for parks and/or payment of an in-lieu fee, as a condition of approval of development projects. The Naylor Act allows cities and

counties to acquire surplus school properties for recreation purposes. Marin County must establish criteria for invoking these laws in the ~~Parks and Recreation Element~~ Countywide Plan.

Marin County's ~~last previous~~ Parks and Recreation Element was adopted in 1965, at a time when the most pressing need was for more regional parks. Since 1965, this need has been substantially met through federal acquisition of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Point Reyes National Seashore, and the Marin County Open Space District's acquisition of more than ~~15,500~~12,000 acres of open space land. However, the Countywide Plan notes that the Novato, Las Gallinas, Upper and Lower Ross Valley, and West Marin Planning Areas fall short of the Quimby standard of 3 to 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

The Marin Countywide Plan ~~Parks and Recreation Element~~ maintains ~~objectives, policies, and implementation~~ implementing programs for acquiring and maintaining new facilities, increasing the inventory of parklands to keep pace with identified needs and population growth, funding capital improvements, and clarifying the county's role in parks and recreation management in other areas within the county.

4.12.2 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.12.2.1 Standards of Significance

The following standards of significance are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. For the purposes of this EIR, an impact to recreation would be considered significant if the implementation of the proposed project would:

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreation facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- Propose the construction of recreation facilities or require the expansion of recreation facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

This EIR does not evaluate impacts on recreational facilities in terms of additional acreage that may be needed to meet local standards, but examines the demand for recreational facilities and the potential environmental effects from the development of additional lands for recreational uses.

4.12.2.2 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The implementation of the proposed desalination project would result in the construction of new infrastructure both through and adjacent to existing recreational lands. Environmental impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed desalination project are summarized below.

Impact 4.12-1: Implementation of the proposed desalination project would result in a change to visual resources from the portion of the Bay Trail in Shoreline Park, adjacent to the proposed plant site and intake structure.

Significance: Less than significant

Mitigation: No mitigation required

4.12 RECREATION

Discussion:

Shoreline Park is a linear park containing the Bay Trail. The park and trail are oriented along a levee adjacent to San Rafael Bay, running between the Marin Rod & Gun Club and Bellam Boulevard, north of the plant site. The plant site structures would be at least 500 feet away from the trail and park. Area residents use the trail primarily as a bayside hiking path. The implementation of the proposed desalination plant would erect a new plant in place of an existing vacant lot immediately west of the trail. Although the visual quality would change from the Bay Trail, it would be a less-than-significant impact. Existing buildings in the area are of a light industrial and commercial nature, and the proposed project would be in keeping with the general character of the area. Furthermore, the scenic beauty in the area lies to the east of the trail, overlooking the San Rafael Bay. These views would remain uncompromised with the addition of the project infrastructure. The intake pipeline, the only new structure east of the trail, would not be visible from the trail.

* * *

Impact 4.12-2: Implementation of the proposed desalination project would result in a change to noise levels from the portion of the Bay Trail in Shoreline Park, adjacent to the proposed plant site and intake structure.

Significance: Less than significant

Mitigation: No mitigation required

Discussion:

The Bay Trail is approximately 500 feet east of the proposed plant site. The predicted noise levels of 45–50 dB L_{dn} at 50 feet from the site noise sources are well below the normally acceptable noise level of 60 dB L_{dn} for exterior noise level for recreation use areas identified in the City of San Rafael 2020 General Plan. The Bay Trail is 450 feet farther away, so the noise levels would be much less than the predicted 45–50 dB L_{dn} at 50 feet.

* * *

Impact 4.12-3: Implementation of the proposed desalination project would result in a loss of approximately 2 acres of open space land in southern Marin County due to construction of a water storage tank.

Significance: Potentially significant

Mitigation 4.12-3: As indicated in Mitigation Measure 4.8-1, MMWD will work with the Marin County Open Space District to identify the location and amount of lands (minimum mitigation ratio of 1:1) that can be purchased or MMWD-owned land that can be traded to offset the loss of this open space land. Preferably the land would be contiguous to other existing open space managed by the Marin County Open Space District. MMWD will then execute the agreed-upon exchange.

Residual Significance: Less than significant

Discussion:

The proposed Ridgecrest A tank site is located on land in unincorporated Marin County currently owned by the Town of Tiburon. The property is designated for Open Space use in perpetuity. Construction of a water storage tank at this location would remove approximately 2 acres of land from open space use. Purchase or trade of other land to the Marin County Open Space District to compensate for this loss would mitigate this impact to less than significant.

* * *

Impact 4.12-4: Construction of the proposed desalination project could intermittently and temporarily disrupt existing nearby recreational facilities for the duration of construction.

Significance: Less than significant

Mitigation: No mitigation required

Discussion:

Construction associated with the proposed project could temporarily disrupt the use of adjacent or nearby recreational facilities, such as Shoreline Park. Construction of a 5 MGD desalination plant would occur over a 24-month period. This could effectively decrease the availability or value of some recreational opportunities, albeit temporarily. In addition, the temporary disruption of access to or use of recreational facilities during construction of proposed activities could temporarily shift demand to other facilities in the vicinity, contributing to the deterioration of those facilities. The project would employ several construction techniques for installing conduit overhead or underground, as described in Section 3.

Project construction would not directly affect or alter any recreational facility on a long term basis. The highest maximum noise levels generated by project construction would be associated with pile driving and would typically range from about 100 to 105 dBA at a distance of 50 feet from the pile driver. Construction-generated noise levels drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance between the source and receptor. Shoreline Park and the Bay Trail are approximately 500 feet away from the plant site. Accordingly, pile driving noise levels at the park and trail would range from approximately 82 to 87 dBA.

City of San Rafael Noise Ordinance 8.13.050 (Standard Exceptions to General Noise Limits; see Section 4.9.1.3) allows construction noise levels not exceeding 90 dBA between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturdays. Section 6.70.030(5) of the Marin County Code limits hours of construction activities to 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. As described in Mitigation 4.9-3(a) in Section 4.9, project construction would be limited to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. No construction activities within 500 feet of residences would occur on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays. Therefore, construction-related noise levels of 82 to 87 dBA at Shoreline Park and the Bay Trail would be within the maximum thresholds and hours set by applicable local standards.

Although other construction activities could be visible and audible from some recreational areas, implementation of construction-related air quality and noise mitigation measures in Sections 4.2 and 4.9, respectively, would ensure that construction would not substantially impair the use or value of any such facility and that construction-related nuisance effects on nearby park users would be less than significant.

4.12 RECREATION

Project construction would not directly affect or alter any recreational facility on a long-term basis.

* * *