

9. Significant Irreversible Changes Due to the Proposed Project

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) describe any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented.

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highways improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

In the case of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan, implementation would cause the following significant irreversible changes:

- Future development that would be accommodated under the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan would entail the commitment of nonrenewable and/or slowly renewable energy resources; human resources; and natural resources such as lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt, steel, copper, lead, other metals, water, and fossil fuels. Future development would also require the use of natural gas and electricity, petroleum-based fuels, fossil fuels, and water. The commitment of resources required for the construction and operation of future development project would limit the availability of such resources for future generations or for other uses during the life of the project.
- An increased commitment of social services and public maintenance services (e.g., police, fire, schools, libraries, and sewer and water services) would also be required. The energy and social service commitments would be long-term obligations in view of the low likelihood of returning the land to its original condition once it has been developed.
- Population growth related to project implementation would increase vehicle trips over the long term. Over the long term, emissions associated with such vehicle trips would continue to contribute to the South Coast Air Basin's nonattainment designation for ozone (O₃), fine inhalable particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and lead (Los Angeles County only) under the California and National ambient air quality standards (AAQS), and nonattainment for coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM₁₀) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) under the California AAQS.

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- Future development in accordance with the proposed project is a long-term irreversible commitment of vacant land to developed land in the City of Banning.

Given the low likelihood that the land would revert to lower intensity uses or to its current form, the proposed Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan would generally commit future generations to these environmental changes.