3.2 Growth

The information in this section is based on the *Community Impact Assessment* (CIA) (January 2012).

3.2.1 Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental consequences of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect consequences, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations, 40 CFR 1508.8, refer to these consequences as secondary impacts. Secondary impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. CEQA guidelines, Section 15126.2(d), require that environmental documents "…discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment…"

3.2.2 Affected Environment

Growth trends within the affected jurisdictions in the MCP study area are discussed below.

3.2.2.1 Riverside County

Riverside County is the 5th most populated county in California and the 15th most populated in the nation. The MCP study area is located in a subregion of the county known as western Riverside County. This subregion includes the cities of Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Canyon Lake, Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Norco, Perris, Riverside, San Jacinto, Temecula, and Wildomar, as well as unincorporated areas. The MCP study area includes the cities of Perris and San Jacinto, and unincorporated communities of Riverside County, such as Lakeview/ Nuevo. According to the Western Riverside County Council of Government, this subregion population increased by 30 percent between 1990 and 2000, reaching a

total of 1,131,981 people.[1] By 2010, the subregion had increased over 50 percent to 1,733,694 people.[2] In 2010, the population in Riverside County as a whole almost doubled and reached 2,189,641 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Even with the economic slowdown that began in 2008, the population in Riverside County is expected to increase over 60 percent (1.3 million people), and growth in employment is expected to rise 80 percent between 2010 and 2035 (SCAG, 2008).

3.2.2.2 City of Perris

Between 2000 and 2010, the population of the city of Perris almost doubled, from 36,189 to 68,386 people. It is projected to increase by an additional 80 percent by 2035, to approximately 114,000 people. The City's adopted General Plan Land Use Element (2005) states that approximately 36 percent of the land designated for residential use in the city is developed. Therefore, 64 percent of land designated for residential uses remains to be developed. Similarly, vast tracts of vacant land are designated for employment-generating uses. Therefore, the city has sufficient vacant land available for development to accommodate the city's projected growth through 2035.

3.2.2.3 City of San Jacinto

Between 2000 and 2010, the population of the city of San Jacinto increased by 86 percent, from 23,779 to 44,199 people. It is projected to increase by an additional 88 percent by 2035, to over 83,000 people. When compared to other incorporated areas in western Riverside County, the city's population growth rate was higher than the county's from 2000 to 2010 but lower than all of the surrounding cities except for Moreno Valley. According to the City's Final General Plan (2006), approximately 29 percent of the city is designated as Open Space, 48 percent as Residential, 5 percent as Commercial, 7 percent as Industrial, and 16 percent as Special Designation.

3.2.2.4 Riverside County Integrated Project

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) was an unprecedented, multiyear planning effort to simultaneously prepare environmental, transportation, housing, and development guidelines for Riverside County for the first

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1 Western Riverside County (2006) *Western Riverside County: A Collection of Profiles, Indicators, and Maps*. Page 8. Website: http://www.wrcog.cog.ca.us/content/growthforecasts.asp.

2 Western Riverside County (2011). *Updated Growth Forecast for the WRCOG Region*. Website: http://www.wrcog.cog.ca.us/content/growthforecasts.asp.

half of the 21st century. Riverside County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, so the purpose of the RCIP was to address the planning, environmental, and transportation issues that would result from the anticipated doubling of population in Riverside County.

The RCIP included three components: (1) a new General Plan for Riverside County, adopted in October 2003; (2) a Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) for western Riverside County (approved in June 2004); and (3) the Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP). These elements of the RCIP guided the decisions made regarding how to address the changes necessary in the County to accommodate and support the anticipated population growth and establish a collective goal so that implementation of each element, even at the local scale, would result in a compatible outcome for the County as a whole. For example, land use patterns and densities were determined and balanced with the plan to implement the necessary transportation facilties, while concurrently establishing biological conservation areas to preserve the diversity of habitats and protected species they support.

CETAP efforts included the study of two intercounty corridors (Riverside County to Orange County and Riverside County to San Bernardino County) and two intracounty transportation corridors (a north-south and a west-east corridor in western Riverside County). Tier 1 analyses and environmental documents were initiated for the two intracounty corridors in fall 2000: a north-south corridor referred to as the Winchester to Temecula Corridor, and a west-east corridor referred to as the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridor. After a Draft Tier 1 EIR/EIS was completed for the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridor and circulated for public review in 2002 with a suite of 14 "build" alternatives, the RCTC Board accepted a staff recommendation in June 2003 to proceed with the accelerated preparation of a project-level environmental document for a west-east alternative that would generally follow the existing alignment of Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway, known as the MCP project. Therefore, the MCP project is a component of the RCIP program and the County's efforts to accommodate the anticipated population growth while addressing the planning, environmental, and transportation issues.

3.2.3 Environmental Consequences

Because indirect growth-related effects represent permanent impacts of a project, there is no discussion of temporary impacts in this section. The growth-related effects of the MCP project were assessed using the Caltrans *Guidance for Preparers of*

Growth-Related, Indirect Impacts Analysis. The guidance specifically deals with the subset of indirect effects referred to as "growth-related impacts" associated with highway projects that encourage or facilitate land use or development that changes the location, rate, type, or amount of growth.

The potential for the proposed MCP Build Alternatives to influence growth was based on consideration of the following questions/issues:

- How, if at all, does the proposed project potentially change accessibility?
- How, if at all, do the proposed project type, project location, and growth pressure potentially influence growth? Some transportation projects may have very little influence on future growth, whereas others may have a great influence. Some geographic locations are more conducive to influencing growth, whereas others are highly constrained. These differences may result from physical constraints, planning and zoning factors, or local political considerations.
- Is project-related growth reasonably foreseeable as defined in NEPA? Under NEPA, indirect impacts need only be evaluated if they are reasonably foreseeable as opposed to remote or speculative.
- If there will be project-related growth, how, if at all, would resources of concern be impacted?

A discussion regarding each of the above questions/considerations is provided below.

3.2.3.1 Build Alternatives

Construction of a new transportation facility such as the MCP project could have growth-related effects by reducing or removing barriers to growth by creating conditions that attract additional residents or new economic activity or by providing a catalyst for future growth in the area.

A number of factors could influence the amount, rate, location, and direction of growth (planned or unplanned) in the MCP study area. These could include:

- Perceived quality of life;
- General economic conditions;
- Specific market conditions for housing, employment, and related services;
- Availability and condition of infrastructure, ranging from schools to transportation systems; and
- Local and regional growth management and land use policies.

Overall Growth Potential in the MCP Study Area

Western Riverside County is projected to continue to grow rapidly, with a projected annual growth rate of 3.4 percent over the next 20 years compared to the 1.25 percent average in southern California (WRCOG, 2005). This pace of development within the MCP study area is projected to occur with or without the MCP project. Lack of transportation system capacity and accessibility have not been a major constraint to development in the area, as evidenced by extensive development that has occurred in western Riverside County over the last 20 years in advance of planned major transportation improvements such as widening of Interstate 15 (I-15) and Interstate 215 (I-215).

There are developed areas within the MCP study area, developing areas, and undeveloped land. The undeveloped land is the focus in determining whether the MCP project would have any growth-related effects on environmental resources of concern. As shown on Figure 3.2.1, and based on communication with local jurisdictions with land use approval authority (the County of Riverside and the Cities of Perris and San Jacinto), much of this undeveloped land is at some stage in the development entitlement process (i.e., Specific Plan, Tentative Tract Map, etc.). These lands are referred to as active and approved developments, which are generally defined as lands where some type of application for a land use permit was filed (active) or where development plans were already approved. The information shown on Figure 3.2.1 is current as of April 2011. The areas where these active and approved lands are located have already experienced growth pressures and are proposed to be developed consistent with the respective local jurisdictions' General Plan land use maps, which designate areas for both land development and open space. However, it is not certain whether all of the active and proposed developments will be constructed as planned. Review of the proposed and approved developments in the past few years has shown that some development applications were withdrawn, possibly due to the 2008–2009 recession.

On average, the MCP study area is about 23 percent "built out," but that percentage varies from more developed areas such as the city of Perris at 43.7 percent build out, the city of San Jacinto at 3.3 percent build out, and unincorporated Riverside County areas at 18.7 percent build out (SCAG, 2005). Because all the local jurisdictions' General Plans have been recently updated (2006 or later), it is expected that this current development is consistent with those General Plans and in those areas planned for development. Additionally, when taking into account the active, approved, and proposed developments identified in Figure 3.2.1 and discussed in Table 3.1.C,

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Figure 3.2.1 Lands Targeted for Development and Conservation in MCP Study Area

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the MCP study area would be "built out" to approximately 56 percent, with that percentage varying for the City of Perris at 65 percent build out, the City of San Jacinto at 48 percent build out, and unincorporated Riverside County areas at 54 percent build out.

In addition, Riverside County and the cities of Perris and San Jacinto are fulfilling their obligations as permittees under the Western Riverside County MSHCP by ensuring developer compliance with the conservation criteria and goals of the MSHCP, including the dedication of lands to be preserved for inclusion in the MSHCP Reserve and/or payment of fees. The lands set aside for conservation under the Western Riverside County MSHCP will augment existing habitat reserve lands within the MCP study area that are protected from future development, including the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. These existing habitat reserve lands are classified as "Public, Quasi-Public" lands on Figure 3.2.1. The most recent acquisitions of conservation lands in the MSHCP area that are devoted to the protection of species are classified as Regional Conservation Authority MSHCP Gains and Acquisitions. These lands will be precluded from future development.

From Lake Perris to State Route 79 (SR-79), the MCP project follows the alignment of the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP corridor that was adopted as part of the Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element in 2003 as the Cajalco Ramona Corridor; therefore, future land uses in this area were planned in conjunction with this additional transportation system capacity. As shown on the Riverside County General Plan, lands located north of Ramona Expressway are designated as agricultural, rural, and conservation uses, and because they are in private ownership, these lands may experience additional growth pressures through the provision of a planned transportation facility such as the MCP project. Based on the above review of land development trends within the MCP study area, implementation of the MCP project is expected to have some influence on the location, amount, rate, or type of growth in the area. The basis for this conclusion is that:

- The MCP project will provide improved access to remaining undeveloped lands and agricultural lands. Although much of this land is planned for future development, the MCP project would provide additional transportation system capacity and may accelerate opportunities to convert these lands to nonagricultural and urban uses beyond what is currently occurring;
- Existing land uses (such as vacant, agriculture, and low-density residential) adjacent to and in the vicinity of the proposed local service interchanges may

experience additional pressures for conversion from existing rural community land uses to higher density residential and commercial/industrial uses; and

- The MCP project is expected to improve travel times between SR-79 and I-215, which would make surrounding undeveloped and developed lands more accessible and, therefore, more attractive for development or for existing development to be intensified.

Comparison of Growth Potential for MCP Build Alternatives

The MCP project is intended to provide a limited access freeway that would effectively and efficiently accommodate regional west-east movement of people, goods, and services between and through Perris and San Jacinto. Based on the type of project, being a limited access freeway, growth would have the greatest potential to occur adjacent to proposed interchanges. The amount of growth expected would be dependent upon the amount of undeveloped land in the immediate area of the interchange and subject to land use approvals by the local jurisdictions and any restrictions included in their respective general plans or the MSHCP.

Alternatives 4 Modified, 5 Modified, and 9 Modified share the same alignment for much of their length in the Lakeview/Nuevo area and San Jacinto; therefore, the overall growth-related effects are similar for those MCP Build Alternatives in those areas. Growth-related effects in the city of Perris would be different under each MCP Build Alternative.

At the west and east termini of the MCP Build Alternatives (I-215 in the west and SR-79 in the east), there is a service interchange at I-215/Ramona Expressway and an arterial intersection at SR-79/Ramona Expressway. These existing service interchanges connect the highways to the arterial street system. Implementation of any of the MCP Build Alternatives would improve these two locations so that they continue to provide service-level connectivity to the study area and provide regional connectivity of these highways with the MCP project.

System interchanges are also proposed for all MCP Build Alternatives at I-215 and SR-79. The system interchanges are generally proposed in locations where interchanges already exist, where development has already occurred, or where additional development is anticipated in the adopted land use plans for the area. Alternative 5 Modified and Alternative 9 Modified propose a new system interchanges near I-215/Rider Street and I-215/Placentia Avenue, respectively, instead of near the Ramona Expressway. The MCP project, as connected with other

highways through system interchanges, will make the MCP study area more regionally accessible and will facilitate future growth and development in a manner consistent with that proposed in the adopted land use plans for the area. However, the possibility of growth-related effects from the proposed service interchanges varies by location as discussed below.

Perris Area

In the city of Perris, service interchanges are proposed at Perris Boulevard and Evans Road for Alternatives 4 Modified and 5 Modified.[1] For Alternative 4 Modified, the Perris Boulevard service interchange is located north of Ramona Expressway, whereas for Alternative 5 Modified, the Perris Boulevard service interchange is located near Rider Street. For Alternative 9 Modified, service interchanges in the city of Perris are located at Redlands Avenue and Evans Road. The Evans Road interchange is common to all MCP Build Alternatives.

The General Plan designated land uses around Perris Boulevard and the Ramona Expressway (where an interchange is proposed under Alternative 4 Modified) are primarily industrial, whereas the existing land uses are commercial and vacant. An interchange in this location would be consistent with the planned uses, and no change in the type or intensity of planned land uses is expected to occur as a result of the MCP Build Alternatives. Similarly, the area around Perris Boulevard and Rider Street, where an interchange is proposed for Alternative 5 Modified, is currently designated for Commercial Retail uses in the General Plan. The existing and planned land uses for the surrounding area are primarily Light Industrial and Business Park. These uses are consistent with the improved access that would be provided by an MCP service interchange, and no intensification in planned land use would be expected to occur as a result of the MCP Build Alternatives.

As mentioned above, service interchanges for Alternative 9 Modified would be located at Redlands Avenue and Evans Road. The General Plan designates areas surrounding Redlands Avenue/Placentia Avenue as Industrial, whereas the existing land uses are Agriculture and Vacant. In addition, there is an active development proposing 11 industrial buildings adjacent to the proposed interchange. The proposed

[1] The San Jacinto North (SJN DV) and San Jacinto River Bridge Design Variations (SJRB DV) would not change the location of proposed service interchanges in the city of Perris for any of the MCP Build Alternatives.

interchange would support the future land uses in this area as planned in the General Plan but could accelerate the demand for development in this area.

The area around Evans Road and Placentia Avenue, where the Evans Road interchange is proposed for all the MCP Build Alternatives, is currently planned for Commercial Retail and high-density residential uses. These relatively high-intensity uses would be compatible with the increased access that a service interchange would provide, and no changes to the General Plan to allow greater land use intensity would be expected as a result of the MCP Build Alternatives. The area surrounding the Evans Road interchange is characterized primarily by privately owned land that may be subject to pressure for new development or redevelopment as a result of implementation of the MCP project.

Lakeview/Nuevo Area and the City of San Jacinto

Alternatives 4 Modified, 5 Modified, and 9 Modified are located in proximity to, or in some areas on top of the existing alignment of Ramona Expressway east of the Perris Valley Storm Drain in the city of Perris. This location of the MCP Build Alternatives is consistent with the CETAP corridor overlay shown in the Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element.

The Lakeview/Nuevo area and San Jacinto service interchanges for all the MCP Build Alternatives are proposed at Antelope Road, Bernasconi Road, Reservoir Avenue, Town Center Boulevard (proposed new arterial associated with future proposed Villages of Lakeview development; this interchange would replace the previously planned CETAP corridor interchange at Bridge Road), Park Center Boulevard (proposed new arterial associated with future proposed Villages of Lakeview development), and Warren Road.

The proposed interchanges at Antelope Road and Bernasconi Road are surrounded by the Lake Perris State Recreation Area and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area north of the MCP project, and a mix of proposed residential, commercial uses, and existing agriculture lands to the south. The Lake Perris State Recreation Area is an established public recreation resource and includes a water reservoir for the State Water Project, as well as adjacent habitat conservation areas. No changes are anticipated to these important State resources with or without implementation of the MCP project. The Lake Perris State Recreation Area is expected to remain as a public recreation area and open space and would not be subject to future development. The approved residential developments and other proposed land development projects currently

under consideration in the vicinities of these interchanges are being developed in a manner that accommodates the proposed MCP Build Alternatives and is consistent with the CETAP corridor overlay shown in the Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element, and the future land uses for this area designated in the General Plan. Similarly, the San Jacinto Wildlife Area has been established for long-term conservation purposes and would not be subject to future development.

Active and approved development plans are already being considered in the vicinity of other proposed interchanges, and these development plans would have to be refined to accommodate the MCP Build Alternatives. Service interchanges, including the Town Center Boulevard and Park Center Boulevard interchanges (Town Center and Park Center are both proposed new arterials associated with future proposed development south of Ramona Expressway), are being planned to be compatible with development plans for the future Villages of Lakeview project. However, General Plan land use designations call for the land north of these interchanges to remain agricultural land, and land south of these interchanges to be rural community. Because of the improved access and mobility provided by the MCP Build Alternatives and the already approved master plan community (Villages of Lakeview), it is expected that these lands could be subjected to accelerated growth pressures as a result of the implementation of the MCP Build Alternatives.

The proposed interchange location at Reservoir Avenue is in an area that includes approved/proposed land development projects and other privately owned lands, some of which are vacant or in agricultural use, which could be developed. Land that is privately owned and vacant or has limited development near the interchanges is the most likely area where future development might change in type as a result of interchange access (i.e., roadway commercial uses rather than residential).

Under the SJN DV for each MCP Build Alternative, the proposed interchange at Warren Road is located slightly north of the existing Ramona Expressway in an area where the General Plan calls for continued agricultural use of the land. The presence of an interchange in this area could have the effect of facilitating a change in land use designation that would allow more intense land uses should area landowners/ developers submit development applications for the conversion of agricultural land to suburban land uses. Currently, the Riverside County General Plan includes policies supporting the continuation of agricultural uses in Riverside County; however, there is typically pressure to convert agricultural land in areas that are experiencing population growth, such as Western Riverside County. The improved access of the

MCP project coupled with an interchange at Warren Road could increase these pressures.

Under the base case for each MCP Build Alternative, the Warren Road interchange would be located on the Ramona Expressway alignment. Because lands south of Ramona Expressway are designated General Industrial, the base case of each MCP Build Alternatives would be more compatible with future planned land uses in this area than would the Build Alternatives with the SJN DV.

Overall, there is a potential for unplanned and planned growth-related effects in the MCP study area. In areas where MCP Alternatives do not follow the CETAP corridor alignment in the Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element or local General Plan Circulation Elements, there would be unplanned growth-related effects. Any intensification of currently planned land uses would require the approval of the local agency with land use jurisdiction. Areas previously planned for growth in coordination with the planning of the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP Corridor and areas compatible with existing General Plan Land use designations would be less likely to experience unplanned growth effects.

Resources of Concern for Growth-Related Effects

The four key resources were identified as resources of concern for growth-related effects in the MCP study area, threatened and endangered species, aquatic resources, cultural resources, and farmlands are discussed below. These four resources were determined to be of concern due to the adverse and/or irreversible impacts that would result from implementation of any of the MCP Build Alternatives.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Biological resources of concern, such as threatened and endangered species, may be impacted due to growth-related effects of the MCP Build Alternatives. Much of the MCP study area is adjacent to areas identified for conservation under the Western Riverside County MSHCP or in areas protected in the Lake Perris State Recreation Area and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP is one of several large, multijurisdictional habitat-planning efforts in southern California, the overall goal of which is to maintain biological and ecological diversity within a rapidly urbanizing region. Under the MSHCP, resource conservation is achieved on a regional habitat-based approach rather than a project-by-project approach. The MSHCP was intended to address the cumulative and indirect effects of General Plan land uses and public infrastructure

projects, referred to as "Covered Activities" under the MSHCP. Both RCTC and Caltrans, as signatories of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, are obligated to comply with the specific conditions described in Sections 13.7 and 13.8 of the MSHCP Implementation Agreement.

Many of the ecological and biological resources in the MCP study area are within existing preserves or within the MSHCP Criteria Area where development will be limited and subject to the requirements of the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The MSHCP Criteria Area represents the area from which 153,000 acres (ac) of new conservation lands will be acquired to contribute toward the assembly of the overall MSHCP Reserve. The Criteria Area serves to connect habitats, maintain connectivity between habitats, and provide linkages where species can move from one area to another without being impeded by future development.

There are two primary components to be considered in determining MCP project consistency with the Western Riverside County MSHCP: (1) how the project relates to the MSHCP Reserve Assembly (i.e., acquisition and conservation of additional reserve lands); and (2) how the project meets other requirements of the MSHCP (e.g., determination of consistency with the MSHCP conservation objectives). As a covered activity under the MSHCP, pursuant to the provisions of Section 7.2.3 of the MSHCP, any indirect growth-related effects of the MCP project on threatened and endangered species would be covered through compliance with the MSHCP criteria. In addition, the MSHCP includes coverage of a west-east CETAP transportation corridor in the area where the MCP Build Alternatives are proposed. Therefore, although adverse growth-related effects to threatened and endangered species may occur as a result of the MCP project, these effects have been considered and mitigated through the MSHCP.

Aquatic Resources

Wetlands and nonwetland waters of the United States and State are resources of concern in western Riverside County. In cooperation with other federal, State, and local agencies, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is developing a Special Area Management Plan for both the San Jacinto River and the Upper Santa Margarita watersheds.

Approximately 60 percent of western Riverside County (752,870 ac out of the 1,258,780 ac within the MSHCP Plan Area) has been identified as reasonably foreseeable for development, based on anticipated impacts projected by the MSHCP

within the next 75 years. Planned activities that are covered under the MSHCP include seven types of roadways, freeways, CETAP corridors, and other major facilities that have been identified in the Riverside County General Plan Circulation Element, flood control facilities, waste/wastewater facilities, electrical utility facilities, and natural gas facilities.

To mitigate for impacts resulting from these and other reasonably foreseeable projects covered under the MSHCP, approximately 500,000 ac in the MSHCP Plan Area are to be assembled as Conservation Area. Because the existing MSHCP database does not provide project-specific levels of detail for vegetation mapping, the MSHCP requires certain local implementation measures that require additional information that must be gathered during the long-term implementation of the MSHCP. These local implementation measures require identifying and mapping of riparian/riverine areas and vernal pools.

Riparian/riverine areas are defined by the MSHCP as lands that contain habitat dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, or emergent mosses and lichens, which occur close to or which depend on soil moisture from a nearby freshwater source, or areas with freshwater flow during all or a portion of the year. Additionally, drainages vegetated by upland species may meet the definition of riparian/riverine areas if it is determined that the functions and values of the drainages has the potential to affect species downstream within the MSHCP Conservation Area. A functions and values assessment of the mapped riparian/riverine and vernal pool areas is required under the MSHCP for covered activities. The functions and values assessment for any future projects must focus on riparian/riverine areas and those functions that may affect downstream values within the MSHCP Conservation Area.

Where impacts occur to riparian/riverine areas or vernal pools, the MSHCP requires that an avoidance alternative be selected and that measures shall be incorporated into the project design to ensure the long-term conservation of the areas to be avoided, and their associated functions and values, through the use of deed restrictions, conservation easements, or other appropriate mechanisms. If avoidance is infeasible, then those impacts that are unavoidable shall be mitigated in that a determination of biologically equivalent or superior preservation shall be made to ensure replacement of any lost functions and values of riparian/riverine habitat as it relates to covered species.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are nonrenewable resources that include prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, as well as historic buildings and other structures. As growth occurs in an area such as western Riverside County, these resources are subject to impacts from physical land development, as well as impacts from increased human activity where resources may be damaged, illegally removed/collected, or destroyed as a result of activities such as off-road vehicle use and vandalism. The Riverside County General Plan EIR identifies areas of sensitivity for cultural resources. The Open Space Element of the Riverside County General Plan includes policies that provide for protection of cultural resources by requiring that land development projects consider avoidance of cultural resources before consideration of minimization or mitigation. Most of the MCP study area that has a high sensitivity for cultural resources is within the jurisdiction of the County of Riverside and is subject to these General Plan policies. The County is working closely with area developers to protect cultural resources that may be affected by land development projects in the area. Because these development proposals are proceeding irrespective of the MCP project, the MCP project is not anticipated to have any growth-related effects on cultural resources.

Farmlands

The MCP project would result in conversion of farmlands and other land uses to transportation uses. Because the MCP project may affect the amount, rate, location, and direction of growth in the MCP study area, it could also lead to acceleration of loss of farmlands among other land uses being impacted. However, the MCP project would not act as a sole-source catalyst for growth-related effects on farmlands since farmland conversion has been occurring and will continue to occur within the MCP study area as the area develops in accordance with the adopted local agency General Plans.

The Riverside County General Plan identifies farmlands as an important resource throughout Riverside County, and includes policies that encourage the conservation and protection of existing farmlands and discourages the placement of incompatible land uses near industrial agricultural uses such as dairies and poultry farms. Even with these policies in place, the Riverside County General Plan EIR (2003) acknowledges that there will continue to be a loss of farmlands due to development throughout Riverside County.

The MCP study area contains prime agricultural lands. Based on RCTC's ongoing coordination meetings with County and City of Perris staff regarding land development proposals in the MCP study area, much of the agricultural land that exists in the area today is expected to be converted to residential and commercial land development, which is consistent with the General Plan land use designations for these lands. These development proposals are proceeding irrespective of the MCP project; therefore, the MCP project is not anticipated to act as a sole-source catalyst for growth-related effects on farmlands.

No Build Alternatives

Under the MCP No Build Alternatives, the growth-related effects discussed above for the MCP Build Alternatives would not occur for the MCP project. However, the other transportation improvement projects included in the No Build Alternatives may result in growth-related effects already considered in the Riverside County General Plan.

3.2.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for the direct effects of the MCP project to resources of concern are discussed in this EIR/EIS as follows:

- Threatened and Endangered Species (Section 3.17, Natural Communities, and Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species)
- Aquatic Resources (Section 3.18, Wetlands and Other Waters)
- Cultural Resources (Section 3.8, Cultural Resources)
- Farmlands (Section 3.3, Farmlands)

Fugitive dust emissions from grading and exhaust emissions from construction equipment impacts would be minimized through implementation of air quality and dust control measures as described in Section 3.14, Air Quality, of this document.

Because of its prior inclusion as a CETAP corridor in the overall Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) planning process that led to the adoption of the updated Riverside County General Plan and the Western Riverside County MSHCP, any direct growth-related effects of the MCP project are expected to be minimal. As a CETAP corridor, the MCP project is an integral component of the RCIP and Riverside County General Plan, and the future growth as projected and planned for in the General Plan reflects the presence of a new major west-east corridor in western Riverside County. However, some segments of the MCP project are located in areas that were not previously analyzed in the RCIP process and, therefore, these areas may be subject to indirect growth-related effects to resources of concern. The impacts of these growth-related effects are minimized through the compliance of local agencies

with land use approval authority (County of Riverside, City of Perris, and City of San Jacinto) and with the policies contained in their respective General Plans. These policies are described below for the four resources of concern.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The MCP project growth-related effects to the threatened and endangered species will be minimized by the compliance with the MSHCP requirements and mitigation fees towards SKR HCP or Section 7 Consultation as discussed in Section 3.21, Threatened and Endangered Species. The MCP project is implementing CETAP in accordance with the RCIP and MSHCP. Because of this, all growth-related effects occurring in areas previously not addressed through the CETAP process and impacting environmental resources of concern would be minimized, and mitigated for by participation in the MSHCP. Because the MCP study area contains a number of environmental resources of concern (i.e., habitat, aquatic resources, and cultural resources), RCTC is exploring the potential to acquire privately held lands in this area to meet both its overall obligations under the MSHCP, as well as the mitigation requirements to natural communities resulting from the MCP project, as discussed in Section 3.17, Natural Communities, of this EIR/EIS.

Aquatic Resources

Any indirect growth-related effects of the MCP project to aquatic resources will be minimized through project compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the Riparian and Riverine policies in Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP. This section of the MSHCP describes the process through which protection of riparian/riverine areas and vernal pools would occur in compliance with the MSHCP to ensure that the biological functions and values of these areas throughout the MSHCP Plan Area are maintained such that habitat values for species inside the MSHCP Conservation Area are maintained.

Cultural Resources

The Riverside County General Plan EIR analyzed the effects of future growth and development on cultural resources. Any indirect growth-related effects of the MCP project to cultural resources would be minimized through project compliance as applicable with the following Riverside County General Plan policies related to the protection of cultural resources:

- **OS 19.1:** Make available programs that educate students about the rich natural and manmade environment of the County, and offer them to local schools (AI 3, 75, 76).
- **OS 19.2:** Review all proposed development for the possibility of archaeological sensitivity.
- **OS 19.3:** Employ procedures to protect the confidentiality and prevent inappropriate public exposure of sensitive archaeological resources when soliciting the assistance of public and volunteer organizations.
- **OS 19.4**: Require a Native American Statement as part of the environmental review process on development projects with identified cultural resources.
- **OS 19.5:** Transmit significant development proposals to the History Division of the Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District for evaluation in relation to the destruction/preservation of potential historical sites. Prior to approval of any development proposal, feasible mitigation shall be incorporated into the design of the project and its conditions of approval.
- **OS 19.6:** Enforce the Historic Building Code so that historical buildings can be preserved and used without posing a hazard to public safety.
- **OS 19.7:** When possible, allocate resources and/or tax credits to prioritize retrofit of County historic structures, which are irreplaceable.

Farmlands

Any indirect growth –related effects of the MCP project to farmlands would be minimized through the project compliance as applicable with the following farmland protection and conservation policies in the Riverside County General Plan:

- **LU 16.1:** Encourage retaining agriculturally designated lands where agricultural activity can be sustained at an operational scale, where it accommodates lifestyle choice, and in locations where impacts to and from potentially incompatible uses, such as residential uses, are minimized, through incentives such as tax credits.
- **LU 16.2:** Protect agricultural uses, including those with industrial characteristics (dairies, poultry, hog farms, etc.) by discouraging inappropriate land division in the immediate proximity and allowing only uses and intensities that are compatible with agricultural uses (AI 3).
- **LU 16.4:** Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production.
- **LU 16.5:** Continue to participate in the California Land Conservation Act (the Williamson Act) of 1965.

- **LU 16.7:** Adhere to Riverside County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance.
- **LU 16.8:** Support and participate in ongoing public education programs by organizations such as the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, University of California Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, and industry organizations to help the public better understand the importance of the agricultural industry.
- **LU-16.11:** The County shall pursue the creation of new incentive programs, such as tax credits, that encourage the continued viability of agricultural activities (AI 1).

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