

3. Existing Conditions and Environmental Consequences

3.0 Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal project sponsors (e.g., the Federal Highway Administration) evaluate many categories of potential social, economic and natural environmental impacts for the reasonable alternatives being considered for a proposed project. This is done so that decision-makers have the best available information to make an informed decision and so that the public and stakeholders are also informed.

In accordance with NEPA, this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) provides an evaluation of potential effects of the proposed project on the natural and physical environment.¹ Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations provide guidance with respect to the NEPA requirements to evaluate the effects on numerous topics including: historical and cultural resources; parklands; prime farmlands; wetlands; wild and scenic rivers; ecologically critical areas; and endangered or threatened species or their habitat.² As such, this chapter provides a description of the current conditions in the project study area; a description of the impacts to the human and natural environment that could be expected from the Recommended Preferred Alternative (RPA) from the DEIS (RA1), the Refined RPA, and the No-build Alternative; and the mitigation measures that would be implemented to address the impacts. This chapter also includes summaries from various environmental studies that have been conducted, and more detailed information can be found in the environmental and technical studies contained in the appendices.

This chapter provides a description of the current conditions in the project study area; a description of the impacts to the human and natural environment that could be expected from the RPA and the Refined RPA; and the mitigation measures that would be implemented to address the impacts.

This FEIS addresses the following resource topics in detail:

- Land Use
- Farmlands
- Social Impacts
- Relocation Impacts
- Economic Impacts
- Considerations Relating to Pedestrians and Bicyclists
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Hazardous Waste Sites
- Energy
- Short-term Uses vs. Long-term Uses
- Indirect and Cumulative Effects
- Air Quality Impacts
- Noise Impacts
- Water Quality Impacts
- Permits
- Wetland and Stream Impacts
- Floodplain Impacts
- Historic and Archeological Preservation
- Section 4(f) Resources
- Visual Impacts
- Irreversible and Irrecoverable
- Sustainability

¹ 40 CFR § 1508.14

² 40 CFR § 1508.27

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- Productivity
- Commitment of Resources

Because the FEIS serves to evaluate the impacts of a proposed project, it should focus on the context and intensity of effects that may significantly affect the quality of the human and natural environment. Due to the absence of some resources, there are several topics that do not warrant evaluation and are therefore not included in this FEIS. Those topics include:

- Coastal Barriers
- Coastal Zone Impacts
- Joint Development

Each resource topic considered in this Chapter of the FEIS is addressed under four primary subsections:

- **Introduction** – The introduction subsection describes the resource analyzed and the contents of the analysis. Where applicable, the regulatory setting is also included to describe what agency has responsibility for the resource and how it is generally managed.
- **Affected Environment** – This subsection describes the existing conditions of the resource in the area of the proposed project. It provides a description of the physical setting and the surrounding context.
- **Environmental Consequences** – This subsection describes the potential impacts to the subject resource for the RPA from the DEIS (RA1), the Refined RPA, and the No-build Alternative.
- **Mitigation Measures** – This section describes the mitigation measures that would be taken to reduce the identified impacts to the extent practicable.