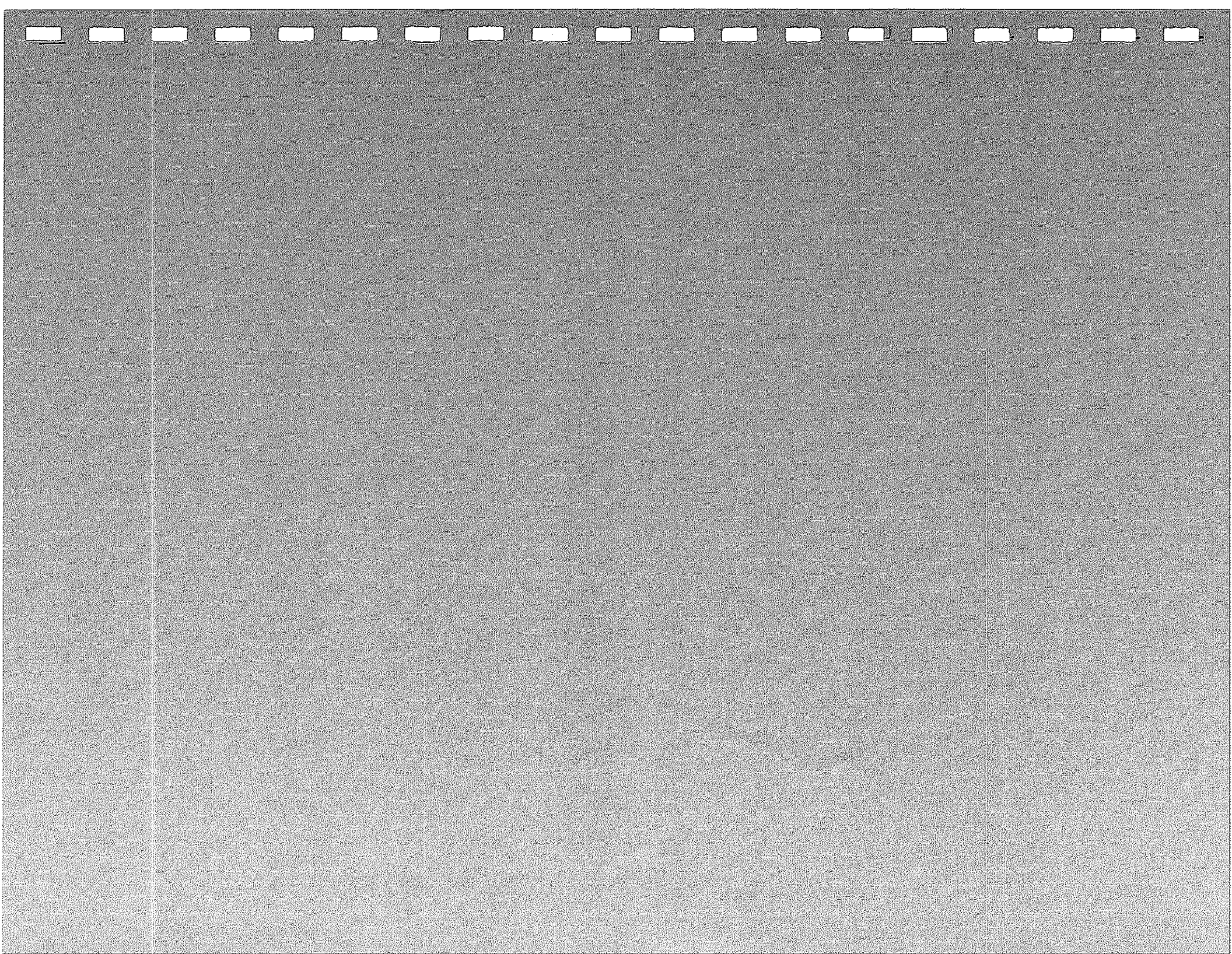
CHAPTER 5.0 CEQA CONSIDERATIONS



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5.1 CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of potential cumulative impacts that could result from a proposed project in conjunction with other projects in the vicinity. Cumulative impacts occur when two or more individual effects together create a considerable environmental impact or compound or increase other impacts. An EIR must contain a discussion of cumulative impacts, meaning the impacts of the project viewed in the context of environmental impacts expected to be caused by reasonably foreseeable or possible future projects. The possible future projects considered generally consist of a list of specific projects that have either been approved, are under consideration for approval, or are contemplated in adopted general plans. For the purposes of the cumulative impacts analysis for this EIR, cumulative growth includes the following planned developed and land use assumptions:

1. Each applicant seeking a long-term permit will operate at maximum production levels under the OCMP, thereby generating the maximum number of truck trips for an average day. Specific production assumptions include:

    - The Cache Creek Aggregates site, located north of SR 16 between Road 85 and Road 87, would increase from a currently permitted total of 748,650 tons per year to 1,075,269 tons per year;

    - The Solano Concrete site, located on SR 16 east of I-505, would increase from a current maximum of 772,417 tons per year to 1,445,783 tons per year;

    - The Syar Industries site, located between Roads 87 and 89 north of SR 16, would increase its maximum production total of 960,871 tons per year to 2,166,667 tons per year;

    - The Teichert - Esparto Properties site, located south of Road 19 between Road 87 and I-505, would increase from the current permitted maximum level of 750,000 tons per year to 1,176,471 tons per year; and

    - The Teichert - Woodland Properties site, located at the western end of Road 20, would increase from the current permitted maximum level of 1,064,224 tons per year to 1,411,765 tons per year.

2. Schwarzgruber, an existing mining operation located along Road 96, would operate at a production level of 114,000 tons per year from 1997 through 2001, and at 167,000 tons per year from 2002 to 2032.

3. No producer will process raw aggregate materials brought in from another location.

4. The volume of recycled materials is assumed to be 4 percent of total production, with 2 percent resulting in new truck trips. Since this does not count against the producer's production totals, it is assumed that this will result in additional truck trips. The assumption of increased recycling under cumulative conditions reflects technological changes and the goal of the OCMP which encourages recycling.

5. A "dummy variable" of 200 acres was assumed as a part of the cumulative condition. Of the 200 acres, 150 acres is assumed to be located along Cache Creek west of I-505, while 50 acres is assumed to be located east of I-505.

6. Granite, an existing mining operation in the study area, was assumed to have mined all resources by 1997 and therefore not be in operation thereafter.

7. The Wild Wing (337 single family dwelling units) and Pheasant Glen (18-hole golf course) planned developments are assumed in place by 2027.

8. Cumulative background traffic levels were computed by applying growth rates to existing background daily traffic volumes and intersection turning movements. Caltrans' count data revealed that the expected annual growth rate of traffic on SR 16 east and west of Road 89 is 1.5 and 2.0 percent, respectively. A 1.5 percent annual growth rate was conservatively assumed for all County roads, which is consistent with the annual growth rate of 1.6 percent projected by the Yolo County Community Development Agency for the unincorporated area of Yolo County.

9. Growth in the Woodland area is assumed to occur consistent with the *City of Woodland Draft General Plan and Draft EIR*, City of Woodland, October 16, 1995. This corresponds to a population growth rate of 2.0 percent per year.

The following is a discussion of cumulative impacts as summarized from Chapter 4.0. Cumulative impacts would occur in the areas: Agriculture; Biological Resources; Air Quality; Traffic and Circulation; Noise; and Aesthetics.

Agriculture

Cumulative land development pressures related to expansion of urban and other competing land uses would contribute to the permanent conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses within the County. The Woodland General Plan indicates that over 2,100 of agricultural land could be converted to urban land uses by 2015. The expected

growth within the spheres of influence of the towns of Esparto and Madison could also result in the additional loss of approximately 2,200 acres of agricultural land to urban development. The reasonably foreseeable mining projects over the next 30 years could result in the conversion of an additional 1,223 acres of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. In addition, 600± may be converted by the Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District for its possible groundwater recharge and recovery program.

Biological Resources

Cumulative development would result in incremental decreases in the quality, quantity, and extent of regional biological resources due to the loss of wildlife habitat, particularly for birds, larger mammals, and the conversion of land to more developed uses. The overall cumulative effect would be dependent on the degree to which significant vegetation and wildlife resources are protected at each location where development is proposed. Wildlife would be generally displaced to the nearest protected area. Habitat for species intolerant of human disturbance would be lost as development encroaches into previously undeveloped areas, disrupting or eliminating movement corridors and fragmenting the remaining suitable habitat retained within parks, remaining agricultural lands, private open space, or undeveloped properties. Sensitive species would be forced to find new breeding, foraging, and protective understory areas, including the Swainson's hawk and several other taxa of concern with declining population levels. If approved, the Yolo County Draft HCP should provide a regional approach toward preservation and management of essential habitat for target species which would be affected by anticipated urban and agricultural development.

Air Quality

Yolo County is considered nonattainment (standards have not been attained) for PM_{10} (state standard) and ozone (state and federal standard). Cumulative development would add to existing sources of PM_{10} and ozone precursors (ROG and NO_X), which would increase the regional emissions burden within Yolo County and within the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District. Cumulative emissions would be expected to delay by a small amount the eventual attainment of the state PM_{10} and state/federal ozone standards within the YSAQMD. There is, however, no current estimate of when state standards for PM_{10} or ozone will be attained in Yolo County.

Traffic and Circulation

Cumulative development would contribute to the exacerbation of existing deficiencies, as well as the accelerated deterioration of pavement. Most facilities would continue to operate at acceptable levels of service. All County roads would operate at LOS A or B, while the operations of SR 16 would operate at LOS D in most locations. The intersections of Road 89 and Road 98 with State Route 16 would operate unacceptably and meet warrants for installation of a traffic signal. Increased traffic that would result from cumulative

development would not disrupt or interfere with any existing or planned bicycle, pedestrian or transit facilities, or school bus operations.

Noise

For most roads, including the haul routes, the cumulative increase in truck traffic would generate an increase in noise levels of 5 dB or less over existing conditions. County Roads 14, 85 and 89 would have increases greater than 5 dB. County Roads 19 and 20 would have increases of 4 or 5 dB and the CNEL at 100 feet would be greater than 60 dB. These increases along County Roads 18, 19, 20, 85 and 89 would generate a significant impact at residences along these roadway segments.

Aesthetics

Mining and reclamation under the OCMP would contribute to cumulative visual changes within the planning area. The Woodland General Plan indicates that between 2,108 acres and 2,296 acres could be developed as urban land uses by 2015. Growth within the spheres of influence of Esparto and Madison could result in up to 2,200 acres of future urban development. Aggregate mining would disturb roughly 2,932 acres of nondeveloped land over the next 50 years. However, the total amount of actively disturbed land that would exist during mining at any one time would be limited while the acreage of reclaimed lands would increase. Reclamation and restoration of mined areas within Cache Creek will have an overall beneficial affect on the visual resources of Cache Creek, relative to existing visual conditions.

5.2 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

In order to comply with CEQA, a Draft EIR must discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment [CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(g)]. A given project could induce growth within a community by lowering or removing barriers to growth, such as providing water service to an area where none currently exists, or by creating an amenity that attracts new population or economic activity. The growth-inducing potential of a project would be considered to have a significant impact if the project either induced growth or created the capacity for growth above and beyond the levels permitted by existing public planning policies or recommended by independent projections. A project's growth-inducing potential does not, however, automatically result in growth, whether it be a portion of projected growth, or an actual exceedance of the projected growth levels. Growth at the local level is fundamentally controlled by the land use policies or local municipalities or counties, which are determined by the local policies in each jurisdiction. Growth-inducing potential or pressure, created by economic or social conditions, is transformed into actual growth only by decision makers.

Growth inducement may be considered detrimental, beneficial, or of insignificant consequence under CEQA. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, in some other way, significantly affects the environment.

Impact 5.2-1
Encouragement of Economic Growth

Implementation of the OCMP and alternatives would not encourage economic growth, but would provide for further development of the region. Sand and gravel are "construction materials." These commodities, collectively referred to as aggregate, provide bulk and strength to Portland cement concrete, asphaltic concrete, and plaster, or stucco. Aggregate is also used as a roadbase, subbase, railroad ballast, or fill. Aggregate normally provides from 80 to 100 percent of the material volume in the above uses. Aggregate material is essential to the needs of a modern society, and is a resource of great importance to the economy of any metropolitan area. Under the OCMP and alternatives, the following tonnages would be mined from the planning area for use in the development of roadways, canals, parking lots, sidewalks, bridge abutments, foundations, buildings, public works projects, and general construction:

- OCMP: 7.4 million tons/year
- Alternative 1a: No Project (Existing Conditions) - 2.5 million tons/year
- Alternative 1b: No Project (Existing Permits and Regulatory Condition) - 4.4 million tons/year
- Alternative 2: No Mining (Alternative Site) - 2.2 million tons/year (imported)
- Alternative 3: Plant Operation Only (Importation) - 4.8 million tons/year
- Alternative 4: Shallow Mining (Alternative Method/Reclamation) - 1.2 million tons/year
- Alternative 5a: Decreased Mining (Restricted Allocation) - 2.3 million tons/year
- Alternative 5b: Decreased Mining (Shorter Mining Period) - 7.4 million tons/year
- Alternative 6: Agricultural Reclamation (with Mining Operations as Proposed) - 7.4 million tons/year

Implementation of the OCMP and alternatives would provide for a continued availability of moderately-priced aggregates in the Sacramento-Fairfield region in the near future, at levels comparable to existing demand. This, in turn, would allow urban development to continue, as dictated by other economic, environmental and political factors. It should not be inferred that disapproval of the OCMP and the alternatives would substantially disrupt urbanization. Rather, disapproval would cause a combination of market adjustments to occur resulting in potentially different production rates, prices, and levels of consumption.

Impact 5.2-2
Remove Obstacles to Population Growth

The OCMP and Alternatives 4, 5a, 5b, and 6 would actually create impediments to growth by revising the A-P (Agricultural Preserve) Zone to allow for the operation of surface mining on contracted land, in accordance with the provisions of the California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act. Existing County regulations prohibit mining from occurring on Williamson Act land which results in pressure to remove the land from the Act because of the valuable

gravel resource. By amending the A-P Zone to be consistent with state law, Williamson Act contracts would remain in place. Similarly, lands identified within the OCMP as appropriate for future mining would be zoned SGR (Special Sand and Gravel Reserve Combining Zone). The SGR would serve as a holding zone to allow long-range planning for lands that have been identified, thereby discouraging the premature and unnecessary conversion of SGR zoned lands to urban uses.

Under Alternatives 1a and 1b, lands proposed for aggregate mining would be taken out of agricultural preserve, and the commitment to preserve prime land for agricultural purposes would be significantly impaired. Alternatives 2 and 3 would neither encourage nor preclude population growth.

Impact 5.2-3
Tax Existing Community Facilities

As discussed in Section 4.13 of this EIR, the proposed project would not significantly affect public services or utilities in the planning area. Access to mining sites to the processing plants would occur on existing or proposed private haul roads. After processing, aggregate materials would be transported along existing public roads to construction sites or other destinations. The project would require operators to pay for costs to implement OCMP policies and to participate in the maintenance of existing public roads; no new public roads, however, would be constructed. Increased employment would be negligible, and consequently, the demand for existing community service facilities would not be increased.

5.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Section 15126(f) of the CEQA Guidelines requires the environmental analysis to identify any significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented. This section indicates that impacts associated with a project may be considered to be significant and irreversible if any of the following would occur:

- The project would involve a large commitment of renewable resources during any phase or all of the project.
- The project is such that removal or non-use later would be unlikely.
- The primary or secondary impacts of the project would generally commit future generations to similar uses.
- The project involves uses from which irreversible damage could result due to potential environmental accidents associated with the project.

This section also states that irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to ensure that current consumption is justified.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in increased short-term production from the study area in the form of aggregate resources. Short-term agricultural productivity would be eliminated, but would be reestablished to agriculture and other open space uses after completion of the project and reclamation of the mined lands within the study area.

Implementation of the proposed project would require the irreversible commitment of natural resources, because the project would permit off-channel mining and processing of minerals that would not be replenished within normal planning horizons, and would decrease the availability of aggregate resources in the future. Please refer to Impact 4.3-4 regarding the decreased availability of aggregate resources in Section 4.3 Geology and Soils of this EIR for further discussion.

Implementation of the proposed project would contribute to the permanent conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses within the County. The reasonably foreseeable mining projects over the next 30 years could result in the conversion of 1,223 acres of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

The OCMP would result in the irretrievable commitment of energy resources (primarily in the form of fossil fuels, including fuel oil, natural gas, and gasoline for automobiles, trucks, and construction equipment) to fuel mining, processing, and subsequent reclamation activities.

5.4 IDENTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Section 15126(d)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the alternatives analysis identify the environmentally superior alternative. If that alternative is the No Project alternative, then the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

Based on the summary comparison of CEQA alternatives provided in Table 3-4 and the alternatives analysis in the individual sections in Chapter 4.0 Environmental Analysis, Alternative 4, Shallow Mining (Alternative Method/Reclamation) is the environmentally superior alternative. In-channel impacts of mining would continue to occur under the no project alternatives (Alternatives 1a and 1b). The OCMP would be adopted under the proposed project and Alternatives 4, 5a, 5b and 6. In contrast to the no project alternatives and out-of-county alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3), the proposed project and Alternatives 4, 5a, 5b and 6 would take a comprehensive approach to planning for Cache Creek, and managing aggregate resources in and adjoining the creek. However, among the proposed project and Alternatives 4, 5a, 5b and 6, only Alternative 4 would limit the depth of mining such that mining pits would not extend to depths below the seasonal high groundwater level; no off-channel wet pit mining would occur. Alternative 4 would avoid potential

adverse impacts to groundwater levels and flow. Chemical releases to wet pits, long-term water quality degradation, and loss of water from aquifer storage due to evaporation would be eliminated. Public health impacts from spillage into new open bodies of water, from children attracted to the reclaimed pits and drowning, and from mosquito generation would not occur. The alternative would provide an opportunity to return roughly 30 percent more mined land to agricultural use than if deep mining were allowed. More land reclaimed for agricultural use would provide opportunities for reestablishing fencerow habitat and more foraging habitat value for Swainson's hawk, a species with legal protective status. There would be a net reduction of about 2,132 trips per day in comparison to the OCMP. Alternative 4 would contribute less to the exacerbation of existing deficiencies and accelerated deterioration of pavement compared to the proposed project. Air pollutant (PM_{10} and ozone precursor) emissions would decrease below current levels due to the decrease in the amount of raw material excavated, processed, and transported from the area. Finally, the increase in traffic noise caused by Alternative 4 would be two decibels less than the OCMP.