

3.4 RECREATION

This chapter discusses the possible effects on recreation experience, ability to recreate, and possible effects on the recreational users themselves. This chapter takes into consideration current recreational opportunities in the surrounding area and at the site, as well as recreational opportunities that would be made available following implementation of the action.

3.4.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The sublease boundary is located within the Recreation Area in eastern Los Angeles County. After construction of the dam, the County of Los Angeles was issued a 50-year lease to develop 1,160 acres at Whittier Narrows Dam, which was later expanded to cover 1,283 acres (USACE 1996). This land, referred to as the Recreation Area, is operated and maintained by County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LACDPR) for recreational use. Facilities within the Recreation Area include fishing lakes, comfort stations, picnicking areas, playgrounds, the Whittier Narrows Nature Center (WNNC), an equestrian facility, trails, a multipurpose athletic complex, a military museum, soccer fields, volleyball courts, and archery, skeet, pistol and trap ranges (USACE 1996). The Whittier Narrows Natural Area (Natural Area) occupies approximately 300 acres in the southern portion of the Recreation Area. The approximately 11.21-acre site is located in the northeastern corner of the Natural Area.

The sublease boundary is currently developed with the WNNC. This facility serves as an educational resource for the area and hosts numerous educational programs for visiting school children from across Los Angeles. A trails network radiates from the WNNC and the parking lot that provide access to the San Gabriel River and Recreation Area (Thomas Hacker Associates 2006).

Surrounding land uses are primarily recreational and open space, including the Whittier Narrows Dam Recreation Area, Pico Rivera Park, and Pico River Golf Course. Adjacent land uses also include South El Monte High School to the north across Durfee Avenue, commercial/industrial uses to the west, and natural areas to the east and south.

3.4.2 CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Effects of the alternatives would be considered significant to recreational visitors if the action were to cause a substantial short- or long-term decrease in the quality of the recreational experience for the majority of the users in the area.

3.4.3 PROJECT EFFECTS ON RECREATION

3.4.3.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on recreation. No changes would occur and no impacts to recreation would occur.

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3.4.3.2 18,230 SF ALTERNATIVE

Educational and recreational experiences would be enhanced by the interpretive center because it would be able to accommodate substantially more visitors than the current facility by providing a larger interpretive center than the existing WNNC, more parking, and new programming (see Table 2-4 on page 2-16). Further, the sublease boundary would be redesigned to create an interactive learning and recreational space through trail enhancement and re-vegetation of native habitats. These new facilities would improve the quality of recreational experiences at the site and connect people to the larger Recreation Area. The 18,230 sf Alternative would have a beneficial effect on recreation.

3.4.3.3 14,000 SF ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION)

See Section 3.4.3.2 above.

3.4.3.4 10,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

See Section 3.4.3.2 above.

3.4.3.5 2,800 SF ALTERNATIVE

The 2,800 sf Alternative would not address a community need for enhanced educational facilities by providing a new, slightly larger and more modern nature center. Although a new structure would be provided, the same programming would be offered as is currently available at the existing WNNC and the same number of people would be expected to visit the sublease boundary. Implementation of the 2,800 sf Alternative would not decrease the amount of recreational space available to the public. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects to recreation would occur. However, this alternative would not have the same beneficial effects as the 18,230 sf Alternative, 14,000 sf Alternative, or 10,000 sf Alternative.

3.4.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required.

3.4.5 SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

3.4.5.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Because no action would be taken, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on recreation.

3.4.5.2 18,230 SF ALTERNATIVE

See Section 3.4.5.4 below.

3.4.5.3 14,000 SF ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION)

See Section 3.4.5.4 below.

3.4.5.4 10,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the 18,230 sf Alternative, 14,000 sf Alternative, and 10,000 sf Alternative would result in new and improved educational facilities. These alternatives would have a beneficial effect on recreation.

3.4.5.5 2,800 SF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the 2,800 sf Alternative would not decrease the amount of recreational space or decrease the quality of the recreational experience. There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on recreation. However, this alternative would not have the same beneficial effects as the 18,230 sf Alternative, 14,000 sf Alternative, or 10,000 sf Alternative.

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