

5.0 ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the environmental impacts associated with the Tranquillon Ridge Project (proposed project). This project is unique in that it represents changes to existing facilities and operations, rather than construction and operation of entirely new facilities. These existing facilities are considered part of the environmental setting (i.e., baseline), for evaluating the environmental effects of the proposed project.

The baseline should normally be the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation is published (California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guideline Section 15125). Where a proposed project will modify an existing project, it is important that the baseline also consider historic operations of the existing project based upon “normal fluctuations” as determined by need, capacity, and other relevant factors. ~~Table 2.1 in Section 2.0, Project Description, presents the permitted maximum operating levels of the existing facilities and their current production volumes.~~

Development of the Tranquillon Ridge Field, as proposed, would increase the production volumes above current rates (but within permitted capacity) and require some facility modifications as presented in Section 2.3. These operational and structural changes to the existing PXP facilities are analyzed by issue area in this section.

The 2006 scoping document for the proposed project identified 16 issue/resource areas where significant impacts could occur. For each issue area, the impact evaluations are presented in the following format:

- Environmental Setting
- Regulatory Setting
- Significance Criteria
- Impact Analysis of the Proposed Project
- Impact Analysis for the Alternatives
- Cumulative Impacts
- Mitigation Monitoring Plan
- References

Within each issue area, the defined study area (environmental setting) is presented for purposes of the impact analysis. In most cases, the study area is the region in the vicinity of the proposed project. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, regional air quality data and transportation networks. The study area or environmental setting also includes a comprehensive list of regulations that apply to each issue area within the context of the study area (Regulatory Setting).

Santa Barbara County significance criteria are then presented by issue area. These criteria define the threshold or limit against which a potential environmental impact is considered. The term “significance” is used throughout the EIR to characterize the magnitude of the projected impact. For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact is a substantial or potentially substantial

change to resources in the local project area or the area adjacent to the project in comparison to the thresholds of significance established for the resource or issue area. Within each issue area an analysis of potential impacts compared to the appropriate significance criteria is presented.

The impact analysis sections also include detailed mitigation measures that have been developed to reduce the severity of the identified impacts. Mitigation measures have been developed for both the proposed project and the project alternatives. Based on the application of available mitigation measure(s) to an identified impact, the residual impact is then described. All impacts identified in this EIR have been classified according to the following criteria:

- ***Class I - Significant adverse impacts that are unavoidable:*** Significant impacts that cannot be effectively mitigated. No measures could be taken to avoid or reduce these adverse effects to insignificant or negligible levels. Even after application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would be significant.
- ***Class II - Significant but mitigable adverse impacts:*** These impacts are potentially similar in significance to those of Class I, but can be reduced or avoided by the implementation of mitigation measures. After application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would not be significant.
- ***Class III - Adverse but not significant impacts:*** While not required under CEQA to reduce an impact to a level of insignificant, mitigation measure(s) are often applied to an identified adverse but not significant impact to mitigate the impact to the maximum extent feasible in accordance with Santa Barbara County policy.
- ***Class IV – Beneficial impacts:*** Effects that are beneficial to the environment.

Identified impacts for the proposed project and alternatives are systematically presented in impact tables throughout each issue area. Each of these impact tables identifies the following:

- Impact #,
- Impact Description,
- Phase in which the impact would occur, and
- Residual Impact (includes impact classification)

The defined phases for which an impact could occur include the following:

- ***Construction:*** Impacts associated with construction activities.
- ***Drilling:*** Impacts associated with the drilling of wells on Platform Irene.
- ***New Operations:*** Impacts due to the operation of new facilities.
- ***Increased Throughput:*** Impacts associated with the increase in oil and gas throughput through the project pipelines, processing facility, and platform over baseline conditions. This increase in production has the potential to increase the magnitude and/or severity of the existing impact.
- ***Extension of Life:*** Impacts due to an increase in the expected life of the Point Pedernales Project over what was assumed in the 1985 Point Pedernales EIR/EIS and the 1993 Point Pedernales SEIR, as modified via permit approvals. Impacts associated with extension of life do not represent new impacts but impacts that exist for the current Point Pedernales operations. The proposed Tranquillon Ridge Project would extend the duration of time over which the existing impact(s) would occur.

Each impact table is then followed by available mitigation measure(s) to reduce the severity of the identified impact. Finally, the residual impact as presented in each impact table is described and the impact classification identified.

Impacts and mitigation measures, for the proposed project and project alternatives, are also systematically presented in tabular form in the impact summary tables, which immediately follow the Executive Summary.