

8.0 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Section 15126.2(c) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that significant irreversible environmental changes, which would be involved with a proposed project, may include the following:

- Uses of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project which would be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or non-use thereafter unlikely;
- Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts which commit future generations to similar uses; and
- Irreversible damage, which may result from environmental accidents, associated with the project.

The purpose of the Tranquillon Ridge Project is to produce approximately 170 to 200 million barrels of oil and 40 to 50 billion standard cubic feet of gas for markets in California. Thus, the project by definition involves use of non-renewable resources. Development of the proposed project would involve the consumption of some non-renewable and locally limited natural resources (i.e., fossil fuels and water) associated with construction activities. The proposed project would also require an increase in consumption of non-renewable resources during operation (i.e., natural gas and fossil fuels). However, the main goal of the proposed project is to develop the non-renewable oil and gas resources while the infrastructure exists to support the development. Therefore, the non-renewable resources demand by the proposed project are not considered to be significant.

The proposed project would directly increase the volume of oil and gas extracted and produced locally, but would not overall increase the consumption of oil or gas. The production from the Tranquillon Ridge Project would be used to satisfy existing demand.

The proposed project could result in environmental accidents (e.g., oil spills) that have the potential to create irreversible impacts to biological, cultural, and hydrological resources. Potential impacts can be reduced through use of adequate design and operating procedures, and effective emergency response plans specifying staffing and equipment needs. However, the potential remains for irreversible damage as a result of an unlikely upset associated with the operation of the proposed project.