

5. Alternative 1 (No Project/Action): Impacts

Selection of the No Project/Action Alternative would mean that the proposed TRTP would not be implemented. As such, none of the associated Project activities would occur and the environmental impacts associated specifically with the proposed Project would not occur. Particularly, the construction-related water quality impacts described in Sections 6 through 11 would be avoided. No soil would be disturbed, and therefore the potential for erosion would be the same as under baseline conditions. No hazardous materials would be transported and potentially leaked into water bodies, and the potential for water quality contamination would also be the same as under baseline conditions.

However, under the No Project/Action Alternative, some currently unknown plan would need to be developed to provide the transmission upgrades necessary to interconnect renewable generation projects in the Tehachapi area and to also address the existing transmission problems south of Lugo Substation. Similarly, other yet unspecified transmission upgrades would presumably be proposed in the future to provide the needed capacity and reliability to serve growing electrical load in the Antelope Valley. To interconnect wind projects in the Tehachapi area, it is possible that other electrical utilities with transmission facilities in the area, such as LADWP, might purchase some of the power from Tehachapi wind developers and integrate it into their system. Another possibility is the development of a private transmission line that could connect wind projects to the electrical grid. Any of these projects, which would occur as a result of the unfulfilled electrical transmission need in the absence of TRTP, are likely to produce similar impacts as those identified for the proposed Project. Transmission line construction utilizes some standard techniques such as leveling, grading, and excavation, which would have similar water quality impacts regardless of the specific configuration of the transmission line.

Additionally, numerous potential developments throughout the proposed Project area that are completely unrelated to electrical transmission could impact water quality. For example, the population within the Antelope Valley was 285,000 in 2006 and is projected to reach 550,000 by the year 2025 (AVEK, 2005). In order to accommodate this large population increase, numerous large housing developments will need to be completed. Not only will these developments impact water quality during the construction phase, but once they are occupied they will be a new source of wastewater. The additional wastewater will at the least change the hydrology of the region and will most likely produce water quality impacts as well. Another example of a change to water quality under the No Project/Action Alternative that is completely unrelated to electrical transmission is the continued development of water quality regulations throughout the Project Regions. In particular, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are being implemented at an increasing rate. These watershed-level regulations may have substantial positive impacts on water quality. The TMDLs will continue to be implemented, regardless of whether or not TRTP is constructed. Because of the above mentioned examples as well as numerous other possible developments, Hydrology and Water Quality impacts, both negative and positive, would occur under the No Project/Action Alternative.