

## 4.5 NOISE

### 4.5.1 Summary of Environmental Consequences

The primary sources of noise under the phase one actions relate to construction activities. Construction-related noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would not be significant. While not significant, limiting use of heavy construction equipment and outdoor power tools to normal daylight hours (7 AM to 7 PM) would lessen the effects of construction noise on sensitive land uses. Limiting use of equipment to certain days of the week or seasons of the year could further lessen the effects of construction noise in recreational areas during peak use times. No significant operational noise impacts have been identified for any of the alternatives.

### 4.5.2 Significance Criteria

Annoyance effects are a primary consideration for most noise impact assessments. Because the reaction to noise level changes involves both physiological and psychological factors, the magnitude of a noise level change can be as important as the resulting overall noise level. A readily noticeable increase in noise levels often will be considered a significant effect by local residents even if the overall noise level is still within land use compatibility guidelines. On the other hand, noise level increases that are not noticeable to most people generally are not considered a significant change, even if the overall noise level is close to or somewhat above land use compatibility guidelines.

A variety of factors related to the nature of a noise source also can affect people's reaction to it. Most people find evening and nighttime noise the most objectionable and are more willing to accept noise sources that operate only during daytime hours. Similarly, temporary noise sources generally are tolerated more than permanent noise sources. Depending on the repetition pattern, intermittent noise sources can be either more or less objectionable than continuous noise sources.

A proposed action can have noise impacts through two different mechanisms: creating new sources of noise in an area or establishing noise-sensitive land uses in locations that will be exposed to high noise levels. Only the former is a concern for this action because no new noise-sensitive land uses are proposed. In this analysis, an alternative would have significant noise impacts if its implementation would directly or indirectly increase ambient CNEL levels by a discernable increment (3 dB or more) at noise-sensitive land uses, while resulting in an overall noise level beyond the relevant "normally acceptable" level (a CNEL of 60 dBA in Imperial and Riverside counties as presented in their respective general plan noise elements).

Temporary noise sources in developed or urbanized areas that are restricted to daytime hours, such as most construction and demolition activities, would be considered a significant impact only if they affect noise-sensitive land uses and result in CNEL levels more than 10 dB above the "normally acceptable" land use compatibility criterion (60 dBA) for the affected noise-sensitive land use.

**4.5.3 Assessment Methods**

The environmental consequences section evaluates the noise effects of the no action and phase one alternatives. For the action alternatives, typical noise levels are presented in tabular format to describe noise levels at different distances from the noise sources. Locations of the noise sources are identified, and the distances from the noise sources to sensitive land uses are provided. Noise levels have been compared to noise criteria for the different areas (noise criteria are presented in Section 3.5), and a determination of significance has been made. While no significant noise impacts have been identified, mitigation to further reduce noise levels is provided.

**4.5.4 No Action Alternative**

*Effect of No Action Alternative with Continuation of Current Inflow Conditions*

The No Action Alternative would have no direct noise effects under current inflow conditions. No new noise sources would be introduced, and no increases in noise levels would occur. The No Action Alternative under current inflow conditions could result in a minor indirect decrease in noise levels if the condition of the sea continued to degrade and vehicle traffic to the Sea and watercraft use on the Sea decreased.

*Effect of No Action Alternative with Reduced Inflows*

The No Action Alternative would have no direct noise effects under reduced inflow conditions. No new noise sources would be introduced, and no increases in noise levels would occur. The No Action Alternative under reduced inflow conditions could result in a minor indirect decrease in noise levels if the condition of the Sea continued to degrade and vehicle traffic to the sea and watercraft use on the Sea decreased.

**4.5.5 Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 would not have any significant noise impacts under current or reduced flow conditions.

**4.5.6 Alternative 2**

Alternative 2 would not result in significant adverse noise effects under current or reduced inflow conditions.

**4.5.7 Alternative 3**

Alternative 3 would not result in significant adverse noise effects.

**4.5.8 Alternative 4**

Alternative 4 would not result in significant adverse noise effects.

**4.5.9 Alternative 5**

Alternative 5 may result in significant but mitigable adverse noise effects.

***Effect of Alternative 5 with Continuation of Current Inflow Conditions***

Alternative 5 combines the north evaporation pond proposed in Alternative 1 with an EES incorporated within the pond itself. Instead of the EES tower configuration described in Alternative 1, the EES used in this alternative would involve technology typically used in artificial snowmaking. This method would employ approximately 3,000 portable, ground-based blowers that would use compressed air to spray piped Salton Sea water up into the air rather than dropping it from towers.

Construction-related noise effects and operational-related noise effects would be similar to those described for Alternative 1. These actions would not generate high levels of noise; therefore, no significant construction-related noise impacts would occur.

The operation of EES equipment could result in significant noise impacts to Salton City residents and recreationists on the Sea depending upon the size, placement, and operational cycles of the blowers. For instance, siting blowers in a high concentration along the dike on the western side of the evaporation pond would have greater noise impacts than placing blowers in a more dispersed pattern farther away from the residences located along the western shore. In addition, running the blowers during certain times of the day (e.g., nighttime hours) or in certain cycles (e.g., having the blowers continuously cycle on and off) may result in annoyance effects in excess to just the noise levels created.

As described under Alternative 1, limiting use of heavy construction equipment to normal daylight hours (7 AM to 7 PM) would lessen the effects of construction-related noise. Likewise, limiting the times of EES blower use (i.e., placing restriction on the hours of day, days of week, or times of year that blowers operate) and configuring the blowers away from the most sensitive land uses would lessen the effects of operational noise.

***Effect of Alternative 5 with Reduced Inflow Conditions***

Noise effects from constructing the concentration pond and EES under reduced inflow conditions would be similar to those described under current inflow conditions. An increase or decrease in the amount of construction and the amount of water processed would have slightly greater or slightly fewer noise effects. The closer proximity to Salton City could have slightly higher noise effects when compared to Alternative 1.

**4.5.10 Cumulative Effects**

No direct cumulative noise effects would result from regional projects. Minor indirect cumulative noise effects could occur if the desirability of the Salton Sea were to increase or decrease, resulting in an increase or decrease in vehicle traffic on area roadways and watercraft traffic on the sea and a concurrent increase or decrease in traffic- and watercraft-related noise levels.

#### 4.5.11 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures for all alternatives except Alternative 5 are required because no significant impacts have been identified for these alternatives; however, suggestions to lessen the effects of temporary construction noise are provided.

***Limit construction activity to lessen effects of construction noise.*** Limit the use of heavy construction equipment and outdoor power tools to normal daylight hours (7 AM to 7 PM) to reduce the effects of construction noise on sensitive land uses. Limit use of equipment to certain days of the week or seasons of the year to further lessen the effects of construction noise in recreational areas during peak use times.

***Limit use of EES equipment and configure equipment to reduce noise impacts.*** For Alternative 5, limit the times of EES blower use (i.e., placing restriction on the hours of day, days of week, or times of year that blowers operate) and configure the blowers away from the most sensitive land uses to lessen the effects of operational noise.

#### 4.5.12 Potentially Significant Unavoidable Impacts

No potentially significant unavoidable noise impacts have been identified.