

SECTION 5

5.20 NOTE ON CEQA THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) recommends that the CEQA Lead Agency state in the EIR the thresholds at which potential adverse impacts will be considered significantly adverse to the environment for purposes of environmental review. These thresholds are determined by the Lead Agency and guide the Lead Agency in its consideration of a proposed action by prescribing quantitative or qualitative standards or a set of criteria which would normally constitute a significant adverse impact on the physical environment. The CEQA Guidelines, regulations that implement the CEQA statute, provide a check-list of the kinds of effects that may be considered to be potentially significant. As the CEQA Lead Agency for the Cadiz Project, Metropolitan has tailored these suggested significance categories in the CEQA Guidelines to specifically address the Cadiz Project and has used them to evaluate the effects of the project on the environment.

The significance thresholds listed in the preceding subsections have been used to evaluate the Cadiz Project with respect to effects within each resource category. As required under CEQA, each potential effect of the project is discussed and a determination is made as to whether the effect of the project would be “significant.” In this determination, the Management Plan has been incorporated into the project and potential project effects are reviewed in light of implementation of the Management Plan.

The Management Plan, contained in Volume IV of this Final EIR/EIS, identifies critical resources, potential adverse impacts of the Cadiz Project on the critical resources and action criteria which, if reached, may indicate that an unacceptable adverse impact may occur as a result of the project. Because the Management Plan has been developed to predict and avoid adverse effects on critical resources that have been deemed to be unacceptable, the potential adverse impacts and the action criteria have been set conservatively and will be triggered well in advance of the occurrence of a significant adverse effect as identified by the CEQA significance thresholds.

It is noted that NEPA requires disclosure of adverse effects but does not require a determination of whether the adverse effect rises to a level of significance. Therefore, for purposes of NEPA, the distinction between adverse effects and significant adverse effects is irrelevant.