

5.0 ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) includes the requirement (Section 102 (E)) that federal agencies “study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources”. The alternatives evaluation process for the WIP Improvements and the Griff Creek SEZ Improvement resulted in definition of the proposed Project. The process assessed the merits and constraints of each considered alternative. The finalization of the design of the proposed Project synthesized the elements of each alternative into an environmental improvements project which minimizes the potential effects to the human and physical environment. Section 4.0 describes the alternatives evaluation process. Pursuant to NEPA regulations, the alternatives were rigorously explored by the lead agency and the Technical Advisory Group. Alternatives were effectively “eliminated” through rejection of specific components on the basis of environmental or economic constraints and incorporation of beneficial components into the design of the Project.

The Project incorporates storm water treatment technologies that were chosen for on the basis of hydrologic conditions within the Project site and their feasibility. The technologies are proven effective in similar settings, including within the Lake Tahoe Basin. The choice of the combination of these technologies was, therefore, developed on an analysis of alternative feasible water quality treatment technologies.

The objective of the Project is to improve storm water quality within the King Beach area to support the need to reduce discharge of pollutants to Lake Tahoe. The Project is constrained by the existing built environment which includes existing residential and commercial development. The EIP specifically identified water quality improvement at King Beach as a regional priority. The purpose of the Project is to meet this need. Relocation of the effort for water quality improvement would not meet the specific objective to improve water quality at Kings Beach. The design of the Project and implementation of the measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the environmental effects of the Project (described in Section 4.0) would not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. Therefore, it is not necessary to develop additional alternatives to the Project.

5.2 Description of the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative will not promote the basin-wide effort to protect and improve Lake Tahoe’s water clarity, improve SEZs in the Project area, nor improve fish passage in Griff Creek. Under this alternative, the existing runoff conveyance and water quality treatment facilities would remain in place. It is assumed that some components of the existing storm water system would require repair and maintenance in the future. Given the regional concerns regarding improvement of water quality in Lake Tahoe, it is reasonable to expect that improvements may include facilities to be built that are similar to components of the proposed Project. The analysis of the No Action Alternative is presented in Section 5.3.

5.3 Analysis of the No Action Alternative

5.3.1 Aesthetics

The No Action Alternative would not result in any known changes in the aesthetic quality of the Project area. However, relative to the Proposed Project, no improvement to existing exposed soil areas or degraded stream channels would be expected. Continued erosion along Griff Creek and other water conveyance structures would be expected to continue. Relative to the Proposed Project, existing and ongoing adverse effects related to erosion would remain and continue.

5.3.2 Agricultural Resources

The Project area does not include any known agricultural resources. Therefore, no effects on agricultural resources would be expected under the No Action Alternative. Therefore, potential effects to agricultural resources under the both the Proposed Project and the No Action alternative would not be expected.

5.3.3 Air Quality

Under the No Action Alternative, the expected effects on air quality would remain similar to those under existing conditions. The primary source of air emissions would be vehicular traffic and construction activities related to permissible development. The permissible development may include repair or maintenance of existing storm water facilities that would be improved by the Proposed Project. Similar to the environmental effects described for the Proposed Project, the repair and maintenance activities would involve temporary construction activities and associated short-term air emissions.

5.3.4 Biological Resources

Under the No Action alternatives, the construction activities required for the Project would not occur. The short-term adverse effects on biological resources related to disturbance of habitat for plants and wildlife during construction of new water quality improvements would not occur. However, impacts may occur during construction activities associated the repair or replacement of existing storm water facilities. The Alternative would not result in disturbance of wetlands. However, long-term improvements to the habitat on stream channels proposed by the Project (i.e., channel stabilization and revegetation) would not occur.

5.3.5 Cultural Resources

Known and unknown cultural resources within the Project Area could be disturbed during permissible development activities under the No Action Alternative, including repair or replacement of existing storm water facilities. Information developed during evaluation of potential effects of the Proposed Project provides important evidence of cultural resources which could used to facilitate recognition and avoidance or minimization of the potential adverse effects. Implementation of the required appropriate actions to avoid or minimize adverse effects would be similar under the Proposed Project and No Action alternative.

5.3.6 Environmental Justice

No environmental justice issues would be presented by the No Action Alternative.

5.3.7 Geology and Soils

The geologic conditions at the Project area would remain similar under the proposed Project and the No Action alternative. The permissible activities within the Project area may include the construction of structures and construction conditions (i.e., excavation for utilities or structures to depths below the groundwater table) that may cause or be affected by unstable geologic, soils, or seismic factors (including seismic shaking, soil collapse, or expansive soils). The potential

geologic/seismic effects on existing or future development would be comparable under the Proposed Project and No Action alternative.

5.3.8 Growth Inducing Effects

No growth inducing effects would be expected under the No Action alternative.

5.3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

As described for the Proposed Project, the Project area includes areas of known or suspected releases of hazardous materials. Under the No Action alternative, the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials would be regulated by the federal, state, and local regulations for the management of hazardous materials. These conditions would be similar to those presented by implementation of the Proposed Project. All construction projects permissible under those regulations that would involve the operation of heavy construction equipment would be similar to those described for the Proposed Project. The construction activities would similarly be temporary. The Proposed Project does not include facilities that would require permanent storage, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Environmental effects related to the Proposed Project and the No Action alternative would be comparable.

5.3.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Under existing and expected future conditions, the storm drainage system provides inadequate treatment of water quality. Additionally, conveyance of storm water runoff in stream channels and SEZs is adversely affected by undersized culverts. Physical barriers present fish passage limitations on Griff Creek. These adverse hydrologic conditions would persist under the No Action alternative. Relative to the Proposed Project, increased discharges of sediment to Lake Tahoe would be expected. Flooding potential for the flood hazard zone within the lower Griff and Deer Creek drainages would remain the same.

5.3.11 Indian Trust Assets

No impact on Indian Trust Assets would be expected in the No Action alternative.

5.3.12 Land Use and Planning

Current commercial, residential, public service, recreational, industrial, and resource management land uses would persist under the No Action alternative. These uses would continue to be regulated under existing land use laws and regulations. Implementation of the Kings Beach Community Plan and the Kings Beach Industrial Community Plan would be expected. However, realization of the goals and objectives in the plans for watershed improvements for erosion control, runoff control and SEZ restoration could only occur if a substantial public works project (similar in purpose and scale to the Proposed Project) was developed and implemented.

5.3.13 Mineral Resources

There are no identified mineral resources or active mining activities within the Project area. Similar to existing conditions, no mining of mineral resources would occur and no loss of availability of mineral resources would be expected under the No Action alternative.

5.3.14 Noise

The existing noise environment within the Project area would not change under the No Action alternative. The primary source of noise would be traffic on major thoroughfares (including within the Commercial Corridor). Temporary construction projects (similar to those activities related to the Proposed Project) could generate short-term increases in noise levels. Such activities would be regulated (as those related to the Proposed Project) by the Placer County Code and TRPA Code of Ordinances. However, project-specific controls are necessary to ensure that environmental effects related to short-term construction noise are minimized.

5.3.15 Population and Housing

Under the No Action alternative, current trends in population and housing would be expected to continue. Population growth and housing trends would be similar to those described for the Proposed Project.

5.3.16 Public Services

Existing public services would be expected to be available and unchanged under the No Action alternative. The operation of those services would be similar to those described for the Proposed Project.

5.3.17 Recreation

The No Action alternative would not result in any change to existing recreational facilities or activities.

5.3.18 Transportation and Traffic

Existing traffic patterns and volumes would not be expected to be altered under the No Action alternative. No changes to existing parking facilities or public transit services would occur. However, repair or maintenance to existing storm water facilities (particularly storm drain in or near roadways) may result in temporary disruptions in traffic.

5.3.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to the existing utilities serving the Project site would occur. Damage to or disruptions of utility service in the Project area could occur as the result of permitted construction activities. In addition, improvements to the storm water management facilities (including more advanced water treatment and enhancement of SEZs) within the Project site that would be constructed and maintained under the Project would not occur.