

### 3.13 SOCIOECONOMICS

#### 3.13.1 Affected Environment

The proposed facilities would be located in a rural portion of Contra Costa and San Joaquin counties. The Old River and Connection Slough sites do not contain developed retail or commercial structures or occupied housing. Active marinas, including retail shops, boat launching facilities and live-aboard vessels, are located about 0.8 and 1.8 miles from the Old River site. The nearest populated area is the in the city of Oakley, about 2.4 miles west of the Old River site. Commercial development in Discovery Bay is located approximately 6 miles from the Old River site.

**Comment [BB1]:** For comparison provide the same info for the Connection Slough site.

#### 3.13.2 Regulatory Setting

No federal, state, or local regulations regarding socioeconomics are directly applicable to the Proposed Action.

#### 3.13.3 Environmental Consequences

##### 3.13.3.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action alternative would have no impacts on socioeconomics because no construction would occur.

##### 3.13.3.2 Proposed Action

###### *Construction*

Approximately 30 workers would be required to construct the proposed facilities. Construction would occur over a seven-week period. It is likely that fewer workers would be required to remove the facilities and perform site restoration during the four-week de-construction period after the five-year demonstration period. Given the small number of workers involved and the brief construction schedule, these workers would readily be available from the local population, and no influx of workers would be required. The only new permanent workers would be the gate operators, who would be required only from December through March and June. These workers could be drawn from the local population. No residences would be constructed as part of the Proposed Action, nor would infrastructure be extended into an area where it did not already exist. If electric power were used to operate the generators, it would be drawn from power lines that are already present at the sites.

The Proposed Action would result in minor socioeconomic benefits by providing periodic jobs for construction workers and gate operators. Construction benefits would be attributed to an expected increase in local spending during the approximate seven-week construction period. Increases in local spending are associated with expenditures by construction workers at local businesses (e.g., restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores, etc.). In addition, the local economy could benefit from project-related outlays on materials and service secured from local providers. There would also be direct benefits to the construction workforce utilized to build the project, including the creation of new jobs and generation of personal income, which could provide local benefits if the local workforce is utilized. Secondary economic benefits could also be realized to the extent that there are existing inter-industry linkages in the local economy,

which facilitate the purchase of local goods and services as inputs to production. Due to the short duration of construction activities, any increase in demand for local housing to accommodate construction workers is expected to be minor.

At the business level, there is the potential that project construction could adversely affect marina operators in the vicinity of proposed construction activities at Old River and Connection Slough. During construction, the navigability of affected waterways may be affected periodically to accommodate installation of the gates and ancillary facilities. Further, construction activities may detract from the recreational quality of the area in the short term. In response, local marinas may experience a decline in business if recreational boaters elect to recreate elsewhere in the Delta. These effects, however, would be minimized through efforts to maintain vessel accessibility through the affected stretches of the river, a public outreach and educational program informing potentially affected boat owners and marina operators of construction activities, and the fact that construction is scheduled during the months of October and November, which falls outside the peak summer recreation season.

### *Operations*

Similar to construction, it is anticipated that operations would also generate socioeconomic benefits and costs. The benefits expected during operations would come in the form of long-term employment at the two gate facilities, which would be staffed by full-time employees while the gates were being operated. Because the number of anticipated employees required to operate the gates is limited, these benefits would be minor, and no housing-related impacts are anticipated.

Operations of the gate facilities may adversely affect recreational opportunities in the area by limiting navigational access during the periods when gates are closed. As a result, boat owners utilizing marina services near the proposed facilities may elect to move their vessels to other nearby marinas if they feel that recreation opportunities are being limited and/or the quality of their recreational experience is being diminished. In addition, recreation boaters that frequent the Delta waterways may elect to avoid the gate facilities by selecting alternative routes to access their destination. In these cases, there is the potential for lost revenues for nearby marina operators. However, operational criteria for the gates indicate that gates would only be closed periodically between December and March and in June. Further, during June, when there is a relatively higher demand for recreation, the gates would remain open on weekends to accommodate recreational boating. When gates are closed, smaller boats would still be able to navigate the river channel by utilizing boat ramps constructed at the gate facilities. These ramps would provide portage around the gates, although the time required to travel through the gates would be longer than with an unobstructed channel. With these measures in place, the potential economic impacts of the Proposed Action would be minimized. Moreover, any potential economic impacts to local businesses near the facilities would likely be offset by economic gains by business in other parts of the Delta, which provide many of the same services as affected marinas. Overall, the net economic effect on the regional economy would be negligible.