RECREATION

3.8 Master Response on Mitigation for Salton Sea Sport Fishery

Several commenters expressed concern that acceleration of the decline of the sport fishery was considered to be a significant and unavoidable impact and requested that feasible mitigation measures be proposed.

In Section 3.6, Recreation, Impact R-8, the Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) concluded that the Proposed Project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact because of reduced opportunities for sport fishing if Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Approach 1 were selected. Since publication of the Draft EIR/EIS, HCP Approach 1 has been eliminated from further consideration. (See Master Response on *Biology – Approach to Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3.5.)

As a result, the mitigation proposed to address biological impacts at the Salton Sea will result in the maintenance of inflows into the Salton Sea at a level that maintains or improves salinity in the Salton Sea relative to the projected Baseline until the year 2030. Modeling projections predict with 90-percent certainty that the Sea will reach 60 ppt between 2018 and 2030. Available information suggests that tilapia reproduction will begin to decline when the Sea reaches a salinity of 60 ppt. Declining reproduction of other sport fish, including orangemouth corvina, likely would occur at a salinity less than 60 ppt. Under this mitigation approach, tilapia production would continue at a level consistent with that anticipated under the Baseline, and the duration of corvina and other sport fish persistence in the Sea would likely increase. Therefore, implementation of the Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy would avoid impacts to tilapia and possibly provide a net benefit to less salt tolerant fish species. This mitigation approach would effectively avoid impacts to the sport fishery in the Salton Sea.