# *17 RECREATION*

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# 17 RECREATION

This chapter describes the existing recreational resources in the project area and the applicable regulations, evaluates the potential impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed Montezuma II Wind Energy Project, and considers mitigation measures to address the recreational impacts found to be potentially significant.

## 17.1 RECREATIONAL RESOURCE SETTING

Solano County offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including horseback riding, waterskiing, swimming, hunting, bird watching, picnicking, and scenic viewing. The County park system manages four parks: Sandy Beach Park, Lake Solano Park, the Lynch Canyon Open Space Area, and Belden's Landing. Sandy Beach Park is the closest to the project area. Belden's Landing is more than eight miles away, and Lynch Canyon Open Space Area and Lake Solano Park are more than 15 miles from the project area. Nearby natural resource areas including the Suisun Marsh and the Sacramento River and Delta also provide recreational opportunities.

### 17.1.1 Suisun Marsh

The Suisun Marsh is the largest contiguous brackish water marsh on the West Coast. The marsh encompasses 116,000 acres including 53,000 acres of managed wetlands, 27,700 acres of upland grasses, 6,300 acres of tidal wetlands, and 30,000 acres of bays and sloughs. The Suisun Marsh Protection Plan identifies primary and secondary management areas; the primary management area includes tidal marshes, managed wetlands, adjacent grasslands and waterways, and the secondary management area consists of significant buffer lands. The Suisun Marsh Secondary Management Area is adjacent to the southwest edge of the project boundary, on the opposite, west side of Collinsville Road.

Visitors to the marsh enjoy waterfowl and duck hunting, fishing, and bird watching (California Department of Water Resources, date unknown). Duck hunters and Suisun Marsh landowners have not to date provided any written comments to the County on the proposed Montezuma II Wind Project, but did comment on previous wind projects in the Montezuma Hills, the last of which was Shiloh I (2005).

### 17.1.2 Sandy Beach Park

Sandy Beach Park is one of four County parks in the area. The park is open year-round and offers a 24-hour boat-launching ramp, camp sites, picnic grounds, and a sandy beach stretching over a half-mile. Visitors to the park can use the park for jet-skiing, pleasure boating, wind surfing, sailing, and sun bathing (Solano County, date unknown). The park is five miles to the east of the southernmost edge of the Montezuma II Wind Energy Project.

### 17.1.3 Western Railway Museum

The Western Railway Museum, a private, nonprofit facility open to the public, is located along the south side of State Route (SR) 12, east of Shiloh Road. The museum is home to over 50 historic streetcars and interurban electric trains from all over California and other western states. The museum offers an electric train trip through the Montezuma Hills area over the original historic main line of the Sacramento Northern Railway (Western Railway Museum 2010). The museum is

located four and a half miles northwest of the northwestern-most project boundary. In addition, the County plans to develop a regional County park in the vicinity of the museum; but has not yet specified the exact location (Solano County 2008).

### 17.1.4 Sacramento – San Joaquin River Delta

The Delta Protection Commission (2006) describes the river delta as a unique geographic region that provides opportunities for water-oriented recreation (e.g., boating) and resource-oriented recreation (e.g., fishing and hunting). In the Primary Zone of the delta are several thousand boat berths, nearly equally prevalent in Contra Costa, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Counties. Private entities also operate facilities for boat launching, camping, picnicking, and fishing. Public recreation and access facilities provide access to the delta waterways in the Secondary Zone as well. The delta waterways are recognized as valuable habitat for migratory and resident species, including amphibians, fish, birds, and mammals. The Delta Protection Act defines the legal delta as delta land and water of primary state concern and identifies primary and secondary zones within the legal delta. Primary zones are areas of the legal delta outside of urban limits or local government general plan spheres of influence; secondary zones are areas of the legal delta within them. The Delta Protection Act gives local governments the responsibility of regulating land use within the secondary zone of the delta. The southern edge of the proposed Project is adjacent to the secondary zone and is approximately 1.5 miles north of the primary zone of the delta.

## 17.2 RECREATIONAL RESOURCE REGULATORY SETTING

State and local plans protect recreational resources near the project area.

### 17.2.1 State

#### *Delta Protection Commission, Delta Protection Act, and Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta*

The Delta Protection Commission adopted a management plan for the Primary Zone in 1995, and updated it in 2010. The proposed Project would not be inconsistent with or impact the Recreation and Access policies identified in the plan. Local jurisdictions manage the Secondary Zone.

### 17.2.2 Local

#### *Solano County General Plan*

The Park and Recreation chapter of the Solano County General Plan includes the following policies and implementation goals relevant to the Montezuma II Wind Energy Project:

- Objective 4, Policy A: Areas surrounding regional parks should be maintained in open space or other compatible uses to protect the natural setting and environment of the park site.
- Objective 4, Policy B: Land use development proposals adjacent to regional parks shall be reviewed for compatibility with natural and recreational features and uses of the park.
- Proposal 5: Development of a County-operated regional park near the Western Railway Museum is proposed, generally south of SR 12 and east of Shiloh Road, within the vicinity of the museum.

## 17.3 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA FOR IMPACTS TO RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

This EIR considered the criteria listed below in the evaluation of potential impacts of construction and operation proposed Project on recreation. The Montezuma II project would have a significant impact on recreation if it would:

- Significantly conflict with existing or future area-wide or local recreation policies or plans, including plans for parks or other special-use areas;
- Create substantial incompatible adjacent land uses as defined by planning documentation;
- Permanently alter a recreational resource (for example, permanent clearing of unique vegetation, habitat, or outstanding landscape characteristics for operational facilities);
- Result in the loss of 10% or more of an established or planned recreation site, or prevent access to the site during its peak use periods or for more than one year;
- Significantly reduce the quality of the recreational experience; or
- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks, resulting in substantial physical deterioration.

## 17.4 RECREATIONAL RESOURCE IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION

The analysis of temporary impacts assumes a 5-month construction period. Chapter 5, Aesthetics, analyzes potential visual impacts on recreational opportunities, for example impacts on the Western Railway Museum and the Suisun Marsh, in more detail. Chapter 8, Biological Resources, discusses potential long-term or permanent impacts on recreation related to waterfowl.

Several of the criteria above were determined to be inapplicable to the project and were eliminated from further consideration. For example, the Project would not permanently alter any recreational resources because it would be constructed entirely on agricultural lands. The Project would also not require relocation of construction workers and their families from areas outside of the Project area as discussed in Chapter 14, Land Use and Population. Therefore, there would be no increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks. The project area is adjacent to the Suisun Marsh Secondary Management Area and is consistent with the Suisun Marsh Local Protection Program regarding compatible adjacent land uses. According to the program, areas adjacent to the marsh must be retained in agricultural uses or uses compatible with long-term agricultural use. Wind energy generation is a land use compatible with long-term agricultural use and therefore a compatible land use. Chapter 6, Agriculture, and Chapter 14, Land Use and Population discuss County land use designations in more detail.

**Impact Rec-1: Impacts on the Quality of Recreational Experience**

The Project would be unlikely to affect the recreational experience of individuals at the Sandy Beach Park, the Western Railway Museum and historic railroad, and the Suisun Marsh.

*Sandy Beach Park*

Sandy Beach Park is located five miles from the southernmost edge of the Project boundary. Berms along the western boundary of the park prevent views of the project area. As a result, the Project

would not be expected to reduce the quality of the recreational experience at the park. Chapter 5, Aesthetic/Visual Resources discusses visual impacts in more detail, and Chapter 15, Noise, addresses noise impacts. Both impact categories were less than significant with regard to this recreational space.

*Western Railway Museum*

According to the Park and Recreation chapter of the General Plan, the Western Railway Museum is a cultural facility and a significant tourist site within the County. The Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, which owns and operates the museum, also owns the Sacramento Northern right-of-way between Montezuma and Dozier. The Association has electrified part of the railroad and currently runs tourist trains as far south as Shiloh Road (Western Railway Museum 2010). Tourists riding the train would pass about three miles northwest of the northwestern-most portion of the project boundary and would not be likely to notice increases in noise and dust during construction. In the unlikely event of an impact, it would be short-term and temporary and would not significantly reduce the quality of the recreational experience. During operation, the Project may be visible from the train in the background, but would not significantly alter the visual character of the existing landscape or deter from the recreational experience. Chapter 5, Aesthetic/Visual Resources discusses visual impacts in more detail, and Chapter 14, Noise, covers noise impacts.

*Suisun Marsh*

Though a small portion of the project area borders the Suisun Marsh (Secondary Management Area), the nearest project feature, a meteorological tower, would be more than 900 feet away, and the nearest potential turbine site would be over 1,000 feet away from the border in question. Waterfowl hunters and other individuals using the Suisun Marsh for recreational purposes would likely be at an even greater distance from the nearest turbine and would be unlikely to be bothered by construction. In the unlikely event of construction-related runoff causing a sedimentation impact to the marsh, it would be temporary and short-term in nature.

Suisun Marsh duck clubs raised concerns during the review process for the Shiloh I Wind Project about the potential impacts of wind development on duck hunting. Though the proposed Project would impact birds, there is no evidence that waterfowl would be impacted significantly. Waterfowl only occasionally pass through the project area, and even then typically fly at heights well above the height of the proposed turbines. Since the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on waterfowl and water bird populations and behaviors, it would have a less than significant impact on duck hunting. See Chapter 8, Biological Resources, for more detail.

**Level of Significance:** Less than Significant.

**Impact Rec-2: The Montezuma II Wind Energy Project Could Conflict with Future Plans for a Regional Park near the Western Railway Museum**

The Park and Recreation Chapter of the General Plan anticipates the development of a regional County park near the Western Railway Museum, south of SR 12 and east of Shiloh Road. The park would be mutually beneficial to the County and museum. The County has not specified the exact

location; however, there are already existing wind facilities (Shiloh I, Shiloh II, and enXco V) located between the Montezuma II Wind Energy Project and the area near the museum. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with future plans for the park.

**Level of Significance:** Less than Significant

## 17.5 REFERENCES

Delta Protection Commission. 2002. Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta. Available: http://www.delta.ca.gov/plan.htm. Accessed: December 13, 2010.

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