SECTION 3.0
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

3.1 LAND USE

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed project on land use. The evaluation is based on a review of the existing and planned land uses in the vicinity of the proposed project. The project area and vicinity are currently in public ownership by the Water Authority, SDUSD, and the City of San Diego. The transfer of ownership of the school district parcel proposed as the location of the FRS II from the SDUSD to the Water Authority would not occur without project approval. All property included in the proposed project is managed by the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department as part of MTRP.

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

On-Site and Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is located in the northwestern portion of MTRP, generally east and north of the terminus of Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, south of SR-52, and west of Fortuna Mountain. The proposed stabilized crossing of the San Diego River is located in the Mission Gorge area of the park, north of Mission Gorge Road and west of the Visitor's Center.

MTRP was established in 1974 and includes nearly 5,800 acres of natural and developed areas. Along with Balboa Park and Mission Bay, MTRP has been called the third jewel in the City of San Diego’s Park System. The addition of over 1,000 acres to the northern portion of the park as part of the Stonebridge Estates residential development project has made MTRP one of the largest urban parks in the United States.

MTRP includes a portion of Camp Elliott, an area used by the U.S. military from 1917 to 1960. The area was first used as an artillery target during World War I training exercises and later as part of U.S. Marine Corps Camp Elliott when it was used for infantry, tank, and artillery training during World War II and the Korean War. Between 1960 and 1963, approximately one-third of Camp Elliott was declared excess land by the military and was given to the City of San Diego and San Diego State University. The discovery of unexploded ordinance on these lands led to an intensive sweep by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in 1993. The ordnance sweep resulted in the removal of tons of unexploded materials from MTRP. Military lands continue to abut MTRP, as Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar is located north of the project site, immediately north of SR-52.

MTRP takes its name from the fact that it was part of the San Diego de Alcalá Mission lands. Originally occupied by the Kumeyaay Indians, the lands within MTRP later were associated with the Mission and include the site of the Old Mission Dam and flume, built to store and transport water for use at the Mission. The Mission was subsequently disbanded, the former Mission lands opened to farming in 1885, and a number of ranches and farms were purchased in the area. Mining came to Mission Gorge when granite mines were opened in 1873. Evidence of this
historic mining within what is now MTRP can still be found along the San Diego River and mining continues within Mission Gorge just beyond the boundaries of MTRP.

The project area is within the West Fortuna Mountain area of MTRP, which consists of the western portion of the park that is located adjacent to the Tierrasanta neighborhood and extends southward towards Mission Gorge Road and the Navajo and San Carlos neighborhoods. Travel is limited to existing roads and trails, which are designated for hiking only, hiking and biking, or hiking, biking, and equestrian use. The terrain consists of a series of ridges and valleys, with the San Diego River flowing through the deepest valley, Mission Gorge.

The proposed FRS II facility would be located on property currently owned by the SDUSD. The Water Authority owns a 130-foot-wide right-of-way through MTRP and, along with SDG&E and the City of San Diego, maintains utilities within the boundaries of MTRP. The City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department manages and patrols all land within MTRP’s borders. Formal gated access points to MTRP within the project area include, from north to south, Mast Boulevard, Portobelo Drive, Seda Drive, Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Calle de Vida, and Mission Gorge Road at Jackson Drive and at Father Junipero Serra Trail. Each of these access points can be used by authorized motor vehicles, which are limited to Park Rangers, park maintenance staff and contractors, law enforcement, fire protection, and utility providers with facilities within MTRP. While motor vehicles operate within the project area on a daily basis, the number of trips is typically low.

Single- and multi-family residences are located in close proximity to the project area, just west of MTRP boundaries. Single- and multi-family homes, schools, parks, community centers, churches, commercial areas, and open space are all found along the proposed construction access routes through Tierrasanta.

**Land Use Plans and Policies**

The project site is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of San Diego, on publicly owned land. As noted above, the Water Authority owns a right-of-way through MTRP where portions of the proposed project would be built. The Water Authority would acquire land adjacent to the right-of-way from the City of San Diego and the SDUSD prior to construction. This would allow the entire project to be located on land owned by the Water Authority. As a Special District, the Water Authority is not subject to local land use plans, policies and ordinances. Furthermore, water supply facilities are exempt from local zoning per California Government Code Section 53091. The Water Authority, however, strives to attain consistency with local land use plans when proposing development of public water facilities. The following discussion addresses local land use plans and policies that would otherwise apply to the proposed project.

**City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan.** Land use and development policies for the City of San Diego are governed by the City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan, which is divided into a number of primary elements. The West Fortuna, East Fortuna, and Mission Gorge areas of MTRP, including the project site, are located within the adopted Tierrasanta Community Plan. In fact, 42 percent of Tierrasanta is generally designated for open
space and preservation, with MTRP as a separate land use category. The adopted land use plan constitutes the land use element of the Progress Guide and General Plan.

The Open Space Element supports the conservation and enhancement of San Diego’s existing communities and seeks to aid in the creation of new communities, which strive to retain and enhance natural amenities. The goal of this element calls for establishing “an open space system which provides for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources, the provision of outdoor recreation, the protection of public health and safety, and the utilization of the varied terrain and natural drainage systems of the San Diego community to guide the form of urban development.”

The Recreation Element interrelates in a variety of ways with many of the other elements. Recreation is one of the major uses for open space lands and resource-based parks are a major part of the City’s open space system. Both the Recreation Element and the Conservation Element are concerned with the preservation and use of beaches, water bodies, and wildlands. Goals of the Recreation Element include the development of an extensive and varied system of open space and recreation facilities. The Conservation Element addresses land resources, water resources, mineral resources, ecological resources, and air resources. Present within the Conservation Element’s discussion of land resources are environmental considerations such as landforms, soils, and erosion.

Specific land uses within the MTRP boundaries are guided by the MTRP Master Development Plan, adopted in 1985. The Master Development Plan shows the project area as “natural open space,” with a number of multi-use trails and park access points in the vicinity.

**City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program.** The City of San Diego MSCP was prepared to implement the state-wide Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP). The NCCP was developed to streamline the permitting process and to facilitate a regional approach to habitat conservation. The MSCP Subarea Plan is specifically designed to facilitate the implementation of a regional habitat preserve while allowing “take” of endangered species or habitats at the individual project level (City of San Diego 1997). The City’s MHPA and lands within it have been designated for conservation of biological resources considered sensitive by the resource agencies and by the City of San Diego. The entire project area is located within the MHPA. Although the Water Authority is currently preparing a Subregional NCCP/Habitat Conservation Plan and is not a participant in the MSCP, this EIR evaluates the compatibility of the proposed project with the City’s MSCP.

### 3.1.2 Thresholds of Significance

Thresholds used to evaluate potential land use impacts are based on applicable criteria in the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR §§15000-15387), Appendix G. A significant land use impact would occur if the proposed project would:

- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan,
local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

### 3.1.3 Impact Analysis

*Would the proposed project conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?*

The Water Authority is the Lead Agency for the proposed project and has jurisdiction over all existing Water Authority facilities and rights-of-way within MTRP. The City of San Diego is responsible for the management of MTRP and retains jurisdiction over all activities within the park outside of existing utility rights-of-way and easements. The SDUSD currently owns the parcel proposed as the site of the FRS II, although the Water Authority would arrange to purchase the property upon approval of the project. The proposed project is consistent with the Water Authority’s Master Plan and with the City of San Diego’s MTRP Master Plan. The SDUSD has determined that the 12.78-acre parcel proposed as the FRS II site is surplus land, because it has been surrounded by MTRP and there is no easy access to paved public roads.

The City of San Diego prepared the MTRP Master Plan to establish their goals, objectives, and long-term management plans for MTRP. Along with the preservation of open space and natural resources and the provision of opportunities for passive recreation, the Master Plan acknowledges the importance of hosting regionally important utilities, such as SDG&E lines, City of San Diego sewer lines, and the Water Authority’s pipelines. While the proposed project would result in the temporary direct disturbance of the West Fortuna Area of MTRP in the form of road and trail closures and the intrusion of construction impacts such as noise, dust, and aesthetics, these impacts would be temporary (access to MTRP and trail closure is anticipated to range from 2 months at the stabilized crossing of the San Diego River to 2 years at the Clairemont Mesa Boulevard staging area). No new trails or roads would be constructed within MTRP, either to facilitate construction or to provide detour routes during construction. This would minimize impacts to the natural areas of the park. Trail detours would utilize existing roads and trails only.

MTRP is designated as parkland in the Tierrasanta Community Plan with the understanding that land uses within the park are regulated by the City of San Diego through the Park and Recreation Department. The Master Plan recognizes the importance of the utilities that cross MTRP and no conflicts have been identified. Therefore, no significant conflicts with applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations have been identified.

The proposed project would not conflict with the Tierrasanta Community Plan or the MTRP Master Plan as all passive recreational uses would continue as planned within the project vicinity following construction. Furthermore, the proposed water distribution facilities would be within or adjacent to the existing Water Authority easements or land ownership. The proposed
stabilized river crossing would provide a benefit to park rangers, maintenance staff, and law enforcement, fire, and emergency personnel.

The impact on land use plans, policies, or regulations would not be significant.

Would the proposed project conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?

MTRP is included within an MHPA as designated by the City of San Diego’s MSCP. Although the Water Authority is currently preparing its own Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Water Authority lands and does not participate in the City’s MSCP, conformance with the City’s plan has been evaluated for the proposed project.

According to the City, land uses that are conditionally compatible with the MSCP objectives include utility lines and limited water facilities. The guidelines of Section 1.4 of the Subarea Plan are presented below.

1. All proposed utility lines (e.g., sewer, water, etc.) should be designed to avoid or minimize intrusion into the MHPA. These facilities should be routed through developed or developing areas rather than the MHPA, where practicable. If no other routing is feasible, then the lines should follow previously existing roads, easements, right-of-ways, and disturbed areas, minimizing habitat fragmentation.

2. All new development for utilities and facilities within or crossing the MHPA shall be planned, designed, located and constructed to minimize environmental impacts. All such activities must avoid disturbing the habitat of MSCP covered species, and wetlands. If avoidance is infeasible, mitigation would be required.

The following land use considerations regarding construction and maintenance policies would apply to the proposed project:

1. Temporary construction areas and roads, staging areas, or permanent access roads must not disturb existing habitat unless determined to be unavoidable. If temporary habitat disturbance is unavoidable, then restoration of, and/or mitigation for, the disturbed area after project completion would be required.

2. Construction and maintenance activities in wildlife corridors must avoid significant disruption of corridor usage. Training of construction crews and field workers must be conducted.

3. Roads in the MHPA would be limited to those identified in Community Plan Circulation Elements, collector streets essential for area circulation, and necessary maintenance/emergency access roads. Local streets should not cross the MHPA except where needed to access isolated development areas.
4. Development of roads in canyon bottoms should be avoided whenever feasible. If an alternative location outside the MHPA is not feasible, the road must be designed to cross the shortest length possible of the MHPA in order to minimize impacts and fragmentation of sensitive species and habitat. If roads cross the MHPA, they should provide for fully functional wildlife movement capability. Bridges are the preferred method of providing for movement, although culverts in selected locations may be acceptable. Fencing, grading and plant cover should be provided where needed to protect and shield animals, and guide them away from roads to appropriate crossings.

The following land use considerations regarding fencing, lighting, and signage would apply to the proposed project:

1. Fencing or other barriers shall be used where it is determined to be the best method to achieve conservation goals and adjacent to land uses incompatible with the MHPA. For example, use chain link or cattle wire to direct wildlife to appropriate corridor crossings, natural rocks/boulders or split rail fencing to direct public access to appropriate locations, and chain link to provide added protection of certain sensitive species or habitats (e.g. vernal pools).

2. Lighting shall be designed to avoid intrusion into the MHPA and effects on wildlife. Lighting in areas of wildlife crossings should be of low-sodium or similar lighting.

3. Signage would be limited to access and litter control and educational purposes.

The MSCP allows for utility impacts within an MHPA where no viable alternatives exist. In the case of the proposed project, the Water Authority’s right-of-way was established long before the MHPA boundaries were drawn and nearly all of the permanent impacts associated with the water conveyance facilities are belowground. Therefore, although the proposed project would result in impacts to sensitive biological resources within the City’s MHPA, the project would be considered compatible with the biological objectives of the MSCP as long as access and construction activities conform to the guidelines of Section 1.4 of the MSCP. Construction would conform to these guidelines, and appropriate biological mitigation would be provided. The following paragraphs describe how the project would conform to the guidelines contained within Section 1.4 of the MSCP.

Impacts to habitats within the MHPA cannot be avoided due to the locations of existing Water Authority facilities within MTRP. However, project components would be located in areas adjacent to existing roads and trails and much of the habitat affected by the proposed project is already disturbed. Approximately 9 acres of the proposed project would be constructed within the existing Water Authority’s 130-foot-wide easement. Areas supporting Diegan coastal sage scrub habitat within the easement have been mitigated as part of a previous project. Therefore, impacts to this habitat would not require mitigation.

Impacts to habitat for species covered by the MSCP and wetlands within the MHPA would not be avoided but would be minimized through project design such as restricting the project footprint to areas adjacent to existing trails and roads. Impacts associated with a previous project
(the Pipeline 4BII project) within the Water Authority’s easement in MTRP were considered permanent and mitigation was provided in the Water Authority’s Crestridge Habitat Management Area. That mitigation allows the Water Authority to conduct work within the right-of-way without the need for additional off-site mitigation. This applies to temporary impacts and requires 1:1 revegetation of disturbed areas within the right-of-way with a native seed mix.

Impacts to Diegan coastal sage scrub, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, valley needlegrass grasslands, San Diego mesa claypan vernal pools, southern willow scrub, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, mule fat scrub, and open waters of the U.S. are considered significant. Mitigation measures for impacts to biological resources are described in Section 3.8.

Temporary construction and staging areas inside the MHPA would result in temporary impacts to sensitive upland habitat. These areas would be revegetated with native plant species once project construction is completed.

In the project area, the San Diego River and associated riparian vegetation serve as a wildlife corridor due to the presence of year-round water and extensive vegetative cover. Most project impacts would occur in upland areas away from the river. The exception would be the stabilized river crossing which is a minor project component. The river crossing would be constructed only during daylight hours and would not affect wildlife movement. Training of construction crews and field workers by a qualified biologist would be provided to avoid unnecessary impacts to biological resources in the area during construction (see Section 3.8). Once constructed, the biological resources at the stabilized crossing would not be very different from those associated with the existing unimproved road that crosses the river.

The proposed project does not include the construction of new roads. Existing roads would be used to access construction areas and during project operation. All disturbed areas associated with the proposed river crossing would be revegetated following completion of construction.

Permanent signage, other than to keep unauthorized personnel outside the fenced area surrounding the FRS II control building, is not proposed as part of the project. Temporary signs would be erected to notify the public of trails that are closed during construction.

Appropriate fencing and/or other barriers have been included in the project design. Lighting associated with the proposed project is limited to emergency lighting at the FRS II control building. The lights would only be used in the event of an emergency and could only be activated by Water Authority staff.

Conformance with the guidelines contained within Section 4.1 of the Subarea Plan, as described above, would avoid significant land use impacts associated with conformance with an applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan. Therefore, there would be no significant impact.
3.1.4 Mitigation Measures

Impacts to land use would be less than significant. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required. See Sections 3.6 and 3.8 for discussions of significant impacts to recreation and biological resources, respectively.

3.1.5 Residual Impacts after Mitigation

No residual impacts would occur.
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On-Site and Surrounding Land Uses

Figure 3.1-2

Mission Trails Flow
Regulatory Structure II,
Pipeline Tunnel, and
Vent Demolition Project

Map Notes
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