

5.15 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

Significant irreversible changes are considered to involve the use of nonrenewable resources, which from implementation of the WTA program could create an irreversible commitment of resources or irreversible damage to the environment. These impacts can fall within three categories:

- The irretrievable commitment of resources, such as energy and construction materials, expended from the expansion of ferry service
- The irreversible loss of resources due to a direct or indirect impact
- An increase in the use of natural resources because of growth

5.15.1 Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Natural resources such as fossil fuel energy will be used for the construction of new or expanded facilities as well as for the operation of an expanded fleet of vessels. This EIR evaluates the use of energy for the alternatives, based on the use of diesel fuel. This EIR also identifies and evaluates possible alternative means of minimizing the use of this fuel. However, expansion of ferry service would likely result in an increase in the use of fossil fuels in comparison to nonferry travel. WTA has investigated the feasibility and application of alternative propulsion systems and fuel that can be considered as ferry transit service is expanded.

Construction of new or expanded facilities would require natural resources such as gravel, sand, asphalt, etc. These materials are generally not retrievable, but they are also generally available and not in limited supply.

5.15.2 Loss of Resources from Direct or Indirect Impacts

The implementation of the program may lead to impacts that adversely affect natural resources. The potential for these impacts is addressed in each of the appropriate sections in this EIR. It is not envisioned that new terminal sites or other facilities that have substantial impacts to areas such as sensitive habitat, aquatic, or community resources would advance very far in the planning process. Specific projects that go forward for consideration will undergo additional review, and avoidance and mitigation measures will have to be applied.

5.15.3 Increase in the Use of Resources from Growth

The potential for growth inducement is addressed earlier in this section. The implementation of the WTA program would affect shifts in commuting patterns, but growth changes are not expected at a regional scale. If growth occurred, it would likely be limited to localized areas around some potential terminals. Although some changes in the regional use of natural resources could take place, they are not expected to be substantial.