

4.9 LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE

4.9.1 ALTERNATIVE A – THE PROPOSED ACTION

LAND USE

The proposed developments would be compatible with surrounding land uses in that there are residential and recreational uses on or near the Sycuan Property. The proposed developments in the area of Lake Emma, however, would not be compatible with mining allowed under the Specific Plan Amendment (SPA) and the Master Use Permit (MUP), so the Tribe will abandon the option to continue sand mining if the land is transferred into federal Trust.

The transfer of land into Trust and the implementation of the Project should not affect uses on adjacent parcels where development would be guided by the County General Plan and zoning ordinances. In fact, the scope of the proposed developments is limited. No development is planned for the entire Sloan Canyon area except for the proposed Olive Grove housing. This provides a buffer to wildlife conservation areas to the south. Similarly, the development of the Pow Wow grounds would be on only a small portion of the land within the Sycuan Property east of the Reservation. Adoption of the Resources Management Plan would ensure that developments are consistent with local biological conservation goals and policies.

The proposed housing would have a greater density than allowed under County ordinances, but the increased density would provide for more-feasible development due to the varying and steep topography of the Sycuan Property. As discussed in the applicable Community Plan, “clustering may be appropriate in the Crest/Dehesa/Harbison Canyon/Granite Hills Subregion because of the generally rugged terrain and other environmental constraints” (San Diego County, 1980). Additionally, clustering of the houses will allow for the provision of more-centralized public services, and will prevent the fragmentation of open space and valuable habitat and wildlife corridors.

The construction of the RV Park is a commercial development that comports with the plan in the SPA that the area around and associated with Lake Emma would be a private recreational facility. In effect, this document and the Resources Management Plan constitute the Long-Term Plan required by the SPA for the area described.

Although the San Diego County Trails Plan shows a recreational trail along the south side of Lake Emma, no easements have been recorded for such a trail, and no physical pathway exists along most of this route. The creation of a trail in this area would conflict with the existing BO issued by the USFWS in regards to the reclamation plan for the sand mining operation. As detailed in the Resources Management Plan, recreational use of existing trails will be allowed, with signs prohibiting off-trail use. No improvements to existing trails or creation of new trails are proposed for the Sycuan Property.

Because similar land uses occur in the vicinity of the Sycuan Property, and because the Proposed Action is not anticipated to affect existing or planned uses in the vicinity, effects to land use would be less than significant.

AGRICULTURE

The Sycuan Property contains prime and unique farmland and statewide and local important farmland. None of the Sycuan Property is designated for agricultural use under the current land use designation or zoning. Additionally, site topography limits the feasibility of agricultural operations. The Proposed Action would not displace existing agricultural operations. Form AD-1006, the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form, was used to determine whether the site is farmland subject to the Federal Farmland Policy Protection Act. Sites receiving a total score of less than 160 need not be given further consideration. The Sycuan Property received a score of approximately 140 points (**Appendix H**). Development of the Proposed Action does not limit the ability of the Tribe to use portions of the Sycuan Property for agriculture. Impacts to agriculture would be less than significant.

4.9.2 ALTERNATIVE B – REDUCED INTENSITY ALTERNATIVE

LAND USE

Development of the Reduced-Intensity Alternative would be compatible with surrounding land uses and would not substantially affect existing or planned uses on adjacent parcels. A large portion of the Sycuan Property would remain as open space. Adoption of the Resources Management Plan would ensure that development surrounding Lake Emma is consistent with local biological conservation goals and policies. Effects to land use would be less than significant.

AGRICULTURE

Implementation of the Reduced-Intensity Alternative would not result in any significant agricultural resource impacts, similar to the Proposed Action.

4.9.3 ALTERNATIVE C – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the Sycuan Property would remain under the jurisdiction of San Diego County and designated as specific plan, estate residential, impact sensitive and multiple rural use. No land use consistency or compatibility impacts would occur under this alternative. The Sycuan Property would continue with current uses under this alternative and no loss of agricultural resources or land use conflicts would occur.