

Chapter 7: Short-Term Use versus Long-Term Productivity of the Environment

This chapter compares the expected adverse impacts on the environment associated with short-term use for the Proposed Action and Alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative, to the expected adverse impacts on the long-term productivity of the environment in the vicinity of the Central Utah Rail Project. The short-term use of the environment would affect the resources discussed in Section 4.1, Impacts on Rail Operations and Safety, through Section 4.15, Impacts on Aesthetics.

Implementation of either of the proposed alternatives (including Alternative B, the Proposed Action) would cause some negligible or moderate adverse impacts from short-term disturbance during construction on resources such as biological resources, groundwater, floodplains, surface water, wetlands, air quality, noise, recreation, and aesthetics. With only a few exceptions, which are discussed below, these negligible to moderate impacts would be eliminated or would rapidly diminish after construction is completed.

The use of best management practices and mitigation in accordance with environmental protection regulations would offset the long-term impacts to wetlands, floodplains, groundwater, and surface water resources. In the case of wetland functions that would be replaced by mitigation, the long-term impacts would be less than the short-term loss of function as the new wetlands develop into maturity over time. Losses, fragmentation, and adverse impacts on biological resources, including protected species and plant communities, would be negligible after reclamation. The loss of cultural resources would be offset through recording and recovery of cultural artifacts.

The proposed alternatives could cause long-term loss of productivity of prime and statewide important farmland. The proposed alternatives do not meet the threshold for special mitigation for losses of prime and statewide important farmland. The proposed alternatives would have moderate adverse impacts to the trucking industry but would improve the overall economic competitiveness and productivity of the region. During construction, the proposed alternatives would consume large amounts of energy resources, but long-term reduction in energy use would offset the short-term uses.

The local short-term impacts and use of resources, both moderate and negligible, by the proposed alternatives would not adversely affect the long-term productivity of the region, which is expected to be enhanced by the proposed alternatives. Further, the proposed alternatives would not preclude the subsequent long-term use of the region for any purpose for which it was originally suited prior to the implementation of the alternative.

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