

3.26 Relationship between Short-term Uses of the Human Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

As described in the introduction to Chapter 3.0, short-term is defined as the 20-year operational life of the project and the 3-year reclamation period; long-term is defined as the future following reclamation (i.e., beyond 23 years). This section identifies the tradeoffs between the short-term impacts to environmental resources during operation and reclamation versus the long-term impacts to resource productivity that would extend beyond the end of reclamation.

The short-term use of resources during the expansion, operation, and reclamation of the proposed project would result in beneficial impacts in the form of an extension of local employment and the generation of revenue.

The proposed project would result in various short-term adverse impacts, such as the temporary loss of soil and vegetation productivity and the associated loss of wildlife habitat, possible wildlife avoidance and displacement, and temporary increases in fugitive dust. These impacts are expected to end upon completion of operations.

The short-term adverse visual impacts would last a few years beyond mine closure and gradually would be reduced as vegetation becomes more established. The scale and extent of the facilities would continue to alter the local landscape and views in the long term.

Impacts to long-term productivity (i.e., following project reclamation) primarily would depend on the effectiveness of the proposed reclamation of the disturbed areas. Successful reclamation would provide for post-mining wildlife and self-sustaining plant communities. Revegetation also is expected to stabilize disturbed surfaces and control erosion.

There would be a long-term loss in soil and vegetation productivity and associated terrestrial wildlife habitat that would be reclaimed, but may take longer than 23 years to re-establish productivity and habitat equivalent to present conditions. There may be a long-term loss in wetland/riparian vegetation (approximately 12 acres) associated with potential flow reductions in seeps and springs from mine groundwater pumping pending recovery of the groundwater table. There also may be long-term losses of springsnail populations associated with the potentially impacted seeps and springs inside the maximum extent of the 10-foot groundwater drawdown contour.