

3.11 - Mineral Resources

This section evaluates the impacts of the proposed project on mineral resources. The following sources were used in the evaluation of mineral resources:

- County of Riverside, County of Riverside General Plan, 2003.
- County of Riverside, County of Riverside General Plan 2015.
- HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. 2014. San Gorgonio Crossings Project/TSG-13, Biological Technical Report. November 11, 2015.
- County of Riverside General Plan Figure OS-5 “Mineral Resources Area” Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) Figure MS-5 “Mineral Resources Area,” RC/GIS.

3.11.1 - Existing Conditions

As discussed in the County of Riverside General Plan, classification of land within California takes place according to a priority list that was established by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) in 1982, or when the SMGB is petitioned to classify a specific area. The SMGB established Mineral Resources Zones (MRZ) to designate lands that contain mineral deposits. The State of California has also designated Aggregate Mineral Resource areas within the County. Based on a review of the Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan, the proposed project site is designated MRZ-3, which are areas where the available geologic information indicates that mineral deposits are likely to exist; however, the significance of the deposit in these areas is undetermined. The area surrounding the project site is also classified as MRZ-3.

The County of Riverside General Plan does not identify any significant mineral resources on the project site or in the project vicinity, as the project site and surrounding area does not have an MRZ-2a or MRZ-2b designation. These designations indicate areas where the available geologic information indicates that there are significant mineral deposits or that there is a likelihood of significant mineral deposits.

The southern and central portions of the property consist of a broad, sloping grassland with steep ridges and canyons occurring on the northern half of the site. Elevations on-site range from approximately 2,400 to 2,690 feet above mean sea level. As discussed in the 2015 San Gorgonio Crossings Biological Technical Report, prepared by HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. in November 2014, overall, site drainage is to the west and southwest. Soils on-site are primarily Hanford coarse sandy loam and terrace escarpments with Gorgonio gravelly loamy fine sand, Greenfield sandy loam, Hanford cobbly coarse sandy loam, and Ramona sandy loam (HELIX 2015).

3.11.2 - Regulatory Setting

State Regulations

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA)

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, referred to as SMARA, was enacted by the California Legislature to address the need for a continuing supply of mineral resources, and to

prevent or minimize the negative impacts of surface mining to public health, property and the environment. The Department of Conservation's Office of Mine Reclamation and the SMGB jointly ensure proper administration of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act's requirements. The SMGB promulgates regulations to clarify and interpret the Act's provisions, and serves as a policy/appeals board. The Office of Mine Reclamation provides an ongoing technical assistance program for lead agencies and operators, maintains a database of mine locations and operational information statewide, and is responsible for compliance related matters (Department of Conservation 2007).

The California Geological Survey has produced a report and a series of Mineral Land Classification Maps for the area that designate MRZs as follows:

- MRZ-1** Areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.
- MRZ-2** Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists.
- MRZ-3** Areas containing mineral deposits, the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data.
- MRZ-4** Areas where available information is inadequate for assignment to any other MRZ zone.

Local Regulations

County of Riverside General Plan

Mineral extraction is an important component of Riverside County's economy. The Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan Element states that the County has extensive deposits of clay, limestone, iron, sand, and aggregates.

The non-renewable resources discussed in this element are mineral resources and energy resources. The Mineral Resources section of this element addresses those resources that are classified under the State Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA).

In addition to agricultural production, mineral extraction is an important component of Riverside County's economy. The County has extensive deposits of clay, limestone, iron, sand, and aggregates. Classification of land within California takes place according to a priority list that was established by the SMGB in 1982, or when the SMGB is petitioned to classify a specific area. The SMGB has also established MRZs to designate lands that contain mineral deposits. The State of California has also designated Aggregate Mineral Resource areas within the County.

The Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County's General Plan identifies the classifications to define MRZs are as follows:

- MRZ-1** Areas where the available geologic information indicates no significant mineral deposits or a minimal likelihood of significant mineral deposits.
- MRZ-2a** Areas where the available geologic information indicates that there are significant mineral deposits.

- MRZ-2b** Areas where the available geologic information indicates that there is a likelihood of significant mineral deposits.
- MRZ-3** Areas where the available geologic information indicates that mineral deposits are likely to exist, however, the significance of the deposit is undetermined.
- MRZ-4** Areas where there is not enough information available to determine the presence or absence of mineral deposits

3.11.3 - Thresholds of Significance

The County of Riverside utilizes Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines as its thresholds of significance for CEQA analysis. Further, the County provides a number of additional environmental considerations as part of the County's Environmental Assessment Checklist.

Would the project:

- a) Be an incompatible land use located adjacent to a State classified or designated area or existing surface mine?
- b) Expose people or property to hazards from proposed, existing or abandoned quarries or mines?

According to the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds, to determine whether impacts to mineral resources are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated. Would the project:

- a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State?
- b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

3.11.4 - Project Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses potential impacts associated with the proposed project and provides mitigation measures where necessary.

Loss of Known Mineral Resource

Impact MIN-1: The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region or the residents of the State.

Impact Analysis

The project site does not contain any known mineral resources. The County of Riverside 2015 General Plan's Multipurpose Open Space Element (Figure OS-6) identifies most of western Riverside County, where there are no known mineral resources, as being within MRZ-3. Areas with this designation are described as areas where the available geologic information indicates that mineral

deposits are likely to exist; however, the significance of the deposit is undetermined. The County of Riverside General Plan provides no specific policies regarding property identified as “MRZ-3” and does not designate the project site for mineral resource-related uses (for example, MRZ-2b, which comprises areas where the available geologic information indicates that there is a likelihood of significant mineral deposits). There is no indication that the project site contains any mineral resources that would be of value to the region or residents of the State.

The proposed project site is also not located adjacent to a state-classified or designated area or existing surface mine. The land adjacent to the project site to the north, south, east and west does not have an Open Space-Mineral Resource (OS-MIN) land use designation, which allows for mineral extraction and processing facilities. Further, in no way will either the construction or operation of the proposed project impact any ongoing mining operations.

The project does not propose any quarries or mines on-site. There are no existing quarries or mines on-site that were identified in any of the technical reports prepared for the project site. Additionally, the County of Riverside does not designate the site as having mineral resources in either the General Plan land use or zoning designations for the project site. The project site does not have an Open Space-Mineral Resource (OS-MIN) land use designation, which would allow for mineral extraction and processing facilities. The project would not expose people or property to hazards from proposed, existing or abandoned quarries or mines. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Loss of Mineral Resource Recovery Site

Impact MIN-2: **The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.**

Impact Analysis

Based on analysis contained in Impact MIN-1, there are no known aggregate resources within the surrounding region, nor is the project area designated as a resource recovery site. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the proposed project site or project area contain significant resources, which is demonstrated by its MRZ-3a classification in the 2008 County of Riverside General Plan. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant impact.

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