

2.9 Mineral Resources

This section of the SEIR analyzes the existing mineral resources relative to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR, including the loss of availability of a known mineral resource or the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site from the County's existing supply of mineral resources, and the potential effects that implementation of the proposed Project may have on such resources.

2.9.1 Existing Conditions

The adequacy of the existing conditions information for this environmental topic as provided in the General Plan Update Program EIR has been confirmed through re-checking of the references pertaining to this section in Chapter 5.0 of the General Plan Update Program EIR, including all relevant listed persons, plans, policies, and websites. In addition, this information has been confirmed through consultation/interviews with appropriate County or other agency staff, as available, that were involved in the preparation/review of this section of the General Plan Update Program EIR and/or supporting technical studies, as well as those involved in preparing/providing the Background Reports/Information pertaining to this section of the General Plan Update Program EIR; all of these sources are listed in Chapter 6.0 of the General Plan Update Program EIR. The existing conditions information for this environmental topic as provided in the General Plan Update Program EIR applies equally to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR, and is therefore not repeated here.

As described in Section 2.10.1.6 of the General Plan Update Program EIR, approximately the western one-third of the County has been classified into distinct Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs), which identify the known or inferred mineral resource potential of individual lands, according to the California Geological Survey (CGS); refer to Figure 2.9-1, San Diego County Mineral Resource Zones. Lands classified as MRZs relative to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR occur within portions of Alpine CPA, Ramona CPA, and Jamul/Dulzura Subregion.

2.9.2 Regulatory Framework

The regulatory framework discussion in the General Plan Update Program EIR pertaining to minerals has not changed since adoption of the General Plan Update in August 2011. Therefore, the regulatory framework applies equally to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR, and is therefore not repeated here.

2.9.3 Analysis of Project Effects and Cumulative Impacts

For the cumulative impact analyses, the geographic scope for each of the issues below would be the same as described and evaluated in the General Plan Update Program EIR, and as updated in Section 1.9 of this SEIR (Cumulative Project Assessment Overview).

2.9.3.1 Mineral Resource Availability

This section describes potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on mineral resource availability, as pertains to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR.

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed Project would have a significant impact if it results in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource as designated by the CGS that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State, such as proposing incompatible development:

- On or within the vicinity (generally up to 1,300 feet from the site) of an area classified as MRZ-2;
- On land classified as MRZ-3;
- On land underlain by Quaternary alluvium; or,
- On or within the vicinity of areas containing industrial material and gemstone resources.

Analysis

The General Plan Update Program EIR determined that buildout under the General Plan Update would result in the following potentially significant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts:

1. Loss of availability of known or suspected mineral resources in areas designated MRZ-2 or MRZ-3, or in areas underlain by Quaternary alluvium, that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State.
2. Planned and projected growth in the region that would result in a reasonably foreseeable loss of mineral resources due to the encroachment of incompatible uses limiting future areas from being permitted for mining operations.
3. Potentially incompatible land uses in areas that are known or likely to contain other industrial materials or gemstone mineral resources.
4. Growth or land uses that are incompatible with mining and resource recovery, thereby contributing to a cumulative loss of available resources on a regional level.

These impacts would be reduced through the implementation of a combination of federal, State, and local regulations; existing County regulatory processes; the adopted General Plan Update goals and policies; and, specific mitigation measures and implementation programs identified in the General Plan Update Program EIR; however, impacts would not be reduced to below a level of significance because the full suite of these and other mitigation measures considered and addressed in the General Plan Update Program EIR were found to be infeasible by the County for the reasons given in Section 2.10.6.1 of that EIR (and in Section 2.9.4.1 below).

Similar direct, indirect and cumulative effects would occur with future development of the Project areas addressed in this SEIR located on lands classified as MRZ-3 or underlain by Quaternary alluvium, including portions of Alpine CPA, Ramona CPA, and Jamul/Dulzura Subregion; refer to Figure 2.9-1, San Diego County Mineral Resource Zones. Such impacts would also be cumulative in nature as they would contribute to a cumulative loss of available resources on a regional level, when combined with other development allowed under the General Plan Update.

The potential effects on mineral resources availability resulting from implementation of the proposed Project would be reduced by the same regulations, implementation programs (General Plan Update goals/policies) and mitigation measures from the General Plan Update Program EIR and repeated in Section 2.9.4.1 (Mitigation for Mineral Resource Availability) below; however, even with implementation of these regulations, programs and measures, Project impacts on mineral resources availability would not be reduced to below a level of significance for the same reasons stated above; specifically, the full suite of these and other mitigation measures considered and addressed in the General Plan Update Program EIR were found to be infeasible.

2.9.3.2 Mineral Resource Recovery Sites

This section describes potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on mineral resource recovery sites, as pertains to the Project areas addressed in this SEIR.

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed Project would have a significant impact if it results 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. Resource recovery sites are those areas where mineral resources could be extracted for use. Locally important resource recovery sites, or areas where important resource recovery sites could potentially be located, are designated by the CGS as MRZ-2 or MRZ-3, or as being underlain by Quaternary alluvium.

Analysis

The General Plan Update Program EIR determined that buildout under the General Plan Update would result in the following potentially significant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts:

1. Planned and projected growth in the region that would result in encroachment of incompatible uses into areas where mines are active, or where future resource recovery sites would have otherwise been permitted, thereby precluding the extraction of mineral resources and limiting future areas from being permitted for mining operations.
2. Land uses that would be incompatible with mining and resource recovery operations in areas designated MRZ-2 or MRZ-3, or in areas underlain by Quaternary alluvium that contain or potentially contain important aggregate resources.

3. Growth or land uses that are incompatible with locally important mineral resource recovery sites, thereby contributing to a cumulative loss of available resources on a regional level.

These impacts would be reduced through the implementation of a combination of federal, State, and local regulations; existing County regulatory processes; the adopted General Plan Update goals and policies; and, specific mitigation measures and implementation programs identified in the General Plan Update Program EIR; however, impacts would not be reduced to below a level of significance because the full suite of these and other mitigation measures considered and addressed in the General Plan Update Program EIR were found to be infeasible by the County for the reasons given in Section 2.10.6.1 of that EIR (and in Section 2.9.4.1 below).

Similar direct, indirect and cumulative effects would occur with future development of the Project areas addressed in this SEIR that are located near existing mineral resource recovery sites, including portions of Alpine CPA, Ramona CPA, and Jamul/Dulzura Subregion. Such impacts would also be cumulative in nature as they would contribute to a cumulative loss of available resources on a regional level, when combined with other development allowed under the General Plan Update.

The potential effects on locally important mineral resource recovery sites resulting from implementation of the proposed Project would be reduced by the same regulations, implementation programs (General Plan Update goals/policies) and mitigation measures from the General Plan Update Program EIR and repeated in Section 2.9.4.1 (Mitigation for Mineral Resource Availability) below; however, even with implementation of these regulations, programs and measures, Project impacts on locally important mineral resource recovery sites would not be reduced to below a level of significance for the same reasons stated above; specifically, the full suite of these and other mitigation measures considered and addressed in the General Plan Update Program EIR were found to be infeasible.

2.9.4 Mitigation

2.9.4.1 Mineral Resource Availability

Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to mineral resource availability associated with the proposed Project would be reduced with implementation of the same applicable General Plan Update policies and mitigation measures as identified in the General Plan Update Program EIR and repeated below; however, the County determined that implementation of the measures listed below would be infeasible for the following reasons:

- Prohibit incompatible uses that would be located on or near significant mineral resource sites. This measure would result in restrictions on future development in areas identified for increased growth in the General Plan Update because significant or potentially significant mineral resources sites have been identified throughout the western portion of the unincorporated County, where the majority of development under the General Plan

Update would take place. Thus, this measure would conflict with the goal of the Housing Element to provide sufficient housing stock.

- For projects that propose incompatible uses near significant mineral resource sites, require the applicants to mine the site prior to project development. This measure would result in undue hardship on the entitlement process as extraction activities often take decades to complete and may make the site unusable for the proposed land use. In some cases, incompatible land uses may already exist in the vicinity of the mineral resource site that would make extraction at the site infeasible.
- Use public funds to initiate new mineral extraction operations. This measure would require voter or BOS approval to appropriate funds toward mineral extraction operations, which cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, this would initiate extraction sites in many areas of the County, which would potentially result in numerous environmental impacts, and conflict with the Project objective to minimize public costs of infrastructure and services.

Because the measures listed above have been found to be infeasible by the County and would not be implemented, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Adopted General Plan Update Policies

Policy COS-10.1: Siting of Development. Encourage the conservation (i.e., protection from incompatible land uses) of areas designated as having substantial potential for mineral extraction. Discourage development that would substantially preclude the future development of mining facilities in these areas. Design development or uses to minimize the potential conflict with existing or potential future mining facilities. For purposes of this policy, incompatible land uses are defined by the Surface mining and Recovery Act (SMARA) Section 3675.

Policy COS-10.2: Protection of State-Classified or Designated Lands. Discourage development or the establishment of other incompatible land uses on or adjacent to areas classified or designated by the State of California as having important mineral resources (MRZ-2), as well as potential mineral lands identified by other government agencies. The potential for the extraction of substantial mineral resources from lands classified by the State of California as areas that contain mineral resources (MRZ-3) shall be considered by the County in making land use decisions.

Policy COS-10.3: Road Access. Prohibit development from restricting road access to existing mining facilities, areas classified MRZ-2 or MRZ-3 by the State Geologist, or areas identified in the County Zoning Ordinance for potential extractive use in accordance with SMARA Section 2764.a.

Policy COS-10.4: Compatible Land Uses. Discourage the development of land uses that are not compatible with the retention of mining or recreational access to non-aggregate mineral deposits.

Policy COS-10.6: Conservation of Construction Aggregate. Encourage the continued operation of existing mining facilities and streamline the permitting of new mining facilities consistent with the goal to establish permitted aggregate resources that are sufficient to satisfy 50 years of County demand.

Policy COS-10.8: New Mining Facilities. Develop specific permit types and procedures for the authorization of new mining facilities that recognize the inherent physical effects of mining operations and the public necessity for available mineral resources adequate to meet local demand, in accordance with PRC Section 2762.

Policy COS-10.9: Overlay Zones. Provide zoning overlays for MRZ-2 designated lands and a 1,500 foot wide buffer area adjacent to such lands. Within these overlay zones, the potential effects of proposed land use actions on potential future extraction of mineral resources shall be considered by the decision-makers.

Mitigation Measures

Min-1.1 Assess the impact of new development on mineral resources as required by the County Guidelines for Determining Significance for Mineral Resources. Update the CEQA Guidelines for Determining Significance (Mineral Resources) to include the requirement to evaluate whether access is being maintained to existing mining sites.

Min-1.2 Revise and update the County ordinances to designate areas of known importance for mineral resources as follows:

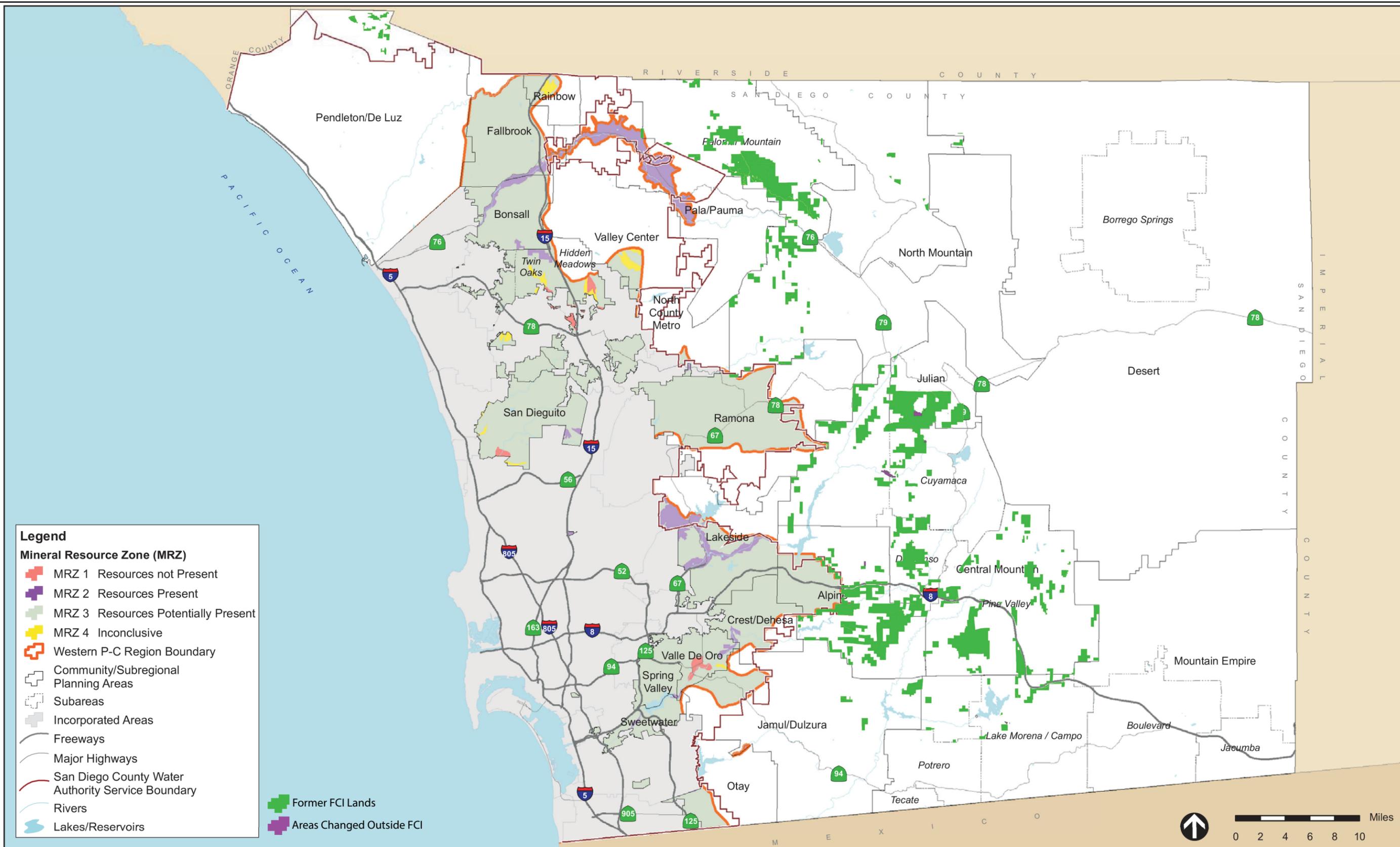
- Update the Zoning Ordinance with the addition of a Mining Compatibility Designator or Overlay that identifies parcels with a high potential for mineral resources. The purpose is to take into account the potential mineral resources not to preclude the potential mining use. In addition, specify that notification of potential mining use is provided to all parcels within a 1,500 foot radius of parcels with a Mining Compatibility Designator/Overlay.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate recycling of salvaged concrete, asphalt, and rock at permitted mining facilities.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance and Grading Ordinance to authorize surface mining operations with a Surface Mining Permit rather than a MUP. Incorporate findings of approval that reflect Mineral Compatibility Designator, SMARA Sections 2762 and 2763, and the inherent nature of surface mining operations. Parcels with a high potential for mineral resources could include those areas designated as MRZ-2 or other areas identified as containing mineral resources that are located where a sufficient buffer is available so that extraction activities are feasible.

Min-1.3 Request that the State Geologist identify mineral resources in previously unmapped areas of East and North County.

2.9.4.2 Mineral Resources Recovery Sites

Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to mineral resources recovery sites associated with the proposed Project would be reduced with implementation of the same applicable General Plan Update policies and mitigation measures as identified in the General Plan Update Program EIR and repeated in Section 2.9.4.1, above; however, the County determined that implementation of those policies and mitigation measures would be infeasible for the same reasons given in Section 2.9.4.1, above.

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY MINERAL RESOURCE ZONES

FIGURE 2.9-1

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