

### 3.1.6 Land Use and Planning

This land use analysis for the Proposed Project describes the relevant land use policy and regulatory framework applicable to the Project, identifies guidelines for determination of significance, and evaluates potential environmental impacts related to the Project's consistency with applicable County land use policies, goals and regulations. The CEQA thresholds of significance used in this section require the EIR to consider whether a proposed project conflicts with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact. Under CEQA, a conflict or inconsistency with an applicable plan is not by itself considered a significant environmental impact. Instead, the inconsistency must result in a significant physical impact for there to be a significant impact under CEQA. In addition to the land use consistency analysis in this section, each chapter of the EIR contains a discussion of the Project's potential physical impacts related to consistency with applicable regulations, including General Plan goals and policies, relevant to the environmental issue area.

#### 3.1.6.1 Existing Conditions

For information regarding the existing physical setting, the reader is referred to the discussion of Subchapter 1.4, *Environmental Setting*, of this EIR, as well as Figure 1-3, *Project Vicinity (Aerial Photograph)*.

#### Regulatory Setting

Land use plans, policies, and ordinances that apply to the Proposed Project are contained in the County of San Diego General Plan (County 2011b), Valle de Oro Community Plan (County 2011c), County Zoning Ordinance, MSCP, LPC, and a host of other implementing regulations discussed in the other sections of this EIR. These documents address a variety of issues, including conservation of sensitive habitats, provision of open space, protection of visual amenities, regulation of signage and lighting, and protection against incompatible land uses. Many of these issues are addressed in several elements of the General Plan, as well as in the Community Plan. The plans and regulations discussed here are primarily related to land use and development. The land use plans are described below, with the applicable goals, objectives, and policies detailed in Appendix B, *Planning Analysis*, of this EIR, which addresses Project consistency with applicable policies.

#### County of San Diego General Plan

The General Plan was comprehensively updated and adopted on August 3, 2011. The General Plan Land Use Element provides maps, goals, and policies and serves as the regulatory document guiding land use, conservation, and development in the unincorporated County. This element provides a framework to accommodate future development within the County in an efficient and sustainable manner that is compatible with the character of unincorporated communities and the protection of valuable and sensitive natural resources (County 2011b).

The Land Use Element describes Regional Land Use Categories and Land Use Designations that are applied to lands within the County's land use jurisdiction. The Land Use Element identifies the entire Project site as within the Open Space-Recreation (OS-R) land use designation, which applies to large, existing recreational areas and allows for active and passive recreational uses. The

Land Use Element includes a variety of policies intended to minimize impacts between adjacent land uses and encourage environmental sustainability.

The Mobility Element of the General Plan describes the multi-modal transportation network within the County's unincorporated areas, including motor vehicle, public transportation, bicycle, pedestrian, rail, and air transportation facilities. The element states the goals and policies that address the safe and efficient operation, maintenance, and management of the transportation network, and identifies major existing and planned road network components in the County. These road network components are shown on maps and matrices in the Mobility Element Network Appendix. In the vicinity of the Project site, the following roads and their corresponding classifications are identified: Campo Road (SR 94; Freeway/Expressway); Jamacha Road (Prime Arterial), Jamacha Boulevard (Major Road), and Willow Glen Drive (Major Road).

The Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element provides direction for future growth and development in the County with respect to the conservation, management, and utilization of natural and cultural resources; protection and preservation of open space; and provision of park and recreation resources. Goals and policies included in this element address the following nine resource topics: biological resources; water resources; agricultural resources; cultural resources; paleontological resources and unique geologic features; mineral resources; visual resources; and air quality, climate change, and energy. Roadways in the vicinity of the Project site that are identified as scenic roadways in the COS Element include SR 94 from SR 125 to Interstate 8 and Willow Glen Drive from Jamacha Road to Dehesa Road, which fronts the northern Project boundary.

The Safety Element brings safety considerations into the planning and decision-making process by establishing policies related to future development that will minimize the risk of injury, death, property and environmental damage associated with natural and human-made hazards (County 2011b). The Safety Element ensures that development accounts for physical constraints and natural hazards of the land. The goals and policies of this element were developed to protect residents and areas from wildland and urban fire, crime, hazardous materials incidents, earthquakes, flooding and hazardous incidents associated with aircrafts and airports. Disaster preparedness and emergency response also are addressed in this element.

The Noise Element ensures that noise considerations are incorporated into the land use decision-making process and establishes Noise Compatibility Guidelines to be used in the evaluation of proposed projects. The community noise control standards within the County's Noise Abatement and Control Ordinance are used in conjunction with the Noise Element in considering the environmental impacts of noise exposure. The Noise Element addresses transportation and non-transportation noise sources, noise-sensitive land uses, and existing and future noise levels. This element was developed to preserve County residents' quality of life by providing protection from the obtrusive impacts of noise and noise-generating uses such as traffic, construction, airplanes, and certain industrial uses.

#### **Valle de Oro Community Plan**

In general, community plans have been adopted as integral parts of the General Plan to provide the framework for addressing the issues and concerns unique to each community that are not

reflected in the broader policies of the General Plan. Each community/subregional plan in San Diego County identifies specific community character attributes and outlines goals and policies intended to preserve those attributes. Community Plans must be consistent with the General Plan but can provide additional guidance that reflects the unique nature of each of the unincorporated area's communities. The General Plan has clearly delineated the relationship between the General Plan and the County's community plans. Community plans must be internally consistent with the General Plan's Goals and Policies and cannot be used to undermine the policies of the General Plan. This means that community plans must be read and interpreted in the context of the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan (General Plan Policy LU-2.2).

The Valle de Oro Community Plan augments the 2011 General Plan with goals and policies specific to its Planning Area. The Valle de Oro Community Planning Area encompasses approximately 19 square miles of the unincorporated portion of the County, including the neighborhoods of Casa de Oro, Mount Helix, Vista Grande Hills, and Rancho San Diego. The Community Plan's stated vision is to retain a unique balance of urban, semi-rural, agricultural, and open space land uses. New development within the community is to conserve natural resources and topography and provide a pleasant, safe environment for community residents (County 2011d). The Community Plan includes elements related to Community Character, Land Use, Mobility, Conservation, Recreation, Scenic Highways, Energy, Public Safety, and Noise. Two parcels totaling approximately 32 acres in the southwestern portion of the Project site—Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 506-021-19-00 (8.2 acres) and 519-011-03-00 (23.8 acres)—are included in the Rancho San Diego Specific Plan Area. The Community Plan includes additional policies specific to this area.

### County Zoning Ordinance

Zoning designations contained within the County Zoning Ordinance guide and determine the allowed type, size, and intensity of development allowed on a site. As shown in Figure 3.1.6-1, *Zoning*, the Project site includes three zoning designations: S80 (Open Space); S90 (Holding Area); and S88 (Specific Planning Area). The County Zoning Ordinance also identifies a Special Area Designator that applies to the Project site, Special Area Designator F (Flood Plain). Special Area Designators are applied to areas with special interest or unusual value; the Special Area Designator F (Flood Plain) is intended to protect the public health, safety, and welfare from flooding.

The S80 (Open Space) designation is used to provide appropriate controls for areas considered unsuitable for intensive development, including hazard or resource areas, public lands, recreation sites, or lands subject to open space easements or similar restrictions. The S90 (Holding Area) designation is intended to prevent isolated or premature land uses from occurring on lands for which adequate public services and facilities are unavailable, or for which the determination of the appropriate zoning regulations is precluded by contemplated or adopted planning proposals or by a lack of economic, demographic, geographic, or other data. Extractive use can be permitted within the S80 and S90 classifications with approval of a Major Use Permit.

The S88 (Specific Planning Area) designation applies to 32 acres in the southwestern portion of the Project site that are not used for golf course operations and are part of the Rancho San Diego

Specific Plan. This zoning designation restricts extractive uses to site preparation, which allows the off-site removal of materials when it is secondary to the future use of the site.

### **3.1.6.2     *Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance***

#### **Physically Divide an Established Community**

##### **Guideline for the Determination of Significance**

A significant impact would occur if the Proposed Project would:

1. Physically divide an established community.

##### ***Guideline Source***

This land use guideline is based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and County staff guidance. The guideline is intended to maintain and enhance the character, structure, and dynamics of established communities in the Project vicinity.

##### **Analysis**

For division of an established community to occur, Project elements would need to separate existing residents from currently available facilities/community services. This can occur, for instance, where a highway is installed between residences and schools, shopping or churches.

The Project site is currently used as a privately owned golf course that is only available for use by visitors to the course. It does not provide pedestrian access through the site for nearby residents. The Project site is currently bisected by Steele Canyon Road that connects Willow Glen Drive to communities along Jamul Drive and Campo Road to the south. During mining operations, no roadways would be closed or hindered, and access would be unchanged within the community. Additionally, similar to existing conditions, the site would remain unavailable for pedestrian use during mining activities. No public services (schools, post office, churches, retail, or government offices) would be blocked for any existing residents by Project implementation. Following reclamation, trails would be provided for access through the site and would connect to the County's regional trail system. Impacts related to division or isolation of an established community would be **less than significant**.

#### **Land Use Plans, Policies, and Regulations**

##### **Guideline for the Determination of Significance**

A significant impact would occur if the Proposed Project would:

2. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

### *Guideline Source*

This land use guideline is based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and County staff guidance. This guideline is intended to ensure conformance with existing regional and local planning efforts.

### *Analysis*

This discussion summarizes consistency with the applicable planning documents. Detailed analysis of consistency with applicable goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan and Valle De Oro Community Plan is detailed in Appendix B of this EIR.

### *County of San Diego General Plan*

In addition to the land use consistency analysis summary contained in this section and detailed analysis contained in Appendix B, each topical analysis in this EIR contains a discussion of the Project's potential physical impacts related to consistency with applicable regulations, including General Plan goals and policies, relevant to the environmental issue area.

Land Use Element. The Project site is currently designated as Open Space (Recreation) in the County General Plan. No General Plan Amendment is proposed or required as part of the Project, as extractive use is allowed within areas designated as Open Space (Recreation) with the issuance of an MUP. The Project would leave the site suitable for uses allowed by the existing land use designation and zoning classifications following mining operations, with the site remaining as open space. Specifically, the General Plan land use designation of Open Space (Recreation) applies to large, existing recreational areas and allows for active and passive recreational uses. The Project site includes three zoning designations: S80 (Open Space); S90 (Holding Area); and S88 (Specific Planning Area). Uses allowed within the S80 and S90 zones include single-family residential (with a minimum lot size of eight acres), essential services, fire protection services, and agriculture (including horticulture, tree crops, row and field crops, and limited packing and processing). However, the Project would specifically provide only open space uses, including recreational trails. This would occur once all mining and reclamation activities are completed at the end of year 12. All mining equipment and related structures would be removed and the Project site would be revegetated with native vegetation. The native vegetation would connect to adjacent open space areas that would protect wildlife habitat and corridors and preserve scenic vistas and areas. The proposed trails would connect to an existing County trail at the northwestern corner of the site. This would be consistent with the site's Open Space (Recreation) land use designation and the applicable Land Use Element policies.

Mobility Element. Vehicles and haul trucks traveling to and from the Project site would utilize existing roadways, most notably Willow Glen Drive. Willow Glen Drive between Jamacha Road and Hillsdale Road is classified in the Mobility Element as a 4.1B: *Major Road with Intermittent Turn Lanes*, typically designated in areas where turning movements are infrequent or where right-of-way is limited. It is currently constructed as a four-lane undivided roadway between Jamacha Road and Steele Canyon Road and as a three-lane roadway with a two-way left-turn lane between Steele Canyon Road and the eastern Project site boundary. The Project would restripe Willow Glen Drive between Steele Canyon Road and the Project ingress driveway to provide Class II buffered

bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway. To facilitate deceleration of right-turning vehicles into the Project ingress driveway, a dedicated right-turn lane would be constructed, which would serve as the primary access to the site. A two-way left turn lane between the Project's primary ingress and egress driveways would also be provided and would serve as a refuge lane for trucks to safely and effectively complete outbound maneuvers. The Mobility Element notes that individual projects may be evaluated through required traffic studies to identify project design considerations that are less than the full buildout classification but would still be consistent with the General Plan. As demonstrated in the Project LMA, project-related traffic would cause no deficiencies within the study area and widening would not be required for the segment of Willow Glen Drive along the Project frontage east of Steele Canyon Road that is not built to the Mobility Element roadway classification (LLG 2021a**b**). Proposed improvements would be compatible with the roadway classification, and the Project would provide an Irrevocable Offer of Dedication along the Project frontage as needed to accommodate the ultimate classification of Willow Glen Drive.

In addition to the primary access described above, a new secondary access point to the property from Willow Glen Drive west of Steele Canyon Road would be constructed at the intersection at Muirfield Drive. Other access points, such as an existing driveway at the northwestern corner of the property and an existing access point off Ivanhoe Ranch Road to the south of the project that is currently used for golf course maintenance would be used as needed, primarily for equipment delivery and/or reclamation maintenance and monitoring. These access points would be designed in accordance with County requirements to provide for safe vehicular movement and adequate emergency access. Accordingly, the Project would be consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the Mobility Element.

Conservation and Open Space Element. As described above, the COS Element addresses the conservation, management, and utilization of natural and cultural resources, protection and preservation of open space, and provision of park and recreational opportunities. Resource topics with applicable goals and policies include biological resources; cultural resources; paleontological resources and unique geologic features; mineral resources; water resources; visual resources; and air quality, climate change, and energy. Relative to the applicable natural resources goals and policies of the COS Element, mining activities would occur primarily in disturbed areas that have historically been used as a public golf course, minimizing impacts by focusing mining activities in the least biologically sensitive areas. The Sweetwater River channel and the majority of native habitat extant on the site would be avoided. As mining is completed, the Project site would be reclaimed as open space and revegetated with native plants. To provide mitigation for the limited impacts that would occur to natural wetland areas, wetland vegetation would be created, restored, and/or enhanced on site. As a result, the Project would largely preserve existing natural areas and would create/enhance others at the conclusion of each phase of mining activities and would be consistent with COS Element policies related to biological resources.

While the three archaeological resources that have been observed on site have not been identified as significant resources, monitoring during mining would be required as mitigation for potential impacts to unknown resources. If additional resources are located, they would be evaluated and curated as appropriate in accordance with EIR mitigation measures. The site contains formations with no, or low, paleontological resource sensitivity. Nonetheless, mitigation has been identified to ensure that appropriate fossils identified during mining would be removed from the site, with research and curation completed as necessary and appropriate. With implementation of these

mitigation measures, the Project would preserve important archaeological and paleontological resources and would be consistent with the applicable COS Element policies.

The Project is located in a river valley surrounded by prominent scenic features including hillsides, ridgelines, and mountainous terrain. The Project would not directly affect these features, but Project effects would be visible from identified scenic vistas at nearby recreational areas, public roads, and components of the County scenic highway. No designated landmarks (i.e., a visual feature or element designated or identified in an adopted land use plan as an important visual or scenic resource) or identified visual resources such as unique topographical features, designated historic resources, or prominent rock outcroppings or ridgelines occur on site. During the mining and reclamation period, the Project site would be modified by removing existing vegetation and golf course uses and introducing exposed soil, mining operations and equipment, a processing plant area, and stockpiles. Approximately 67 existing trees would be removed to construct the Project entrance and Willow Glen Drive improvements. A six-foot-high, chain-link fence would be installed along Willow Glen Drive that would further block views of Project components and result in visual effects. These Project elements would be visible and highly contrasting, affecting the composition of the visual environment, including as viewed from Willow Glen Drive, a County-designated scenic highway corridor. Mining and reclamation activities would create notable physical changes in the composition of the visual environment, as viewed from Willow Glen Drive, Steele Canyon Road, and surrounding recreational and residential areas that would result in reduced visual quality of the site and surrounding area. During mining operations, some shielded night lighting may be installed for security purposes. The lighting would be designed to minimize glare and reflection or spill onto neighboring areas, and would include pole-mounted sodium, metal halide, fluorescent or LED lighting that would be operated with cut-offs to reduce light pollution. While the Project would comply with applicable goals and policies to the extent feasible for an extractive use and would implement a comprehensive reclamation plan to ensure that mined areas are backfilled and revegetated with appropriate plant communities, visual impacts were assessed as potentially significant and would result in conflicts with applicable goals and policies. Long-term changes within the Project site post reclamation would contribute positively to the valued views, and trees and shrubs planted in accordance with the revegetation plan would improve the visual character and quality of the Project site once maturity is reached (approximately five to seven years post-installation), and ultimately would be consistent with applicable goals and policies of the COS Element.

In accordance with the Project objectives, the Project has been designed to allow for the recovery and processing of construction aggregates in a financially sound and efficient manner, while considering environmental considerations. The Project would extract aggregate resources for local uses in accordance with the Project Reclamation Plan. Providing an additional local supply of aggregate material would reduce the need to import material from more distant mines and support the County's demand for aggregate resources, consistent with COS Element policies addressing mineral resources.

Relative to policies associated with water resources, the Project would be subject to applicable regulation and permitting requirements (from the County, CDFW, USACE, and RWQCB) during mining and reclamation to protect the quality of runoff draining to the Sweetwater River and ensure that groundwater deposits and flows are not contaminated by mining and reclamation activities. Groundwater use for materials processing and reclamation, including irrigation for revegetation,

would be substantially less (approximately 139.9 acre-feet per year) than existing use rates (approximately 804.3 acre-feet per year) for the golf course irrigation. The reduced rate would neither exacerbate existing conditions nor adversely affect groundwater users. Following establishment of revegetation plantings, no additional irrigation would be needed and no conflicts with this policy would occur. Development associated with the proposed mining activities would remove existing impervious surfaces associated with golf course operations and involve minor addition of impervious surfaces on site; as areas are reclaimed, impervious surfaces would be removed, resulting in a substantial decrease in impervious surfaces in the ultimate post-reclamation condition and consistency with applicable policies associated with impervious surfaces and minimizing impacts from development.

Dust and other pollutant emissions could be generated during Project activities but would be minimized through the BMPs described in EIR Chapter 1.0 and summarized in Chapter 7.0. Implementation of BMPs would reduce the pollutants to less than significant levels and ensure compliance with applicable policies addressing air quality. A Construction and Demolition Debris Management Plan would be developed to divert debris from construction and demolition away from landfills. In accordance with County Ordinance Sections 68.508 through 68.518, 90 percent of inert materials and 70 percent of all other construction and demolition debris generated by the Project would be recycled.

Safety Element. Safety Element policies applicable to the Project address defensible space and minimizing risks associated with wildland fires, as well as flood hazards. With regard to potential fire hazards, the Proposed Project would adhere to the recommendations within the Fire Protection Plan (FPP), including guidance on water supply, fire access roads, property line setback distances, building construction, fire protection systems, defensible space, vegetation management, and owner-maintained fuel modification, thus reducing fire risks and ensuring compliance with applicable Safety Element policies.

With regard to flood hazards, as mining is completed in phases and selected areas backfilled, the site would be restored with a widened river channel. The increased flow capacity from widening would be partially offset by the increase in riparian vegetation on the site through reclamation. At most locations, the combined effect would result in a lower water surface elevation during a 100-year flood. At the limited locations where the water surface elevation would be slightly increased compared to the existing conditions (e.g., at the far southwest corner of the site and southwest of the Steele Canyon Road Bridge where the low-flow channel curves toward the southern portion of the site), it would occur within the boundaries of the subject property, in accordance with County and FEMA flood policies and therefore would not increase flood risk. As documented in the Project's Drainage Study (Chang Consultants ~~2021a~~2024a), the Project also would not result in increased velocities or in increase in flow rates to off-site areas.

Noise Element. The Project has completed an acoustical study, as described in EIR Subchapter 2.4. The Project would employ a variety of design features, including recessing activities below ground surface to the extent feasible, locating initial excavation activities further from sensitive receptors, and using a conveyor belt rather than haul trucks for a majority of material hauling on site, to minimize noise impacts to noise-sensitive land uses in the vicinity. Additionally, mitigation in the form of berms and/or noise walls would ensure that the Project would comply with applicable County noise standards. Potential vibration from Project activities would be minimal.



Conclusion. As indicated above, the Proposed Project would be compliant with the majority of the General Plan goals and policies applicable to the Project. While the Project would comply with applicable goals and policies to the extent feasible for an extractive use and would implement a comprehensive reclamation plan to ensure that mined areas are backfilled and revegetated with appropriate plant communities, impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources would be potentially significant during the duration of mining and reclamation activities. Implementation of the proposed Reclamation Plan and revegetation of subphase areas would ensure that the Project would comply with the applicable goals and policies of the General Plan and long-term visual impacts would be less than significant. Accordingly, impacts associated with the goals and policies of the County General Plan would be **less than significant**.

#### *Valle de Oro Community Plan*

Community Character Element. Existing on-site landscaped vegetation and mature trees along Willow Glen Drive would be maintained to the extent feasible during mining activities to provide vegetative screening. Approximately 67 existing trees would be removed to construct the Project entrance and Willow Glen Drive improvements. A six-foot-high, chain-link fence would be installed along Willow Glen Drive that would further block views of Project components and result in visual effects. The Project would implement a Conceptual Landscape Screening and Entrances Plan to provide landscaping adjacent to the Project entrances and additional screening of the plant area and parking lot from Willow Glen Drive. Riparian and upland vegetation would be sequentially installed during the mining and reclamation phase, which would replace existing non-native vegetation with native vegetation.

Land Use Element. The Project has submitted a MUP application to permit proposed mining activities, as well as a Reclamation Plan to specify the standards to which the site must be reclaimed upon completion of mining activities in accordance with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975.

Approximately 66 acres (23 percent) of the Project site, primarily located along the southern property boundary, would not be disturbed during mining and reclamation, providing a buffer between the ~~short-term~~ operational activities and the existing off-site land uses. In addition to the retention of existing trees and provision of additional landscaping near the Project entrances as noted above, berms and/or noise walls would provide screening for residences.

Disturbance of sensitive habitats during mining activities would be limited to approximately 4.2 acres; the remainder of the site that is proposed for mining is currently characterized as developed/disturbed. The existing Sweetwater River channel and the majority of extant native vegetation would be avoided. Areas disturbed by resource extraction would be progressively reclaimed to open space as mining proceeds. As part of the Reclamation Plan, the Project would create new on-site trails that would be accessible by the public and local residents. On-site restored biological open space required for biological mitigation would be dedicated for preservation in perpetuity. Implementation of the proposed Reclamation Plan would result in placement of approximately 142.6 acres of preserved, rehabilitated, and restored habitat into on-site open space.

Mobility Element. The reclaimed areas would include the 5-foot-wide trail through the site that would connect to other planned and existing trail features, supporting an overall system of non-motorized recreational trails within the region.

Conservation Element. The existing Sweetwater River channel that traverses the site would be maintained and widened to an average width of 250 to 300 feet. These improvements would result in the same overall natural drainage pattern and topography as under current conditions. The majority of extant habitat on the site would be retained and areas not identified for mining would be improved through removal of invasive species. Following mining, reclamation by subphase would take place, which would result in revegetation with native species. Mitigation measures are required in order to minimize or compensate for potential impacts to sensitive biological resources, including measures to protect sensitive avian species that may be present in the vicinity.

The Project would require substantially less groundwater use than the golf courses require under existing conditions, with no Project-related water draw proposed upon the completion of reclamation. The Project would include de-siltation basins that would prevent sediment from leaving the site while allowing water to pass through to existing drainage features. Mining and reclamation grading would direct runoff from the disturbed areas towards the basins. The existing Sweetwater River channel would be avoided and silt fences would be installed five feet from the outer edge of each side of the channel. Operations would implement erosion control measures in accordance with set criteria to reduce on- and off-site erosion. These measures include monitoring soil movement, arresting gullies or rills using straw mulch and hay bales, and installing silt fencing, compacting soils with equipment, and re-grading as necessary. Measures to avoid contamination from equipment operations and maintenance also would be enforced.

Proposed safety lighting would be designed to adhere to the County LPC; lighting would be shielded to direct light downward. Similarly, Project-related air pollution sources (dust and other emissions) have been identified and reduced through Project design.

Scenic Highways Element. The Valle de Oro Community Plan identifies Willow Glen Drive as a unique and important scenic highway corridor. While some trees would be removed to construct the Project entrance and Willow Glen Drive improvements, replacement trees would be planted prior to initiation of Phase 1 to provide visual screening. The Project would implement a landscape screening and entrances plan to supplement existing screening vegetation along Willow Glen Drive and help screen the plant from viewers north of the site. Screening mesh would be installed on the six-foot-high, chain link security fencing that would be installed along the property boundary with Willow Glen Drive. While Project components and contrasts would be screened from view near the processing plant, new fencing and mesh screening would restrict available views and reduce visual quality along the Willow Glen Drive corridor. Views towards the Project site along the approximately 0.14-mile-long parking lot frontage of Willow Glen Drive are limited in length by mature landscaping installed near the clubhouse. However, the visual change in the Project site and associated visual landscape experienced from Willow Glen Drive would be notable, strong, and perceived negatively. Thus, the Project would not protect and enhance the appearance of the scenic landscape experience from Willow Glen Drive, resulting in a conflict with scenic highways policies. Long-term changes within the Project site post reclamation would contribute positively to the valued views experienced along Willow Glen Drive. At maturity (approximately five to seven years post reclamation for each phase), the visual character of the

Project site would be enhanced with native vegetative cover and appropriate landforms for site drainage. Scenic views experienced along the segment of the roadway bordering the Project site would be an extension of the continuous pattern elements of the surrounding visual environment within the river valley, and ultimately, the Project would be consistent with scenic highways policies in the long-term condition.

Public Safety Element. With regard to natural drainage areas, the existing river channel would be protected by silt fencing, retaining its current flow volume/recharge capacity, and sediment basins would trap and slow on-site runoff during mining activities.

Noise Element. The site would be temporarily used for mining activities, with equipment usage that would generate sound. All Project noise would be mitigated to less than significant levels, as described in EIR Subchapter 2.4.

Rancho San Diego Specific Plan. Two parcels in the southwestern portion of the Project site, totaling approximately 32 acres, are included in the Rancho San Diego Specific Plan area. These areas were incorporated into the Specific Plan area as an extension of the Cottonwood Golf Club in order to replace the fairways affected by the Steele Canyon Road bridge over the Sweetwater River (County 2013). These parcels would be used to improve the Sweetwater River channel and increase the area of native riparian vegetation within the channel. No mining activities are proposed within the parcels subject to the Specific Plan. The part of the channel on these parcels is currently a choke point for water as it exits the property and the existing vegetation is dominated by invasive plant species. Expanding the channel at this location and revegetating the area would improve drainage and replace non-native, invasive species with native species. Mitigation measures are required in order to minimize or compensate for potential impacts to sensitive biological resources, including measures to protect sensitive avian species that may be present in the vicinity. The end use for both parcels would be open space, consistent with the Specific Plan.

Conclusion. As indicated above, the Proposed Project would be compliant with the majority of the Community Plan goals and policies applicable to the Project. While the Project would comply with applicable goals and policies to the extent feasible for an extractive use and would implement a comprehensive reclamation plan to ensure that mined areas are backfilled and revegetated with appropriate plant communities, impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources would be potentially significant during the duration of mining and reclamation activities. Implementation of the proposed Reclamation Plan and revegetation of subphase areas would ensure that the Project would comply with the applicable goals and policies of the Valle de Oro Community Plan and long-term visual impacts would be less than significant. Accordingly, impacts associated with the goals and policies of the Valle de Oro Community Plan would be **less than significant**.

### *Zoning Ordinance*

Mining activity would be located within the S90 zone. Extractive use can be permitted within the S80 and S90 classifications if the MUP is approved; however, no mining activity would occur in the S80 classification. Extractive uses in the S88 classification is restricted to site preparation, which allows the removal of materials when it is secondary to the future use of the site. As indicated above, Project activities in this area would be limited to expanding the Sweetwater River

channel and replacing non-native, invasive species with native species. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and impacts would be **less than significant**.

### 3.1.6.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Cumulative land use and planning impacts may occur when project-specific impacts evaluated in an EIR are combined with the effects of other projects which, when examined individually, may not be considered to be significant. All of the projects depicted on Figure 1-16 in Chapter 1.0 of this EIR were included in review of the potential for significant cumulative land use impacts.

The identified cumulative projects would represent land uses that are disparate from the Project, as they are related to residential, commercial, and institutional (church and school) uses. The majority of the identified cumulative projects are relatively small (e.g., 2 to 25 residential units). Three of the cumulative projects, however, are larger projects that would require General Plan Amendments (GPAs), including Aventine at Sweetwater Springs, Ivanhoe Ranch, Skyline Retirement Center, and Sweetwater Vistas. A summary of each of these projects relative to their consistency with applicable goals and policies is provided below:

- The Aventine at Sweetwater Springs project proposes the development of 92 detached condominium units on an approximately 10.57-acre existing shopping center site in the Spring Valley Community Plan area, approximately 2.5 miles southwest of the Project site. The GPA would change the General Plan Land Use Designation from General Commercial to Village Residential (VR-10.9). The Regional Category of Village applies to the property; no change to the Regional Category is proposed with the Project. The GPA would also amend the Spring Valley Community Plan maps and text to be consistent with the project. A Specific Plan Amendment would amend the Rancho San Diego (Sweetwater-Avocado) Specific Plan (SP-74-01) to amend the land use designation from General Commercial to Multi-Family Residential, for consistency with the proposed GPA. As described in the CEQA Initial Study, the project would differ slightly with respect to the existing allowed land use types and allowed density, but was found to be generally consistent, if not complementary, with applicable goals, policies, and objectives contained within the General Plan.
- The Ivanhoe Ranch project proposed immediately south of the Proposed Project would include a GPA to allow 120 residential units, as well as 24.97 acres of biological open space and a private 1.78-acre park with a parking lot. The project would change the existing General Plan land use designation from Open Space (Recreation) and Semi-Rural (SR-10) to SR-2 and SR-0.5, allowing for a maximum density of one unit per 0.5-acre or 2 acres, respectively. As described in the Initial Study circulated with the NOP for the Ivanhoe Ranch project, the project would be generally consistent with the rural residential lot development to the south and is not expected to result in conflicts with surrounding land uses. However, because the project would result in development of a vacant lot and would change the on-site land use from agricultural to residential with supporting utilities/services and recreational uses, there is a potential for conflicts with applicable plans and policies.
- The Skyline Retirement Center project, which was approved by the County Board of Supervisors on January 29, 2020, proposes a GPA, Rezone, and MUP for the development

of a full-service, senior living facility with multiple levels of care and facilities. The GPA is proposed to change the Regional Category to Village, change the Land Use Designation to Village Residential 30 (VR-30); and change a map in the Valle de Oro Community Plan to reflect the Land Use Designation change to VR-30. According to the CEQA Initial Study, the proposed project would not conflict with the Valle De Oro Community Plan and was found to be consistent with the proposed General Plan Regional Category and Land Use Designation, as well as applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations.

- The Sweetwater Vistas residential development project is located on a 52-acre site within The Pointe Specific Plan Area in the Spring Valley Community Plan Area, approximately 2.5 miles southwest of the Project site. The project would construct 218 residential units and conserve 27.9 acres of biological open space. The GPA is proposed to change the land use designation from Specific Plan to Village Residential (VR15) and Open Space Conservation (OS-C). As described in the CEQA Addendum, while the Sweetwater Vistas project would eliminate the resort uses originally proposed in the Specific Plan and would not be a mixed-use project, the proposed Sweetwater Vistas project would not conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Each of the identified cumulative projects must be found consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the County General Plan and any applicable community plans in order to be approved. As summarized above, with the exception of the Ivanhoe Ranch project that is currently undergoing the CEQA review process with an NOP dated April 15, 2021, all of the GPA projects within the cumulative study area were found to comply with applicable plans and policies. Accordingly, cumulative impacts associated with land use and planning would not be cumulatively considerable and would be less than significant.

#### **3.1.6.4     *Significance of Impacts***

Based on the analysis provided above, while the Project would result in ~~short-term~~ conflicts with goals and policies related to aesthetics during mining activities, the environmental effects of which are evaluated in Subchapter 2.1 of this EIR, the Project would comply with applicable goals and policies to the extent feasible for an extractive use and would implement a comprehensive reclamation plan to ensure that mined areas are backfilled and revegetated with appropriate plant communities. The Project would be consistent with all applicable goals and policies in the long-term reclaimed condition. As such, the Proposed Project would have less than significant impacts related to land use and planning.

#### **3.1.6.5     *Conclusion***

Based on the Project design features and above analysis, the Proposed Project would have less than significant Project-specific or cumulative impacts related to land use and planning.

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