

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT INFORMATION FOR THE READER

This document consists of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the proposed Cottonwood Sand Mine Project (“Project” or “Proposed Project”). The EIR text is preceded by the List of Persons, Organizations, and Public Agencies that Commented on the Draft EIR (DEIR) dated December 2021 and Recirculated DEIR (RDEIR) dated June 2023; Comments and Responses on the DEIR and RDEIR; and the Statement of Location and Custodian of Documents.

The DEIR was previously circulated for public review from December 16, 2021 to February 28, 2022 (a 75-day public review period). All interested persons and organizations had an opportunity during the DEIR’s public review period to submit their written comments on the DEIR to the County of San Diego (County). In response to comments received from the circulation of the DEIR, revisions were made to the Project Description and the Biological Resources Analysis of the DEIR. Due to these additions and changes, the County recirculated an RDEIR for an additional public review and comment period that included: (1) summary chapter; (2) recirculated Chapter 1.0, *Project Description*, and recirculated Subchapter 2.2, *Biological Resources*. The RDEIR was recirculated for a 60-day period from June 29, 2023 to August 21, 2023.

The major additions or changes associated with the RDEIR included the following:

- New information regarding the number of truck haul trips generated by the Proposed Project. Specifically, after circulation of the DEIR, it was determined that an additional 58 truck trips per day, averaged over the 10-year operation of the Proposed Project, would be required to import suitable backfill material to achieve the Project’s proposed post-reclamation elevation. These additional 58 truck trips per day were not disclosed in the DEIR.
- New information regarding the potential for significant impacts to biological resources. Specifically, as a result of comments received during the public review and comment period for the DEIR, additional surveys were completed. These surveys determined there was a potential for the Project to impact three additional special status plant species (Palmer’s goldenbush [*Ericameria palmeri* var. *palmeri*], San Diego sagewort [*Artemisia palmeri*], and southwestern spiny rush [*Juncus acutus* ssp. *Leopoldii*]), and six additional special status animal species (white-tailed kite [*Elanus leucurus*], small-footed myotis [*Myotis ciliolabrum*], Townsend’s big-eared bat [*Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens*], western mastiff bat [*Eumops perotis*], western red bat [*Lasiurus blossevillei*], and Yuma myotis [*Myotis yumanensis*]).
- New biological resources mitigation measures, and revisions to existing mitigation measures, that reduce potential impacts to biological resources to less than significant. Specifically, Mitigation Measures BIO-11, BIO-12, and BIO-13 were added.

Summary of Final EIR Revisions

Following the DEIR and RDEIR public review periods, and once all comments received had been considered, revisions to the Project Description and environmental analysis were incorporated into the FEIR in strikeout/underline format. These refinements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Revisions to Objective 4 detail Project objectives for the maintenance of the Sweetwater River.
- Clarifications in the Project Description describe the maintenance of erosion control features as part of the Reclamation Plan, the types of rodent traps to be used, the potential for removal of trees, the type of fencing to be installed to allow for wildlife passage, and avoidance of San Diego Gas & Electric facilities.
- Figures 1-5a, 1-5b, 1-6a, and 1-6b have been updated with the final plot plan and reclamation plan.
- Figure 1-12 has been updated for consistency with the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan.
- Table 1-2 has been updated to reflect a later mining initiation date and clarify that Phase 4 is not part of the mining duration (10 years) since it involves the final work for reclamation rather than an active mining phase for the entire duration.
- Clarification that a 100-foot limited building zone would be established adjacent to the Biological Open Space easement areas.
- Revisions to Subchapter 2.2, *Biological Resources*, to provide definitions of federal and state special status species designations, and clarification that Sweetwater River low-flow channel would be maintained and the floodplain would be expanded to range in width from approximately 400 to 700 feet.
- Figure 2.2-9 has been updated to exclude erosion control features from areas that would be preserved in a Biological Open Space easement held by the County post-reclamation. The acreage of the Biological Open Space area has been revised throughout to exclude the erosion control features (149.0 acres).
- Revisions to Mitigation Measures BIO-3, BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-7, BIO-9, and BIO-14 were made but do not substantively affect the requirements of these measures.
- Revisions to Subchapter 2.4, *Noise*, and Sections 3.1.1, *Air Quality*, 3.1.2, *Energy*, 3.1.3, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, and 3.1.7, *Transportation/Traffic*, provide the methodology and results of technical studies addressing the addition of 58 truck trips per day, the associated increase in VMT, and an additional conveyor belt for backfill material. No new impacts were identified; however, Mitigation Measure M-N-1 and Figures 2.4-3a through 2.4-3c have been revised to adjust required noise barrier heights.

- The results of long-term ambient noise measurements have been provided.
- Additional information about the potential for mining equipment to generate vibration has been provided.
- Regulatory setting updates were made in Sections 3.1.1, *Air Quality*, 3.1.2, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, and 3.1.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.
- New information about the loss of sequestered carbon from tree removal has been provided and is included in the quantification of Project-related greenhouse gas emissions.
- Clarification of the safety of AggreBind has been provided.
- An additional guideline for the determination of the significance of water quality impacts has been evaluated.
- Revisions to the Drainage Study to assess water transfer rates during Loveland Reservoir releases in combination with precipitation events, as well as the results of the Streamflow Infiltration to Groundwater report evaluation of potential impacts to surface water or groundwater, have been summarized.
- A final engineering level hydrology analysis would be required as a condition of approval.
- The existing setting related to Willow Glen Drive has been updated. The Project would construct an acceleration lane between the ingress and egress Project driveways and would provide an Irrevocable Offer of Dedication along the Project frontage as needed to accommodate the ultimate roadway classification of Willow Glen Drive.
- The discussion of Project alternatives incorporates changes to the Project impact analysis noted above, as applicable.
- Other edits captured in the Final EIR include editorial revisions, minor corrections for accuracy, references to new or updated technical studies, and global edits to incorporate the revisions described for the RDEIR and FEIR above.

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