
5.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The visual impacts of the project are determined by assessing the visual resource change due to the project and predicting viewer response to that change. Visual resource change is the sum of the changes in visual character and the changes in visual quality.

The first step in determining visual resource change is to assess the compatibility of the project with the visual character of the existing landscape. The second step is to compare the visual quality of the existing visual resources with projected visual quality during construction and after the project is completed.

The viewer response to project changes is determined by viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity to the project. The resulting level of visual impact is determined by combining the severity of resource change with the degree to which people are likely to oppose or be disturbed by the change.

The measurement of impacts are based on the principles utilized in the most widely used visual resource assessments including the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects; the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) Visual Management System; and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) modified Visual Management System. The concepts contained in these three visual assessment documents are comprehensive, have long-term acceptance, and have analogous approaches to visual resource assessment. Moreover, The County has developed visual resource assessments and standards based on the concepts supported by these three widely used approaches.

5.1 GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE

The visual impact assessment will be based on an evaluation of the project impacts on several categories, including: visual quality, landform quality, view quality and community character.

The following significance guidelines are used in this analysis to determine whether a significant impact to visual resources will occur as a result of project implementation. A project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it results in any of the changes listed below. Conversely, if a project does not propose any of the following, it will generally not be considered to have a significant effect on visual resources.

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1. The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.
 2. The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.
 3. The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
 - a public road,
 - a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
 - a scenic vista or highway, or
 - a recreational area.
 4. The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

5.2 KEY VIEWS

The proposed elements that have the potential for changing the visual environment from the key views selected for project analysis include the mining operations, golf course pond to be filled, seven locations where the portable processing plant will be sited during the four project phases, access/haul road, stockpiles, berms, temporary transmission lines, slope revegetation areas, and post-reclamation revegetated project site.

Eighteen key views were selected for consideration to depict representative views of the project features as seen from within the project viewshed. The key views were comprehensively evaluated and seven key views that best depicted the visual impacts of the project from the perspective of different viewer groups at different points in time during the project duration were selected (Key Views 1 through 7). Figure 3 shows the location of the 18 key views in relation to the project site. Figures 17a, 17b, and 17c contain photographs from the 18 key views. The comprehensive evaluation of the all 18 key views based on the viewer groups, and potentially visible project features is summarized in Table 4.



Key View 1

Trail at Lake Jennings Campground, looking north-northwest



Key View 2

From El Monte Road, looking northwest



Key View 3

From El Monte Road, looking northwest



Key View 4

Looking east up valley from northern valley slope



Key View 5

From Willow Road, looking southeast



Key View 6

From Blossom Valley-El Monte Park Trail, looking west

Figure 17a
Key Views



Key View 7
Looking west across valley from El Monte Road



Key View 8
From Lake Jennings Campground Trail, looking northeast



Key View 9
From trail behind residences on Lazy Creek Road, looking northwest



Key View 10
From Quail Canyon Road, looking northwest



Key View 11
From Lake Jennings Campground, looking northwest



Key View 12
From informal trail between residential lots at the end of Pebble Creek Lane, looking north

Figure 17b
Key Views



Key View 13

From El Monte Road, looking north-northwest



Key View 14

From El Monte Road, looking northwest



Key View 15

From El Monte Park-Blossom Valley Trail, looking west



Key View 16

From Willow Road, looking southwest



Key View 17

From Willow Road, looking northeast



Key View 18

From Willow Road, looking east

Figure 17c
Key Views

Photorealistic visual simulations are prepared to determine and assess the magnitude of visual impacts. The photorealistic simulations of the project features as visible in the seven key views developed through the use of a three-dimensional (3D) computer model of the landform and project elements including the portable processing plant and other equipment. This digital terrain model was then superimposed on the existing site photographs by matching the view point of the terrain model and the photograph, using global positioning system (GPS). Additional texture, color, details, and shadowing were added through the use of computer rendering software to create an accurate and realistic appearance for each simulation.

The simulations represent visual impacts at various times during the life of the project, including pre-excavation, excavation, reclamation, and post-reclamation. The key views (existing conditions) and key views (simulation depicting project visual impacts) are illustrated in Figures 18 (a and b) through 24 (a and b). These figures include information related to the exact location of the view point and the point in time and project elements the simulation illustrates. The main feature of the post-reclamation view is the revegetated project site, including the revegetated slope in the excavation area. Reclamation would include planting of riparian vegetation to willow scrub on the slopes above the channel. The strip surrounding the mined areas would be revegetated with upland habitat to help blend it with the surrounding vegetation. As each phase is completed, final landforms would be established and the disturbed area planted with the native species, to be identified in the Reclamation Plan and Revegetation Plan. Revegetation would be implemented where temporary impacts occur to address Reclamation Plan, County, and resource agency requirements. This revegetation would result in a net increase in native habitat acreage onsite and improve overall native habitat quality and functions. At the completion of reclamation and revegetation activities and with achievement of the success criteria for revegetation, almost no exposed soil would be visible.

Simulation 1, Key View 1 (Figures 18a and 18b)

Orientation

The Key View 1 photograph was taken from a trail at Lake Jennings Campground at the top of the ridge south of the project. This key view is representative of public views available from the Lake LU and is angled north-northwestward to encompass a portion of Phases 3 and 4 and Plant Site 4. However, the physical features of the entire project would not be present in this view at one time.

Table 4 Key Views Analysis and Simulation Details											
Key View (KV) Number	Directional Description of Viewpoint	View Type	Project Phase Areas Visible	Project Elements Visible	Viewer Groups	Viewer Sensitivity to Change	Duration of View	Quantity of Viewers	Project Site Distance, as seen from viewpoint	Notes	Recommended for Simulation
1	Looking north-northwest down valley from top of valley slope	Public	3 and 4	DS, WP, SC, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	Trail Users	High	Short-moderate; Long	Low; High	Middleground	Represents the public view from a trail at the Lake Jennings campground, most elements of the project would be visible.	Recommended
2	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	N/A	N/A	Vehicle Occupants on El Monte Road	High	Moderate	High	Background	Represents eastbound public view; Existing riparian vegetation obscures view to project.	Recommended
3	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	1 and 2	RV, DS, WP, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	Vehicle Occupants on El Monte Road	High	Moderate	High	Middleground	Public view reflecting part of northeastern portion of project.	Recommended
4	Looking east up valley from northern valley slope	Public/Private	1	DS, WP, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	Vehicle Occupants on Willow Road; Lowland Residents	High	Long	Moderate	Middleground	Represents views for residences and drivers on Willow Road.	Recommended
5	Looking southeast across valley from Willow Road	Public	3	DS, WP, SC, RD, ST, OT, LT, FY	Vehicle Occupants	High	Moderate	High	Foreground	Represents views for drivers on Willow Road.	Recommended
6	Looking west across valley from Blossom Valley-El Monte Park Trail	Public/Private	1, 2, 3, 4 (post-reclamation)	RV	Trail Users/Ridgeline/Slope Residents	High	Moderate-Long	Low	Middleground	Public view from local park trail; comprehensive angle with most of the project visible. Also represents views similar to those for Ridgeline/Slope Residents.	Recommended
7	Looking west across valley from El Monte Road	Public	4	N/A	Vehicle Occupants	High	Moderate	Very High	Middleground	Public view, encompasses southwestern portion of project	Recommended
8	Looking northeast up valley from Lake Jennings Campground Trail	Public	1	N/A	Trail Users; Lake Jennings Campground Patrons	High; Moderate	Long; Moderate	Low; Moderate	Middleground	Public view from private park; would only see approximately half of project.	Not Recommended
9	Looking northeast down the valley from top of valley slope	Private	1	N/A	Ridgeline/Slope Residents	High	Long	High	Background	Landforms to the west block views of most project features, KV 1 is similar but more comprehensive	Not Recommended
10	Looking northwest down valley from Quail Canyon Road	Private	1	N/A	Ridgeline/Slope Residents	High	Long	High	Middleground	Similar to KV 9, landforms to the west block most project feature locations. KV 1 is similar but more comprehensive.	Not Recommended
11	Looking northwest over western half of valley from Lake Jennings campground	Public	4	N/A	Lake Jennings Campground Patrons	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Middleground	Public view from private park. Encompasses western portion of project.	Not Recommended
12	Looking north up valley from top of valley slope	Private	1	N/A	Ridgeline/Slope Residents	High	Long	High	Background	View limited by landforms. KV 1 is similar but more comprehensive.	Not Recommended
13	Traveling west on El Monte Road, looking north-northwest	Public	1	N/A	Vehicle Occupants	High	Short	Very High	Middleground	Low angle view; east of most of the project site; existing vegetation and landform to west blocks most views.	Not Recommended
14	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road/residential area	Public/Private	1, 2	N/A	Vehicle Occupants; Valley Residents	Moderate; High	Short; Long	Moderate; Very High	Middleground	Similar to KV 13 but closer to project elements. KV 3 and KV 2 are similar and more comprehensive.	Not Recommended
15	Looking west across valley from El Monte Park-Blossom Valley Trail	Public	1, 2, 3	N/A	Trail Users	High	Long	Low	Middleground	Similar to KV 6 but at a lower elevation along the same trail. The lower angle reduces the contrast of project elements.	Not Recommended
16	Looking southwest down valley from Willow Road	Public	1, 2, 3	N/A	Vehicle Occupants	High	Moderate	Moderate	Foreground	Low angle of view but most of valley is visible; good alternative to KV 4	Not Recommended
17	Looking northeast up valley from Willow Road	Public	1, 2, 3	N/A	Vehicle Occupants	High	Moderate	Moderate	Foreground	Low angle of view but most of valley visible; good alternative to KV 5	Not Recommended
18	Looking southeast across valley from Willow Road	Public	4	N/A	Vehicle Occupants	High	Moderate	Moderate	Middleground	Similar to KV 17 but farther from project elements, many of which are blocked by existing vegetation	Not Recommended

Note: Shading indicates a simulation was prepared.

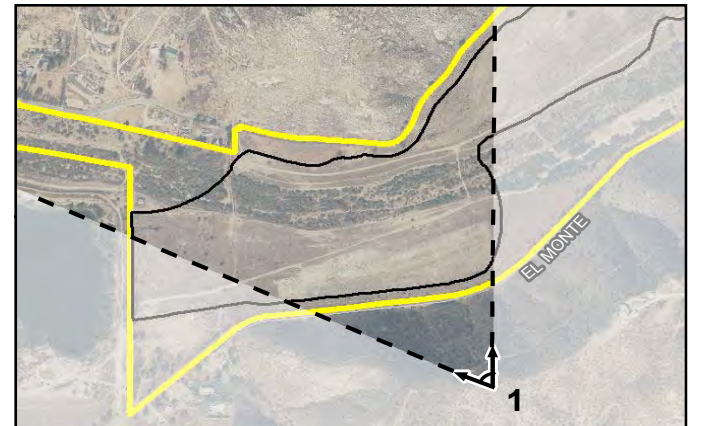
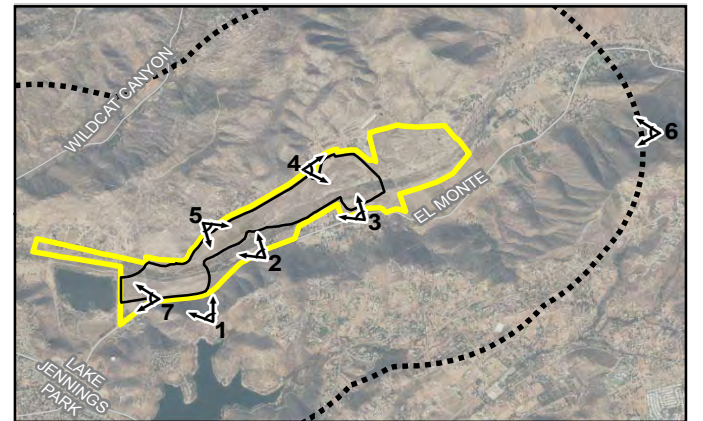
Table Key: Project Elements Visible
RV: Slopes and Riparian Vegetation
DS: Drop Structure
WP: Processing Wash Plant

SC: Storage Container and Scales
RD: Access/Haul Road
ST: Stockpiles
B: Berms
OT: Office Trailer
LT: Security Lighting
FY: Fenced Yard

Duration of View
Very Short: Under 30 seconds
Short: 30 seconds to 10 minutes
Moderate: 10 minutes to 1 hour
Long: 1 hour to 12 hours

Quantity of Viewers
Low: 0 to 10 persons
Moderate: 10 to 50 persons
High: 50 to 100 persons
Very High: Over 100 persons

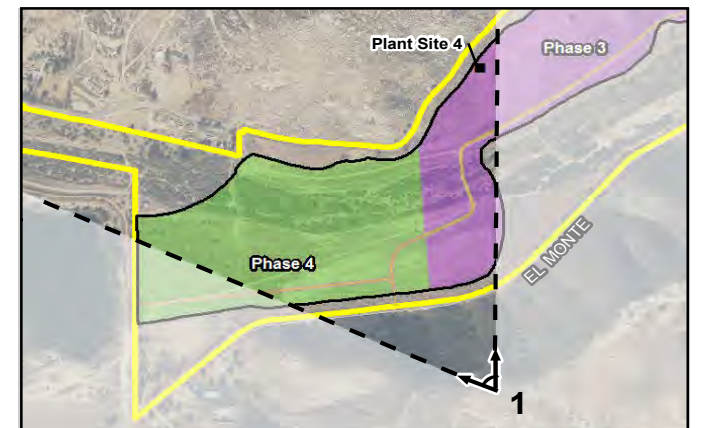
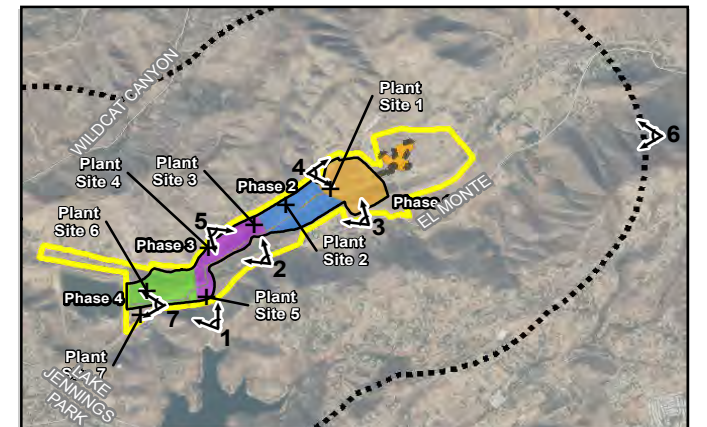
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Existing Perspective

- Trail at Lake Jennings Campground
- 772 feet above sea level
- 32.87° Latitude/-116.89° Longitude
- Located south of Proposed Project
- Looking down valley (west) from top of ridge
- Public view
- Lowland Disturbed, Riparian River Channel, Lowland Residential, and Undisturbed Canyon Slopes LUs

Figure 18a
Key View 1 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- Project Year 9
- Phase 3 excavation activities
- Processing Plant Site 4
- Phase 4 pre-excitation
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway
- Phase 4, Type "C" Primitive Trail

Figure 18b
Key View 1 Simulation

The photograph encompasses the Lowland Disturbed and Riparian LUs within the project site. Willow Road is visible across the valley from the viewer. Some portions of the Lowland Residential LU are visible in the background. Undisturbed Canyon Slopes comprise most of the background of the photograph, while more distant hills comprise the background behind Undisturbed Canyon Slopes. The foreground is made up of brown and green vegetation.

Existing Visual Character and Quality

Currently, the river valley in the view consists of flat areas covered with low-growing vegetation cut through by a swath of darker-green, taller trees, as seen on Figure 18a. The view is characterized by natural, undulating lines. Green and brown vegetation dominates the view; although the light colored rock formations across the valley on the canyon slopes also are present, adding to the natural colors. The valley floor and adjacent slopes are dominant in the view, and are in scale with each other providing high continuity as well.

The visual quality of the view is high. The riparian vegetation and undisturbed slopes, as well as the lowland disturbed areas have high unity and intactness. The slopes and the green vegetation along the river also are highly vivid.

Mining and Reclamation

Phase 3 excavation activities and Plant Site 4 are visible in the middleground at right of view, in the Key View 1 Simulation. The features shown on Figure 18b reflect 9 years after project initiation and include the portable processing plant project elements, associated equipment, haul road and cut slopes resulting from excavation activities in Phase 3. The Phase 3 project elements would be in this location for approximately one year. No reclamation from previous phases is visible in this view. The eastern extent of Phase 4 is located in the center of the view.

Post-Reclamation

Reclamation of completed Phase 3 and Phase 4 would be visible in the middleground of the Key View 1. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. This view would show the revegetation completed in Phases 3 and 4 with a healthy incrementally maturing natural wild land free of undesirable invasive species. The background hillside and immediate foreground would remain undisturbed.

Simulation 2, Key View 2 (Figures 19a and 19b)

Orientation

Key View 2 is a photograph taken from El Monte Road, northeast of Key View 1. This photograph was taken in the valley rather than on the ridgeline, therefore the angle of the view encompassing the project site is much more oblique than Key View 1, and looks more directly west than Key View 1. Key View 2 encompasses the project site that would be affected by Phase 3 of the project.

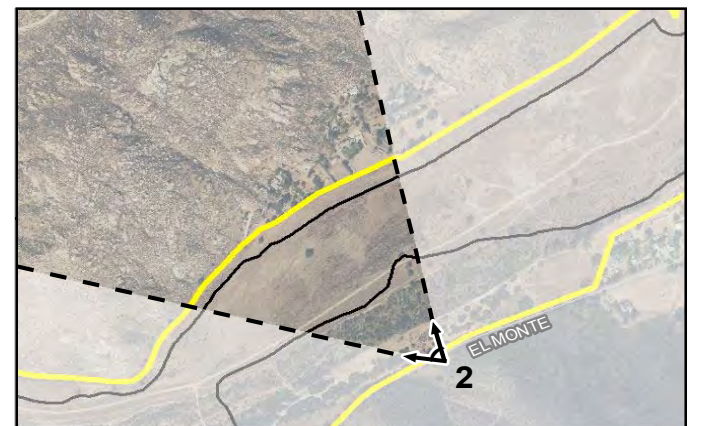
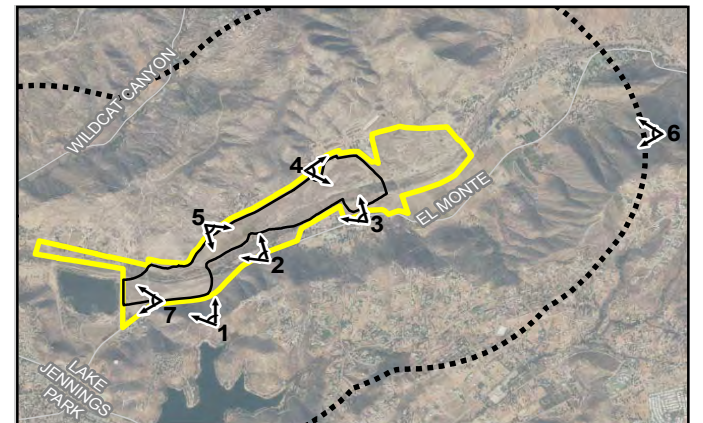
Key View 2 represents a public view available to vehicle occupants on the south side of the valley and future trail users who would be riding or hiking on the El Monte Valley Trail. Vehicle occupants on El Monte Road may be residents of Lowland Residential areas, workers at the agricultural fields and dairy east of this point, or traveling to or from El Monte County Park. Key View 2 encompasses fewer LUs than Key View 1 due to the oblique angle. Riparian and Lowland Disturbed vegetation comprise the majority of the view and the background is Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, located above the north side of the valley.

Existing Visual Character and Quality

Green and brown vegetation colors dominate the view in Figure 19a. The vegetation has fine textures, in contrast to the coarse rocky slopes in the background. The view has high unity and intactness, since it is divided between the natural vegetation of the river area and the natural rocks and plants on the mountain slope. The vividness is moderately high, with the rocky nature of the slope providing the most memorable element of the view. Overall, Key View 2 has high visual quality.

Mining and Reclamation

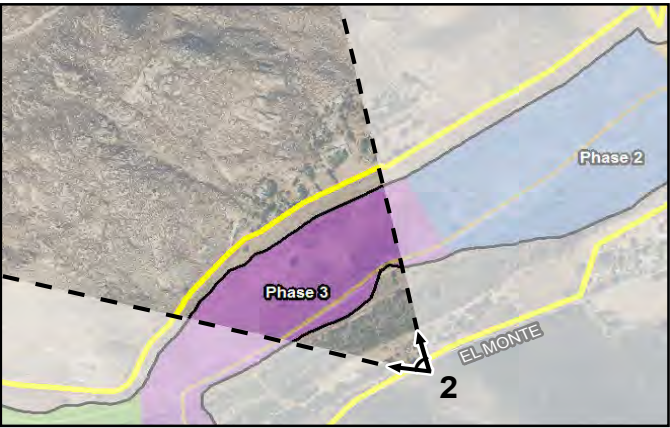
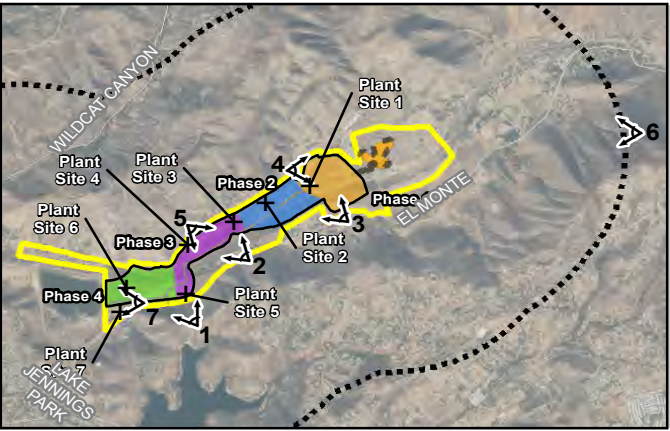
Project features at Key View 2 include clearing of soil and vegetation and excavation activities associated with Phase 3; including project elements (portable processing plant project elements, associated equipment, haul road, and cut slopes). Following excavation, stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. Viewers from this perspective on El Monte Road would not observe excavation, reclamation, or revegetation activities associated with the project.



Existing Perspective

- From El Monte Road
- 457 feet above sea level
- 32.87° Latitude/-116.88° Longitude
- Looking northwest across the valley
- Public view
- Riparian River Channel, Lowland Disturbed, and Undisturbed Canyon Slopes LUs

Figure 19a
Key View 2 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- No phases are observed from this perspective because of the low elevation of the key view
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway

Figure 19b
Key View 2 Simulation

Post-Reclamation

Project revegetation results associated specifically with Phase 3 would not be visible from Key View 2. The mature vegetation and angle of view screen the viewer from project-related visible impacts.

Simulation 3, Key View 3 (Figures 20a and 20b)

Orientation

The Key View 3 photograph was taken from El Monte Road, looking northwest across the valley. This view is representative of public views from El Monte Road. Viewers in this location are vehicle occupants on El Monte Road and may be residents of Lowland Residential areas, workers at the agricultural fields and dairy east of this point, or traveling to or from El Monte County Park.

Lowland Agriculture, Lowland Disturbed, Riparian River Channel LUs comprises the majority of the view and the background is Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, located on the north side of the valley. Lowland Residential structures are located along the base of the canyon slopes, across the valley.

Existing Visual Character and Quality

Green and browns of vegetation on the valley floor and on the canyon slopes across the valley dominate the colors within Key View 3, shown on Figure 20a. The slopes in the background of the view are more uniformly vegetated than the slopes present in Key Views 1 and 2, although rocky slopes are visible at the left side of the view. The Lowland Residential structures in the middleground are varied, single story, spread out, and intermixed with mature vegetation. A small number of neatly rowed grape vines are visible in the foreground, adjacent to El Monte Road. The view consists of curving and gently undulating lines and vegetation with medium textures. The portions of residential roads visible in the middleground consist of straight lines and curves and because they are mostly unpaved, do not contrast with the natural setting. A few power transmission towers are visible along the ridgeline across the valley, in the background of the view.

Mining and Reclamation

Key View 3 project activities would include clearing of soil and vegetation and excavation activities associated with Phase 1 and Phase 2; including project elements (portable processing plant project elements, associated equipment, haul road, and cut slopes). Following excavation, stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants.

The cleared riverbed and vegetation and exposed soil during Phase 1 and 2 would be minimally visible from this view. The stockpiles and berms associated with Plant Site 2 would be located center-left of the view. These project elements would remain in this location for approximately three years during Phase 2.

Post-Reclamation

Reclamation of completed Phase 1 and 2 would be visible in the middleground of Key View 3. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. The Key View 3 Simulation (Figure 20b) shows revegetation completed in Phase 1 at two years after planting (right side of view) and revegetation of Phase 2 at less than one year after planting (left side of view). The landforms in the foreground and background would be undisturbed by the project.

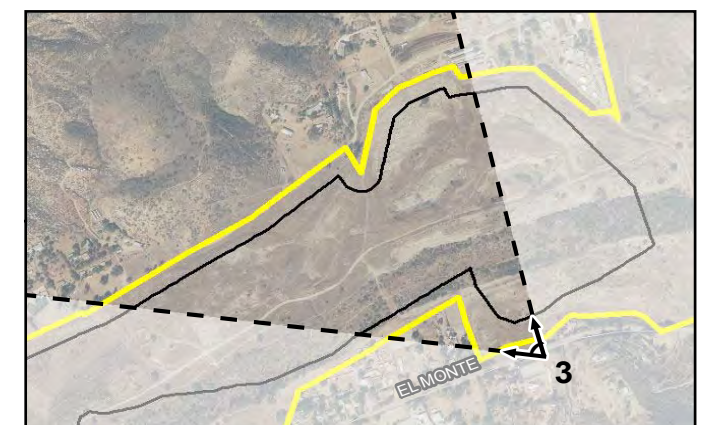
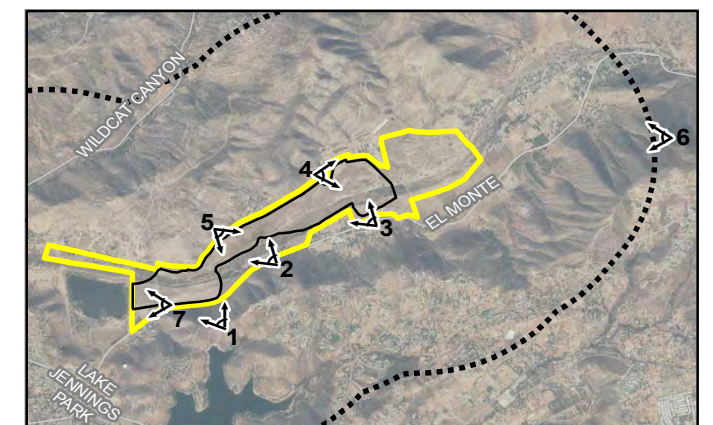
Simulation 4, Key View 4 (Figures 21a and 21b)

Orientation

The Key View 4 photograph is angled eastward, up the valley. The Van Ommering Dairy is visible on the valley floor on the left side of the photograph. The previously excavated golf course pond is located in the photograph as well, although it is not visually prominent. This view is representative of private views from the Lowland Residential LU and public views from Willow Road. Willow Road is an unpaved road and serves the dairy and residential units on the north and east sides of the project site. The fence in the foreground is located on the south side of Willow Road.

Viewers in this location include vehicle occupants and residents or workers. It is also representative of views that may be available to trail users on the future San Diego River Trail, which when developed would extend through El Monte Valley approximately parallel to Willow Road. No other public recreational areas are located along Willow Road east of this point.

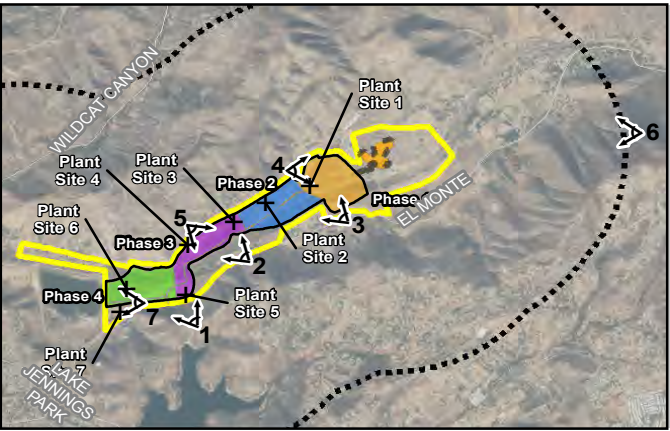
The Lowland Residential /Agriculture LU is located across the valley from Key View 4. The Riparian River Channel LU is not highly visible since the vegetation within the river is sparse at this end of the valley. The Canyon Slopes LU comprises the background, and Ridgeline Residential is visible, though not prominent, at the top of the slopes on the right side of the view.



Existing Perspective

- From El Monte Road
- 480 feet above sea level
- 32.88° Latitude/-116.87° Longitude
- Looking northwest across the valley
- Public view
- Lowland Agriculture, Lowland Disturbed, Riparian River Channel, and Undisturbed Canyon Slopes LUs

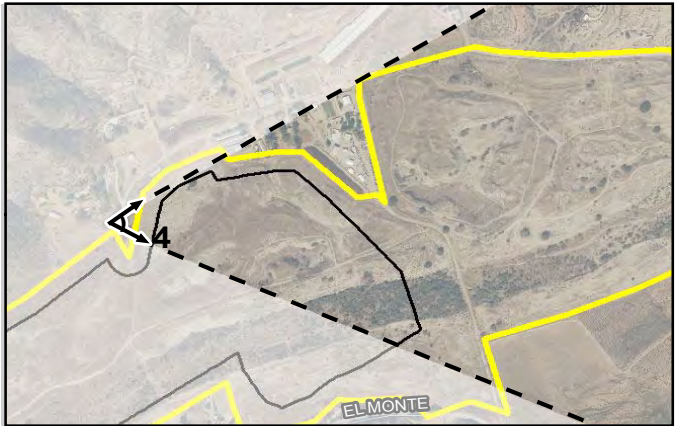
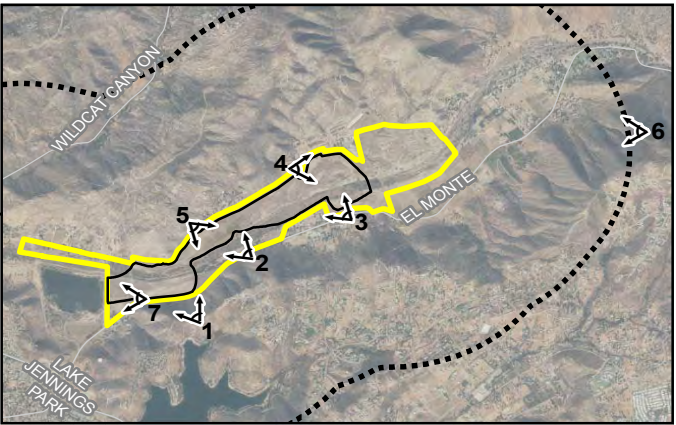
Figure 20a
Key View 3 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

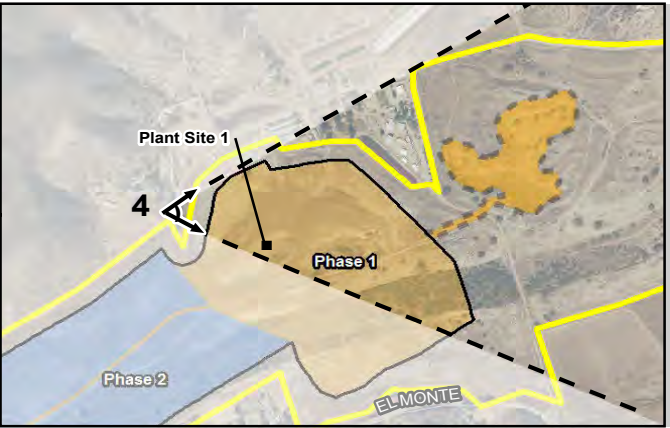
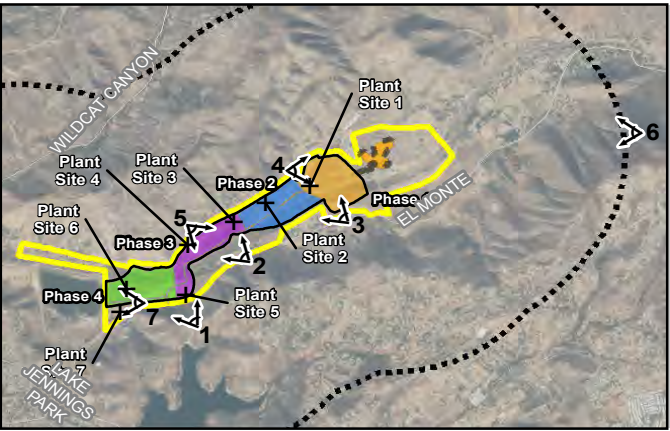
- Project Year 6
- Phase 2 excavation activities
- Phase 1 reclamation
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway
- Phase 4, Type "C" Primitive Trail

Figure 20b
Key View 3 Simulation



- Existing Perspective
- From Willow Road
 - 468 feet above sea level
 - 32.88° Latitude/-116.88° Longitude
 - Looking east up the valley
 - Public and private views
 - Lowland Agriculture, Lowland Residential, Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, and Ridgeline Residential LUs

Figure 21a
Key View 4 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- Project Year 3
- Phase 1 excavation activities
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway
- Phase 4, Type "C" Primitive Trail

Figure 21b
Key View 4 Simulation

Existing Visual Character and Quality

Greens and browns of valley floor vegetation and on distant slopes dominate the colors within the view, as shown on Figure 21a. The slopes that make up most of this background are more uniformly vegetated than the slopes in Key View 1 and Key View 2, although the rocky slopes are visible at the left side of the view. Brightly colored flowers and darker green ornamental vegetation is seen in the foreground. The view consists of curving and gently undulating lines and vegetation with medium to coarse textures.

The view is highly continuous with just enough diversity to create interesting patterns, although the area is not highly memorable or vivid. Overall, the intactness, unity, and vividness are moderately high in Key View 4.

Mining and Reclamation

The Key View 4 Simulation (Figure 21b) shows the project features at the end of Phase 1, three years after project initiation. Excavation activities and the processing plant elements are visible in the middleground of the view, excavation is nearly complete, and reclamation has yet to begin. During the beginning of the extraction process, haul roads for bringing material from the extraction areas to the dry golf course pond would extend from the west to the ponds. However, this road would be of similar color and texture as the existing ground surface where vegetation is sparse and Willow Road. The haul road would create a small degree of contrast and would not be highly visible from Key View 4.

The proposed features of the other phases of the project would not be visible from Key View 4 because of a small hill directly to the west. From Key View 4 vegetation removal, portions of the drop structure, exposed soil, equipment and trucks, and the processing plant and stockpiles would be visible. As the project progresses and Phase 1 is completed, revegetation would commence.

Post-Reclamation

Reclamation of completed Phase 1 would be visible in the middleground of Key View 4. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be been revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. The landforms in the foreground and background would be undisturbed by the Project. The previously excavated golf course pond would be filled and planted, which would create more unity and continuity across the valley floor.

Simulation 5, Key View 5 (Figure 22a and 22b)

Orientation

The Key View 5 photograph was taken from Willow Road west of Key View 4 and north of Key View 1 and Key View 2. This portion of Willow Road is directly south of and at the base of the hill where Louis Stelzer County Park is located. Willow Road at this point is approximately the same elevation as the valley floor, although the river areas in the center of the valley are lower. From Key View 5, the viewer would see the project site at an oblique angle.

Key View 5 is representative of views available to vehicle occupants, who may be residents or workers in the Lowland Residential or Lowland Residential/Agricultural LU. The photograph is angled to the southeast and shows the Lowland Disturbed LU in the foreground. The fence between the viewer and the valley features is located on the south side of Willow Road. The Canyon Slopes LU along the south side of the valley comprises the background and some houses within the Ridgeline Residential LU are visible at the top of the hills in the background.

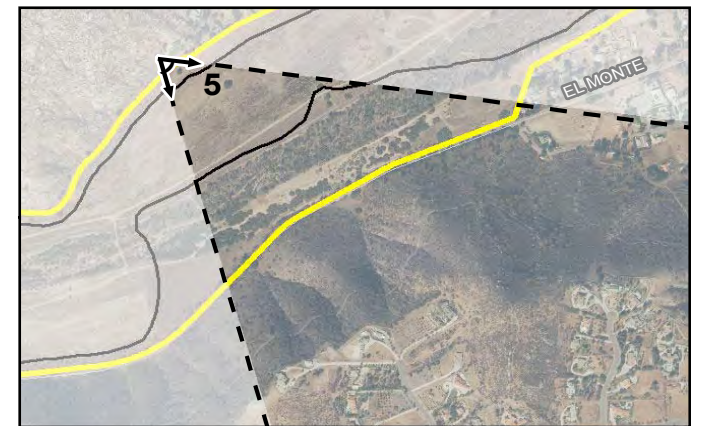
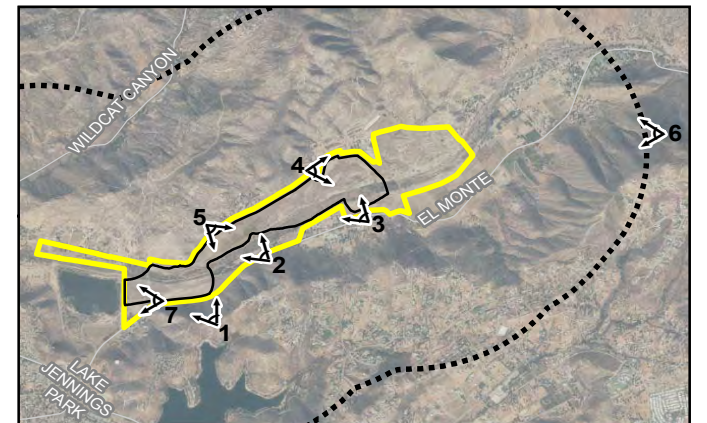
Existing Visual Character and Quality

As with the other key views, the visual environment of Key View 5 is dominated by the green and brown vegetation of the valley floor and background slopes, as shown on Figure 22a. Rocks are visible on the slopes and houses are located on the ridge, but overall, the moderately smooth textures and undulating lines dominate the view. The visual features within the scene are continuous, with little diversity visible. No highly contrasting or out of scale elements are present. The intactness and unity of the view are high. While there are no memorable individual features in the view, the vividness is moderately high due to the visual pattern of the combined components.

Mining and Reclamation

From Key View 5, along Willow Road, most of Phase 3 would be visible (refer to Figure 22b). Phases 1 and 2 would be located east of Key View 5, to the viewer's left. As shown in the simulation, a portion of the haul road and berm surrounding the processing plant would be visible from Key View 5 but the most visible feature would be the processing plant and stockpiles, which would be located in the left of the view.

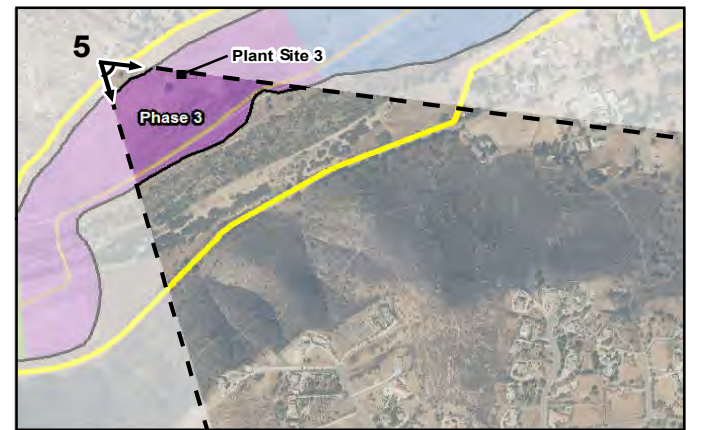
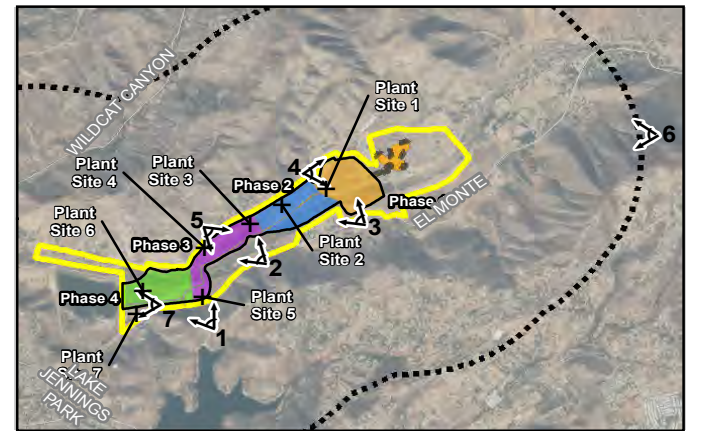
After Phase 3 is complete, the processing plant and stockpiles would be moved to a point west (to the right) of the view and just outside the frame of the photograph. Vegetation within the Phase 3 would be cleared and exposed soil and mining equipment would be highly visible from Willow Road at Key View 5. The vegetation in the foreground and background would remain undisturbed for the length of the project, since these areas are located within the 150-foot road buffer and slopes beyond the project footprint.



Existing Perspective

- From Willow Road
- 436 feet above sea level
- 32.87° Latitude/-116.89° Longitude
- Looking southeast across the valley
- Public view
- Lowland Disturbed, Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, and Ridgeline Residential LUs

Figure 22a
Key View 5 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- Project Year 8
- Phase 3 excavation activities
- Processing Plant Site 3
- Phase 4, Type "C" Primitive Trail

Figure 22b
Key View 5 Simulation

Post-Reclamation

The final project features visible in the middleground of Key View 5 are limited to the reclamation and revegetated landscape of Phase 3. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. Existing vegetation would be removed as the project begins. However there are a few trees in the portion of the valley encompassed by Key View 5, and those that would be removed are far from the viewer and while distinct, are not visually prominent. The landforms in the foreground and background would be undisturbed by the project.

Simulation 6, Key View 6 (Figures 23a and 23b)

Orientation

The Key View 6 photograph was taken from an overlook along El Monte Park Trail, above El Monte County Park, and north of the Ridgeline Residential area of Blossom Valley. This point is accessible from El Monte County Park up a steep hillside or via the trail with a trailhead between residences along Creek Hills Road. Key View 6 is one and one-half miles east of the project site and provides a comprehensive view of El Monte Valley. This view represents private views from nearby residences and public views available to trail users.

The Lowland Residential/Agricultural LU located in the eastern end of the valley (including Ommering Dairy at the right of the view) is closest to the viewer, with Lowland Disturbed LU at the western end of the valley. The Riparian River LU winds through the center of the valley and is distinguished by the dark band of vegetation edged by the lighter green, less dense vegetation of the other LUs. The Canyon Slopes LU is visible on both sides of the valley and Suburban LU areas are barely visible in the background, beyond the valley and below the mountains and hills that make up the far background horizon line.

The previously excavated golf course pond is visible from this point but not visually prominent, to the left of the Van Ommering Dairy facility, between the buildings and riparian vegetation.

Existing Visual Character and Quality

The colors that make up the visual environment of Key View 6 are more varied than within the other key views, from bright greens of agricultural areas to dark purples of distant native vegetation and the atmosphere-dulled blues of the background ridges, as shown on Figure 23a. Tans, browns, and yellow-tinged greens fill the valley, while tan rocks are scattered across the dull green hillside of the northern side of the valley. Undulating horizon lines and the curving

line of the mass of river vegetation provide the dominant visual characteristic of the majority of the valley view, although geometric grids in agricultural areas provide some diversity within the view as well.

Despite the contrast created by the diversity of uses in the valley, the area closest to the viewer has compositional harmony and moderately high integrity, as well as high memorability. Overall, the view from Key View 6 has high visual quality due to its high vividness, moderately high intactness, and moderately high unity.

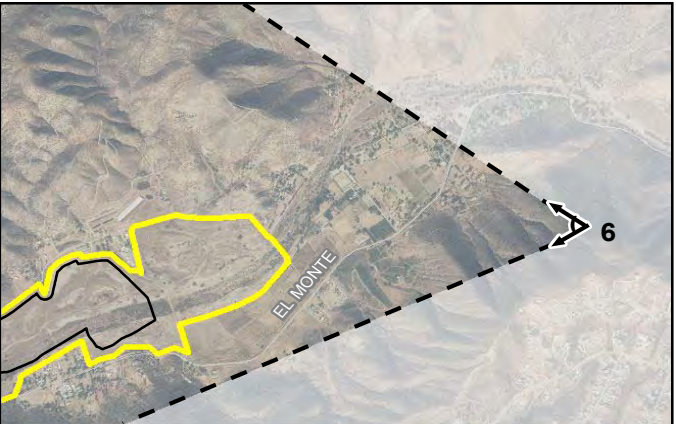
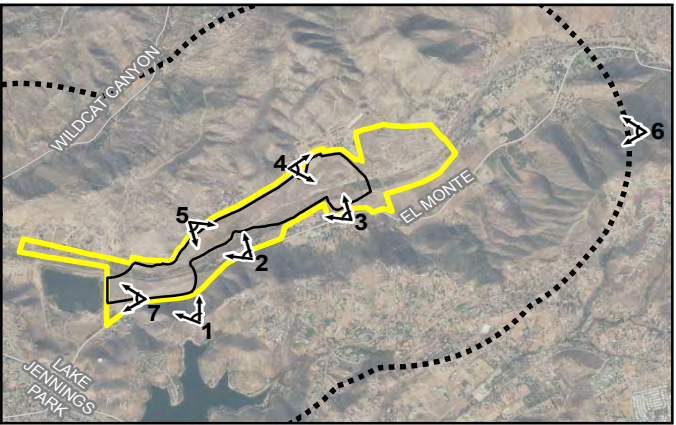
Mining and Reclamation

Viewers at this location would see all phases of the mining operation because Key View 6 has a clear view of the El Monte Valley. However, because of the planned phasing of the project, the entire project footprint would not be graded, unvegetated, or exposed at one time.

Portions of the project footprint would be cleared of vegetation during each phase and exposed soil, equipment, processing plant, stockpiles, haul roads, and vehicles would be visible from this view. The mining operation would first be located east of the western edge of Phase 1 and then move westward, away from the viewer, with each phase.

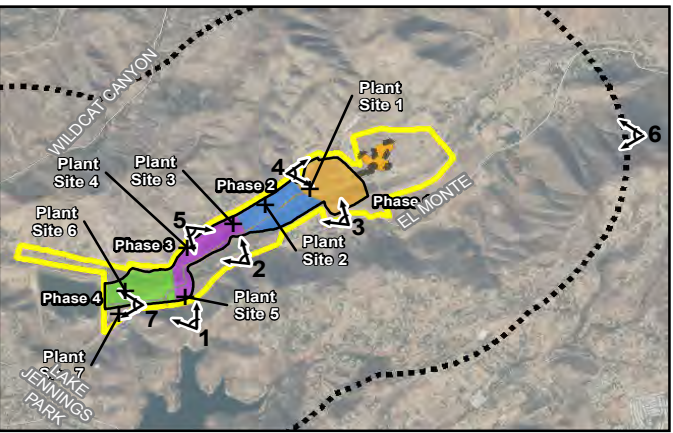
Post-Reclamation

Almost all of the project would be visible from Key View 6, as shown in Figure 23b. The Key View 6 Simulation reflects the view at 16 years past project initiation. The reclamation of each phase would be complete. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. The reclaimed project site visible in this view has the appearance of a healthy, incrementally maturing, natural wild land, which is free of undesirable invasive species. The slopes on either side of the valley from this view would remain undisturbed.



- Existing Perspective
- From El Monte Park Trail, above El Monte County Park
 - 1,401 feet above sea level
 - 32.88° Latitude/-116.84° Longitude
 - Two miles east of the Proposed Project
 - Public/Private views
 - Lowland Residential, Lowland Agricultural, Lowland Disturbed, Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, Suburban, and Ridgeline Residential LUs

Figure 23a
Key View 6 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- Project Year 16
- All phases (post-reclamation)
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway
- Phase 4, Type "C" Primitive Trail

Figure 23b
Key View 6 Simulation

Simulation 7, Key View 7 (Figures 24a and 24b)

Orientation

The Key View 7 photograph was taken from westbound El Monte Road, less than 0.75 miles east of Lake Jennings Road, north of and at the base of the hill below Lake Jennings. This view looks westward, away from El Monte Valley. Existing utility lines cross the valley and Ridgeline Residential structures are seen on the top of the hillside to the left of the view.

This represents public views for vehicle occupants along El Monte Road, most of whom would be residents of Lowland Residential LU or recreational users leaving El Monte Park. Key View 7 encompasses Lowland Disturbed LU areas and a portion of the Riparian River LU. Canyon Slopes and Ridgeline Residential LU areas comprise the background of the view and some roofs of Lowland Residential LU houses at the eastern edge of the Suburban LU are visible as well, across the valley from the viewer, and at the base of the slopes.

Existing Visual Character and Quality

The Key View 7 photograph shows mostly brown and green vegetation, with little variation as to color and texture, although the rocks on the hillside in the background provide some variety of texture and color (refer to Figure 24a). The riparian vegetation is not highly visible, although some trees stand out in the view. The dominant elements are the valley floor, and canyon and rocky background slopes.

Mining and Reclamation

The Key View 7 Simulation reflects the project 11 years after project initiation; during Phase 4 mining activities (refer to Figure 24b). Phase 4 would be the only portion of the project visible from Key View 7. Due to the low elevation at this view, the exposed soil and much of the project's operational elements would not be highly visible until Phase 4, when the western portion of the project site would be cleared and grading and mining operations would begin. The final location of the portable processing plant (Plant Site 7) is shown in the center-right of the simulation.

The haul road and pad on which the processing plant would be located would be placed on a level pad at ten feet below the existing grade and would be edged with a berm that would be eight feet tall above existing grade. El Monte Road at the point Key View 7 was taken is a few feet higher than the valley area where these features would be placed. The stockpiles and processing plant equipment would be taller and therefore visible over the berm.

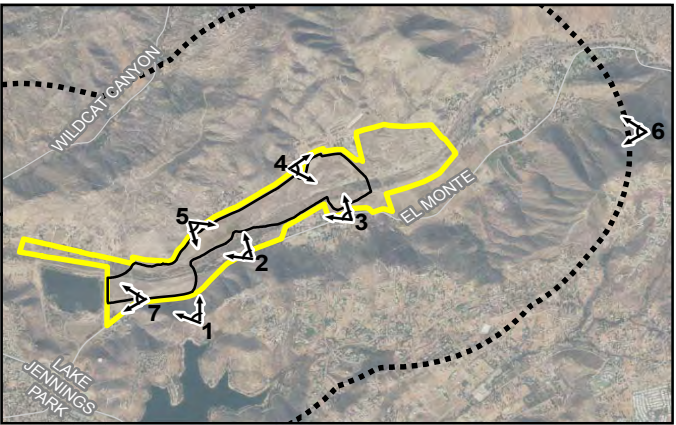
Post-Reclamation

Reclamation of completed Phase 4 would be visible in the middleground of Key View 7. Stabilized post-extraction landforms have been revegetated with a diverse native seed mix and container plants. This view would show the revegetation completed in Phase 4 and the appearance of a healthy, incrementally maturing, natural wildland that is free of undesirable invasive species. The project would result in a positive visual impact in Key View 7 because it would introduce native vegetation and habitat to this portion of the valley, which is currently disturbed lowland habitat. The vegetation in the foreground and slopes in the background would remain undisturbed.

5.3 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL CHARACTER AND VISUAL QUALITY

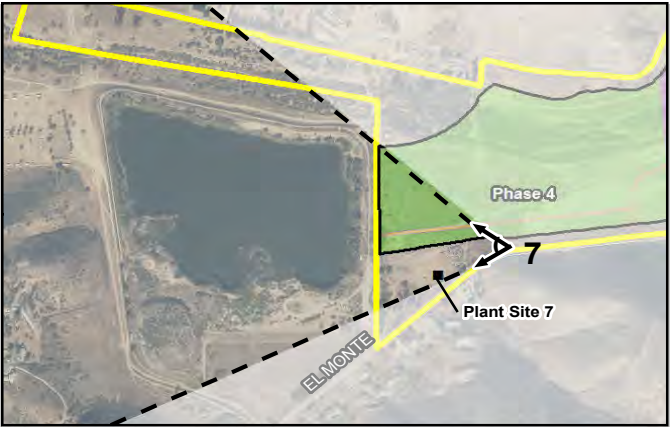
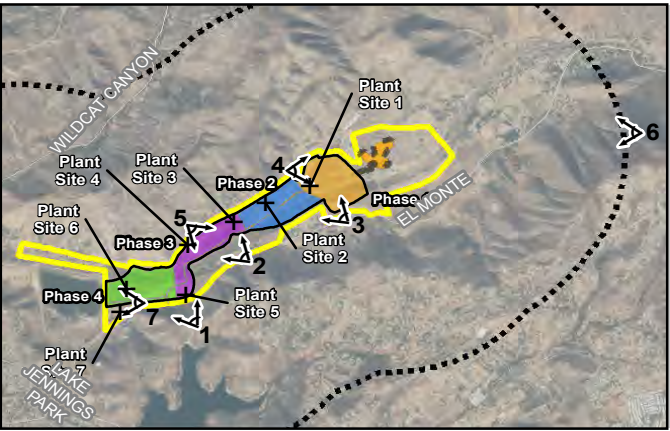
The visual impacts resulting from the changes made by the project are determined by assessing the visual resource change and predicting viewer response to that change. The resulting level of visual impact is determined by combining the severity of resource change with the degree to which people are likely to oppose the change. The LUs are the basis of characterization for describing a visual setting and are the basis for determining character and quality of visual resources. Visual impacts are considered in accordance with the four significance criteria outlined in Section 5.1.

The primary visual elements that the project would introduce into views of the valley would be site clearing, mining equipment, grading and exposed soil, processing equipment and stockpiles, reclamation and revegetation activities and, eventually, the post-reclamation restored habitats and open space.



- Existing Perspective
- From El Monte Road
 - 451 feet above sea level
 - 32.87° Latitude/-116.89° Longitude
 - Looking west
 - Public views
 - Lowland Residential, Riparian River Channel, Undisturbed Canyon Slopes, Lowland Disturbed, Suburban, and Ridgeline Residential LUs

Figure 24a
Key View 7 Existing Conditions



Simulated Environment

- Project Year 11
- Phase 4 excavation activities
- Processing Plant Site 7
- Phase 1, Type "D" Pathway

Figure 24b
Key View 7 Simulation

5.3.1 Assessment of Visual Character

The assessment of visual character considers the compatibility of the proposed project with the visual character of the existing landscape. Analysis is provided per each of the four significance guidelines outlined in Section 5.1.

1. *The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.*

Mining and Reclamation

The existing visual character and quality of the valley, as shown in the key views, is mostly high, with moderately high to high vividness, moderately high to high intactness, and high unity. The project would affect the Lowland Disturbed LU and Riparian River Channel LU directly with the introduction of exposed soils, active construction equipment and activities, and other man-made elements that would contrast with the existing character of the project LUs. The mining and restoration would introduce substantial changes into the views from the other LUs in the project vicinity. The Lowland Disturbed LU currently has moderate visual quality. The Riparian River Channel LU currently has high visual quality which would be modified and negatively affected during mining and reclamation activities.

Post-Reclamation

Post-reclamation, the long-term visual environment of the valley would reflect Riparian and Upland Habitats as described in the Revegetation and Reclamation Plans. The area within the project footprint would be a depression from the excavation activities with a single 20-foot bench around the perimeter, located 20 feet above the bottom of the excavated plain and 10 feet below the current level of existing grade. A low-flow meandering channel would be constructed along the bottom of the excavated pit to direct water westward. The channel would be approximately five feet deep, with a 25-foot-wide bottom and 4:1 slopes. The existing riparian vegetation that signifies the presence of the seasonal river bed and a high water table is dark green and brown and this visual character and quality would return to the valley post-reclamation.

The landforms of the project site would be permanently modified. The cut slopes of the excavated areas would contrast with the existing and surrounding visual character due to the proposed geometric, man-made appearance of the edges. The angular and uniform slopes that contain the project site would aid in the efficiency of the operations, and while the proposed revegetation would serve to obscure the regularly spaced benches and uniformly sloped edges, it would partially soften the overall hard, man-made lines of the proposed final slope and bench

configuration. Because of the prominent man-made slopes, the project would affect the visual quality and character of the site. In addition, the man-made slopes softened by revegetation would partially affect the view of the broader valley and hillsides available to the public and local residents (both in the Lowland areas and Ridgeline areas).

The resulting visual environment of the valley would be different from the existing visual configuration and the final revegetated areas would result in a change to Riparian River Channel and Upland Habitat from the existing Lowland Disturbed and Riparian River Channel LUs. The majority of the plant species currently within the project footprint are non-native due to previous disturbance and changes to the hydrologic regime. Post-reclamation, the project footprint would be revegetated with native plant species and a weed control and maintenance program would be implemented during the multi-year revegetation process. Thus the project would result in a net increase in native habitat acreage and improved overall native habitat quality and functions.

2. *The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.*

Mining and Reclamation

During project operations and before completion of the final phases, the exposed soil, lack of vegetation, removed trees, and presence of processing plant equipment, vehicles, and stockpiles—although confined to the active phase area of the project site—would be highly visible. The exposed soil would contrast highly with the natural greens and browns of the existing vegetation. The soil would have a different texture from neighboring vegetation and the rough rocky slopes abutting the site on the north. The exposed raw edges of the mine's pit and the straight lines and uniform slopes of the finished slopes before revegetation would be more geometric than the naturally undulating lines that compose the current vistas of the valley. The equipment and trucks also would contrast with the surroundings in being brightly colored, metal, complex, man-made objects in a setting that has no visually dominant man-made features. The stockpiles and the processing plant equipment would be larger in scale than any other feature within the valley. Overall, the features of the project operation would be highly contrasting and would cause a substantial change to the visual character of the valley.

Post-Reclamation

No designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings exist within the site or the valley, although the slopes north of the valley are covered with rock outcroppings. The project would lower the elevation of the valley floor and introduce revegetated landscape into the valley. The slopes within the excavated area would be planted with high quality coastal sage scrub that

is consistent with upland habitat. The geometric configuration of the slopes with straight edges, angular corners, and uniform slopes would be highly visible but softened by the revegetation and would change the visual quality of the site slightly.

The project would remove existing trees within the valley. The vegetation that exists in the area contributes to the visual character of the community and the valley. However, the Revegetation Plan would utilize native vegetation, resulting in a riparian and upland palette that would include trees and would replace native trees that would be removed with trees of similar visual character.

3. ***The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from: a public road, a trail within an adopted County or State trail system, a scenic vista or highway, or a recreational area.***

Mining and Reclamation

The project viewshed (Figure 13, above) shows that the project site is visible from a small portion of Scenic Highway 67, and highly visible from El Monte Road and Willow Road, also scenic roadways. The portable processing plant and stockpiles, when located in Phase 3 or Phase 4, might be visible from Scenic Highway 67. The existing vegetation and structures would block most of these features but the top of the highest stockpile might be visible from the portion of the highway shown in the viewshed.

The visibility of the project features from El Monte Road and Willow Road is discussed throughout this report. Key Views 2, 3, 5, and 7 are taken from these roads, and their corresponding simulations represent the changes that would be visible. The processing plants, stockpiles, and other temporary project features would be visible from Scenic El Monte and Willow Roads, as well as the trail above El Monte County Park. The temporary changes the project would introduce a substantial contrast into the vistas from the roads and trails. The temporary changes created by the project in the viewsheds of scenic roadways El Monte Road and Willow Road would be substantial.

Additionally, Key View 6 represents a panoramic vista available from a trail within the County trail system and above a recreational area and the corresponding simulation represents the change that the project would create within that view. The processing plants, stockpiles, and other temporary project features would be visible from the trail above El Monte County Park. The temporary changes created by the project in the vista available from the trail above El Monte County Park would be substantial.

Post-Reclamation

Long-term changes from valued viewpoints would be minimal post-reclamation. Along Highway 67, existing structures and vegetation block views of the project features and the project change would have no impact on the scenic qualities of that roadway. The geometric cut slopes would be a new feature within the valley different from any other visible component. The undulating, natural lines of the existing riparian vegetation within the valley would be straightened slightly to a smoother curvilinear delineation of man-made riparian habitat. The vegetation that would eventually cover the cut slopes and excavated areas would result in high quality riparian and upland habitat, which would help to soften the effect. The final project features would maintain the high visual quality of the Riparian River Channel LU areas. It would change the visual environment of the Lowland Disturbed LU as well, but the resulting visual quality would be high to moderate, with increased vegetation quality and habitat.

4. *The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.*

Table 5 provides a summary of the goals and policies relevant to the long-term project as detailed above in Section 3.3. This table provides a discussion of the ways in which the mining and reclamation phase of the project would be in conformance with applicable policies or goals or how those activities would create a policy conflict. The table also discusses how at completion the post-reclamation phase would either comply or be in conflict with the goals and policies.

Mining and Reclamation

Project features that would be visible while the project is in active mining operation and reclamation include the exposed soil, lack of vegetation, removed trees, and presence of processing plant equipment, vehicles, and stockpiles—although confined to the active phase area of the project site—would be highly visible, highly contrasting, and would a substantial change to the visual character of the valley. Any buildings required for project operations would be temporary structures restricted to a small area of the site, would be smaller in scale than processing plant equipment, and thus not highly noticeable within wider views of the project site and the entire valley. Similarly, temporary utility lines and support poles may be necessary during operations. These utility lines would be above ground but not highly noticeable. The project perimeter buffer areas set back the project features from adjacent roadways and residential areas. The project would operate mainly during daylight hours and any security lighting necessary for emergency purposes would be shielded and conform to lighting design codes. During this time, the features would be out of scale, disruptive, and unnatural.

Table 5
Project Conformance with Goals and Policies

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
San Diego County General Plan			
Conservation and Open Space Element Goal COS-11 Preservation of Scenic Resources	Policy COS-11.1 Protection of Scenic Resources. Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.	During the mining and reclamation period, the project site would be modified by removing vegetation to expose view groups to exposed soil and presence of processing plant equipment, vehicles, and stockpile. Although confined to the active phase area of the project site, these project elements would be highly visible and highly contrasting. During this time, the visual elements of the project would be out of scale, disruptive, and unnatural, and would not conform to this policy.	The project is located in a valley location that does not have prominent scenic features such as ridgelines or dominate landforms or reservoirs. The overall viewshed of the valley, however, is considered a scenic landscape and can be viewed from County Scenic Highway System roads and surrounding trail networks. Post-reclamation, the project site would be restored with native vegetation cover, which would also help landform modifications be softened and better blend into the surrounding visual environment. The visual quality of the Lowland Disturbed LU over which the project is located would be improved to include high quality, native riparian and upland habitat. The visual quality of the Riparian River Channel LU would remain high. The project would conform to this policy post-reclamation.
Conservation and Open Space Element Goal COS-11 Preservation of Scenic Resources	Policy COS-11.2 Scenic Resource Connections. Promote the connection of regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and regional trails.	During mining and reclamation, the project would not obscure designated scenic connections between regionally significant visual resources. Roadways including SR 67, EL Monte Road, and Willow Road would remain open and available to the public. There are no designated or dedicated public trails that currently traverse the project site, thus the mining and reclamation project would not affect the public use of trails. Construction of project trails would occur in both Phase 1 and Phase 4. While the timing of development of other trails proposed in community planning documents around the	Post-reclamation, the project would contribute to the regional and local trail system through the implementation of the trail network as proposed through the reclaimed project site in alignments generally similar to those proposed in the local community trail plan. The visual features introduced into the vista by the project would not be substantially different from the existing features. Once restored, the project site would visually blend with the existing valley viewshed and would not substantially detract from the visual environment that is enjoyed by motorists on

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
		project site may be influenced by the active mining and reclamation phases, the project would not hinder or restrict the future development of these proposed trails. Thus, the mining and reclamation phase would be in conformance with this policy.	local roadways and recreational trail users in the area. Thus, post-reclamation, the project would be in conformance with this policy.
<p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p> <p>Goal COS-11 Preservation of Scenic Resources</p>	<p>Policy COS 11.3 Development Siting and Design. Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative site planning • Integration of natural features into the project • Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape • Minimal disturbance of topography • Clustering of development • Creation of contiguous open space networks 	<p>Due to the nature of the mining project, it is not feasible to creatively design a site plan with substantial retention or preservation of natural features, including vegetation or topography.</p> <p>Although confined to the active phase area of the project site, the visual elements of the project would be out of scale, disruptive, and unnatural,</p> <p>The project would begin the process of creating a contagious open space by phasing the reclamation and revegetation to begin once mining operations are completed in area, as opposed until waiting until all mining is finished.</p> <p>However, during this time, the visual elements of the mining operations would be highly visible and highly contrasting with the existing setting and would not conform to this policy.</p>	<p>The final configuration of the site's most prominent feature (cut slopes) would include straight lines, angular corners, and uniform slopes. These features would be somewhat softened by native vegetation used for reclamation and would be in scale with the existing slopes and ridgelines on each side of the valley</p> <p>The final configuration of the site after project completion would include final landform establishment and plantings of native vegetation species to be identified in the Reclamation and Revegetation Plan, in this way integrating natural features into the project.</p> <p>The project would lower the topography of the valley floor to approximately 4 feet above the groundwater table. The project would not remove any existing rock outcroppings or topologically unique features (none are present on the valley floor and project activities would not affect the adjacent slopes), and the resulting flat surface of the final landform would mimic the relatively flat existing valley floor, lessening the visible effects of the change in topography.</p> <p>The final configuration of the project site would be a restored vegetated undeveloped</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
			<p>area with native habitats generally in the western portion of the valley; therefore there will be no development clustered or otherwise.</p> <p>Additionally, space for future trails has been provided within the easements and project setbacks.</p>
Conservation and Open Space Element			
<p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p> <p>Goal COS-13 Dark Skies</p>	<p>Policy COS-13.1 Restrict Light and Glare</p> <p>Restrict outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.</p>	<p>Temporary nighttime lighting would be installed at the facility for safety purposes. Mining operations would be conducted between the hours of and would not require additional lighting. The project would operate mainly during daylight hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and any security lighting necessary for emergency purposes would be shielded and appropriately directed and conform to lighting design codes to avoid light pollution. Mining operation equipment would not produce glare. Thus, the mining and reclamation phase would be in conformance with this policy.</p>	<p>The project would not include any outdoor lighting at completion. Thus, post-reclamation would be in conformance with this policy.</p>
San Diego County Zoning Ordinance			
<p>Part Five: Special Area Regulations, Section 5200: Scenic Regulation Overlay</p>	<p>Section 5210: Site Plan Review Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and structure placement • Landscaping: Removal of native vegetation shall be minimized and the replacement vegetation and landscaping shall be compatible with native vegetation on or near the area... and shall not obstruct significant views when 	<p>Any buildings required for project operations would be temporary structures restricted to a small area of the site. Processing plant facilities would appear large and out of scale and context within the site.</p> <p>Additionally, project operations would necessitate the clearing of existing native and disturbed vegetation within the current Phase footprint and grading would occur across the entire project site, including</p>	<p>No buildings or structures would be included in the final site configuration. The project site would be restored to a vegetated undeveloped area with native habitats.</p> <p>Although existing native, and disturbed vegetation would be removed within the entire site footprint, the final configuration of the site after project completion would include final landform establishment and plantings of native vegetation species to be identified in the Reclamation and</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
	<p>installed or mature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads, walkways, parking, storage • Above ground utilities: (where necessary) above ground utilities shall be constructed and routed to minimize detrimental effects on the visual setting or screened where practical. • Grading: Alteration of the natural topography shall be minimized and shall avoid detrimental effects to the visual setting of the designated area and the existing natural drainage system. Alterations of the natural topography shall be screened from view...by landscaping and plantings which harmonize with the natural setting. • Lighting: Interior and exterior lighting of building, structures, signs, roads, and parking areas shall be compatible with the lighting employed in the designated area. 	<p>within the natural drainages. The project would phase the reclamation and revegetation to begin once mining operations are completed in area,</p> <p>Temporary utility lines and support poles may be necessary during operations. These utility lines would be above ground but not highly noticeable.</p> <p>The project would require extensive grading of the site during sand extraction and the natural topography of the site would be modified, including natural drainages. The project perimeter buffer areas set back the project features from adjacent roadways and residential areas. Exposed soil would be visible from some locations during project operations.</p> <p>Temporary nighttime lighting would be installed at the facility for safety purposes.</p> <p>However, during this time, the visual elements of the mining operations would be highly visible and highly contrasting with the existing setting and would not conform to the Scenic Regulation Overlay site plan review criteria.</p>	<p>Revegetation Plan. The habitat established post-reclamation would be compatible with vegetation that exists within the remainder of the valley. The slopes on which the vegetation would be planted would be lower in elevation than the surrounding area and viewpoints, and in this way would not obstruct significant views to or from the project site.</p> <p>No roads, parking, or storage would be included in the final site configuration. Trails would be constructed by the project during Phase 1 and at completion of the mining operations in Phase 4.</p> <p>Any utilities installed or rerouted would be visually similar to existing utilities near or crossing the site.</p> <p>The project would alter the natural topography of the valley floor and the San Diego River's natural drainage patterns. The project would lower the topography of the valley floor to approximately 10 feet above the groundwater table. The project would not remove any existing rock outcroppings or topologically unique features (none are present on the valley floor and project activities would not affect the adjacent slopes), and the resulting flat surface of the final landforms would mimic the relatively flat existing valley floor, lessening the visible effects of the change in topography. The final configuration of the site's most prominent feature (cut slopes) would include straight lines, angular corners, and uniform slopes. These features would be somewhat softened by native</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
			<p>vegetation used for reclamation. The proposed vegetation also would screen and cover the slopes such that no exposed soil would be visible and would be compatible with existing undisturbed vegetation within the remainder of the valley.</p> <p>The project would not include any outdoor lighting at completion.</p>
Lakeside Community Plan			
Industrial Goal: Provide for the kind of industrial development that does not detract from the existing rural character of the community.	Policy 11. Require adequate landscaping to screen unsightly industrial uses from surrounding properties and roadways through the use of the "D" Design Special Area Designator.	Measures to reduce the effects of disruptive visual project elements have been included in the project, including vegetative screening. The project has attempted to reduce and minimize unsightly views associated with the mining operations and would conform to this policy. As described in Chapter 6, the project would implement the El Monte Road Screening Plan along certain segments of El Monte Road adjacent to the project site to reduce the temporary visual impacts to vehicle occupants along this roadway.	The project would conform to this policy and provide landscaping in the post-reclamation period as the disturbed areas of the project would be replanted with native vegetation and native trees on the project site would be replaced during revegetation.
Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal: Balance the regional need for construction materials with the community need for freedom from any disturbing effects of sand and gravel extraction.	Policy 1. Permit only controlled extraction operations that have a minimal adverse impact on the environment.	During this time, the visual elements of the project would be out of scale, disruptive, and unnatural, and would not conform to this community policy.	The mining operation would have impacts on the visual environment during active operations and reclamation activities. However, once the mining and reclamation processes are complete, the site would be restored with native vegetative plantings and habitat. Although existing native and disturbed vegetation would be removed in within the entire site footprint, the disturbed areas of the project would be replanted with native vegetation. Native trees on the project site would be replaced during revegetation.
Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal:	Policy 2. Extract sand and gravel in a way that minimizes any harm or	Measures to reduce the effects of disruptive visual project elements have been included	The project includes buffer areas on all sides of the project site that would set the

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
Balance the regional need for construction materials with the community need for freedom from any disturbing effects of sand and gravel extraction.	disturbance to adjacent residents and properties.	<p>in the project, such as setbacks from roadways, vegetative screening, phased reclamation and revegetation to begin once mining operations are completed in area, and the use of minimal lighting. Temporary nighttime lighting would be installed at the facility for safety purposes. Mining operations would be conducted between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and would not require additional lighting. Any security lighting necessary for emergency purposes would be shielded and appropriately directed away from adjacent properties.</p> <p>Thus, the project has attempted to reduce and minimize unsightly views associated with the mining operations and would conform to this policy.</p>	<p>project features at a distance from adjacent roadways and residential areas.</p> <p>The post-reclamation visual features introduced into the vista by the project would not be substantially different from the existing features. The project would not include any outdoor lighting post reclamation.</p>
Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal: Balance the regional need for construction materials with the community need for freedom from any disturbing effects of sand and gravel extraction.	Policy 4. Recognize that extraction of sand and gravel is a long-term process. Allow extraction only on a controlled, coordinated basis, and provide for the rehabilitation of worked out areas.	The project would phase the reclamation and revegetation to begin once Phase I extraction activities are completed and would continue phase by phase as mining operations are completed in each phase, as opposed until waiting until all mining is finished. Mining activities will recover only a portion of available mineral resources and be completed in 12 years.	Although existing native and disturbed vegetation and existing landforms would be removed within the entire site footprint, once the mining and reclamation processes are complete, the site would be restored to a vegetated undeveloped area with native habitats. The disturbed areas of the project site would be replanted with native vegetation and native trees would be replaced during revegetation. The proposed revegetation also would screen and cover the slopes such that no exposed soil would be visible and the revegetated open space would be compatible with existing undisturbed vegetation within the remainder of the valley.
Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal: Balance the regional need for construction materials	Policy 3. Minimize dust, noise, traffic, unsightly views, accumulations of water, steep slopes, and safety and health hazards resulting from sand and	Measures to reduce the effects of disruptive visual project elements have been included in the project, such as setbacks from roadways, vegetative screening, phased	The project includes buffer areas on all sides of the project site that would set the project features at a distance from adjacent roadways and residential areas. The

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
with the community need for freedom from any disturbing effects of sand and gravel extraction.	gravel extraction.	reclamation and revegetation to begin once mining operations are completed in area, and the use of minimal lighting. Thus, the project has attempted to reduce and minimize unsightly views associated with the mining operations and would conform to this policy.	revegetation of the project slopes would help to screen and cover any exposed soil. The post-reclamation visual features introduced into the vista by the project would not be substantially different from the existing features. The project would not include any outdoor lighting at completion.
Conservation, Environmental Goal: Provide a desirable, healthy, and comfortable environment for living, while preserving Lakeside's rural atmosphere and unique resources.	Policy 9. Encourage the preservation of mature trees on public and provide property, and require equitable replacement of those removed.	Due to the nature of the mining project, it is not feasible to creatively design a site plan with substantial retention or preservation of natural features, including vegetation. However, a setback from areas identified as Mature Riparian Woodland would be set at 50 feet from the outer foliage of the trees.	The project would remove existing trees within the project site. However, the Revegetation Plan would utilize native vegetation, resulting in a riparian and upland palette that would replace native trees that would be removed with trees of similar visual character.
Floodplain Goal: Enhance the floodplains as an environmental, recreational and economic asset to Lakeside.	Policy 2. Encourage the utilization of the floodplains outside for recreation, open space, agricultural, and planned extraction of natural resources.	The proposed mining activities would be consistent with the policy of using the area for planned extractions. In addition, the project will make trails accessible for public recreation during the mining and reclamation phases.	The post-reclamation land uses would be consistent with this policy regarding use of the land as open space and for recreational uses. Once the mining and reclamation processes are complete, the site would be restored to a vegetated undeveloped area with native habitats. The project proposes to construct trails along Willow Road, El Monte Road and connections between these trails through project site that would contribute to the expansion of and linkage to the recreational public trail system.
Floodplain Goal: Enhance the floodplains as an environmental, recreational and economic asset to Lakeside.	Policy 3. Avoid the need for artificial drainage structures; utilize natural channels and streambeds, and recharge groundwater supplies with run-off and drainage.	The project would require extensive grading of the site during sand extraction and the natural topography of the site would be modified, including natural drainages. However, the project has been designed in phases to allow natural drainages to stay in place as long as possible and also phase the reclamation and restoration to a native vegetated area to begin once mining operations are completed in area. Thus, the	The project would alter the natural topography of the valley floor and the San Diego River's natural drainage patterns. Although existing landforms would be removed within the entire site footprint, once the mining and reclamation processes are complete, the site would be restored to a vegetated undeveloped area with native habitats and appropriate landforms for site drainage. The restoration would be

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
		project would minimize the amount of time that natural drainages would be disrupted.	consistent with this policy.
Resource Conservation Areas	<p>El Cajon Mountain – El Capitan Reservoir RCA</p> <p>The rocky peaks serve as a scenic backdrop for El Cajon as well as the Lakeside region</p>	<p>As mapped, a segment of the El Cajon Mountain – El Capitan Reservoir RCA extends to the El Monte Valley floor surrounding a large portion of the project site and expands within the boundary of proposed Phases 3 and 4 (see Figure 10). However, none of the resources listed as unique to the RCA are represented in this portion of the site. Project operations would not occur within the RCA Overlay Area until Phase 3 and Phase 4. The project would not create a policy conflict with the RCA.</p>	<p>The proposed revegetation would screen and cover the new slopes such that no exposed soil would be visible. The plant palette also would result in more native habitat area within the valley as compared to existing conditions. Further, the slopes on which the vegetation would be planted would be lower in elevation than the surrounding area and viewpoints, and in this way would not obstruct views to or from the project site. In this way, the project would be visually compatible with the RCA.</p>
Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan			
Trails identified in the plan	<p>Trails proposed within and near the project site include the San Diego River Park Regional Trail (D), El Monte Valley River Trail (131), El Monte/Willow Connector Trail (07), Power Pole Trail (41), Dairy Road Trail (61), El Monte Road Pathway (05), and Willow Road Extension Trail (127). See http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/CTMP/maps/Lakeside.pdf for the Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan map.</p>	<p>There are no designated or dedicated public trails that currently traverse the project site, thus the mining and reclamation project would not affect existing public trails. The project proposes to construct trails along Willow Road, El Monte Road and others internal to the project site that are similar in alignment to those defined in the Lakeside Community Trails and Pathway Plan. While the timing of development of trails proposed by the Lakeside Community Trail and Pathway Plan may be influenced by the active mining and reclamation phases, the project would not hinder or restrict the future development of these proposed trails. Thus, the mining and reclamation phase would be in conformance with this plan.</p>	<p>The project would not preclude future development of the trails and would accommodate space for the San Diego River Regional Trail and the El Monte Valley River Trail within the project easements. The project proposes to construct trails along Willow Road, El Monte Road and connections between these trails through the project site that are similar in alignment to those defined in the Lakeside Community Trails and Pathway Plan. The trails would contribute to the expansion of and linkage to the County's Community Trails Master Plan trail system. The internal trails (Type C Primitive) are anticipated to be approximately 2-3 feet in width within a 20-foot wide easement with a natural soft-surface that would create only a minimal visual element among the revegetated areas. Type D Pathways would be 10-12 feet wide within a 20-foot wide easement. Thus, the post-reclamation phase would be in conformance with this plan.</p>

Table 5 provides analysis of how the visual changes that would result from the mining and reclamation activities would either be consistent or inconsistent with applicable policies. As shown in Table 5, mining and reclamation activities were found to be inconsistent or nonconforming with the following:

County of San Diego General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element

- Policy 11.1: Protection of Scenic Resources
- Policy 11.3: Development Siting and Design.

County of San Diego Zoning Ordinance

- Scenic Regulation Overlay, Site Plan Review Criteria

Lakeside Community Plan

- Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal, Policy 1: Permit only controlled extraction operations that have a minimal adverse impact on the environment.

Post-Reclamation

The visual changes in the post-reclamation period were analyzed for consistency with applicable visual policies and plans. Reclaimed lands would generally consist of natural open space revegetated with native vegetative cover and appropriate landforms for site drainage. Table 5 provides the policy analysis and identified no inconsistencies or nonconformance related to post-reclamation.

5.3.2 Assessment of Visual Quality

Mining and Reclamation

The project would last approximately 16 years and the final configuration of the project site would be completed in four phases. The simulations depict different views of the site at various phases of completion. The project operations would change the Lowland Disturbed LU and Riparian River Channel LU from the existing conditions to have areas that would be temporarily devoid of vegetation. Tall, complex machinery, up to 70-foot tall stockpiles, vehicles and equipment would be visible in addition to the exposed soil and slopes. The visible elements of the project during project operations would create a high level of contrast with the surrounding visual environment, particularly the Lowland Disturbed and Riparian River Channel LUs existing on and next to the site. The visual environment of each project phase during construction would have low visual quality.

The exposed soil of the newly graded slopes and processing plant areas would have little variation in color or texture. The processing plant areas would have a chaotic visual environment

as well. The exposed soil and processing plant areas would be visible for two to four years, depending on the Phase (Refer to Table 1). Additionally, multiple phase areas of the project site and multiple processing plant locations are visible from most of the project viewshed, meaning the exposed soil of multiple phases would be visible from multiple viewpoints. Once each phase is completed, the exposed slopes within the phase would be planted per the Revegetation Plan. The slopes would then evolve from a sandy, graded environment to eventually appear similar to what is shown in the post reclamation simulations. The stabilization of the slopes with riparian habitat would take approximately three years and its full visual quality returning in 5 to 10 years following the start of revegetation.

The whole project site would not be exposed at one time due to the phasing plan for the project operations and the plan to revegetate immediately following each phase. The vegetation within a completed phase would mature as new exposed slopes are created westward, only to then be revegetated as the next phase begins. The plan would allow the plants along the slopes created in Phases 1 and 2 to be fully mature as Phase 3 is completed and Phase 4 is in process. Revegetation of exposed slopes created or expanded within each phase would begin at the end of each phase, as the next is beginning. The vegetation would not immediately cover exposed slopes, however, and until the proposed plants mature, the exposed soil, mining operation vehicles, and processing plant would create a chaotic visual environment. The effects of the high contrast and low visual quality of the mining operations would therefore be visible for up to nine years per phase¹. It is anticipated that planting installed after Phase 4 would take another 4 years to mature after the project mining operations are complete.

Exposed soil and equipment, despite being surrounded by existing or replanted revegetation, would contrast sharply with the existing visual environment of the Lowland Disturbed and Riparian River Channel LUs. These temporary features would have a moderate vividness that would negatively contrast with existing surroundings. They would encroach on the visual environment of the valley areas, creating low intactness. With the temporary features visible, the valley would have low visual coherence and no compositional harmony, resulting in a low visual unity. Overall, the areas affected by each phase, from clearing through operation until the plants are mature, would have low visual quality.

Post-Reclamation

As a result of successful implementation of the Reclamation Plan, the intactness of the visual environment would become high. The geometric banks of the cut slopes softened by revegetation would be partially incongruent with the natural slopes of the valley. Thus, the unity of the valley

¹ This timeframe is based on the duration of Phase 1 (the longest phase) plus five years for visual quality to return due to maturation of plant material installed during revegetation activities.

would be moderate. The resulting vividness of the reclaimed slopes would be moderately high. The overall visual quality of the resulting LU would be moderately high because of the increased coverage of native vegetation and enhanced habitat quality in the valley after reclamation.

Though composed of different elements, the resulting post-reclamation visual quality would increase as compared to the existing moderate level of the Lowland Disturbed LU and be similar to the high level visual quality of the Riparian River Channel LU.

5.4 ASSESSMENT OF VIEWER RESPONSE

The viewer response to project change is the sum of viewer exposure, viewing duration and viewer sensitivity to changes in the visual environment. Viewer exposure identifies who can see the project, from what distance, and how much of the project can be seen by this viewer. Viewer duration is determined by the total amount of persons seeing the project elements, and the length of time that they are exposed to these views. Viewer sensitivity is determined by subjective elements such as a person's understanding of the local visual environment and personal experiences as well as objective elements such as the aesthetic organization of the proposed element and the amount of contrast it has with the local visual environment.

The viewer groups present in the viewshed and surrounding LUs are discussed above, and their anticipated level of response to changes in the visual environment is summarized in Table 2. The specific features these groups would see are as follows.

Vehicle Occupants – Key Views 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 represent typical views available to vehicles on El Monte and Willow Roads. Although not currently possessing striking scenic qualities itself, the openness of the valley floor and the slight difference in elevation between the road and the valley would place changes to the visual environment of the valley in the foreground of the views of vehicle occupants as they travel east. The riparian and upland vegetation that would be planted within the project footprint and on cut slopes would be visible from the roadways on the opposite side of the valley. Most of the mining operations during the four project phases also would be visible from the roadways. The most visually prominent temporary features of the project would be exposed soil, processing plant equipment, and stockpiles. The high level of visual contrast caused by these features within the visual environment of the valley would be noticeable to these viewers.

Vehicle occupants on scenic El Monte and Willow Roads have high sensitivity. Their exposure to views from El Monte Road and Willow Road would be moderately high. Their response to changes in the visual environment is expected to be moderately high.

Trail Users – Key Views 1 and 6 represent views from existing trails near the project site. Since most of the existing trails in the area are higher in elevation than the project site and the valley floor, viewers are expected to see most of the project, including the riparian and upland habitat on the cut slopes created during reclamation. Every aspect of the project during the extraction phases would be visible from the trails, including the soil exposed by cleared vegetation and sand removal and the mining equipment, vehicles, processing plant, and stockpiles, as well as the high level of visual contrast these features would have with the surrounding visual environment.

No officially designated trails exist within the valley floor currently, although hikers and equestrian riders use the area. Permanent trails are proposed to be developed by the project. A portion of the trail network, including the trail along Willow Road would be developed during Phase 1 while the remaining trails would be constructed following completion of the mining operations in Phase 4. Users of these trails would see the finished configuration of the valley. Trail users are highly sensitive to changes in the visual environment, because they are usually seeking scenic vistas and have a moderate to long view duration. Their numbers are low, however, especially compared to residents and vehicle occupants. Overall, their exposure is moderately high.

Lake Jennings Campground Patrons – Key View 1 is a simulation of the view from a trail at the Lake Jennings Campground. Campground patrons would have comprehensive views of the valley and the project features if they hiked up to a high elevation. The riparian and upland habitat and cut slopes softened by revegetation would be prominent visual features after project completion.

During project operation, campground patrons would see most of the operation and equipment, including the exposed soil, vehicles, the processing plant, and the stockpiles, as well as the high level of visual contrast these features would have with the surrounding visual environment.

The awareness of some frequent users of the campground would be higher due to the opportunity to observe this area every time they visit, however Lake Jennings campground patrons overall would have moderate sensitivity and exposure to changes in the visual environment.

Ridgeline/Slope Residences – Ridgeline Residences would have views similar to those shown in Key View 4. Slope Residences would have views similar to Key View 1 as well. Viewers at these locations would see the same project features as all other groups, namely the riparian and upland habitat and cut slopes softened by revegetation. Ridgeline and Slope Residences also would see all of the features of the mining operations, including exposed soil, equipment and vehicles, the processing plant and stockpiles.

Ridgeline Residences with views of the entire valley would see all of the project operations, while residents on slopes at lower elevations may have views limited to one or two phases of the project operation and footprint. Project effects would be lessened within their views within three to seven years depending on which and how many phases would be visible, as the slopes are reclaimed and vegetation matures.

Residences have high sensitivity to changes within the visual environment. The view duration is long and the number of residences is high but not as high as the number of vehicle occupants. Overall, their exposure would be high.

Valley Residences – Although no key views have been simulated from private property along the valley floor, Key Views 2, 4, and 5 represent views available from Valley Residences. As with the other viewer groups, these viewers would see the riparian and upland habitat and cut slopes softened by revegetation at project completion, as well as the exposed soil, equipment, vehicles, processing plant, and stockpiles during the excavation phases of the project.

As with other Resident viewer groups, these viewers have high sensitivity to changes within the visual environment, a long view duration, and high exposure overall. Further, the project elements would be, for many of these viewers, closer and thus the change would be more obvious. However, as with Slope Residences, their views may be limited to one or two phase areas of the project site, rather than a comprehensive overview. In this case, the project effects would be lessened within their views within three to nine years depending on which and how many phases would be visible, as the slopes are reclaimed and vegetation matures.

5.5 DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Project visual impacts are evaluated in relation to those that would occur during the mining and reclamation activities and the post-reclamation aesthetic of the site. The mining and reclamation activities refer to the visual conditions occurring during the time period of excavation activities, implementation of the reclamation plan, and implementation of the revegetation plan. This time period is expected to be 16 years, as outlined in Table 1 and the post-reclamation period refers to the visual conditions enduring beyond the 16 year temporary project activity period. The following provides a determination of significance per each of the County's significance thresholds as outlined in Section 5.1 and used for analysis throughout Chapter 5.

- 1. The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.***

Mining and Reclamation

During the time of operations from when vegetation is removed until a particular phase is complete and until the revegetation maturation period is complete, the exposed soil would be highly visible. This change to the character of the area would be substantial. Additionally, the equipment, vehicles, processing plant, and stockpiles that would be visible during the project operation would be industrial-like features in what is currently a mostly natural, although disturbed, setting. This change also would be substantial. Overall, the changes during mining and reclamation activities due to the introduction of features that would detract or contrast with the visual character/quality of the area would be adverse and would result in a **significant visual impact**.

Post-Reclamation

The post-reclamation visual features that would exist throughout the project site and valley floor would not highly contrast with existing conditions, as native riparian and upland habitat in the disturbed areas of the project would be required to be installed following mining activities. This change would not be adverse and the level of change to the visual environment of the project site and valley floor would be low when considering only the final visual composition. Based on successful implementation of the Restoration Plan and achievement of the success criteria required in that plan, the resulting visual quality would be an improvement from the existing moderate level of the Lowland Disturbed LU and the same as the high visual quality of the existing Riparian River Channel LU. The contrast created by introducing these features into the visual environment would not be readily perceived by viewers and post-reclamation conditions would result in a **less than significant visual impact to visual quality**.

2. *The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.*

Mining and Reclamation

No designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings exist within the site or the valley, although the slopes north of the valley are covered with rock outcroppings. However, during project operations and before completion of the final phases, the exposed soil, lack of vegetation, and removed trees would be highly visible. The exposed soil would contrast highly with the natural greens and browns of the existing vegetation. The soil would have a different texture from neighboring vegetation and the rough rocky slopes abutting the site on the north. The exposed raw edges of the mine's pit and the straight lines and uniform slopes of the finished slopes before revegetation would be more geometric than the naturally undulating lines that

compose the current vistas of the valley. Overall, the changes during mining and reclamation activities due to the removal of features that would create a substantial adverse change to the visual character of the area and would result in a **significant visual impact**.

Post-Reclamation

The project would remove existing trees which contribute to the visual character of the project site and LUs but revegetation would introduce more trees into the project site to replace those native trees that would be removed as specified in the Revegetation Plan. The resulting visual character of the project site and affected LUs would not be substantially different from the existing conditions. **The resulting visual impact to community character would be less than significant.**

3. *The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from: a public road, a trail within an adopted County or State trail system, a scenic vista or highway, or a recreational area.*

Mining and Reclamation

The visible features of the project extraction operations would not obstruct or interrupt the panoramic vistas available from existing trails or scenic roads. However, the exposed soil, equipment, processing plant and stockpiles would highly contrast with the surrounding existing vegetation and natural slopes, and thus would detract from the visual quality and substantially change the character of the LUs within the project site that are visible from a wide variety of public viewpoints, including trails and scenic roads. This detract from scenic views during mining and reclamation activities would result in a **significant visual impact to view quality, scenic vistas, and scenic resources**

Post-Reclamation

Overall, the post-reclamation features would not substantially obstruct or interrupt the panoramic vistas available from the scenic roadways and the trail. The minor change in visual quality and relatively small scale of the features within the expansive panoramic views would not detract from the vistas. The reclaimed and revegetated project site would be visible from scenic El Monte Road, scenic Willow Road, and existing trails such as El Monte/Blossom Valley Trail above El Monte Park. The enhanced riparian and upland habitats would be an improvement to the currently disturbed lowland and riparian habitat within the valley and would not contrast with the natural configuration of the valley and adjacent slopes. The overall visual character of the valley within scenic vistas would not be substantially changed. The visual quality of the Riparian River Channel LU areas would remain high and the visual environment of the Lowland Disturbed LU would change from moderate to high. The post-restoration change would result in a **less than significant visual impact to view quality, scenic vistas, and scenic resources**

4. *The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.*

Mining and Reclamation

As detailed in Table 4, the project would be unable to conform to certain San Diego County General Plan COS policies, San Diego County Zoning Ordinance Lakeside Community Plan. The mining and reclamation project activities would **not be in conformance with applicable goals and policies and would result in a temporary significant impact.**

Post-Reclamation

As detailed in Table 4, in the post-reclamation condition, the project would conform to zoning codes and land use goals and policies within the San Diego County General Plan, San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, San Diego County RPO, Lakeside Community Plan, and Lakeside Community Design Guidelines. The post-reclamation site conditions **would be in conformance with applicable goals and policies and result in a less than significant impact.**

5.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Cumulative project impacts must be evaluated because a project may contribute to a significant adverse cumulative effect when considered with other proposed projects or action in the area even though the project itself does not cause a significant adverse impact.

The following list of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects in the project area was prepared in consultation with the County's EIR Coordinator and includes 22 possible cumulative projects contributing to a cumulative impact as listed in Table 6.

Of these 22 cumulative projects, almost all are located to the west, northwest, and southwest of the project site. None of the cumulative projects are within the viewshed areas of the project (see Figure 14 for viewshed). Nearest to the project viewshed is the Hanson El Monte Pond Flood Control project, located near the intersection of El Monte Road and Lake Jennings Park Road.

As described throughout Chapter 5, significant visual impacts during mining and reclamation could result from the introduction of features that would detract or contrast with the visual character/quality of the area, the removal of features that would create a substantial adverse change to the visual character of the area, detraction from scenic views, and non-compliance with applicable visual policies. When analyzing cumulative visual impacts, it is important to consider those projects that could alter the existing visual environment with the same viewshed

Table 6
List of Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects

Project Name	Project Type	Location(s)	County of San Diego Reference #	APN #	Potential Resources Affected/Notes
Lake Jennings Marketplace	Shopping Center Gasoline, Food Mart, Car Wash	South side of Old Highway 80 between Ridge Hill Road and Rios Canyon Road. Lakeside, CA	TM5490 PDS2014- TM-5590	395-250-08	Potential biological resources, air quality, and traffic impacts.
Ashwood II Condo Conversion	Residential subdivision into nine lots on a 4.54-acre site	9288 Adlai Road. Lakeside, CA	TM5356 PDS2004- 3100-5356	398-390-19	Potential impacts to biological resources, noise, utilities and service systems. Mitigated Negative Declaration approved 2006.
Greenhills Ranch	Estate Residential	9370 Adlai Road. 9385 Adlai Road. Lakeside, CA	TM5140/ TM5563	398-400-08	Potential biological resources and cultural resources impacts.
Crest/Dehesa	Estate Residential	12101 Muth Valley. Lakeside, CA	TM5317	329-121-02	Project is idle.
Lakeside Tractor Supply Co	Specialty Store Storage/Display	14140 Old Hwy 80. Lakeside, CA	(MUP 14-015) PDS2014-	395-250-21	Approved by County Planning Commission in June 2015. Currently being appealed to the County Board of Supervisors.
Crestlake	Single Family Detached	15045 Old Hwy 80. Lakeside, CA	TM5082 PDS2004- 3100-5082	402-210-19	Potential impacts to biological resources. EIR approved 2007.
Magnolia Courts	Single Family Detached	9317 Lake Jennings Park Road. Lakeside, CA	TM5541 PDS2007- 3100-5541	395-220-11	Project is idle.
Clegg	Single Family Detached	13516 E Lakeview Road. Lakeside, CA	TM 5286 PDS2004-3100- 5286	398-390-66	Negative Declaration approved 2007.
Julian Avenue Major Subdivision	Single Family Detached	9626 Christmas Tree Lane. Lakeside, CA	TM 5539 PDS2007-3100- 5539	395-091-03	Negative Declaration approved 2009.
Oakmont II	Single Family Detached	Located off of Flinn Springs Road and Oak Creek Road. Lakeside, CA	TM5421 PDS2005- 3100-5421	396-020-13	Potential biological resources and noise impacts. Mitigated Negative Declaration approved 2014.
Sunny Ridge Estates	Single Family Detached	11427 El Nopal. Lakeside, CA	TM5436	379-024-31	Noise and traffic impacts.

Project Name	Project Type	Location(s)	County of San Diego Reference #	APN #	Potential Resources Affected/Notes
Eniss Sand Mines	Minor alterations at the existing mining area.	12356 Moreno Avenue. 12238 Moreno Avenue. 12332 Vigilante Road. 12417 Vigilante Road. Lakeside, CA	87-075-01 87-006-01 PDS2005-3301-87-075-01 PDS2011-3311-87-0011	375-040-01 25-062-06	In Progress. No environmental documents available as of the date of this report.
Turner Sand Mine (East County Sand Mine)	Extraction of 1,175,000 cy of material (sand and top soil). Reclamation Plan consists of importing 1,278,000 cy of clean soil, rock, and asphalt for onsite fill, channel rip-rap, and to construct a portion of Slaughterhouse and San Vicente creeks channels to convey 100-year storm.	South of San Vicente Avenue. Bounded by SR 67 to the west and Moreno Avenue to the east. Lakeside, CA	PDS2009-3300-09-016	375-100-24 375-041-12 375-041-09 375-041-28 375-041-29 375-100-09	In Progress. No environmental documents available as of the date of this report.
Settler's Point	Multi-Family Residential	13244 I-8 Business. Lakeside, CA	TM5423 PDS2005-3100-5423	397-291-03	Negative Declaration approved in 2012.
Fanita Ranch	Residential	Northwest area of Santee, CA	TM 05-04	Unavailable	In progress. No environmental documents available as of the date of this report.
Braverman Dr. Residential	Residential	10635 Braverman Drive. Santee, CA	TM-2015-2	381-160-7300	Approved by City Council in February 2016.
Hanson El Monte Pond Flood Control	Restoration and Recharge	10402 El Monte Road. Lakeside, CA	PDS2014-LDGRMJ-00012	Unavailable	Currently in the environmental public review period.
Michael Grant	Residential	Prospect Avenue between Mesa Road and Our Way. Santee, CA	TM2015-2	383-112-05, 28	In progress. No environmental documents available as of the date of this report.
Infill Development Company	Infill Development	8646 Caribbean Way. Santee, CA	TM2015-3	383-260-40, 383-260-41	In progress. No environmental documents available at the time of this report.
Village Run Homes LLC	Residential	Buena Vista and Mission Greens. Santee, CA	TM2015-4	384-042-22, 384-042-23	In progress. No environmental documents available as of the date of this report.

Project Name	Project Type	Location(s)	County of San Diego Reference #	APN #	Potential Resources Affected/Notes
Mission Trails Collection (Middle Parcel)	Residential	8758 Bushy Hill Drive. Santee, CA	TM2015-5	383-021-06	Mitigated Negative Declaration found potential impacts to biological and cultural resources. Approved by City Council on January 27, 2016.
Hattie Davison Properties	Residential	7927-7941 Mission Gorge Road. Santee, CA	TM2015-6	383-260-75-00 /383-260-76-00	Potential impacts to biological and cultural resources. Mitigated Negative Declaration approved by City Council on October 28, 2015.

as the project. If other cumulative projects within the viewshed were to have adverse visual impacts, those impacts could combine with the project to create a significant cumulative impact. However, as described above, none of the cumulative projects are located within the project viewshed; thus, the visual changes resulting from these project would not have the potential to add to the visual changes in the viewshed. Thus the project would not combine with other projects to jointly introduce features that would detract or contrast with the visual character/quality of the area (Threshold 1). The project would combine with other projects to increase the removal of features that would create a substantial adverse change to the visual character of the viewshed (Threshold 2). Because cumulative projects would not occur within the same viewshed as the project, they would not combine to detract from scenic views (Threshold 3) or create additional non-compliance with visual policies applicable to the viewshed (Threshold 4). Thus, there are not substantial visual changes as a result of cumulative projects within the same viewshed that would combine with the project to create a significant cumulative visual change to the aesthetic environment. **Therefore, a cumulatively considerable impact would not result.**

5.7 SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Mining and Reclamation

The project would introduce a phased mining operation, including reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas, into the visual environment of the project site and surrounding setting. Due to the prolonged timeframe of the project operations during mining and reclamation activities, the conditions of the project would be visible from multiple viewpoints within the project viewshed and the visual contrast created by the exposed soil, mining operations, project vehicles, processing plant and stockpiles would be substantially adverse. The mining and reclamation activities would also be inconsistent with various visual policies applicable to the project. The mining and reclamation activities would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality (Significance Guideline 1), result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character (Significance Guideline 2), detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista (Significance Guideline 3), and not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements (Significance Guideline 4). Thus, mining and reclamation would result in **a significant visual impact under all four significance guidelines.**

Post-Reclamation

Ultimately, the project would return the disturbed area to high quality native riparian and upland habitat. In the post-restoration condition, project features would not highly contrast with the existing and surrounding area. Post-reclamation, the project would not introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality (Significance Guideline 1), would not result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character (Significance Guideline 2), would not detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista (Significance Guideline 3), and would comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements (Significance Guideline 4). Thus, post-reclamation conditions would result in **less than significant visual impact under all four significance guidelines.**

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6.0 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

CEQA requires a good faith effort to avoid environmental impacts and if these impacts cannot be avoided then mitigation the long-term impacts to best extent possible is required. Some visual impacts could be mitigated by changes in the aesthetic elements that would lower the contrast with the current character of an area. Other visual impacts could be mitigated through screening the negative element. However, screening would only be effective for a certain viewer group from a very specific viewing location. Usually, the most effective visual mitigation measures result from changes in the physical element itself to lower its contrast with the setting. Mitigation was considered along Willow Road, but was determined to not be feasible as the site is offset from the roadway and there is currently vegetation that screens the site to the extent possible and would not be enhanced with additional landscaping for screening purposes. Screening is only proposed where the site immediately abuts the road in locations where existing landscaping does not exist or serve as an adequate screening feature. The following mitigation measure is required to offset the impacts identified in Chapter 5.

Mitigation Measure 1 – The El Monte Road Screening Plan, as shown in Figure 25, shall be implemented along certain segments of El Monte Road adjacent to the project site to reduce the temporary visual impacts to vehicle occupants along this roadway. The Screening Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the County of San Diego prior to issuance of the Major Use Permit. The applicant shall be responsible to maintain the screening vegetation that is within the project boundary. Screening shall occur along the northern edge of El Monte Road within the project boundary footprint where existing vegetation and landform do not screen project activities. Plantings shall be installed prior to any mobilization of Phase 1. Proposed plant material shall be mixed in an informal arrangement to avoid a linear look. Trees shall be planted at a maximum of 50' on center. Recommended tree species shall have a minimum container size of 24" box and may include: western sycamore (*Platanus racemose*), fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), and/or coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Recommended shrub species shall have a minimum container size of 15 gallons and may include: Toyon (*Heterom elesarbutifolia*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus Mexicana*), bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), and/or Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*). Vegetation spacing shall be determined in the field to achieve the intent of the screening plan.

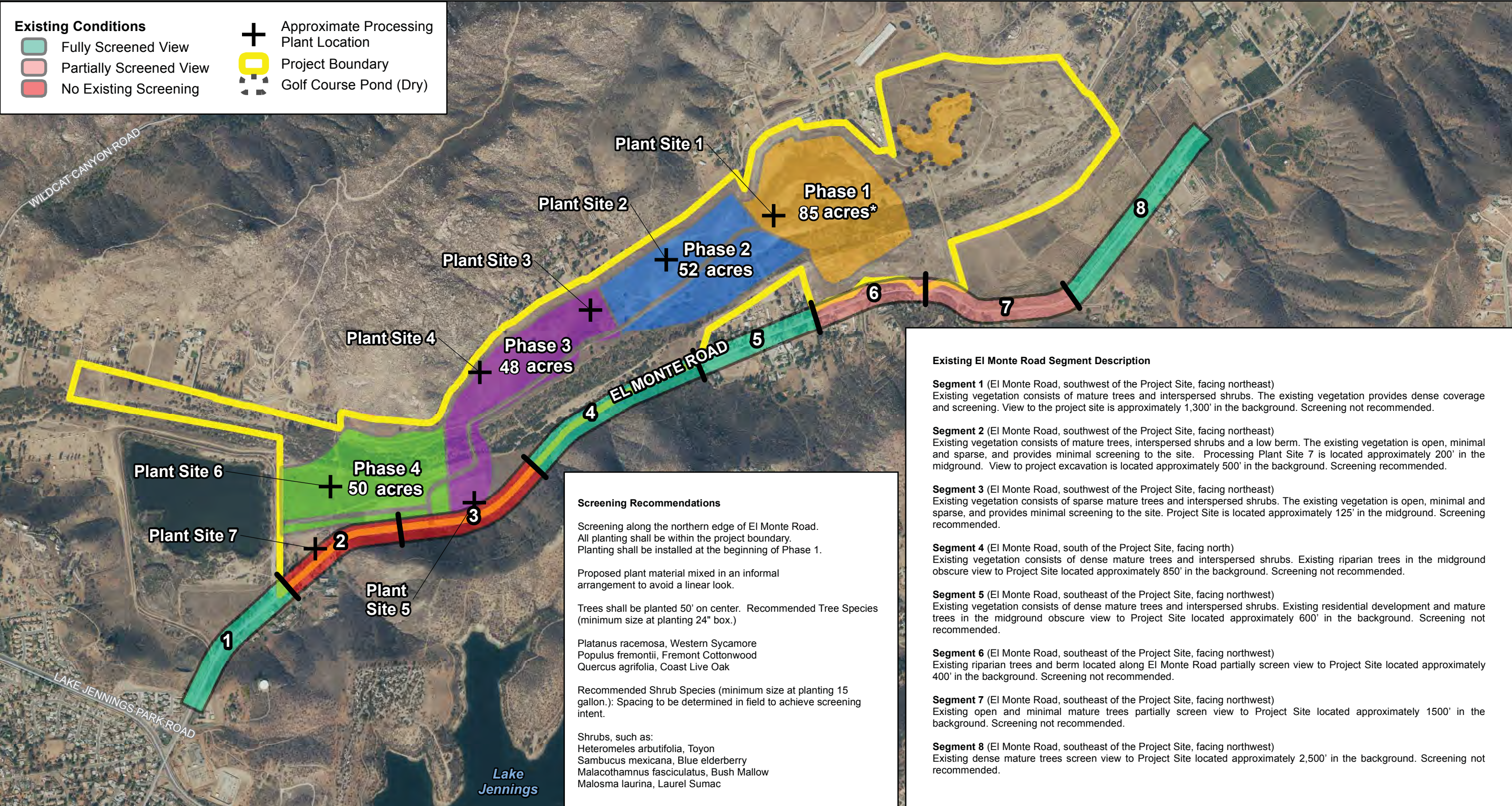
6.1 IMPACTS AFTER MITIGATION

Visual quality and view quality impacts would be reduced for vehicle occupants along El Monte Road by Mitigation Measure 1. However, the change to the visual environment seen from other viewpoints during project operations would remain noticeable and would continue to contrast

with the existing and surrounding visual environment. Mining and reclamation impacts to view quality would remain significant.

No mitigation measure would be feasible to reduce the overall significant impacts that would result from mining and reclamation activities as detailed throughout Chapter 5. Therefore, visual impacts due to project mining and reclamation operations would remain significant and unavoidable.

Impacts post-reclamation would remain less than significant with no mitigation required.



Source: EnviroMine, 2016. SanGIS, 2014.

*Excludes golf course pond area.

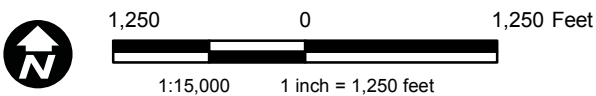


Figure 25
Draft El Monte Road Screening Plan

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7.0 REFERENCES

County of San Diego

2016 The Zoning Ordinance of San Diego County. Adopted October 1978, Amended May 2016.

2011a General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element. August.

2011b Lakeside Community Plan. Adopted December 19, 1975, Amended August 3, 2011.

2007 Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirements, July 30.

2005 Community Trails Master Plan. Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan. January 12.

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8.0 REPORT PREPARERS

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