

CHAPTER 2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This chapter of the environmental impact report (EIR) provides discussions of those effects that through the course of analyzing the environmental effects associated with the proposed project were identified as significant. Each environmental issue area describes existing conditions, regulatory setting, analysis of project effects and determination as to significance, cumulative impact analysis, significance of impact prior to mitigation, mitigation, and conclusion. This chapter also includes a section that discusses significant irreversible environmental changes resulting from project implementation (Section 2.9).

The eight environmental issue areas addressed in Chapter 2.0 are as follows:

- Aesthetics (Section 2.1)
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources (Section 2.2)
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Section 2.3)
- Biological Resources (Section 2.4)
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources (Section 2.5)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 2.6)
- Noise (Section 2.7)
- Transportation and Traffic (Section 2.8).

2.1 Aesthetics and Visual Quality

This section considers impacts to aesthetics, visual resources and potential effects to the visual character of the project site that could result from the proposed project. The information and analysis in this section have been compiled based on an understanding of the visual character of the project area and an understanding of the key concepts of the proposed project.

2.1.1 Existing Conditions

The County of San Diego (County) is a visually diverse region with a dramatic coastline, mountains, and desert. It is also rich in natural open space, topographic resources, scenic highways, scenic vistas, and other diverse aesthetic resources. These natural features contribute greatly to the overall quality of the existing visual setting. The majority of the project area is located in the western third of the County. Figures 1-3 through 1-7 in Chapter 1.0, Project Description, provide a few examples of the visual setting in select portions of the project area.

Regional Trails

Regional trails cover long distances, transcend community and/or municipal borders, have state or national significance, and provide important connections to existing parks, open space preserves, and other visual resources. The regional trails system is shown in Figure 2.1-1, Regional Trails Map.

Visual Character

The County has three distinctive geographic regions that provide a backdrop for visual resources, as defined in the County's General Plan: the low-lying coastal plain, the mountainous peninsular range, and the lowlands of the desert. The diversity of these regions provides County residents and visitors with an array of natural vistas and scenic environments that feature a unique aesthetic collection from the ocean to the desert. Urban land uses are focused in the western third of the County, while the eastern two-thirds are largely undeveloped with mountains and desert dominating the landscape.

Primary aesthetic resources in the coastal plain region include coastal lagoons, canyons, mesas, natural vegetation, historic or unique structures, and agricultural lands. Notable scenic resources in the peninsular range foothills include the Otay River, Sweetwater River, upper San Diego River, Upper and Lower Otay Lakes, Sweetwater Reservoir, Lake Hodges, and San Vicente Reservoir. Scenic resources in the higher elevation of the peninsular range region are plentiful, including large open spaces such as Cleveland National Forest, Agua Tibia Wilderness Area, San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, Palomar Mountain State Park, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, and various County reserves and parks, as well as the large water bodies of El Capitan Reservoir, Barrett Lake, Lake Morena, Lake Cuyamaca, and Lake Henshaw. Most of the desert region is located within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, a valuable visual resource providing scenic beauty for many visitors. The desert region also provides expansive views characterized by dramatic landforms, native desert habitat, and low desert valleys.

2.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal Regulations

National Highway System (NHS) Designation Act of 1995

This landmark legislation designates almost 260,000 kilometers (160,955 miles) of roads as the NHS. Title III, Section 304 of the legislation allows, but does not mandate, design standards for NHS projects that take into account the constructed and natural environment of the area including the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and preservation impacts of the proposed activity.

State Regulations

California Street and Highways Code

The California Street and Highways Code establishes standards for undertaking the development and designation of official scenic highways and assigns responsibility for the development of scenic highways to local jurisdictions. It establishes the State Scenic Highway system by designating highways that are either eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway or have been designated as such.

State Scenic Highways Program

The California Scenic Highways Program was created by the California Scenic Highway Law in 1963 with the purpose of preserving and protecting scenic highway corridors from any change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. State Scenic Highways are those highways that are either officially designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) or are eligible for designation. The statewide system of scenic highways is part of the Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official State Designation as Scenic Highways. Scenic highway nominations are evaluated using the following criteria:

- The proposed scenic highway is principally within an unspoiled native habitat and showcases the unique aspects of the landscape, agriculture, or man-made water features;
- Existing visual intrusions do not significantly impact the scenic corridor;
- Strong local support for the proposed scenic highway designation is demonstrated; and
- The length of the proposed scenic highway is not short or segmented.

A highway's status changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a Scenic Corridor Protection Program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as an official State Scenic Highway. Once a scenic highway is designated, the responsibility lies with the local jurisdiction to regulate development within the scenic highway corridor. This applies only to areas where the local agency has land use jurisdiction.

Local Regulations

County of San Diego General Plan

The General Plan provides guidance for the preservation of visual resources. The General Plan includes community and subregional plans, which include goals, policies, and recommendations to guide development of a region. These community plans identify a variety of specific planning

considerations that may include guidelines for protecting visual character and quality through development guidelines designed to minimize adverse aesthetic affects. The General Plan also includes specific guidelines for protecting scenic corridors and dark skies.

San Diego County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element

The General Plan's Conservation and Open Space Element includes (1) a comprehensive County Scenic Highway System, (2) goals and policies to preserve scenic resources, (3) goals and policies to protect ridgelines and hillsides, and (4) goals and policies for the protection of dark skies. The General Plan goals and policies for visual resources are provided in COS-11 through COS-13 of the Conservation and Open Space Element.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The County Zoning Ordinance contains several sections that pertain to aesthetic character and resources. These sections are summarized below.

County Zoning Ordinance, Sections 5200–5214, Scenic Area Regulations, regulate development in areas of high scenic value to exclude incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance the scenic resources in adjacent areas. The regulations apply to areas of unique scenic value, including, but not limited to, scenic highway corridors designated by the County General Plan; critical viewshed and prime viewshed areas as designated on the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan; and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic, or scenic resources, including, but not limited to, federal and state parks.

County Zoning Ordinance, Sections 5750–5758, Community Design Review Area Regulations include provisions to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of a community's individual visual character and identity. The provisions require that a site plan be submitted for development within those areas having a Community Design Review Area Special Designator (Designator B).

County Zoning Ordinance, Sections 5900–5910, Design Review Area Regulations include provisions to ensure that future structures and development of a site will complement not only the site to be developed but also the surrounding areas and existing development. The provisions require that a site plan be submitted for certain discretionary project applications within those areas having a "D" zoning designator, indicating the need for design review. The regulation requires that the proposed site plan be reviewed against specific criteria to ensure that it will complement the site to be developed, the surrounding area, and any existing development.

County Zoning Ordinance, Sections 5700–5749, Historic/Archaeological Landmark and District Area Regulations, include provisions intended to identify, preserve, and protect the

historic, cultural, archaeological, and/or architectural resource values of designated landmarks and districts and encourages compatible uses and architectural design. Areas designated by the Historic/Archaeological Landmark District have an “H” special area designator while areas within a Specific Historic District are noted with a “J” special area designator. Where an “H” designator exists, the Historic Site Board, a board appointed by the Board of Supervisors, may provide advice to the Director of Planning and Land Use on historical/archaeological matters. The Historic/Archaeological Landmark and District Area Regulations include requirements for a site plan review for certain discretionary projects, site plan review criteria, and site plan waiver provisions.

County of San Diego Code of Regulatory Ordinances Sections 59.101–59.115, Light Pollution Code

The code was developed by the County Department of Planning and Land Use and Department of Public Works in cooperation with lighting engineers, astronomers, land use planners from San Diego Gas & Electric, Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories, and local community planning and sponsor groups to address and minimize the impact of new sources light pollution on nighttime views.

2.1.3 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination of Significance

The proposed project consists of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance related to equine uses in unincorporated portions of the County over which the County has land use jurisdictions; see Section 1.4, Project Components, for further details. Specifically, the proposed project applies to properties that are zoned with an Animal Designator D–J, L–N, U, V, or X, totaling 344,665 acres. The proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment is provided as Appendix A to this environmental impact report (EIR). Based on the proposed tiered permitting for horse stables, the development of horse stables in certain areas within the County that currently require a Major Use Permit (MUP) may be allowed without a ministerial permit or discretionary permit. Under these circumstances, future equine uses within the Tier One and Tier Two would not be subject to environmental review. The following impact analysis has been separated into Tier One/Tier Two and Tier Three/Tier Four to reflect the distinction in the level of review required for the establishment of each use (non-discretionary versus discretionary).

2.1.3.1 Scenic Vistas

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following significance guideline from Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines applies to the direct and indirect impact analysis, as well as the cumulative impact analysis. A significant impact would result if:

- The project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

The following are definitions which help to characterize visual resources.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are located throughout the County. Public agencies and planning policies establish visual resource management objectives in order to protect and enhance public scenic resources. Goals, objectives, policies, implementation strategies, and guidance are typically contained in general plans, resource management plans, and local specific plans.

Scenic Vista

Viewsheds and visible components of landscape within a viewshed, including the underlying landform and overlaying land cover, establish the visual environment for the scenic vista. A vista is a view from a particular location or composite views along a roadway or trail. Scenic vistas often refer to views of natural lands, but may also be compositions of natural and developed areas, or even entirely of developed and unnatural areas, such as a scenic vista of a rural town and surrounding agricultural lands. The items that can be seen within a vista are visual resources.

Scenic Highway

State Scenic Highways refer to those highways that are officially designated by Caltrans as scenic (Caltrans California Scenic Highway Program). Generally, the area defined within a state scenic highway is the land adjacent to and visible from the vehicular right-of-way. The dimension of a scenic highway is usually identified using a motorist's line of vision, but a reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. The scenic highway corridor extends to the visual limits of the landscape abutting the scenic highway. The State Scenic Highways located in proximity to the proposed project area are shown in Figure 2.1-2, State Scenic Highways.

Resource Conservation Areas

Certain areas in the County have been designated as Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs) for purposes of informing future planning decisions. RCAs include, but are not limited to, areas of aesthetic quality, areas with groundwater problems, coastal wetlands, native wildlife habitats, areas with construction quality sand, areas with astronomical dark skies, scenic geological formations, and significant archaeological and historical sites.

Natural Landforms

Natural landform features that are located throughout the County include important geological and scenic landform features, hillsides and ridgelines, canyons, creeks, prominent trees, and watershed areas.

Parks, Open Space Preserves, and Reserves

Open space includes, but is not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, rivers, and streams; and areas that serve as links between major recreation and open space reserves, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors. The County also has a system of 18 open space preserves and reserves that are distributed primarily in the western and central areas of the County. There are a number of regional parks that contain important historical or cultural sites and often museums and/or interpretive centers.

Viewer Groups

Sensitive viewpoints that could be affected by implementation of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment include surrounding residences, recreational areas, and designated scenic roads in the vicinity of future equine projects. Viewer groups would include stationary viewers located on residential, commercial, and agricultural uses and mobile viewers on surrounding roads, highways, and recreational/hiking trails.

Viewer Response

Viewer response is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. Viewer sensitivity is defined as the viewer's concern for scenic quality and the viewer's response to change in the visual resources that make up the view. Local values and goals may confer visual significance on landscape components and areas that would otherwise appear unexceptional in a visual resource analysis.

Viewer exposure is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of views, speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. High viewer exposure heightens the importance of early consideration of design, and architecture and their roles in managing the visual resource effects of a project.

Dark Skies

Dark skies are a natural resource in San Diego County and are essential to the study of the celestial bodies. The maintenance of dark skies in the County is vital to the two world-class observatories that depend on them for astronomical research: Palomar and Mount Laguna Observatories. The County is committed to ensuring that these two valuable research observatories continue to operate and function for future generations.

Nighttime light is produced primarily by upward pointing or upward reflected light from outdoor lighting. This type of lighting illuminates the nighttime sky from below, just as the sun does from above in the daytime, and can be detrimental to astronomical observations by impacting dark skies. Nighttime light that spills outside its intended area can be annoying to neighbors and potentially harmful to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Further, the health of natural wildlife can also be adversely affected from nighttime lighting. Nighttime lighting in excess of what is necessary for its purpose is called light pollution.

The County Light Pollution Code, also known as the Dark Sky Ordinance, was adopted “to minimize light pollution for the enjoyment and use of property and the night environment by the citizens of San Diego County and to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories from the effects of light pollution that have a detrimental effect on astronomical research by restricting the permitted use of outdoor light fixtures on private property” (County Code, section 59.101 et seq.).

Analysis

As described in Section 2.1.1, the County contains visual resources affording opportunities for scenic vistas in every community. As described in the County’s Community Plans, the areas designated RCAs are the closest that the County comes to specifically designating scenic vistas, since RCAs can include areas of aesthetic quality, areas with groundwater problems, coastal wetlands, native wildlife habitats, areas with construction quality sand, areas with astronomical dark skies, areas with scenic geological formations, and significant archaeological and historical sites. Many public roads in the County currently have views of RCAs or expanses of natural resources that for the purposes of this EIR would have the potential to be considered scenic vistas. Numerous public trails are also available throughout the County which can provide views of scenic vistas. Two designated scenic highways are also located in the unincorporated County: These include State Route (SR) 78 through the Anza–Borrego Desert State Park and SR-125 between Interstate 8 (I-8) and SR-94. Eligible scenic highways include portions of I-5, I-15, SR-94, I-8, SR-79, SR-78, and SR-76 within the unincorporated County (see Figure 2.1-2). The County has identified additional roads as scenic in its County Scenic Highway System Priority List. Recreational areas available for public use throughout the County include parks, open space preserves, and reserves. Additionally, the County contains a vast amount of publicly owned land that provides open space and visual relief from the human-made environment, including Cleveland National Forest in the Peninsular Ranges region and the Anza–Borrego Desert State Park in the desert region.

The project area applies to properties that are zoned with an Animal Designator D–J, L–N, U, V, or X in which the County has land use jurisdiction, and includes lands zoned for agriculture which are largely undeveloped. Therefore, the project area includes scenic vistas within the County, including those visible from public roads, trails, scenic highways, and recreational areas.

Views of scenic vistas within the County include coastal lagoons, canyons, mesas, natural vegetation, historic or unique structures, and agricultural lands in the Coastal Plain region; various water resources such as rivers and reservoirs, and large open spaces including County reserves and parks in the Peninsular Ranges; and expansive views characterized by dramatic landforms, native desert habitat, and low desert valleys in the Desert region.

The proposed project would allow development of equine uses that could obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista. For example, a future horse stable or barn may have the potential to interrupt the view of a large open space area from an existing roadway or public trail. However, it is important to note that the County currently contains a number of equine facilities as these facilities are allowed under the current zoning for agricultural, commercial and residential uses. As described in Chapter 1.0, Project Description, the horse industry was prominent in the County's early economy, and today, horse stables and other equine uses continue this heritage. Figures 2.1-3 through 2.1-5 provide a few examples of equine facilities that currently exist within the County.

Tier One and Tier Two

Future equine uses within Tier One and Tier Two may be located in areas that could impact scenic vistas. The proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment (see Section 1.4.1) include changes relating to signage, parking, setbacks, and lighting. The changes would allow for one sign at the entrance to a property to identify the stable or ranch name. The sign must be consistent with section 6252.v, which limits size to 20 square feet. The sign shall not be illuminated. The proposed project would increase parking requirements for new commercial horse stables from zero to one per four horse corrals, paddocks, or stalls, and would require one loading space per eight horse corrals, paddocks, or stalls. The parking requirements have the potential to increase the amount of infrastructure associated with horse stables that could possibly detract from scenic vistas. Outdoor lighting would be allowed, but shall not be illuminated between 10 p.m. and dawn, unless it is security lighting. As for setbacks, the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would require horse stables over 1,000 square feet to have a minimum 25-foot setback from all property lines. Horse stables and associated structures on parcels of land less than 5 acres in size would require a minimum 50-foot setback from the nearest existing residences on adjacent properties. These additional setback restrictions may help minimize visual impacts by decreasing the visibility of horse stables, as well as the potential for these structures to obstruct views of scenic vistas. However, interior side setbacks for animal enclosures in the most restrictive category would be reduced from 15 feet to 10 feet as a result of the proposed project. Fences, corrals, and enclosures are limited in height in the setbacks and within the property by zoning, limiting view obstruction.

Future equine facilities may introduce new vertical elements within the viewshed of a scenic vista that would not be subject to environmental or design review. The existing height limits of

the zone would apply, limiting the height of any proposed structure. Some of the environmental design considerations included in the zoning verification process under Tier Two, such as setbacks and lighting restrictions, would minimize potential impacts to scenic vistas. Additionally, the County currently contains numerous equine facilities within the project area. Therefore, the development of equine facilities under both Tier One and Tier Two would result in **a less-than-significant impact**.

Tier Three and Tier Four

The proposed project would allow equine uses that fall under Tier Three with an Administrative Permit and equine uses that fall under Tier Four with an MUP. Under these tiers, discretionary review would be required and projects would be evaluated as part of the County's discretionary environmental review process (CEQA) and would be required to implement measures to minimize impacts to scenic vistas, as necessary. CEQA requires proposed projects to provide detailed information on the potentially significant environmental effects they are likely to have, list ways in which the significant environmental effects would be minimized, and identify alternatives that would reduce or avoid the significant impacts identified for the project.

Future equine uses within Tier Three and Tier Four may be located in areas that would impact scenic vistas. The most common zoning designations in the proposed project study area are Limited Agricultural (A70), General Agriculture (A72), and Rural Residential (RR). Although equine uses are generally compatible with the visual environment found in these areas, they would have the potential to interrupt or detract from a scenic vista that previously did not include infrastructure or development. Through the Administrative Permit and MUP discretionary review process, all future equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four would be required to implement mitigation measures that would minimize environmental impacts, such as impacts to scenic vistas. However, as there is ultimately no guarantee on a project-specific level that mitigation measures would reduce impacts to a level below significant, these larger equine facilities, as compared to those developed under Tier One and Tier Two, may result in **significant impacts** related to scenic vistas (**AE-1**).

2.1.3.2 *Scenic Resources*

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following significance guideline from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines applies to the direct and indirect impact analysis, as well as the cumulative impact analysis. A significant impact would result if:

- The project would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within the viewshed of a state scenic highway.

Analysis

The unincorporated County contains many scenic resources including mountains, watersheds, scenic geologic features, and RCAs that have been identified for protection because of their scenic value. Scenic resources throughout the County are summarized above in Section 2.1.1. Scenic resources are often found in County parks, habitat preserves, reservoirs, RCAs, Multiple Species Conservation Program areas, and other undeveloped lands throughout the County, but can be found in more urbanized areas as well. Future equine uses have the potential to result in the removal or destruction of scenic neighborhood or community resources, such as historic resources, trees or rock outcroppings. In addition, future equine uses along the two designated state scenic highways located in the County could have the potential to detract from the visual quality of the scenic highway by introducing new structures that may block or distract from existing views.

Similarly, trees and rock outcroppings are located throughout the County that would have the potential to be considered visual resources because community plans consider these resources as contributing to the character and beauty of the communities. Some have been identified as RCAs for their scenic value. Examples of scenic trees are the Jesmond Dene oaks in the North County Metro Subregion and the eucalyptus groves in the Sweetwater Community Planning Area (CPA). Examples of scenic rock outcroppings include a scenic rock slab in Valley Center on Chaparral Ridge and the Mother Grundy rock formation in the Jamul/Dulzura area. The development of future equine uses could block public views of these resources, or could result in the detracting of the resource. However, as stated in Section 2.1.3.1, it is important to note that the County currently contains a number of equine facilities as these facilities are allowed under the current zoning. As such, these equine facilities co-exist near scenic resources. The horse industry was prominent in the County's early economy as indicated in Chapter 1.0, Project Description, and today horse stables and other equine uses continue this heritage. They are an established part of the visual setting. Therefore, they do not detract from scenic resources. Figures 2.1-3 through 2.1-5 provide a few examples of equine facilities that currently exist within the County.

Tier One and Tier Two

Equine facilities may introduce a new vertical element, such as a barn or horse stable, that would not be subject to environmental or design review. As illustrated in Figure 2.1-2, equine facilities may be developed near or within the viewshed of a scenic resource such as a State Scenic Highway. Some of the environmental design considerations included in the zoning verification process under Tier Two would minimize potential impacts to scenic resources. Additionally, the County currently contains numerous equine facilities within the project area. Therefore, the development of equine facilities under both Tier One and Tier Two would generally be consistent with existing facilities and therefore result in a **less-than-significant impact**.

Tier Three and Tier Four

Future equine uses within Tier Three and Tier Four may be located in areas that would impact scenic resources. For example, as illustrated in Figure 2.1-2, future equine facilities may be developed near or within the viewshed of a scenic resource such as a State Scenic Highway. The most common zoning designations in the proposed project study area are Limited Agricultural (A70), General Agriculture (A72), and Rural Residential (RR). Although equine uses are generally compatible with the visual environment found in these areas, they would have the potential to interrupt or detract from a scenic resource that previously did not include infrastructure or development through ground disturbance, removal of vegetation, and construction of structures. Through the Administrative Permit and MUP discretionary review process, all future equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four would be required to implement mitigation measures that would minimize environmental impacts, such as impacts to scenic resources. However, as there is ultimately no guarantee on a project-specific level that mitigation measures would reduce impacts to a level below significant, these larger equine facilities, as compared to those developed under Tier One and Tier Two, may result in **significant impacts** related to scenic resources (AE-2).

2.1.3.3 *Visual Character or Quality*

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following significance guideline from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines applies to the direct and indirect impact analysis, as well as the cumulative impact analysis. A significant impact would result if:

- The project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Analysis

The unincorporated County consists of a variety of visual characteristics and qualities. Each CPA and subregion in the unincorporated County has a unique community character that could have the potential to be impacted by equine facilities developed pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment if the new development is incompatible with the existing character of the community or would result in the loss of or adverse change to scenic resources that contribute to the community's character. The proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would include regulations on equine uses that would apply to the unincorporated areas of San Diego County of which the County has land use jurisdiction. The areas to the west of the County contain more urban characteristics as they surround the City of San Diego and other incorporated areas. The eastern portions of the County are decidedly more rural with less development and more

agricultural land uses. As depicted in Figure 1-2, the project area is mostly concentrated in the western portion of the County.

Tier One and Tier Two

The most common zoning designations in the proposed project study area are Limited Agricultural (A70), General Agriculture (A72), and Rural Residential (RR). Equine uses are commonly found in these areas and are generally compatible with the visual environment. Equine facilities may introduce a new vertical element, such as a barn or horse stable, that would not be subject to environmental or design review. However, equine facilities are an established part of the visual setting. As indicated in Chapter 1.0, Project Description, the horse industry was prominent in the County's early economy and today horse stables and other equine uses continue this heritage. Due to the nature of the existing community character and the fact that many equine facilities currently exist within the County, these structures are anticipated be consistent with existing uses and will not result in visual impacts. Therefore, equine facilities developed under Tier One and Tier Two would result in **less-than-significant impacts** to visual character and quality.

Tier Three and Tier Four

As previously described, the most common zoning designations in the proposed project study area are Limited Agricultural (A70), General Agriculture (A72), and Rural Residential (RR). Equine uses are commonly found in these areas and are compatible with the visual environment. Equine facilities may introduce a new vertical element, such as a barn or horse stable. However, due to the nature of the existing community character and the fact that many equine facilities currently existing with the County, these structures are not anticipated to result in visual impacts. Additionally, through the Administrative Permit and MUP discretionary review process, all future equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four would undergo a review for visual impacts and would be required to implement mitigation measures, such as M AE-1; please refer to Section 2.1.6.1. It is not anticipated that equine facilities would impact the existing visual character and quality of the project area; therefore, impacts would be **less than significant**.

2.1.3.4 *Light and Glare*

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following significance guideline from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines applies to the direct and indirect impact analysis, as well as the cumulative impact analysis. A significant impact would result if:

- The project would create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Analysis

Glare is a continuous or periodic intense light that is greater than the luminance to which the eyes are adapted and would have the potential to cause annoyance, discomfort or visual impairment, and can be a nuisance or hazard. Glare commonly occurs when an object is significantly brighter in contrast to the rest of the viewshed, such as light reflecting off an expanse of glass or steel in a commercial or industrial development.

Daytime lighting would not result in a substantial new source of light or result in light pollution or light trespass. However, excessive nighttime lighting would have the potential to result in light pollution, also called skyglow, which is the haze of light that surrounds highly populated areas and is the result of brightening of the night sky from both artificial (outdoor) and natural (atmospheric and celestial) light.

Tier One and Tier Two

The proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would allow outdoor lighting for a horse stable or animal enclosure pursuant to Section 6322 of the Zoning Ordinance. The use of outdoor lighting, excluding security lighting, would not be permitted in the horse stable area between 11:00 p.m. and dawn. Any associated signs would not be illuminated. All lighting would be required to comply with the County Light Pollution Code found in Section 59.101 of the County Code of Regulatory Ordinances. Adherence to this ordinance that was established to minimize the impact of light pollution from new lighting sources on nighttime views would reduce the impact of light and glare from the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Analysis of existing facilities shows that most do not have outdoor lighting, other than security lighting. The additional setbacks for horse stables in the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would decrease the potential for light and glare to substantially affect surrounding sensitive receptors including motorists and nearby residents. Therefore, impacts from the proposed project relative to light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area would be **less than significant**.

Tier Three and Tier Four

All lighting associated with proposed equine facilities under Tier Three and Tier Four would be subject to the County Light Pollution Code as described above. Adherence to this ordinance that was established to minimize the impact of light pollution from new lighting sources on nighttime views would reduce the impact of light and glare from the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Compliance with the code is required prior to issuance of any building permit for any project. Therefore, impacts from the proposed project relative to light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area would be **less than significant**.

2.1.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis for aesthetics includes the immediate vicinity of view corridors, viewsheds, or scenic resources in the County, as well as the 15-mile radius areas surrounding the two observatories.

2.1.4.1 *Scenic Vistas*

Cumulative projects located in the San Diego region would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to scenic vistas if in combination they would result in visual impacts within the viewshed of a scenic vista. Adjacent jurisdictions, including incorporated cities, adjacent counties, and federal and state-managed lands, have general plan policies, zoning ordinances, and other ordinances or regulations in place to protect scenic vistas within their jurisdictions. However, it cannot be assured that past, present, and foreseeable future projects will be required to adhere to regulations that protect scenic vistas. For example, the Sunrise Powerlink Project, included in Table 1-4d, has recently added new transmission lines through the Desert Subregion which would have the potential to detract from scenic vistas in the desert landscape. Development on tribal lands within the County also has the potential to result in the impacts to scenic vistas. Therefore, projects in the region may have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts to scenic vistas.

Tier One and Tier Two

As described in Section 2.1.3.1, equine facilities developed under the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment under Tier One and Tier Two that would have less than significant impacts to scenic vistas. These equine uses would be located in areas that already contain numerous equine facilities. Therefore, in combination with other past, present and foreseeable future projects, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect scenic vistas.

Tier Three and Tier Four

As described in Section 2.1.3.1, the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment may result in equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four that would have the potential to create impacts to scenic vistas. Therefore, in combination with other past, present, and foreseeable future projects, the proposed project would potentially contribute to a **cumulatively considerable impact** to scenic vistas (**AE-3**).

2.1.4.2 *Scenic Resources*

Cumulative projects located in the San Diego region would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to scenic resources if in combination they would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within the viewshed of a state scenic highway. Past, present, and foreseeable future projects are not all held to strict standards protecting scenic resources. For example, utility projects in the County or development projects in Mexico or on tribal lands sometimes have direct or indirect adverse effects on scenic resources in the region. Therefore, the cumulative projects in the region may have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts to scenic resources.

Tier One and Tier Two

As described in Section 2.1.3.2, equine facilities developed under the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment under Tier One and Tier Two would result in less than significant impacts to scenic resources. Future horse stables and other equine uses would be consistent with the existing community character. Therefore, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect scenic resources.

Tier Three and Tier Four

As described in Section 2.1.3.2, the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment may result in equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four that would have the potential to create impacts to scenic resources. Therefore, in combination with other past, present, and foreseeable future projects, the proposed project would potentially contribute to a **cumulatively considerable impact** to scenic resources (AE-4).

2.1.4.3 *Visual Character or Quality*

The proposed project would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to visual character or quality if, in combination with other cumulative projects, it would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The County's General Plan Update project identified significant unavoidable impacts to the visual character and quality of its communities throughout the unincorporated County. Therefore, the cumulative projects in the region may have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to visual character and quality.

Tier One and Tier Two

As described in Section 2.1.3.3, equine facilities developed under the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment under Tier One and Tier Two would result in less than significant

impacts to visual character and quality. This is because the existing visual character within the project area currently includes many equine uses. Therefore, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect visual character or quality.

Tier Three and Tier Four

As described in Section 2.1.3.3, equine facilities developed under the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment under Tier Three and Tier Four would be consistent with the existing visual character of the project area. Because future development of these uses would be compatible with the community character, impacts to visual character would be less than significant. Therefore, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect visual character or quality.

2.1.4.4 *Light and Glare*

The construction and operation of cumulative projects located in the San Diego region would have the potential to create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Impacts from glare are generally localized and not cumulative in nature. There are no known instances in the County unincorporated area where multiple projects have reflective materials in close proximity, thereby resulting in combined effects of glare. Therefore, a cumulatively considerable impact related to glare has not occurred. However, new sources of nighttime light pollution in the San Diego region would result in a potential lighting impact to the Palomar Mountain and Mount Laguna Observatories. For example, new sources of lighting would be created from development of proposed new and expanded casino projects identified on tribal lands in San Diego County, which would be in operation at night. Despite lighting ordinances and other regulations pertaining to night lighting and mitigation measures that would reduce light pollution on a project-by-project basis, the combined effect of all cumulative projects in the San Diego region would be a cumulative increase in light pollution. Therefore, the cumulative projects in the region may have the potential to result in a cumulatively considerable impact associated with nighttime lighting.

Tier One and Tier Two

Future equine facilities developed under Tier One and Tier Two will be required to conform to the Light Pollution Code. The standards in the code are the result of this collaborative effort and establish an acceptable level for new lighting. Compliance with the code is required prior to issuance of any building permit for any project. New equine facilities would not be permitted to use outdoor lighting, other than security lighting, between 11:00 p.m. and dawn and would not be able to illuminate any signs associated with equine facilities. Mandatory compliance with the Light Pollution Code for all new building permits and the permitted lighting uses for horse

stables ensures that this project, in combination with all past, present, and foreseeable future projects, will not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact. Therefore, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area due to light or glare.

Tier Three and Tier Four

Future equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four will conform to the Light Pollution Code. The standards in the code are the result of this collaborative effort and establish an acceptable level for new lighting. Compliance with the code is required prior to issuance of any building permit for any project. New equine facilities would not be permitted to use outdoor lighting, other than security lighting, between 11:00 p.m. and dawn and would not be able to illuminate any signs associated with equine facilities. Mandatory compliance with the Light Pollution Code for all new building permits and the permitted lighting uses for horse stables ensures that this project, in combination with all past, present, and foreseeable future projects, will not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact. Therefore, the project **would not result in a cumulative impact** that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area due to light or glare.

2.1.5 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

The proposed project would result in potentially significant impacts associated with visual resources, including scenic vistas (**AE-1** and **AE-3**) and scenic resources (**AE-2** and **AE-4**), prior to mitigation. The proposed project would not result in potentially significant impacts associated with visual character or quality or light or glare.

2.1.6 Mitigation Measures

2.1.6.1 Scenic Vistas

The proposed project would allow for development of equine facilities under Tier Three and Tier Four that could have significant adverse effects on scenic vistas (**AE-1** and **AE-3**). Mitigation measures (described below) have been identified that would reduce potentially significant impacts to scenic vistas, but not below a significant level.

Mitigation Measure

M AE-1: During the environmental review process for future Major Use Permits for equine facilities developed under Tier Three and Tier Four, the County Guidelines for Determining Significance for Visual Resources and Dark Skies and Glare shall be applied. When aesthetic impacts are determined to be significant, feasible and appropriate project-specific mitigation measures shall be incorporated. Examples

of standard mitigation measures within the County Guidelines include siting/location considerations, minimizing development and grading of steep slopes, natural screening and landscaping, undergrounding utilities, inclusion of buffers, and lighting restrictions.

Infeasible Mitigation Measures

The following measures were considered in attempting to reduce impacts to scenic vistas to below a level of significance. However, the County has determined that these measures would be infeasible, as described below. Therefore, the following mitigation measures would not be implemented.

- Require a visual resource study for all new equine facilities to ensure that impacts to scenic vistas will be avoided or mitigated. This measure is not feasible as it would directly conflict with the project objective to streamline the permitting process for equine facilities in order to better facilitate the development of such uses within the County, while ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and utilizing sound management practices.
- Prohibit equine facilities near scenic vistas. This measure is not feasible as it would conflict with the project objective described above to better facilitate the development of such uses within the County.

Because the measures listed above are infeasible, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. Chapter 4, Project Alternatives, provides a discussion of alternatives to the proposed project that would result in some reduced impacts associated with scenic vistas as compared to the proposed project.

2.1.6.2 Scenic Resources

The proposed project would allow for development of equine facilities under Tier Three and Tier Four that could have significant adverse effects on scenic resources. The proposed project would also alleviate current restrictions on commercial horse stable uses that may directly or indirectly affect scenic resources in the County (**AE-2** and **AE-4**). Mitigation measures (described below), have been identified that would reduce potentially significant impacts to scenic resources, but not below a significant level.

Mitigation Measure

Mitigation measure **M AE-1** listed under Scenic Vistas is applicable to this issue and is incorporated here by reference. However, impacts to scenic resources would not be reduced to below a significant level.

Infeasible Mitigation Measures

The following measures were considered in attempting to reduce impacts to scenic vistas to below a level of significance. However, the County has determined that these measures would be infeasible, as described below. Therefore, the following mitigation measures would not be implemented.

- Require a visual resource study for all new equine facilities to ensure that impacts to scenic resources will be avoided or mitigated. This measure is not feasible as it would directly conflict with the project objective to streamline the permitting process for equine facilities in order to better facilitate the development of such uses within the County, while ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and utilizing sound management practices.
- Prohibit equine facilities near scenic resources. This measure is not feasible as it would conflict with the project objective described above to better facilitate the development of such uses within the County.

Because the measures listed above are infeasible, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. Chapter 4, Project Alternatives, provides a discussion of alternatives to the proposed project that would result in some reduced impacts associated with scenic resources as compared to the proposed project.

2.1.6.3 Visual Character and Quality

The proposed project will not result in any significant impacts relative to visual character and quality, and no mitigation measures are required.

2.1.6.4 Light and Glare

The proposed project will not result in any significant impacts relative to light and glare, and no mitigation measures are required.

2.1.7 Conclusion

The discussion below provides a synopsis of the conclusion reached in each of the above impact analyses and the level of impact that would occur after mitigation measures are implemented.

Scenic Vistas

Development of equine facilities under Tier One and Tier Two pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would result in less than significant impacts to scenic resources. Development of equine facilities under Tier Three and Tier Four pursuant to the proposed

Zoning Ordinance Amendment would have the potential to result in significant adverse effects to scenic vistas (**AE-1**). Therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. The proposed project would also potentially contribute to cumulative impacts to scenic vistas (**AE-3**). The mitigation measures identified in Section 2.1.6.1 would reduce direct and cumulative impacts to scenic vistas, but not to below a level of significance.

Scenic Resources

Development of equine facilities under Tier One and Tier Two pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would result in less than significant impacts to scenic resources. Development of equine facilities under Tier Three and Tier Four pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would have the potential to result in significant adverse effects to scenic resources (**AE-2**). Therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. The proposed project would also potentially contribute to cumulative impacts to scenic resources (**AE-4**). The mitigation measures identified in Section 2.1.6.2 would reduce direct and cumulative impacts to scenic resources, but not to below a level of significance.

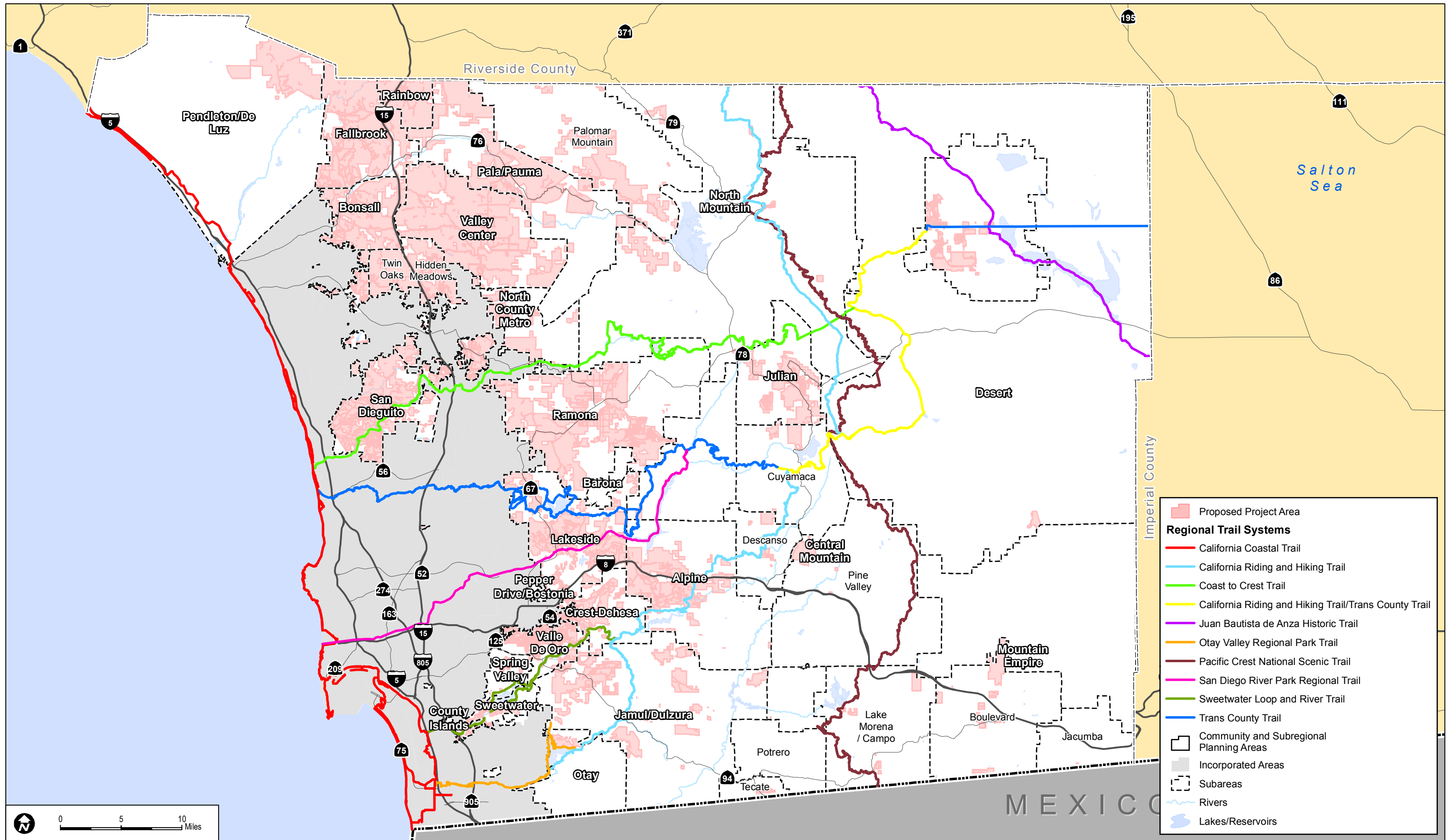
Visual Character and Quality

Development of equine facilities under Tier One, Tier Two, Tier Three, and Tier Four pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would result in less than significant impacts to visual character and quality. The proposed project would also not contribute to cumulative impacts relative to visual character and quality. The proposed project will not result in any significant impacts relative to visual character and quality, and no mitigation measures are required.

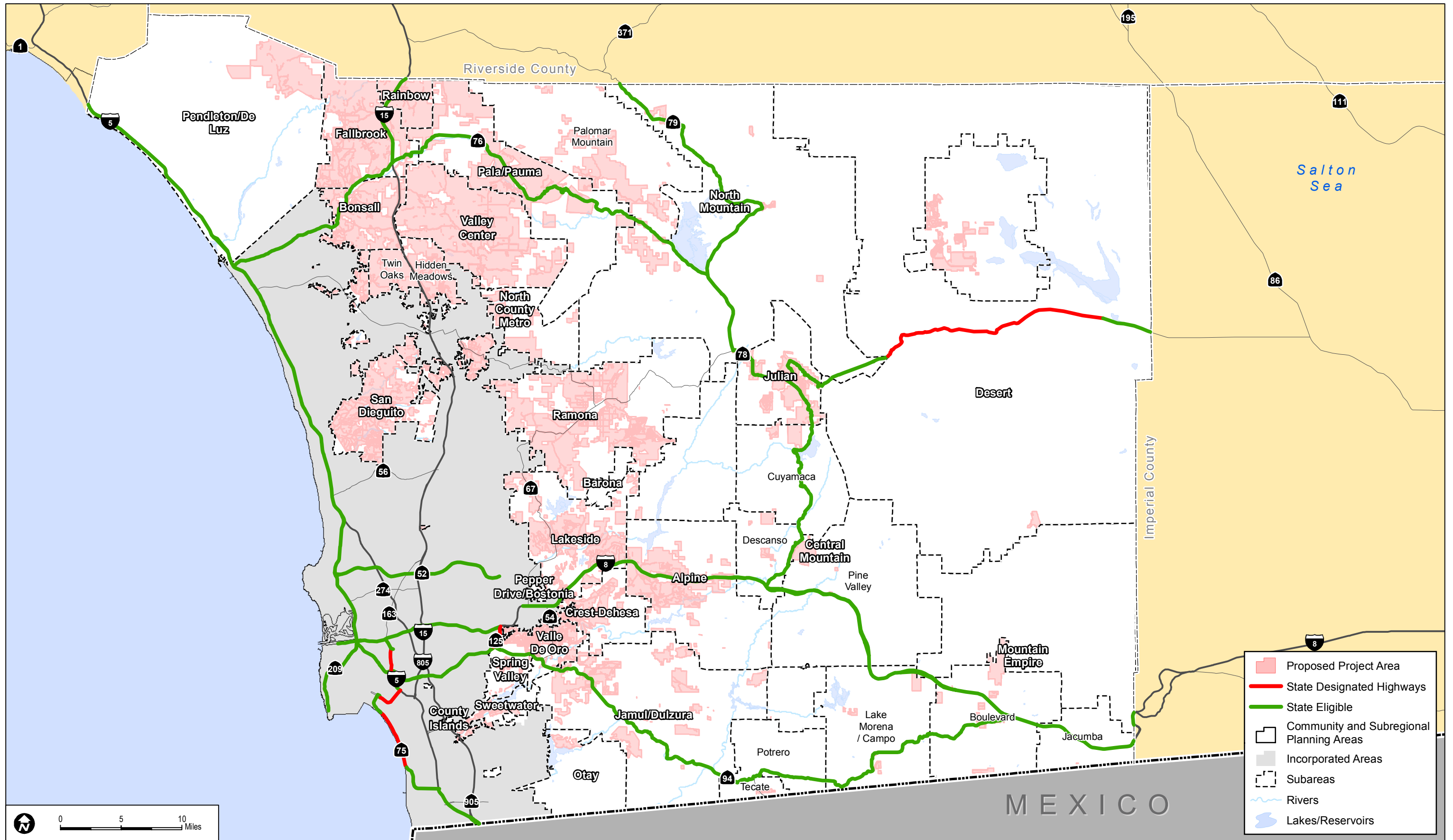
Light and Glare

Development of equine facilities under Tier One, Tier Two, Tier Three and Tier Four pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment would not result in significant impacts relative to light or glare. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. The proposed project would also not contribute to cumulative impacts relative to light or glare. The proposed project will not result in any significant impacts relative to light or glare, and no mitigation measures are required.

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK