

2.1 Aesthetics

This section describes the existing visual resources on the project site and in the surrounding area, and identifies potential impacts to aesthetics and visual resources that would result from implementation of the proposed project. The analysis in this section is based on the Visual Impact Analysis (VIA) (AECOM 2018) which is included in Appendix D of this EIR.

2.1.1 Existing Conditions

2.1.1.1 *Scenic Vistas*

The landscape of the San Diego region is rich in natural open space, unique topographic resources, and scenic vistas. These natural features contribute greatly to the overall quality of the existing visual setting experienced by viewers within the County. According to the County's Zoning Ordinance, properties in and surrounding El Monte Valley, including virtually all of the project site, have a Scenic (S) Special Area Regulation designator, as shown on Figure 2.1-1. As defined in Sections 5200-5212 of the County Zoning Ordinance, Scenic (S) Special Area Regulation zones are areas having unique scenic value.

2.1.1.2 *Viewshed*

The viewshed for a proposed project is defined as the geographical area from which the project site can be seen (see Figures 2.1-2 and 2.1-3). The VIA prepared for the proposed project includes a viewshed analysis to determine the project site's visibility as far away as three miles (AECOM 2018). However, objects more than two miles away are generally not considered visually prominent, as distance decreases scale and contrast.

2.1.1.3 *Scenic Corridors*

A scenic corridor generally includes the land adjacent to and visible from the vehicular right-of-way. The dimension of the corridor is usually identified using a motorist's line of vision. State Scenic Highways are highways that are either officially designated by Caltrans or are eligible for designation. A highway may be designated as "scenic" depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the aesthetic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view.

According to the San Diego County General Plan, three scenic routes exist in the vicinity of the project site, including State Route 67 (SR-67) from Santee city limits to State Route 78 (SR-78), El Monte Road from El Capitan Reservoir to Lake Jennings Park Road, and Willow and El Monte Roads from SR-67 to the southern end of El Capitan Reservoir (AECOM 2018).

2.1.1.4 Visual Character

While a viewer observes the visual environment as a whole, the viewer's understanding of that environment is based on the visual character of objects and the relationships between them. Visual character is the order and combination of patterns that are created by visual elements in a scene. Visual pattern is created with four elements, consisting of form, line, color, and texture. Form is the most dominant element, followed by line, color, and texture. Pattern character can best be described in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity, as described below. The combination of the various elements will contribute to high or low visual character of a view and/or site.

The character of an area is mostly determined by the surrounding land forms, land uses, and the visual elements common to those uses, described in terms of Landscape Units (LUs). A LU is a definable area that contains consistent visual and perceptual characteristics. Each unit can be classified as having a particular visual quality that results in a common visual experience and sensitivity to change. The LU boundaries are generally created by landforms and/or edges defined by vegetation, development, or fencing. They typically have similar form, scale, and materials as well as visual quality and character.

The project site is bounded by the El Cajon Mountains to the north, the Community of Blossom Valley to the southeast, and Lake Jennings to the south. The project site is located within the El Monte Valley, a rural landscape with steep valley slopes to the north and south. The LUs identified within three miles of the project site are depicted in Figure 2.1-4. Table 2.1-1 summarizes the existing visual quality of these LUs. The project site includes Lowland Disturbed and Riparian River Channel LUs. The Lowland Disturbed and Lowland Residential/Agricultural areas have moderate visual quality and the Riparian River Channel has high visual quality (AECOM 2018).

2.1.1.5 Key Views

Figure 2.1-5 identifies 18 principle key views that were selected for consideration to depict representative views of the proposed project as seen within the project viewshed. Seven key views were determined to best represent the important views of the project site and highlight sensitive and/or typical views within the El Monte Valley. These seven key views were used as the basis for the analysis and determinations made in the VIA (AECOM 2018). Two of these seven key views are from ridgeline public trail locations and five are from surrounding roadways. Table 2.1-2 provides a general description of each of the seven key views, existing conditions, the likely viewer groups and sensitivity to changes. Existing conditions of the seven key views are shown on Figures 2.1-6a, 2.1-7a, 2.1-8a, 2.1-9a, 2.1-10a, 2.1-11a, and 2.1-12a.

2.1.1.6 Visual Quality

Visual quality results from the interpretation of physical character resources and features that are filtered by the viewer's perception of what is seen. These perceptions are based on a viewer's cognitive assimilation of landscape elements into a memorable landscape image, distinguishable from other landscapes within the region. Visual quality factors include:

- **Vividness** – the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.
- **Intactness**– the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. Intactness can be present in developed urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- **Unity** – the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity frequently attests to the careful design of individual built components in the landscape.

A visual resource with a high degree of vividness, intactness, and unity will typically have a high level of visual quality. Refer to Appendix D for the discussion of the visual quality of each LU.

Visual quality results from the interpretation of physical character resources and features that are filtered by the viewer's perception of what is seen. These perceptions are based on a viewer's cognitive assimilation of landscape elements into a memorable landscape image, distinguishable from other landscapes within the region. Visual quality factors include vividness, intactness, and unity. Viewer sensitivity is defined both as the viewers' concern for scenic quality and the viewers' predicted response to change in the visual resources that make up the view. Based on the seven key views studied, the project site contains high visual quality and high sensitivity to change for each of the seven views (AECOM 2018).

2.1.1.7 Regulatory Framework

Federal

There are no applicable federal regulations related to aesthetics.

State

California Scenic Highway Program

California adopted a Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.) in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the visual quality of areas that are adjacent to

highways. The scenic designation is based on the amount of natural landscape visible by motorists, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the motorist's enjoyment of the view. As stated above in Section 2.1.1.3, three scenic routes exist in the vicinity of the project site, including State Route 67 (SR-67) from Santee city limits to State Route 78 (SR-78), El Monte Road from El Capitan Reservoir to Lake Jennings Park Road, and Willow and El Monte Roads from SR-67 to the southern end of El Capitan Reservoir (AECOM 2018). However, these scenic routes are designated by the County and are not State Scenic Highways.

Local

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

The County General Plan Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element includes a Visual Resources section intended to, among other goals, preserve and enhance existing visual resources, including scenic corridors (highways) and dark skies. The following goals and policies related to visual resources are relevant to the proposed project:

Goal COS-11: Preservation of Scenic Resources. Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized.

Policies

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.

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.

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:

- 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 so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character.
- Creation of contiguous open space networks

Goal COS-13: Dark Skies. Preserve dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories.

Policies

COS-13.1: Restrict Light and Glare. 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.

In addition, the Visual Resources section of the COS Element states that there are three roadway segments that are included in the County Scenic Highway System that are in the vicinity of the project site. They include:

- SR-67 from Santee city limits to SR-78 (excluding Poway segment)
- El Monte Road from El Capitan Reservoir to Lake Jennings Park Road
- Willow and El Monte Roads from SR-67 to southern end of El Capitan Reservoir

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The majority of the project site is zoned S82, Extractive Use (404 acres) with a portion zoned as A70, Limited Agriculture (75 acres). The S82 Use Regulations identify and create areas within the County where mining, quarrying, or oil extractive uses may be permitted (Zoning Ordinance Sections 2820-2829). Typically, the S82 Use Regulations would be applied to areas of mineral deposits, to signify the presence of such deposit and notify adjacent or affected properties of the intention to allow extraction of minerals within the zone. The S82 Use Regulation may be used to preserve areas with valuable mineral deposits until extraction can take place. Special regulations are to be imposed governing the conduct of mineral extraction, associated operating characteristics, and care of the site at conclusion of the extraction operation. Zone A70 Use Regulations are intended to create and preserve areas intended primarily for agricultural crop production; however, extractive use types (mining and processing) are permitted upon issuance of a MUP (Zoning Ordinance Section 2705e).

The zoning classification for most of the project site and surrounding properties to the north, east, and southeast includes the Special Area Regulation “S” or Scenic designation, as shown on Figure 2.1-1. The Scenic Area Regulations are comprised of Sections 5200 – 5212 of the Zoning Ordinance. Section 5200 states: “The purpose of these provisions is to regulate development in areas of high scenic value, both to assure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures and to preserve and enhance the scenic resources present in adjacent areas.”

Section 5205 requires the preparation and approval of a site plan for projects with the Scenic designation, and Section 5210 describes the site plan review criteria. The general criterion of site plan review is that the proposed development shall not, to the maximum extent feasible, interfere with or degrade those visual features, natural or man-made, of the site or adjacent sites which contribute to its scenic attractiveness, as viewed from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource. These requirements will be addressed through the processing of the MUP for the proposed project.

Lakeside Community Plan

The proposed project is located within the Lakeside Community Planning Area (County of San Diego, 2011). The Lakeside Community Plan includes goals, policies and recommendations pertaining to scenic highways and the protection of scenic resources within designated scenic corridors. The following Lakeside Community Plan goals and policies related to visual impacts would be applicable to the proposed project:

Industrial Goal: Provide for the kind of industrial development that does not detract from the existing rural character of the community.

Policy 4: Encourage new and existing industrial facilities to blend with their surroundings by utilizing harmonious architectural design, undergrounding utilities, landscaping, and a high standard of maintenance.

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

Policy 3: Minimize dust, noise, traffic, unsightly views, accumulations of water, steep slopes, and safety and health hazards resulting from sand and gravel extraction.

The Lakeside Community Plan also designates Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs) for Lakeside as lands requiring special attention in order to conserve resources in a manner best satisfying public and private objectives. The El Cajon

Mountain – El Capitan Reservoir RCA overlay includes a portion of Phases 3 and 4 of the project site, as shown in Figure 10 of the VIA (AECOM 2018). The Lakeside Community Plan describes the El Cajon Mountain – El Capitan Reservoir RCA as follows:

El Cajon Mountain - El Capitan Reservoir: This large area contains very steep slopes (the portion in Lakeside about 60 to 70 percent is greater than 50% slope) and isolated rocky peaks and ridges, including some of the largest granitic domes in San Diego County. Vegetation is excellent wildlife habitat with Oak woodlands, Coastal Sage scrub and Mixed and Chamise chaparral. The area contains historical and existing golden eagle nest sites. The rocky peaks, especially El Cajon Mountain, serve as a scenic backdrop for El Cajon as well as the Lakeside region.

Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan

The Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan identifies existing and future trails and pathways within and surrounding the El Monte Valley. Two east-west trending trails are proposed across the project site (D: San Diego River Park Regional Trail; and 131: El Monte Valley River Trail). Three additional trails would cross the site in a north-south direction (07: El Monte/Willow Connector Trail; 41: Power Pole Trail; and 61: Dairy Road Trail). On the north side of the project site, the proposed Willow Road Pathway (06) alignment would be located adjacent to Willow Road, which also serves as the majority of the northern boundary of the project site. Along the southern boundary of the project site, El Monte Road Pathway (05) is proposed to be located along El Monte Road.

Existing trails in Lakeside are mostly located within or near County Parks, including Cactus County Park, Louis Stelzer County Park, and El Monte County Park. The trail within Cactus County Park is located approximately 1 mile west of the project site. The trail in Louis Stelzer County Park is approximately 0.66 to 0.75 miles northwest of the project site, and provides access to three viewpoints, including two that overlook the El Monte Valley and the project site. The trail within El Monte County Park is located 1.4 to 2 miles east of the project site, and provides extensive westward views over El Monte Valley, including the project site. The Flume Trail was opened by the County in 2011, linking El Monte County Park to Blossom Valley. The trail starts by wrapping around the west boundary of El Monte County Park and climbs over 1,100 feet in elevation. From the Flume Trail, there are views of El Capitan in the east and El Monte Valley stretching west.

2.1.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

For the purpose of this EIR, the identified significance thresholds are based on criteria provided in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and San Diego County Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content

Requirements for Visual Resources (County Guidelines for Visual Resources), approved July 30, 2007 and Dark Skies and Glare (County Guidelines for Dark Skies and Glare), modified January 15, 2009.

2.1.2.1 Issue 1: Scenic Vistas

Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based on the County Guidelines for Visual Resources, a significant impact would occur if 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.

Analysis

Mining and Reclamation

According to the County's Municipal Code, a portion of the project site is located within a Scenic (S) Special Area Regulation zone due to its unique scenic value (Figure 2.1-1). As described above in Section 2.1.1.2, the VIA assessed the surrounding area's viewshed of the project site within a three-mile radius (AECOM 2018). Two viewshed analyses were run for the project. The first, as shown in Figure 2.1-2, is for the total project excavation and reclamation areas by phase. The surrounding areas are shaded to indicate whether viewers can see one, two, three, or four phases of the proposed project. The second viewshed analysis, shown in Figure 2.1-3, shows the viewshed for the proposed processing plant and stockpiles. The plant would be placed near each phase of the project, starting in the east and moving westward every few years. The viewshed shows which surrounding areas would have views of the processing plant locations. The processing plant would include a surge stockpile of up to 70 feet tall and thus has the potential to be visible.

As shown in Figure 2.1-2, the project site is visible from a small portion of SR-67 and highly visible from El Monte Road and Willow Road, all of which are designated scenic roadways. As shown in Figure 2.1-3, the portable processing plant and stockpiles, when located in Phase 3 or Phase 4, might be visible from SR-67, which is designated as a scenic highway. The existing vegetation and structures would block most of these proposed features, but the top of the highest stockpile may be visible from the portion of the highway shown in the viewshed.

The visibility of the proposed project from El Monte Road and Willow Road are shown within Figures 2.1-7b, 2.1-8b, 2.1-10b, and 2.1-12b. The processing plants, stockpiles, and other temporary project features would be visible from scenic El Monte Road and Willow Road. The proposed project would introduce temporary changes that would cause a visual contrast into the scenic vistas from these roads. Due to the visual conflicts in the viewshed associated with these

changes, the impact to the viewsheds from El Monte Road and Willow Road would be substantial.

Additionally, panoramic vistas available from a trail above El Monte County Park would show the processing plant, stockpiles, and other temporary project features during mining and reclamation. The temporary changes created by the project in these panoramic vistas available from the trail would be substantial.

While the visible features of the proposed extraction operations would not obstruct or interrupt panoramic vistas available from existing trails or scenic roads, the exposed soil, equipment, processing plant and stockpiles would highly contrast with the surrounding existing vegetation and natural slopes. Thus, the visible features associated with the proposed extraction operations would detract from the visual quality of the project area and substantially change the character of the LUs within the project site, which are visible from a wide variety of public viewpoints, including trails and scenic roads. Therefore, this detracting from scenic views during mining and reclamation activities would result in a **significant impact (Impact AE-1)**.

Post-Reclamation

Long-term changes from key viewpoints would be minimal post-reclamation. Along SR-67, existing structures and vegetation would block views of the proposed project and would screen the changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project. Thus, **impacts** on the scenic qualities of SR-67 would be **less than significant**.

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 effects of the proposed project. The final project features would maintain the high visual quality of the Riparian River Channel LU areas. While the proposed project would change the visual environment of the Lowland Disturbed LU as well, the resulting visual quality would be improved to high to moderate, with increased vegetation quality and habitat.

Overall, the post-reclamation features, such as the revegetated slopes, would not substantially obstruct or interrupt the panoramic vistas available from the scenic roadways and the trail above El Monte County Park. The minor change in visual quality and relatively small scale of the post-reclamation features within the expansive panoramic views would not detract from scenic vistas. The reclaimed and revegetated project site would be visible from the designated scenic roadways, including El Monte Road and Willow Road, and existing trails, such as

the trail above El Monte County 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. Therefore, impacts associated with the post-restoration change to the project area would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.2 Issue 2: Scenic Resources

Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based on the County Guidelines for Visual Resources, a significant impact would occur if 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.

Analysis

Mining and Reclamation

During project operations and before completion of the final phase, 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 (AECOM 2018). The mining equipment and trucks would be brightly colored, metal, complex, man-made objects, which would create a substantial contrast 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 changes during mining and reclamation activities would result in a substantial adverse change to the existing visual character of the project area, and thus would result in a **significant impact (Impact AE-2)**.

Post-Reclamation

No designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings exist within the project site, although the slopes north of the valley are covered with rock outcroppings. The proposed 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 existing upland habitat. While the geometric configuration of the slopes with straight edges, angular corners, and uniform slopes would be highly visible, these visual components would be softened by the revegetation and would result in a relatively small change to the visual quality of the project site.

The proposed project would remove existing trees within the valley during the mining and reclamation phases, which would detract from the visual character of the community and the valley. However, the Revegetation Plan would utilize native vegetation, including riparian and upland habitats, to restore the project site. The Revegetation Plan would utilize a riparian and upland palette to replace native trees removed during the mining and reclamation phases with trees of similar visual character. The resulting visual character of the project site and affected LUs post-reclamation would not be substantially different from existing conditions. Therefore, the resulting visual impact to scenic resources post-reclamation would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.3 Issue 3: Visual Character and Quality

Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based on the County Guidelines for Visual Resources, a significant impact would occur if 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.).

Analysis

As described above in Section 2.1.1.5, seven key views were determined to best represent the important views of the project site and highlight sensitive and/or typical views within the El Monte Valley (AECOM 2018). Visual simulations were used to determine which proposed project features would be visible in the key views during the mining and reclamation phases. Table 2.1-3 provides a general description of each of the seven key views, the project components and phases visible from these locations, the likely viewer groups, and sensitivity to changes. Visual simulations of the seven key views are shown on Figure 2.1-6b, 2.1-7b, 2.1-8b, 2.1-9b, 2.1-10b, 2.1-11b, and 2.1-12b.

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 proposed 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 proposed mining and reclamation activities would introduce substantial changes into the key views from the other LUs in the proposed 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 proposed mining and reclamation activities.

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 project site would be substantial. Additionally, the equipment, vehicles, processing plant, and stockpiles that would be visible during the proposed mining and reclamation activities would create industrial-like features in a mostly natural setting. The proposed mining and reclamation activities would result in a substantial change to the existing setting, and these changes would introduce features that would detract or contrast with the visual character/quality of the area. Therefore, mining and reclamation would result in adverse visual changes to the project area, which would result in a **significant impact (Impact AE-3)**.

Post-Reclamation

The long-term visual environment of El Monte Valley would reflect riparian and upland habitats, as described in the Conceptual Revegetation and Reclamation Plans (Appendices I and J, respectively). The post-reclamation project site would include a very large depression from the excavation activities, with a single 20-foot-wide bench around the perimeter located 20 feet above the bottom of the excavated pit and 10 feet below current 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. In existing conditions, the existing riparian vegetation, which signifies the presence of the seasonal river bed, and the high water table, are currently dark green and brown. Implementation of the Revegetation and Reclamations Plans would return these features to a similar visual character and quality as present in existing conditions. Therefore, a relatively small change to visual character and quality would occur between existing conditions and the post-reclamation project site.

Implementation of the mining and reclamation phases of the proposed project would permanently modify existing topography located on the project site. 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. While the angular and uniform slopes that contain the project site would aid in the efficiency of the operations, the proposed revegetation would serve to obscure the regularly spaced benches and uniformly sloped edges, and 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 project 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 and Ridgeline areas).

The resulting visual environment of El Monte 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 site are non-native due to previous disturbance and changes to the hydrologic regime. Post-reclamation, the project site 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 proposed project would result in a net increase in native habitat acreage and improve overall native habitat quality and functions.

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 would be required to be replanted in the disturbed areas of the project site 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 Conceptual Revegetation and Reclamation Plans, and achievement of the success criteria required in both plans, 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. Therefore, 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 impact**.

2.1.2.4 Issue 4: Lighting and Glare

Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based on the County Guidelines for Dark Skies and Glare, a significant impact would occur if the project would install outdoor light fixtures that do not conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements of Section 59.105 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code; operate Class I or Class III outdoor lighting between 11:00 p.m. and sunrise that is not otherwise exempted pursuant to Section 59.108 or 59.109; and generate light trespass that exceeds 0.2 foot candles measured five feet onto the adjacent property. A significant impact would also occur if the project installs highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to reflective glass and high-gloss surface color that will create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways or areas frequently

used for outdoor activities on adjacent properties. In addition, a significant impact would occur if the project does not conform to applicable Federal, State, or local statute or regulations related to dark skies or flare, including but not limited to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

Analysis

The proposed project (aggregate processing and transportation) would operate during daylight hours, between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The transportation of aggregate would also occur from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturdays. The project site would be closed on Sundays and holidays. Shielded night lighting would be installed around the processing plant for security purposes and would be designed to minimize glare and reflection onto neighboring areas. The proposed project would comply with applicable regulations by using fully shielded pole-mounted sodium, metal halide, or fluorescent lighting types of 4,050 lumens or below for outdoor lighting. This lighting would minimize energy use, and in combination with cut-offs, reduce light pollution. No other nighttime lighting would be required, and no night-time construction activities or operations are proposed.

The proposed project does not include a major new source of permanent outdoor lighting and would not use building materials having highly reflective properties, such as highly reflective glass or high-gloss surface colors. Mining operation equipment would not produce glare. Post-reclamation features would include revegetated slopes, river channel, and recreational trails. No lighting would be present on the project site after proposed mining and reclamation activities are completed. Therefore, the project would conform with the San Diego County General Plan Goal COS-13, associated policies, and the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance governing light and glare during project operation. Impacts related to light and glare would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.5 Issue 5: Consistency with Applicable Policies and Planning Documents

Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based on the County Guidelines for Visual Resources, the proposed project would result in a significant visual impact if it would not comply with applicable goals, policies, or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

Analysis

Mining and Reclamation

Project features that would be visible during mining and reclamation activities include exposed soil and slopes, and presence of processing plant equipment,

vehicles, and stockpiles. Although confined to the active phase area of the project site, these project features would be highly visible, highly contrasting, and would create a substantial change to the visual character of the valley. Any buildings required for the proposed mining activities 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 proposed 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 2.1-4 provides a consistency analysis between the visual changes associated with mining and reclamation activities and applicable policies. As shown in Table 2.1-4, mining and reclamation activities were found to be inconsistent or nonconforming in regards to 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

- Industrial Goal, Policy 4: Encourage new and existing industrial facilities to blend with their surroundings
- Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal, Policy 1: Permit only controlled extraction operations that have a minimal adverse impact on the environment.

As detailed in Table 2.1-4, the proposed project would not conform to certain policies of the County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, and Lakeside Community Plan. Proposed mining and reclamation activities would not be in conformance with certain applicable goals and policies, and would result in a **significant impact (Impact AE-4)**.

Although Lakeside has historic resources, it does not have a recognized Historic District; therefore, there is no inconsistency with regard to a historic district's zoning.

Post-Reclamation

The visual changes in the post-reclamation period were also analyzed for consistency with applicable visual policies and plans. Reclaimed lands would generally consist of vegetated undeveloped area with native habitats and appropriate landforms for site drainage. Table 2.1-4 provides consistency analysis, and did not identify any inconsistencies or nonconformance issues with applicable plans/policies within the San Diego County General Plan, San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, and Lakeside Community Plan. Therefore, impacts would be **less than significant** after reclamation.

2.1.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Issue 1: Scenic Vistas

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts in regards to scenic vistas is defined as the viewshed of the proposed project. The cumulative projects listed in Table 1-11, located in Chapter 1, Project Description, includes 22 possible cumulative projects contributing to a cumulative impact. Of these 22 projects, almost all are located to the west, northwest, and southwest of the project site, and none are within the viewshed areas of the proposed project. As described above, implementation of the proposed project would result in a significant visual impact during mining and reclamation that would detract from scenic views. However, none of the cumulative impacts are located within the project viewshed. Therefore, the visual changes resulting from the proposed project would not have the potential to combine with other cumulative projects to detract from scenic views. Therefore, impacts associated with scenic vistas are **not considered cumulatively considerable**.

Issue 2: Scenic Resources

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts in regards to scenic resources is the viewsheds of the proposed project. None of the 22 cumulative projects listed within Table 1-11 are located within the viewsheds areas of the proposed project. While the proposed project would result in significant impacts to scenic resources, the proposed project would not combine with other projects to create a cumulative impact to the visual character of the viewsheds. Therefore, impacts associated with scenic resources are **not considered cumulatively considerable**.

Issue 3: Visual Character and Quality

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts with regards to visual character and quality are public views of the project site and surrounding areas. A significant cumulative impact would occur if the development of cumulative projects would change the overall visual character of the area. However, none of the cumulative projects are located within the project viewsheds. Thus, the proposed project would not combine with other projects to jointly introduce features that would detract or contrast with the visual character and quality of the area. Therefore, impacts associated with visual character are **not considered cumulatively considerable**.

Issue 4: Lighting and Glare

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts in regards to lighting and glare are the cumulative projects throughout El Monte Valley and those listed in Table 1-11 in the Project Description. These projects include, but are not limited to residential, commercial, and mining projects. Cumulative projects could have the potential to introduce new sources of light and glare to the valley without the proposed project. Cumulative projects would be required to comply with the San Diego County Zoning Ordinances governing light and glare. The proposed project would include shielded night lighting for security purposes, which would be designed to minimize glare and reflection onto adjacent uses. The proposed project would comply with all applicable regulations, including the County Guidelines for Dark Skies and Glare. No lighting would be present on the project site after mining and reclamation activities are completed. Therefore, impacts associated with lighting and glare are **not considered cumulatively considerable**.

Issue 5: Consistency with Applicable Policies and Planning Documents

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts in regards to consistency with applicable plans and policies are the cumulative projects in the Lakeside Community Plan area. There are no known conflicts with the General Plan or the Lakeside Community Plan from the cumulative projects with respect to aesthetics. Although Lakeside has historic resources, it does not have a recognized Historic District. Furthermore, none of the cumulative projects are located within the project viewsheds, and would not create additional non-compliance with visual policies applicable to the viewshed. Therefore, impacts associated with consistency with applicable plans and policies are **not considered cumulatively considerable**.

2.1.4 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

The following significant impacts related to aesthetics would occur with project implementation:

Impact AE-1: Implementation of the proposed mining and reclamation activities would detract from the visual quality of views from public viewpoints, resulting in a significant impact related to scenic vistas.

Impact AE-2: Implementation of the proposed mining and reclamation activities would result in removal or substantial adverse change of features that contribute to the visual character or the area, resulting in a significant impact related to scenic resources.

Impact AE-3: Implementation of the proposed mining and reclamation activities would introduce features that would detract or contrast with the visual character and quality of the area, resulting in a significant impact.

Impact AE-4: Implementation of the proposed mining and reclamation activities would not conform to certain applicable goals and policies related to visual resources, resulting in a significant impact.

2.1.5 Mitigation

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 project site is offset from the roadway and there is currently vegetation that screens it to the extent possible that would not be enhanced with additional landscaping for screening purposes. Screening is only proposed where the project site immediately abuts the road in locations where existing landscaping does not exist or serve as an adequate screening feature.

M-AE-1: The El Monte Road Screening Plan, which will be conditioned with the MUP, as shown in Figure 2.1-13, shall be implemented along certain segments of El Monte Road adjacent to the project site to reduce the visual impacts associated with mining and reclamation activities 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 MUP. 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 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 (*Plantanus 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.

2.1.6 Conclusion

The proposed project would introduce a phased mining operation, including reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas, into the visual environment of the project site and surrounding area. Due to the prolonged timeframe of the project operations during mining and reclamation activities, the proposed project would be visible from multiple viewpoints within the affected viewsheds. The visual contrast created by exposed soil, mining operations, project vehicles, the processing plant, and stockpiles with the surrounding visual setting would be substantially adverse. The mining and reclamation activities would also be inconsistent with certain visual policies applicable to the proposed project. The mining and reclamation activities would detract from valued scenic vistas, would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character of scenic resources, would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality, and not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements.

While implementation of mitigation measure **M-AE-1** would reduce visual quality and view quality impacts for vehicle occupants along El Monte Road, the changes 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 with implementation of mitigation measure **M-AE-1**. There are no additional feasible mitigation measures to reduce impacts related to scenic vistas and resources, visual character and quality, and conflicts with applicable goals and policies to less than significant levels during mining and reclamation activities. Therefore, Impact **AES-1**, Impact **AES-2**, Impact **AES-3**, and Impact **AES-4** are considered **significant and unavoidable**.

Ultimately, the project site 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 proposed project would not detract from valued scenic vistas, would not result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character of scenic resources, would not introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality, and would comply with applicable Plan goals and policies. Thus, post-reclamation conditions would result in **less than significant** visual impacts.

The proposed project does not include a major new source of permanent outdoor lighting and would not use building materials having highly reflective properties during the mining and reclamation phases. The project would conform with the San Diego County General Plan Goal COS-13, associated policies, and the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance governing light and glare during project operation. Additionally, no lighting would be present on the post-reclamation project site. Therefore, impacts related to light and glare are considered **less than significant**.

Table 2.1-1: Summary of the Visual Quality of Landscape Character Units in the Project Vicinity

#	Landscape Character Unit	General Description	Viewer Sensitivity to Change
1	Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Jennings and its adjacent slopes • Provides high scenic view of mountainous area north of project site • Within viewshed of the project and looks down over the staging area 	High
2	Lowland Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various agricultural crops providing variable pattern appearance to area • Bamboo grove and pomegranate trees along El Monte Road, accentuating linear road and east-west trend of the Valley 	Moderate
3	Lowland Disturbed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of openness within Valley and views to surrounding mountains • Surface area previously excavated in past that contributes to variable landforms • Mature oaks near riparian area serve as focal points to break up monotonous grassland 	Moderate
4	Lowland Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single family homes with majority of residential area situated close to valley floor • Disturbed nature affords to an overall variable development pattern and lower visual quality 	Low
5	Lowland Residential/Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential and agriculture developments lie north of the project site • Agriculture equipment scattered throughout the properties afford to a non-unified landscape 	Moderate
6	Mountainous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous rocky outcrops and granitic domes • Mountains provide the backdrop of the El Monte Valley and scenic designation of the Valley 	High

Table 2.1-1: Summary of the Visual Quality of Landscape Character Units in the Project Vicinity

#	Landscape Character Unit	General Description	Viewer Sensitivity to Change
7	Ridgeline Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newer homes on larger lots exist on ridgeline of valley interspersed with moderately paved and landscaped areas Development contributes to demarcations between residential and natural landscapes with some blending in with surrounding environment 	Moderate
8	Riparian River Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channel vegetation noticeably greener on west end of valley floor Various trails interspersed through the riverbed with large riparian specimens in the center of the project area Stressed appearance due to prior disturbance within Valley and non-native vegetation when compared to other riparian areas throughout region 	High
9	Suburban Developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suburban development affords to non-unified, low visual quality as it conflicts with character of rural areas typical of the rural low-density communities within the area 	Low
10	Undisturbed Canyon Slope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steep slopes help frame the scenic backdrop of the mountainous landscape character unit Steep slopes contribute to connecting views of the Valley floor to mountains 	High

SOURCE: AECOM 2018

Table 2.1-2: Principle Key Views Existing Setting Summary

#	General Description of Key View	View Type	Dominant Viewer Group	Viewer Sensitivity to Change	Notes
1	Looking north-northwest down valley from top of valley slope	Public	Trail users	High	Represents the public view from a trail at the Lake Jennings campground. See Figure 2.1-6a.
2	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	Vehicle occupants on El Monte Road	High	Represents eastbound public view; existing riparian vegetation obscures view to project. See Figure 2.1-7a.
3	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	Vehicle occupants on El Monte Road	High	Public view reflecting part of northeastern portion of project. See Figure 2.1-8a.
4	Looking east up valley from northern valley slope	Public/Private	Vehicle occupants on Willow Road; Lowland residents	High	Represents views for residences and drivers on Willow Road. See Figure 2.1-9a.
5	Looking southeast across valley from Willow Road	Public	Vehicle occupants	High	Represents views for drivers on Willow Road. See Figure 2.1-10a.
6	Looking west across valley from Blossom Valley-El Monte Park Trail	Public/Private	Trail users/Ridgeline/Slope residents	High	Public view from local park trail; comprehensive angle with most of the project visible. Also represents views similar to those for Ridgeline/Slope Residents. See Figure 2.1-11a.
7	Looking west across valley from El Monte Road	Public	Vehicle occupants	High	Public view, encompasses southwestern portion of project. See Figure 2.1-12a.

SOURCE: AECOM 2018.

Table 2.1-3: Principle Key Views Simulation Summary

#	General Description of Key View	View Type	Project Components Seen	Visible Phases	Dominant Viewer Group	Viewer Sensitivity to Change	Notes
1	Looking north-northwest down valley from top of valley slope	Public	DS, WP, SC, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	3 and 4	Trail Users	High	Reclamation of completed Phase 3 and 4 visible in middleground. Background hillside and foreground would remain undisturbed. See Figure 2.1-6b.
2	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	N/A	N/A	Vehicle Occupants On El Monte Road	High	Excavation, reclamation, and revegetation activities associated with Phase 3 would not be visible. See Figure 2.1-7b.
3	Looking northwest across valley from El Monte Road	Public	RV, DS, WP, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	1 and 2	Vehicle Occupants On El Monte Road	High	Reclamation of completed Phase 1 and 2 would be visible in the middleground. Stabilized post-extraction landforms would be been revegetated. See Figure 2.1-8b.
4	Looking east up valley from northern valley slope	Public/Private	DS, WP, RD, ST, B, OT, LT, FY	1	Vehicle Occupants on Willow Road; Lowland Residents	High	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. See Figure 2.1-9b.
5	Looking southeast across valley from Willow Road	Public	DS, WP, SC, RD, ST, OT, LT, FY	3	Vehicle Occupants	High	Most of Phase 3 would be visible, including the processing plant and stockpiles. The vegetation in the foreground and background would remain undisturbed for the length of the project See Figure 2.1-10b.

Table 2.1-3: Principle Key Views Simulation Summary

#	General Description of Key View	View Type	Project Components Seen	Visible Phases	Dominant Viewer Group	Viewer Sensitivity to Change	Notes
6	Looking west across valley from Blossom Valley-El Monte Park Trail	Public/Private	RV	1, 2, 3, 4 (post-reclamation)	Trail Users/Ridgeline/Slope Residents	High	Almost all of the project would be visible. Reflects the view 16 years past project initiation. The reclamation of each phase would be complete. See Figure 2.1-11b.
7	Looking west across valley from El Monte Road	Public	N/A	4	Vehicle Occupants	High	Reflects the project 11 years after project initiation. Phase 4 would be the only portion visible. The stockpiles and processing plant equipment would be visible over the berm. See Figure 2.1-12b.

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
 SOURCE: AECOM 2018

Table 2.1-4: Project Conformance with Goals and Policies

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
San Diego County General Plan			
<p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p> <p>Goal COS-11 Preservation of Scenic Resources</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The proposed 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.</p>
<p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p> <p>Goal COS-11 Preservation of Scenic Resources</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Post-reclamation, the proposed 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</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
		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 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.	the existing valley viewshed and would not substantially detract from the visual environment that is enjoyed by motorists on 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 project 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 project 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 proposed project would lower the topography of the valley floor to 5 to 15 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</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
			<p>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 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 proposed 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			
Part Five: Special Area Regulations,	Section 5210: Site Plan Review Criteria	Any buildings required for project operations would be temporary structures restricted to a small area of the site.	No buildings or structures would be included in the final site configuration. The project site would be restored to a

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
Section 5200: Scenic Regulation Overlay	<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 installed or mature. • 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, 	<p>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 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</p>	<p>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 project site after project completion would include final landform establishment and plantings of native vegetation species to be identified in the Reclamation and 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 project site.</p> <p>The proposed project would alter the natural topography of the valley floor and the San Diego River's natural drainage patterns. The proposed project would lower the topography of the valley floor to</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
	signs, roads, and parking areas shall be compatible with the lighting employed in the designated area.	conform to the Scenic Regulation Overlay site plan review criteria.	<p>approximately 5 to 15 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 project 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. 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 proposed 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	The proposed 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.

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
		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.	
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.

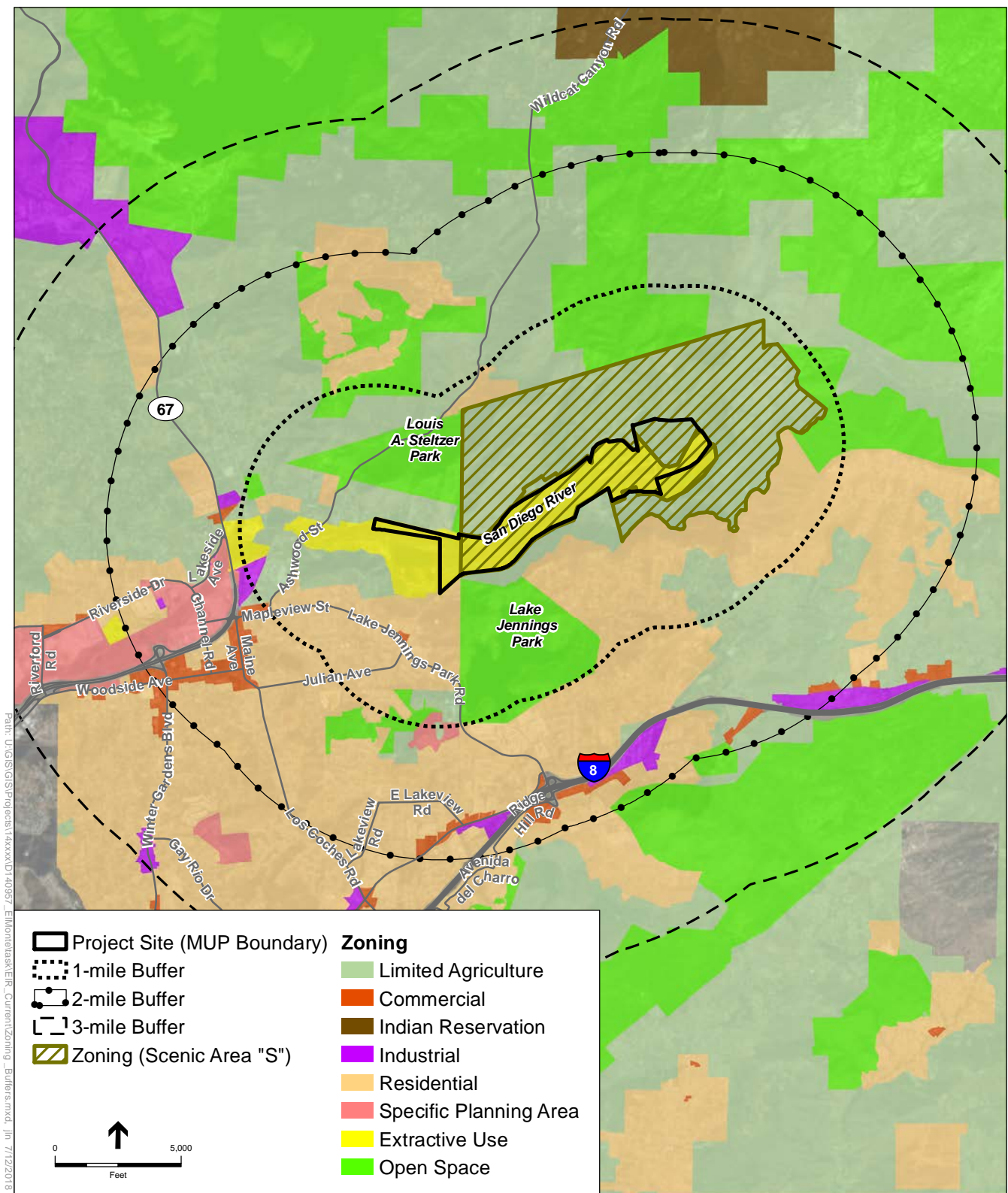
Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
<p>Sand and Gravel Extraction Goal: Balance the regional need for construction materials with the community need for freedom from any disturbing effects of sand and gravel extraction.</p>	<p>Policy 2. Extract sand and gravel in a way that minimizes any harm or disturbance to adjacent residents and properties.</p>	<p>Measures to reduce the effects of disruptive visual project elements have been included 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>The proposed 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.</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 at post reclamation.</p>
<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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The project would phase the reclamation and revegetation to begin once Phase 1 extraction activities are complete 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.</p>	<p>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</p>

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
			existing undisturbed vegetation within the remainder of the valley.
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 3. Minimize dust, noise, traffic, unsightly views, accumulations of water, steep slopes, and safety and health hazards resulting from sand and gravel extraction.	Measures to reduce the effects of disruptive visual project elements have been included 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. Thus, the project has attempted to reduce and minimize unsightly views associated with the mining operations and would conform to this policy.	The proposed 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 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 proposed 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.

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
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 each area. Thus, the project would minimize the amount of time that natural drainages would be disrupted.	The proposed 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 consistent with this policy.
Resource Conservation Areas	<p>El Cajon Mountain – El Capitan Reservoir RCA (No. 58) (see Figure 4 of the Lakeside Community Plan at https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/docs/CP/Lakeside_CP.pdf)</p> <p>The rocky peaks serve as a scenic backdrop for El Cajon as well as the Lakeside region</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. This RCA also includes portions of proposed Phases 3 and 4. 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.	The proposed vegetation 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.
Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan			
Trails identified in the plan	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	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	The proposed 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

Planning Document	Policy	Mining and Reclamation Phase Conformance	Post-Reclamation Conformance
	http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/CTMP/maps/Lakeside.pdf for the Lakeside Community Trails and Pathways Plan map.	<p>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>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>

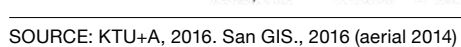
SOURCE: AECOM 2018

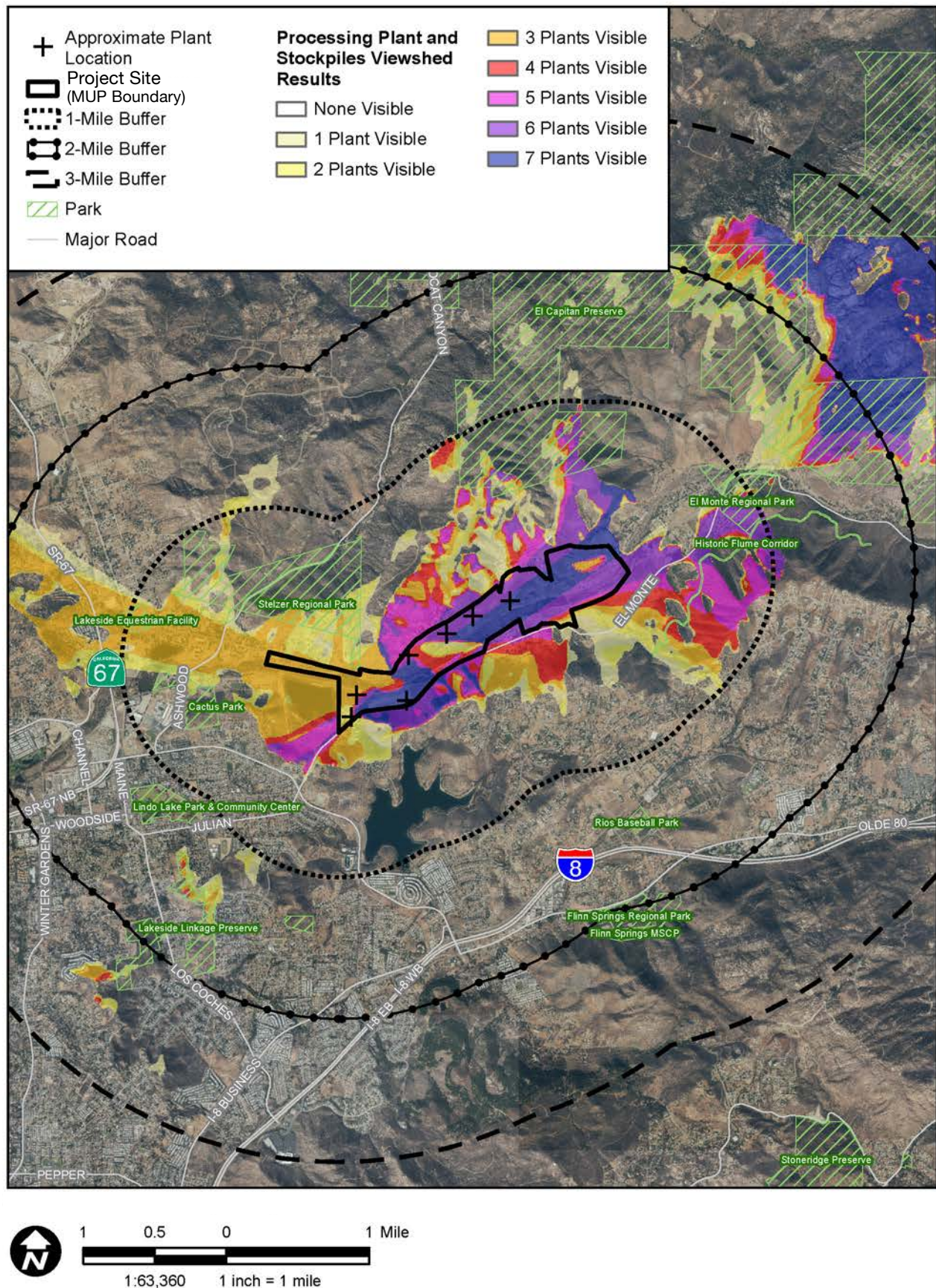


SOURCE: ESRI; EnviroMine; The Altum Group; Chang Consultants; ESA; SanGIS

El Monte Sand Mining Project. 140957

Figure 2.1-1
Scenic Special Area Designation Zoning

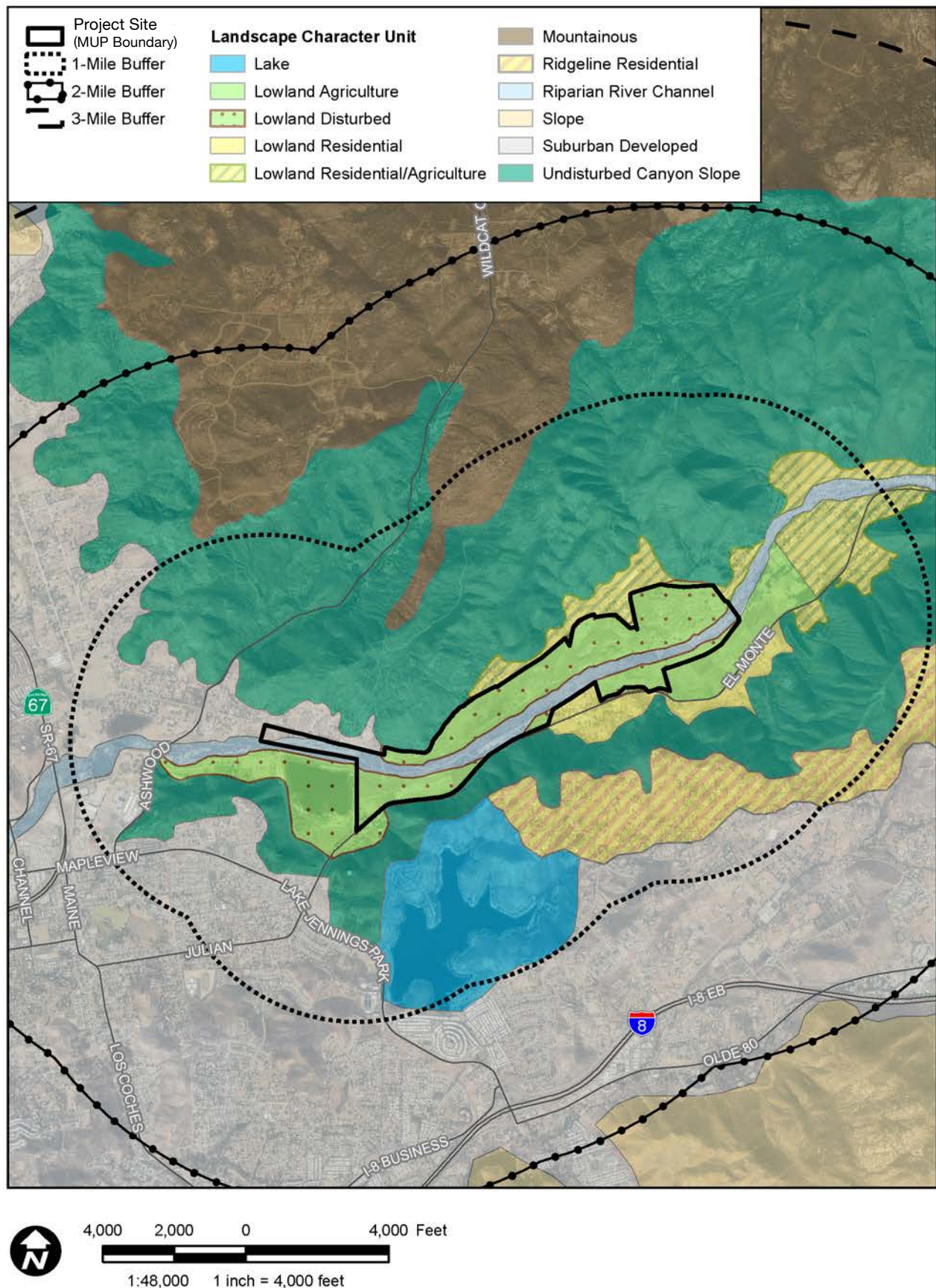




SOURCE: KTU+A, 2016. San GIS., 2016 (aerial 2014)

El Monte Sand Mining Project . 140957

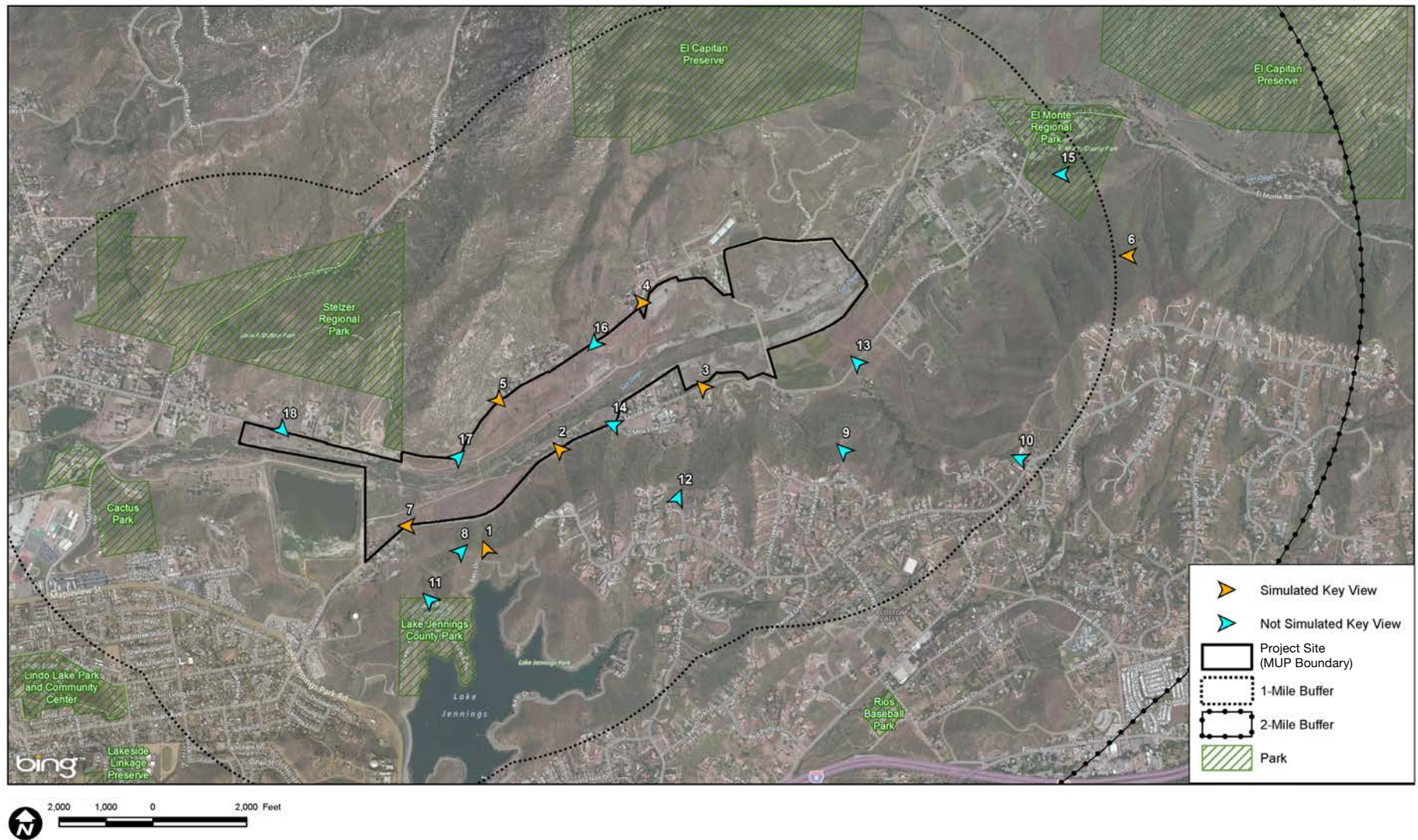
Figure 2.1-3
Processing Plant and Stockpile Viewshed



SOURCE: San GIS. KTU+A

El Monte Sand Mining Project . 140957

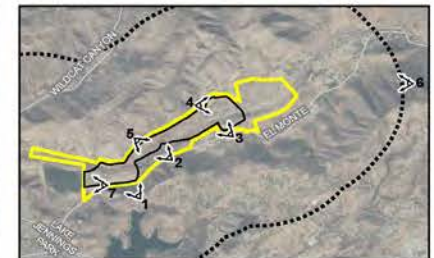
Figure 2.1-4
Landscape Character Units



SOURCE: AECOM, 2016; SanGIS

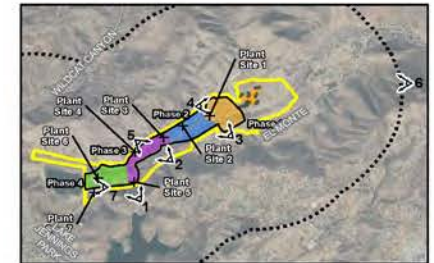
El Monte Sand Mining Project . 140957

Figure 2.1-5
Key View Locations



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 LCUs

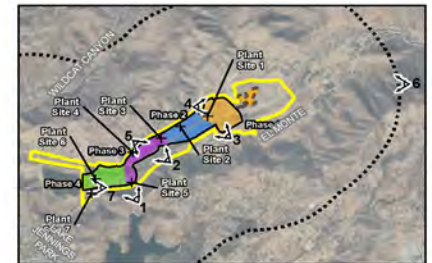


- Simulated Environment**
- Project Year 9
 - Phase 3 excavation activities
 - Processing Plant Site 4
 - Phase 4 pre-excavation



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 LCUs



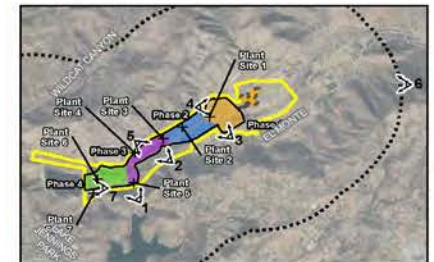
Simulated Environment

- No phases are observed from this perspective because of the low elevation of the key 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 LCUs

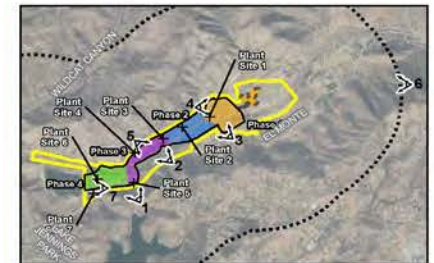


- Simulated Environment
- Project Year 6
 - Phase 2 excavation activities
 - Phase 1 reclamation



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 LCUs



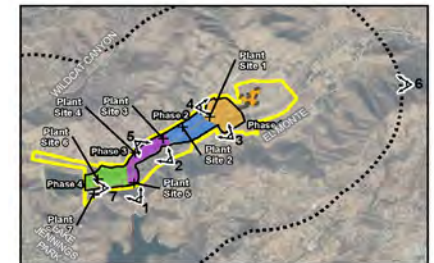
Simulated Environment

- Project Year 3
- Phase 1 excavation activities



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 LCUs

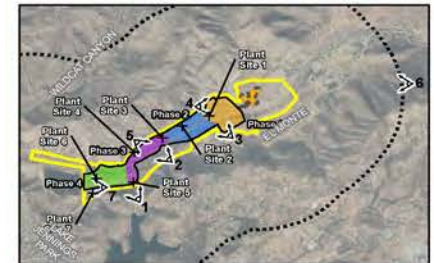


- Simulated Environment**
- Project Year 8
 - Phase 3 excavation activities
 - Processing Plant Site 3



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 LCUs

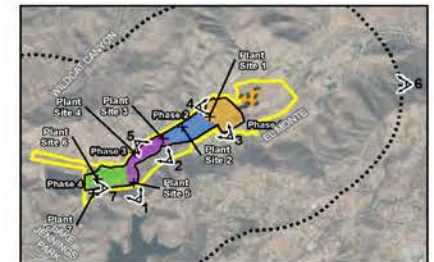


- Simulated Environment
- Project Year 16
 - All phases (post-reclamation)

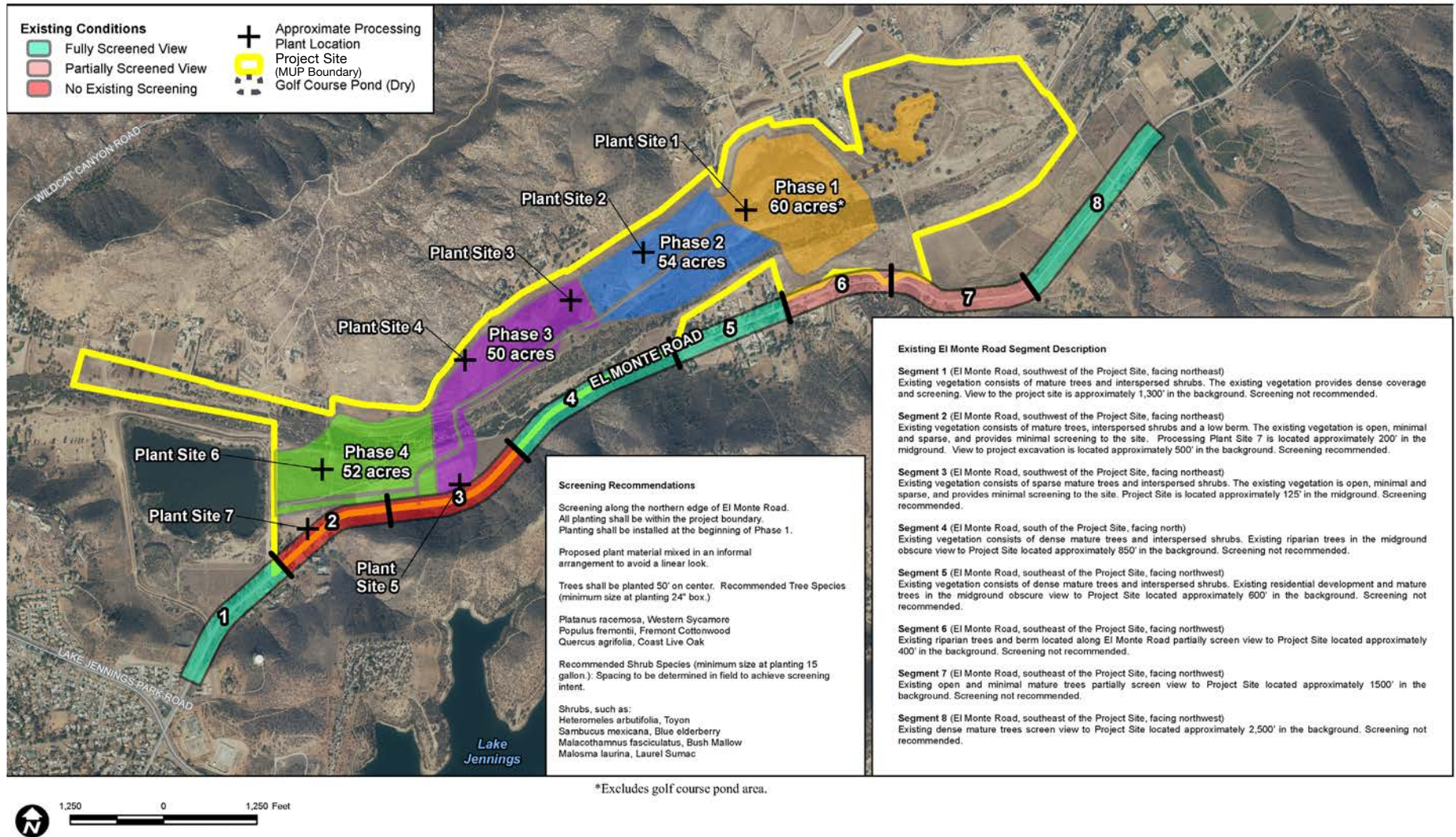


Existing Perspective

- 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 LCUs



- Simulated Environment**
- Project Year 11
 - Phase 4 excavation activities
 - Processing Plant Site 7



SOURCE: EnviroMine, 2016. San GIS, 2014

El Monte Sand Mining Project . 140957
Figure 2.1-13
Draft El Monte Road Screening Plan

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