

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

12. MINERAL RESOURCES

1. INTRODUCTION

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzes the Project's potential impacts on mineral resources. The section briefly addresses relevant regulations and policies related to mineral resources and describes existing mineral resources in the Project vicinity. The analysis is based in part on a review of maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey (CGS).

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

a. Regulatory Setting

(1) State Regulations

(a) State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and the California Geological Survey¹

The State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, as amended, mandates the classification of mineral lands to help identify and protect non-fuel mineral resources in areas within the State subject to urban expansion or other irreversible land uses that would preclude mineral extraction. After designation of mineral resource areas, this Act provides for the classification of designated lands containing mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance. In addition, guidelines for the proper reclamation of mineral lands are provided to ensure appropriate second uses are developed upon completion of mining. Non-fuel mineral resources include metals such as gold, silver, iron, and copper; industrial minerals such as boron compounds, rare-earth elements, clays, limestone, gypsum, salt, and dimension stone; and construction aggregate, which includes sand, gravel, and crushed stone.

In compliance with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, the CGS has prepared Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) maps that identify the following mineral resource zones:

¹ *The California Geological Survey was formerly called the California Department of Mines and Geology.*

- MRZ-1: Areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.
- MRZ-2: Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists.
- MRZ-3: Areas containing mineral deposits the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data.
- MRZ-4: Areas where available information is inadequate for assignment to any other MRZ zone.

Mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance correspond with MRZ-2. As discussed below in subsection 3b(2), Project Site, the Project Site is located entirely within the MRZ-3 zone.

Aggregate resources in particular are critical to the construction industry as they are used in cement, asphalt, and other building materials. The CGS monitors the consumption of aggregate resources in four separate Production-Consumption regions located entirely or partially within the County of Los Angeles (County). The Project Site is located within the Saugus–Newhall Production-Consumption region, which covers an approximately 650-square-mile area from near the community of Castaic south to the San Fernando Valley and from Soledad Canyon west to near the Ventura County line.

(2) County Regulations

(a) County of Los Angeles General Plan

As discussed in greater detail in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, of this Draft EIR, the County General Plan directs future growth and development in the County's unincorporated areas and establishes goals, policies, and objectives that pertain to the entire County. The current General Plan, adopted in 1980, includes a Conservation and Open Space Element that sets policy direction for the County's mineral resources. One relevant policy calls for the conservation, evaluation, and reclamation of mineral resources.

As also discussed further in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, the County circulated a draft General Plan update (Draft General Plan), entitled Los Angeles County General Plan 2035, in January 2014 and a Draft EIR addressing the Draft General Plan in June 2014. This Draft General Plan contains a new Conservation and Natural Resources Element that includes a brief section on Mineral and Energy Resources with a stated goal of meeting the needs of the construction, transportation, and industrial sectors with locally

available mineral resources. In addition, there is a stated goal of conducting mineral extraction and production in a manner that minimizes impacts to the environment.

As discussed in the General Plan policy consistency analysis provided in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, the Project would be consistent with relevant General Plan polices related to mineral resources.

(b) Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan: One Valley One Vision 2012

As discussed in greater detail in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, of this Draft EIR, the recently updated Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan: One Valley One Vision 2012 (Area Plan) serves as a long-term guide for development over the next 20 years. The Area Plan ensures consistency between the General Plans of the County and the City of Santa Clarita (City) in order to achieve common goals. The Area Plan's Conservation and Open Space Element maps notable mineral resource areas in the Santa Clarita Valley (Valley) and sets forth policies to protect these areas from incompatible development, while ensuring that extraction and reclamation activities are compatible with other development and that adverse environmental impacts are mitigated. Relevant policies focus on the identification of significant mineral resources, establishment of buffers near mineral resource areas, impact mitigation, closure and/or remediation of depleted resource sites, and appropriate reuse of such sites.

As discussed in the Area Plan policy consistency analysis provided in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, the Project would be consistent with applicable Area Plan polices related to mineral resources.

(3) Previously Adopted Plans and Mitigation

(a) Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP and EIS/EIR

The Project Site is included in the project area for the Applicant's Newhall Ranch Resource Management and Development Plan and Spineflower Conservation Plan (RMDP/SCP), shown in **Figure 3-5**, RMDP/SCP Project Area, in **Section 3.0**, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, which covers certain aspects of resource management for the Project and other nearby developments. As discussed in greater detail in **Section 4.1**, Environmental and Regulatory Setting, the RMDP component of the Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP project is a conservation, mitigation, and permitting plan for the long-term management of sensitive biological resources and development-related infrastructure in the River and tributary drainages within the 11,999-acre Specific Plan area and along the extension of Magic Mountain Parkway through the Project Site. The SCP component of the Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP project is a conservation and management plan to permanently protect and manage a system of preserves designed to maximize the long-

term persistence of the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* ssp. *Fernandina*) (spineflower), a federal candidate and state-listed endangered plant species. The SCP encompasses the Specific Plan area, the Valencia Commerce Center planning area, and the Project Site, in order to conduct conservation planning and preserve design on the Project Applicant's land holdings in Los Angeles County that contain known spineflower populations.

The Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP project was the subject of a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) (SCH No. 2000011025) by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).^{2,3} At the time CDFW certified the EIR portion of the EIS/EIR in December 2010, it also adopted the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the RMDP/SCP project. This regulatory plan, required under CEQA, describes the mitigation measures, monitoring, and/or reporting plan for the Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP project (including the Entrada South Project Site). The Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP EIS/EIR determined that impacts to mineral resources would be less than significant. Thus, no mitigation measures were required.

(i) Newhall Ranch Section 404 Permit

The Corps issued the Applicant the final Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit (Permit No. SPL-2003-01264-AOA) for the Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP project on October 17, 2012.⁴ As part of that permit, the Corps imposed special conditions designed to protect the jurisdictional mitigation and conservation areas located in waters of the United States. Those conditions include a prohibition on new drilling, mining, exploring and/or operating, storing in, and/or removing of oil, minerals, natural gas and other hydrocarbons through the surface or the upper 500 feet of the subsurface of the Corps' referenced mitigation and conservation areas.⁵

² *Newhall Ranch Resource Management and Development Plan and Spineflower Conservation Plan, Final Joint Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report, June 2010.*

³ *The California Department of Fish and Game was officially renamed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as of January 1, 2013.*

⁴ See **Appendix 2F** of this Draft EIR for a copy of Newhall's final Section 404 permit and **Appendix 2D** for the associated Record of Decision (August 2011).

⁵ See final Section 404 permit (October 17, 2012), Special Condition 27.

b. Existing Conditions

(1) Santa Clarita Valley

The Santa Clarita Valley contains extensive aggregate mineral resources, with nearly 19,000 acres (approximately 30 square miles) designated by the State as MRZ-2, or areas of prime importance due to known economic mineral deposits. In particular, sand and gravel resources are present, primarily along waterways such as the Santa Clara River. According to the Area Plan, as of 2003, approximately 525 acres in the Valley were used for the extraction of sand, gravel, and rock. The Valley also contains other mineral resources that have been extracted historically, including gold, natural gas, and oil. Many older mines and oil wells have been abandoned, although oil and natural gas production still occurs, particularly in the western portion of the Valley (largely west of Interstate 5) and in a central portion of the City adjacent to State Route 14.⁶

Within the Saugus–Newhall Production-Consumption region, which largely coincides with the Valley, approximately 110 square miles were classified as MRZ-3 as of 1987.⁷ The extent or significance of mineral deposits in these areas is unknown based on available data.

(2) Project Site

As shown in **Figure 5.12-1**, Mineral Resource Zones within the Project Area, on page 5.12-6, the Project Site is located within MRZ-3.⁸ There are no active mineral extraction areas within the Project Site. As indicated in the Mineral Resources Map in the Area Plan and discussed in greater detail **Section 5.8**, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, of this Draft EIR, the western portion of the Project Site is underlain by an oil and natural gas field. Specifically, a portion of the Project Site overlays the Castaic Junction Field, which was abandoned in the late 1990s.

⁶ *Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan: One Valley One Vision 2012, Chapter 4: Conservation and Open Space Element, p. 130 and Figure CO-2: Mineral Resources.*

⁷ *California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, Special Report 143: Mineral Land Classification of the Greater Los Angeles Area (Part V), 1987, p. 10, <https://archive.org/stream/minerallandclass1435cali#page/n1/mode/2up>, accessed March 4, 2015. According to “Publications of the SMARA Mineral Land Classification Project Dealing with Mineral Resources in California” (California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey; May 2013), Special Report 143 (Part V) dated 1987 is the most recent version; see www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/minerals/mic/Documents/SMARA_Publications_March_2013.pdf, accessed March 10, 2015.*

⁸ *Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan: One Valley One Vision 2012, Figure CO-2: Mineral Resources.*

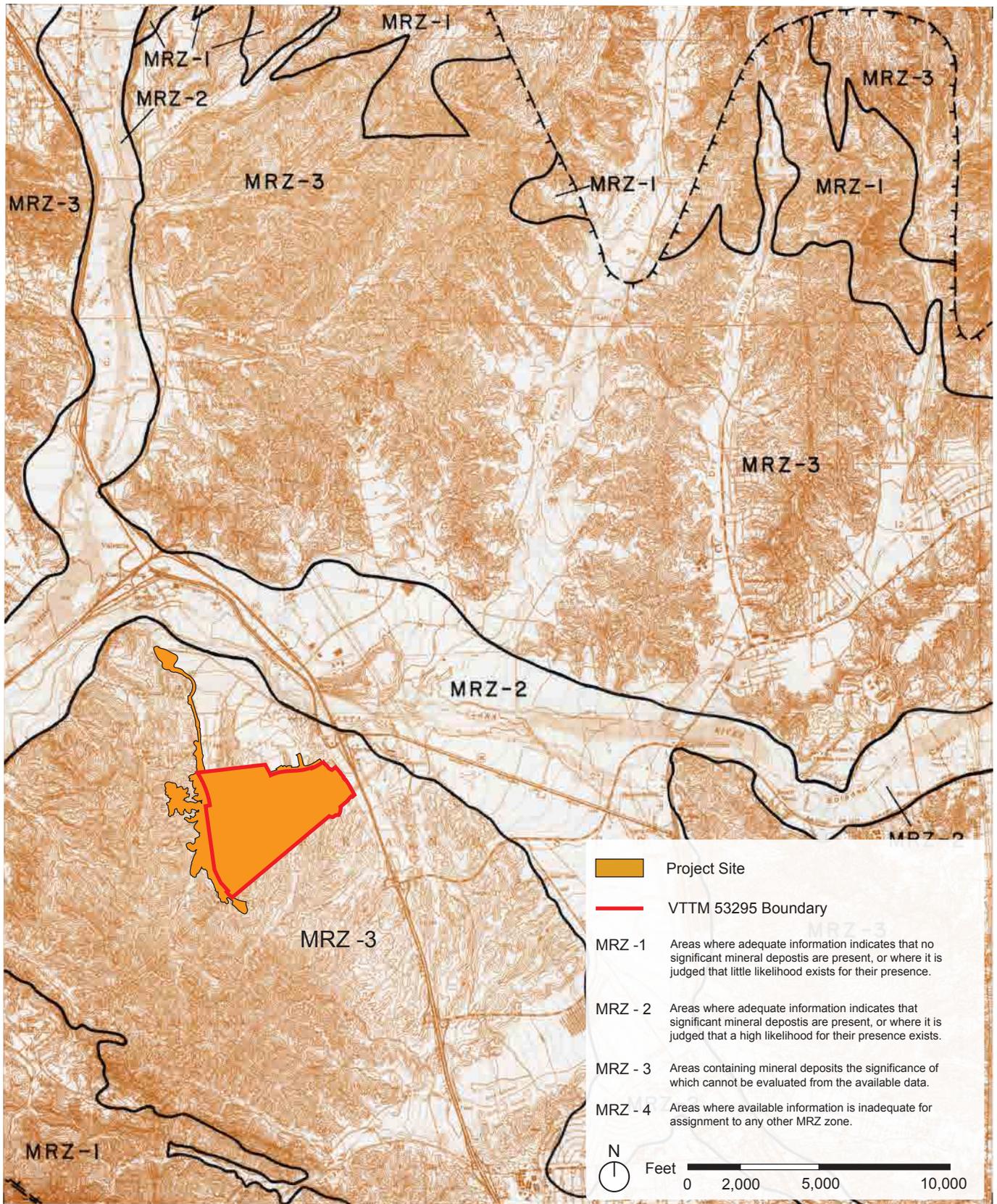


Figure 5.12-1
Mineral Resource Zones Within the Project Area

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

a. Methodology

The evaluation of the Project's potential impacts on mineral resources is based on a review of the Mineral Resource Zone maps prepared by the State Division of Mines and Geology and the Mineral Resources Map included in the Area Plan to determine the presence of mineral resources within the Project Site and the extent to which Project implementation may affect the availability of such resources. Applicable regulations and policies were also reviewed and evaluated relative to the Project Site.

b. Project Design Elements/Project Design Features

No specific Project design features (PDFs) are proposed with respect to mineral resources beyond the Project characteristics described in **Section 3.0**, Project Description, of this Draft EIR. As discussed in **Section 5.8**, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, of this Draft EIR, re-abandonment of some or all oil wells to the current standards of the California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources shall be performed, if required, in compliance with applicable regulations.

c. Significance Thresholds

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and other relevant criteria, the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning has determined that a project would have a potentially significant impact related to mineral resources based on the following criteria:

Threshold 5.12-1: Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

Threshold 5.12-2: Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

d. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.12-1: Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

Threshold 5.12-2: Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

A combined analysis for Thresholds 5.12-1 and 5.12-2 is provided below since these criteria both address the loss of availability of mineral resources.

As discussed in more detail in **Section 5.11**, Land Use and Planning, of this Draft EIR, the Project Site is designated for residential, commercial, and recreational land uses. Further, as previously discussed and shown in **Figure 5.12-1**, Mineral Resource Zones within the Project Area, the Project Site does not include any land designated as MRZ-2 and thus does not contain mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance. As such, the County has no plans to utilize the Project Site for long-term mineral extraction.

While the Project Site is located entirely within an MRZ-3 zone, indicating that mineral deposits are expected to occur but their extent is unknown, as discussed in more detail in **Section 5.8**, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, of this Draft EIR, the Project Site does not include any active mineral extraction operations, and all of the former oil and gas wells on-site have been abandoned. Moreover, ongoing oil and gas extraction activities within the surrounding area and potential future extraction from beneath the site would not be hindered by Project development. Therefore, Project implementation would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource of value, nor would it result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site. Impacts with respect to mineral resources would be less than significant.

4. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The geographic context of the cumulative impact analysis of mineral resources is the San Fernando Valley and Saugus–Newhall Production-Consumption regions, which are frequently evaluated together for the purposes of evaluating aggregate resources. Anticipated growth within these Production-Consumption regions could result in the cumulative loss of availability of known mineral resources.

Aggregate resources are critical to the construction industry and accounted for over half the monetary value of non-fuel mineral production in California in 2011. In the most recently updated report, the CGS projected a 50-year demand for aggregates in the San Fernando Valley and Saugus–Newhall Production-Consumption regions of approximately 476 million tons. There are currently 77 million tons of aggregate resources permitted in this combined region, or approximately 16 percent of the projected 50-year demand. Accordingly, the CGS estimates that as of 2011, there are fewer than 10 years of permitted reserves remaining in the combined San Fernando Valley and Saugus–Newhall Production-Consumption regions. However, given the geographic range of areas designated as MRZ-3 (i.e., areas where the extent of mineral deposits is not known), this lack of permitted resources may reflect the lack of data, not an actual lack of production capacity. The State continues to study the sustainability of aggregate supplies and in 2011

began developing new aggregate availability map concepts that reflect current economic, social, and environmental factors. The proposed maps and reports would assist regional planning agencies and decision makers in planning for sustainable future supplies of aggregate resources.^{9,10}

The County is responsible for the permitting of new or expanded mineral extraction operations. As previously discussed, the Project Site is designated for residential, commercial, and recreational uses and is not identified as containing mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance. As such, the County has made a determination that there are no plans to utilize the Project Site for long-term mineral extraction, and aggregate demand will be met by mining in other areas. Like the Project, the related projects and all other future development projects within the Production-Consumption regions would be subject to the County's land use designations (or those of the City of Santa Clarita or other cities, as applicable), which regulate the use of land, including for the extraction of mineral resources. As also previously discussed, the Project itself would not result in the loss of availability of aggregate or oil and natural gas resources and, therefore, the Project would not contribute to the cumulative loss of availability of these resources. Therefore, the Project would not result in a long-term cumulatively considerable loss of mineral resources, and cumulative impacts on mineral resources would be less than significant.

5. MITIGATION MEASURES

a. Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP Mitigation Measures

The Newhall Ranch RMDP/SCP EIS/EIR determined that impacts to mineral resources would be less than significant, thus no mitigation measures were required.

b. Entrada South Project-Level Mitigation Measures

Project-level impacts with regard to mineral resources would be less than significant. Therefore, no Project-specific mitigation measures would be required. Cumulative impacts also would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures would be required.

⁹ California Department of Conservation, State Mining and Geology Board, *Annual Report 2012–2013, December 2013*; available at www.conservation.ca.gov/smgb/reports/Annual%20Reports/Documents/SMGB%20AR%2012-13.pdf, accessed March 4, 2015.

¹⁰ California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey, *Aggregate Sustainability in California, Fifty-Year Aggregate Demand Compared to Permitted Aggregate Reserves, 2012*; available at www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/information/publications/ms/Documents/MS_52_2012.pdf, accessed March 4, 2015.

6. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Project-level impacts with regard to mineral resources would be less than significant. In addition, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.