

## **5.1 Aesthetics**

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## 5.1 AESTHETICS

This Section describes the existing visual environment in and around the Project site. It assesses the potential for aesthetic, and light and glare impacts using accepted methods of evaluating visual landscape quality, as well as identifying the type and degree of changes the Project would likely have. Visual impacts were evaluated through multiple approaches including a site reconnaissance and review of aerial and site photographs. The analyses presented below address four issue areas, in accordance with CEQA Appendix G thresholds: scenic vistas/viewsheds; State scenic highways; visual character/quality; and light and glare.

### 5.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY

##### Regional Visual Setting

The Project area is situated west of the Santa Lucia range and east of the Pacific Ocean. The scenic ocean shoreline is the main visual resource in the general area. Designated public shoreline areas include local State Beaches. Mountains and ridgelines, unique geological forms, bays, and coastal views are the area's most notable visual resources. Other area visual resources that were considered include open meadows, riparian corridors, wetland areas, forested areas, and open spaces. The local ocean shoreline, creek sides, and pine forests provide varied scenic settings for both active and passive forms of recreation.

Surrounding agricultural areas also contribute to the area's visual quality. Most urban and intensive agricultural uses in the general area occur in the valleys and coastal terraces of the western ranges. However, an increased conversion of fallow land to agricultural production has been accompanied by conversion of agricultural land to urban uses (including rural residential structures).

##### Project Site and Surrounding Area

The Project site is situated east of State Route 1 (SR-1), and north and east of the Hearst San Simeon State Park (State Park). San Simeon and Van Gordon Creeks traverse the Project site, which is developed with the CCSD-owned San Simeon well field and effluent percolation pond disposal system (includes four existing percolation ponds and associated piping, as well as an unused wastewater treatment plant effluent storage reservoir [the Van Gordon Creek Reservoir]). The Project site is predominantly vegetated with annual grassland and ruderal vegetation, with some willow riparian forest and a single stand of Monterey Pine. Areas to the north and east of the Project site are characterized by undulating hillsides with undeveloped lands used for agriculture. Areas to the south and west of the Project site involve natural undeveloped lands



and recreational areas that are characterized by willow riparian forest within the creek corridor and ruderal vegetation within and surrounding the State Park.

The land uses surrounding the Project site are illustrated on [Exhibit 3-2](#) and summarized, as follows:

- *North:* San Simeon Monterey Creek Road (aka San Simeon Creek Road) forms the Project site's northern boundary. San Simeon Creek Road is a two-lane local roadway used as an access route to the agricultural, residential, and industrial uses located to the east. Agricultural uses are located further north, beyond the road.
- *South:* San Simeon Creek is located immediately south of the Project site. When present, surface water in San Simeon Creek flows to the west approximately one mile to the Pacific Ocean. Washburn Primitive Campground (located within the State Park) and San Simeon Trail are located further south on a ridgeline that overlooks the valley floor. A trailhead is located to the east of the Washburn Primitive Campground.
- *East:* Agricultural, residential, and industrial uses, including the Cambria Rock Quarry are located to the east.
- *West:* Van Gordon Creek Road, a two-lane local roadway, forms the Project site's western boundary. When present, surface water in Van Gordon Creek flows south to the confluence with San Simeon Creek near the southwestern corner of the Project site. A trailhead for San Simeon Trail is located at Van Gordon Creek Road, just south of San Simeon Creek Lagoon. The San Simeon Creek Campground extends along the west side of Van Gordon Creek Road. Two single-family dwellings located within the campground provide housing for State Park personnel (State Park camp hosts). The dwellings are located further west beyond Van Gordon Creek Road, approximately 750 feet south of San Simeon Monterey Creek Road. SR-1, an All-American Road and Officially Designated State Scenic Highway, is located approximately 0.2-mile west of the Project site; refer to the *National Scenic Byways Program* and *California Scenic Highway Program* Sections below, respectively.

## VISUAL RESOURCES

According to the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Conservation and Open Space Element (page 9.1), visual resources consist of open areas, scenic corridors, and the built environment. Open area and scenic corridor visual resources are discussed below. No built environment (urban landscape) is located in the immediate Project vicinity.



## Open Areas (Scenic Vistas)

The Conservation and Open Space Element (page 9.1) defines open area visual resources as “agricultural and natural, undeveloped lands.” Based on the Coastal Zone North Coast Planning Area Rural Combining Designation Map, SLO County-identified visual resources located within portions of the Project site include designated Sensitive Resource Area (SRA), Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Terrestrial Habitat (ESHA-TH), and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Coastal Creeks (ESHA-CC). The Project site’s open areas and features that are considered visual resources involve the San Simeon Creek and Van Gordon Creek corridors (SRA and ESHA-CC) that traverse the southeastern and western portions of the Project site, respectively. The SRA and ESHA-TH Combining Designations are also applied to portions of the Project site to recognize the Monterey pine forest and San Simeon Trail, respectively. However, these resources are not present on the Project site, where the SRA and ESHA-TH Combining Designations are applied. Refer to the *Regulatory Setting (County)* Section below for further discussion in this regard.

The term *vista* generally implies an expansive view, usually from an elevated point or open area. A *scenic vista* is a view that possesses visual and aesthetic qualities of high value to the community. Scenic vistas can provide views of natural features or significant structures and buildings.

The open area visual resources described above contribute to the scenic vistas that are present in the Project area.

**From the North and West (San Simeon Monterey Creek Road and Van Gordon Road).** Motorists traveling along these roads experience intermittent views of the Project site; see Exhibit 5.1-1, Views from San Simeon Creek Road and Van Gordon Creek Road. However, they are not County-designated scenic roads, nor are they popular public roads that possess unique or outstanding scenic qualities; refer to *Scenic Corridors* Section below. San Simeon Creek Road is a two-lane local roadway used as an access route to the agricultural, residential, and industrial uses located to the east. Van Gordon Creek Road is a two-lane local roadway that terminates approximately 750 feet south of San Simeon Creek Road.

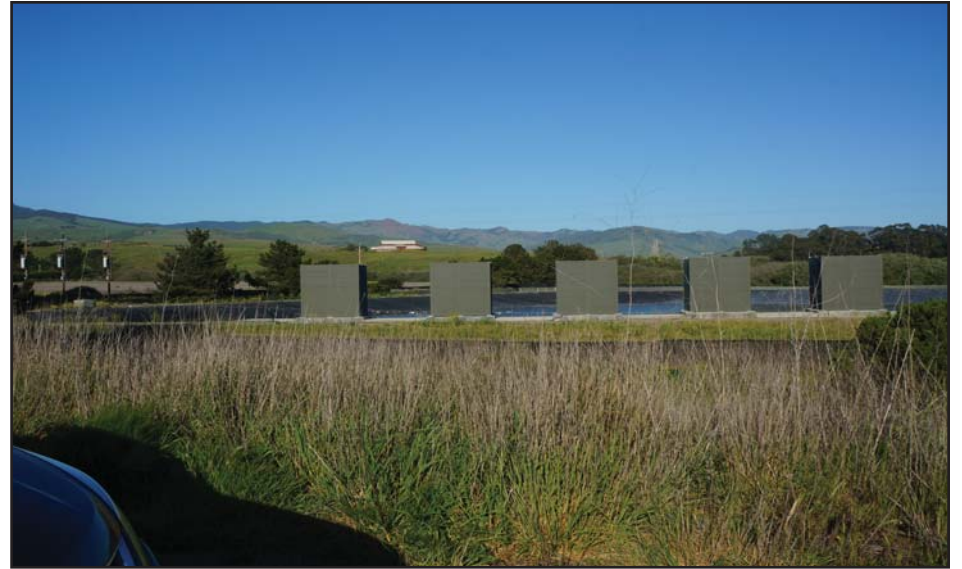
**From the West (San Simeon Creek Campground).** Campers experience views of the Van Gordon Reservoir in the foreground, the percolation ponds and natural lands along San Simeon and Van Gordon Creeks in the middle-ground, and agricultural and natural lands in the background; see Exhibit 5.1-2, Views from Upper San Simeon Creek Campground.

**From the South (San Simeon Trail and Washburn Primitive Campground).** Intermittent wide-range views from a publicly accessible area in the Project vicinity are provided along the San Simeon Trail. Recreational users along the trail experience long-range views encompassing varying visual resources including agricultural and natural lands (beaches), and the Pacific Ocean; see Exhibit 5.1-3, Views from Washburn Primitive Campground. The middle-ground views from





View from Van Gordon Creek Road, looking east at the evaporators and evaporation pond.



View from Van Gordon Creek Road, looking east at the evaporators and evaporation pond.



View from Van Gordon Creek Road, looking east at the evaporators and evaporation pond.



View from San Simeon Creek Road looking south at the evaporators and evaporation pond.





View from Campground 16, looking southeast at the evaporation pond.



View from Campground 18, looking east/southeast at the evaporation pond.



View from Campground 19, looking east at the evaporation pond.



View from Campground 21, looking east at the evaporation pond.



View from Campgrounds 23 and 24, looking east at the evaporation pond.



View from Campground 24, looking east/southeast at the evaporation pond.





View from the San Simeon Trail, looking north.



View from Campground H2, looking northwest at the AWTP.



View from Campground H2, looking northwest at the AWTP.



View from San Simeon Trail, looking northwest at the evaporators and the evaporation pond.





the trail encompass the natural lands along San Simeon and Van Gordon Creeks, as well as the Project site's existing water and wastewater facilities (i.e., a potable water well field, a potable water supply pipeline, extraction and monitoring wells, a discharge structure, and a treated wastewater effluent, land disposal system); see Exhibit 3-3, Existing Site Conditions. The Monterey pine which grow along the ridgeline situated south of the Project site partially buffer the campers' southerly views of the valley below.

## Scenic Corridors

The County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element (page 9.1) defines scenic corridors as areas having scenic or historic qualities that are visible from recognized roadways. Scenic corridors are further defined as viewsheds<sup>1</sup> from popular public roads and highways that have unique or outstanding scenic qualities (Conservation and Open Space Element page 9.3). According to Conservation and Open Space Element Table VR-2, *Suggested Scenic Corridors*, there are no scenic corridors located within the Project site's viewshed. San Simeon Monterey Creek Road and Van Gordon Creek Road are not County-designated scenic roads.

## SCENIC HIGHWAYS

The Project site is located approximately 0.2 mile inland (to the east) of SR-1, which is an All-American Road and Officially Designated State Scenic Highway. In the Project's vicinity, the main visual resource experienced by motorists traveling along SR-1 is the scenic ocean shoreline to the west. To the east, motorists also experience views of agricultural and natural, undeveloped lands to the west.

While looking inland (eastward) from SR-1, the western portion of the Project site is within the viewshed of motorists traveling northbound on SR-1, although very briefly (approximately seven seconds). From this vantage point, the western portion of the Project site is visible, however, indiscernible, given the distance from SR-1 (over 0.3 mile). Otherwise, the remainder of the Project is not readily visible due to distance, topography, and intervening vegetation.

## LIGHT AND GLARE

*Lighting effects* are associated with the use of artificial light during the evening and nighttime hours. There are two primary sources of light: light emanating from building interiors passing through windows; and light from exterior sources (i.e., street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, parking lot lighting, and landscape lighting). Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent light-sensitive uses, diminish the view of the clear night sky and, if uncontrolled, can cause disturbances. Land uses such as residences and hotels are considered

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this analysis, a viewshed is defined as all of the surface areas visible from the Project site. Typical obstructions that limit the Project's viewshed include topography, structures, and vegetation (particularly trees).



light sensitive, because occupants have expectations of privacy during evening hours and may be subject to disturbance by bright light sources. Recreational sites such as the campsites located south and west of the Project site, would similarly be considered light sensitive. *Light spill* is typically defined as the presence of unwanted light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. With respect to lighting, the degree of illumination may vary widely depending on the amount of light generated, height of the light source, presence of barriers or obstructions, type of light source, and weather conditions.

*Glare* is primarily a daytime occurrence caused by the reflection of sunlight or artificial light by highly polished surfaces such as window glass or reflective materials and, to a lesser degree, from broad expanses of light-colored surfaces. *Perceived glare* is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person looking directly into the light source of a luminaire. Daytime glare generation is common in urban areas and is typically associated with buildings with exterior facades largely or entirely comprised of highly reflective glass. Glare can also be produced during evening and nighttime hours by the reflection of artificial light sources such as automobile headlights. Glare generation is typically related to either moving vehicles or sun angles, although glare resulting from reflected sunlight can occur regularly at certain times of the year. Glare-sensitive uses include residences, hotels, transportation corridors, and aircraft landing corridors.

Light and glare are not being emitted from the Project site. The light sensitive land use located nearest the Project site is the San Simeon Creek Campground located to the west.

## 5.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

### FEDERAL

#### National Scenic Byways Program

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration. The Program was established to help recognize, preserve, and enhance selected U.S. roads. The DOT recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. America's Byways® is an umbrella term the DOT uses to refer to both National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. According to the National Scenic Byways Program website, SR-1 in the Project's vicinity (San Luis Obispo North Coast Byway) is a 57-mile All-American Road that extends from the Monterey County line on the north to the San Luis Obispo City limit on the south.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Website, National Scenic Byways Program, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/byways/2475>, Accessed October 10, 2015.



## STATE

### California Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program (CSHP) was created by the Legislature in 1963 with the purpose of preserving and protecting scenic highway corridors from change, which diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The CSHP's stated intent (Streets and Highway Code Section 260) is to protect and enhance California's natural beauty and protect the social and economic values provided by the State's scenic resources. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. The CSHP lists highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. According to the CSHP website, SR-1 is an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.<sup>3</sup> The SR-1 segment in the Project vicinity extends 57 miles.

## LOCAL

### San Luis Obispo County General Plan

#### LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM (LCP) POLICY DOCUMENT

- Policy 1** Protection of Visual and Scenic Resources. Unique and attractive features of the landscape, including but not limited to unusual landforms, scenic vistas and sensitive habitats are to be preserved protected, and in visually degraded areas restored where feasible. [This policy shall be implemented as a standard.]
- Policy 2** Site Selection for New Development. Permitted development shall be sited so as to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Wherever possible, site selection for new development is to emphasize locations not visible from major public view corridors. In particular, new development should utilize slope created "pockets" to shield development and minimize visual intrusion. [This policy shall be implemented as a standard.]
- Policy 7** Preservation of Trees and Native Vegetation. The location and design of new development shall minimize the need for tree removal. When trees must be removed to accommodate new development or because they are determined to be a safety hazard, the site is to be replanted with similar species or other species which are reflective of the community character. [This policy shall be implemented pursuant to section CZLUO Section 23.05.064.]

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<sup>3</sup> State of California Department of Transportation Website, California Scenic Highway Program, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16\\_livability/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm), Accessed October 10, 2015.





Refer to [Section 5.6, \*Land Use and LCP Compliance\*](#), for further discussion concerning the Project's consistency with these policies.

## NORTH COAST AREA PLAN (NCAP)

### NCAP Combining Designations

To recognize visual resources with scenic value, the County applies Combining Designations. As discussed in detail in [Section 5.3, \*Biological Resources\*](#), and shown on the *Coastal Zone North Coast Planning Area Rural Combining Designation Map*, portions of the Project site are designated Sensitive Resource Area (SRA), Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Terrestrial Habitat (ESHA-TH) and ESHA Coastal Creeks (ESHA-CC).

**Sensitive Resource Area (SRA)**. The SRA Combining Designation is applied to identify areas with special environmental qualities, or areas containing unique or endangered vegetation or habitat resources. SRAs include ESHA (i.e., streams, riparian vegetation, wetlands, and terrestrial habitat). The Project site's extreme southeast and southwest corners are designated SRA in association with the Monterey pine forest that exists to the south; refer also to the *Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Terrestrial Habitat (ESHA-TH)* Section below. Additionally, SRA include ESHA (streams, riparian vegetation, and wetlands), which are present on the Project site; refer to the Coastal Creeks (ESHA-CC) Section below. Refer also to [Section 5.3, \*Biological Resources\*](#).

**Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Terrestrial Habitat (ESHA-TH)**. The SRA-TH Combining Designation is applied to the Project site's extreme southeast and southwest corners to recognize the Monterey pine forest. However, there is no Monterey pine forest present onto the Project site, where the ESHA-TH Combining Designation is applied. Refer also to [Section 5.3](#).

**Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area - Coastal Creeks (ESHA-CC)**. Coastal creeks such as the San Simeon and Van Gordon Creeks, which traverse the Project site, as well as adjacent riparian and wetland areas provide important visual resources.

### NCAP Standards

Refer to [Appendix B, \*NCAP Combining Designations and Standards\*](#), for a list of NCAP standards. NCAP Standard AW-6 pertains to Aesthetics. Refer to [Section 5.6, \*Land Use and Planning\*](#), for further discussion concerning the Project's consistency with these standards.

## COASTAL ZONE LAND USE ORDINANCE (CZLUO)

**Chapter 23.04 (Site Design Standards)**. This Chapter establishes standards for the design and layout of sites for land uses. The purpose of these standards is to support, through careful site evaluation and design, the establishment of land uses in a manner that is compatible with existing



land uses and neighborhoods, and the natural environment. Standards are provided for the following site development features that are relevant to visual resources: setbacks; minimum site area; heights; and fencing and screening.

**Section 23.04.124 (Height Limitations).** The maximum height of structures allowed at the Project site is 35 feet.

**Section 23.04.180 (Landscape, Screening, and Fencing).** The purpose of landscape, screening and fencing standards are to: provide areas which can absorb rainfall to assist in reducing storm water runoff; control erosion; preserve natural resources; promote, preserve and enhance native plant species; reduce glare and noise; enhance the appearance of structures and property; and to provide visual privacy, while recognizing the need to use water resources as efficiently as possible.

**Section 23.04.190 (Fencing and Screening).** Standards for fencing and screening are established to: protect certain uses from intrusion; protect the public from uses that may be hazardous; and increase compatibility between different land uses by visual screening.

**Section 23.04.210 (Visual Resources).** The following standards apply within Critical Viewsheds, Scenic Corridors, and Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) Combining Designations that are intended to protect visual resources.

- 1) Location of development. Locate development, including, but not limited to primary and secondary structures, accessory structures, fences, utilities, water tanks, and access roads, in the least visible portion of the site, consistent with protection of other resources. Emphasis shall be given to locations not visible from major public view corridors. Visible or partially visible development locations shall only be considered if no feasible non-visible development locations are identified, or if such locations would be more environmentally damaging. New development shall be designed (e.g., height, bulk, style, materials, color) to be subordinate to, and blend with, the character of the area. Use naturally occurring topographic features and slope-created "pockets" first and native vegetation and berming second, to screen development from public view and minimize visual intrusion.
- 2) Structure visibility. Minimize structural height and mass by using low-profile design where feasible, including sinking structures below grade. Minimize the visibility of structures by using design techniques to harmonize with the surrounding environment.
- 4) Landscaping for hillside and ridgetop development (*this standards is not applicable to the Project*).



An exemption from the above standards may be granted if documentation is provided demonstrating that the development will not be visible from the shoreline, public beaches, the Morro Bay estuary, any of the roads specified in the applicable area plan planning area standards for Critical Viewsheds, Scenic Corridors, or SRA's that are intended to protect visual resources. Such documentation shall be prepared by a qualified professional acceptable to the Planning Director and at a minimum shall provide scaled topographic and building elevations with preliminary grading, drainage, and building plans.

**Section 23.04.320 (Outdoor Lights).** Per Section 23.04.320(c), no light or glare shall be transmitted or reflected in such concentration or intensity as to be detrimental or harmful to persons, or interfere with the use of surrounding properties or streets. Per Section 23.04.320(d), any light source used for ground area illumination except incandescent lamps of 150 watts or less and light produced directly by the combustion of natural gas or other fuels, shall be shielded from above in such a manner that the edge of the shield is level with or below the lowest edge of the light source. Where any light source intended for ground illumination is located at a height greater than eight feet, the required shielding is to extend below the lowest edge of the light source a distance sufficient to block the light source from the view of any residential use within 1,000 feet of the light fixture. Free-standing outdoor lighting fixtures are not to exceed the height of the tallest building on the site (Section 23.04.320[e]).

**Section 23.05.064 (Tree Removal Standards).** A tree may be removed only when the tree is any of the following:

- (1) Dead, diseased beyond reclamation, or hazardous;
- (2) Crowded, with good horticultural practices dictating thinning;
- (3) Interfering with existing utilities, structures or right-of-way improvements;
- (4) Obstructing existing or proposed improvements that cannot be reasonably designed to avoid the need for tree removal;
- (5) Inhibiting sunlight needed for either active or passive solar heating or cooling, and the building or solar collectors cannot be oriented to collect sufficient sunlight without total removal of the tree;
- (6) In conflict with an approved fire safety plan where required by Section 23.05.080; and
- (7) To be replaced by a tree that will provide equal or better shade, screening, solar efficiency or visual amenity within a 10-year period, as verified in writing by a registered landscape architect, licensed landscaping contractor or certified nurseryman.

Any tree removed to accommodate new development or because it is a safety hazard shall be replaced, in a location on the site and with a species common to the community, as approved by the Planning Director (Section 23.05.064[c]). Per Section 23.05.064(e), new development shall incorporate design techniques and methods that minimize the need for tree removal.





## Emergency Coastal Development Permit (E-CDP) Condition

Refer to Appendix C, E-CDP Conditions of Approval, for a list of E-CDP Conditions. E-CDP Condition 6F pertains to Aesthetics.

### 5.1.3 SUMMARY OF WATER MASTER PLAN PEIR CONCLUSIONS

WMP PEIR Section 5.2, *Aesthetics*, analyzes impacts to visual resources, as summarized below:

**Short-Term Visual Character.** Grading and construction activities associated with the WMP improvements may temporarily alter the existing visual character/quality of the construction sites and their surroundings. Although construction-related activities are not considered significant, as they are short-term, mitigation is recommended to further minimize construction-related visual impacts. Further review on a project-by-project basis may be necessary to evaluate site specific construction related impacts. The analysis concluded that impacts would be less than significant following implementation of the recommended mitigation and compliance with SLO County regulatory requirements.

**Long-Term Visual Character.** Implementation of the WMP may alter the visual character/quality of the sites and their surroundings. Improvements at the existing WWTP would not alter the existing visual character of the area surrounding the Plant, as improvements would occur within the existing facility. Through the County's development review process, WMP improvements would be evaluated to determine the appropriate permits, and would be subject to compliance with existing policies and regulations that mitigate visual impacts. The analysis concluded that a less than significant impact would occur following compliance with SLO County requirements and implementation of the recommended mitigation.

**Scenic Vistas and Visual Resources.** Implementation of the WMP improvements could impact a scenic vista or resource, including those along Highway 1. Subterranean system components would not impact a scenic vista or resource, as they would not be visible at ground level. Additionally, improvements at the existing WWTP are not anticipated to impact vistas or resources, since the improvements would occur within the existing facility. Depending on the size and location of the improvements, topography of surrounding area, and development site's proximity to the scenic resource, further review may be necessary on a project-by-project basis. The analysis concluded that a less than significant impact would occur following compliance with SLO County regulatory requirements and implementation of the recommended mitigation.

**Light and Glare.** The WMP may create a new source of substantial operational light and glare, potentially impacting views. New lighting from WMP improvements could cause spillover light and glare impacts, which would be addressed in a project-specific EIR/EIS. The analysis concluded that with implementation of recommended mitigation and compliance with SLO



County regulatory requirements, potential light and glare impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels.

### **5.1.4 IMPACT THRESHOLDS AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

The issues presented in the Initial Study Environmental Checklist (CEQA Guidelines Appendix G) have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this Section. The Checklist includes questions relating to aesthetics and visual resources. Accordingly, the Project may create a significant adverse environmental impact if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; refer to Impact Statements 5.1-1 and 5.1-3;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway (refer to Impact Statement 5.1-4);
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (refer to Impact Statements 5.1-1 and 5.1-2); and/or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area (refer to Impact Statement 5.1-5).

Based on these standards, the Project's effects have been categorized as "less than significant impact" or "potentially significant impact." Mitigation measures are recommended for potentially significant impacts. If a significant impact cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation, it is categorized as a significant and unavoidable impact.

Nighttime lighting and day and nighttime glare are assessed qualitatively through comparative analysis of existing and Project conditions, and evaluation of the Project's design features.

### **5.1.5 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

As discussed in detail in [Section 5.0, \*Environmental Analysis\*](#), for purposes of the following impact analyses, "Sustainable Water Facility" (SWF) involves the built and operational Project components, whereas "Mitigation Measures (Project modifications)" involve proposed Project modifications in compliance various SWF mitigation measures.



## **IMPACT 5.1-1 CONSTRUCTION-RELATED IMPACTS TO VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY**

- **WOULD THE PROJECT RESULT IN SHORT-TERM VISUAL IMPACTS TO SCENIC VISTAS OR THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS?**

### **Impact Analysis:**

#### **SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY**

SWF construction-related activities intermittently altered the character of the Project site and its surroundings, as graded surfaces, construction debris, construction equipment, and truck traffic were visible. Additionally, soil was stockpiled and equipment for grading activities was staged at various locations throughout the Project site; see [Exhibit 3-14, \*SWF Construction Laydown/Staging Areas\*](#). These SWF construction-related activities persisted for approximately 180 days.

Surrounding recreational users, residents, and motorists experienced nominal intermittent views of SWF construction activities. As shown in [Exhibit 3-14](#), the laydown/staging areas were located at the northern and western portions of the Project site, most of which were sited in areas of lower elevation than surrounding public views. Further, concerning the single staging area that was visible (near the Van Gordon Reservoir's western boundary), staging was only visible for a short period of time. As these impacts were temporary in nature and ceased upon completion of the SWF (within approximately 180 days), SWF construction-related impacts to the visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings were less than significant.

#### **MITIGATION MEASURES (PROJECT MODIFICATIONS)**

Implementation of recommended Mitigation Measure AES-2<sup>4</sup> (and further described under Impact 5.1-2), would result in additional construction activities, similar to those described above for the SWF Project. Subject to completion of the SEIR process and completion of all necessary regulatory agency permits, construction of the Project modifications (see AES-2), is anticipated to begin during 2017 and occur over approximately 12 months. Construction work times would occur between 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Mondays through Fridays, and between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Saturdays, consistent with CZLUO Section 23.06.042 regulations. Construction activities including clearing, grading (nominal), excavating, trenching, pipe installation, placement of

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<sup>4</sup> Mitigation Measure AES-2 would result in Project modifications that generally involve evaporation pond repurposing, mechanical spray evaporator/enclosure removal, offsite RO concentrate disposal, surface water treatment, and a modified lagoon water surface discharge. These modifications are also illustrated on [Exhibit 3-12, \*Mitigation Measures \(Project Modifications\)\*](#).





backfill, and installation of other limited equipment/improvements on structural footings and concrete housekeeping pads would be visible.

Surrounding recreational users, residents, and motorists would experience intermittent views of the Project modification construction activities, which would visibly degrade the area's character. Compliance with Mitigation Measure AES-1 would be required, including siting of all construction staging areas as far as practicable from sensitive receptors and regularly maintaining all construction areas in order to minimize unnecessary debris piles. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1 would minimize the visual impacts during construction, as viewed from the surrounding recreational users, residents, and motorists. As these impacts would be temporary in nature and cease upon completion, the construction-related impacts to the visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, as a result of Project modifications, would be reduced to less than significant levels.

**Construction-Related Measures/Standards:** The construction-related measures/standards implemented before/during the SWF construction phase did not pertain to construction-related visual impacts.

**Standards and Regulations:** No County standards or regulations are applicable to this environmental issue.

**Mitigation Measures:** The following mitigation measures pertain to both the SWF and Project modifications, unless otherwise noted.

AES-1 Prior to commencement of construction activities for the Mitigation Measures (Project modifications), the CCSD shall confirm that the plans and specifications stipulate that, Project construction shall implement standard practices to minimize potential adverse impacts to the site's visual character, including the following:

- Construction staging areas shall be located as far as practicable from sensitive receptors; and
- Construction areas shall receive appropriate routine maintenance to minimize unnecessary debris piles.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.

## **IMPACT 5.1-2 OPERATIONAL IMPACTS TO VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY**

- **WOULD THE PROJECT SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS?**



## Impact Analysis:

### SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY

The visual character/quality of the Project site and its surroundings is described above in [Section 5.1.1, \*Environmental Setting\*](#). The Project site contains various water and wastewater facilities (i.e., a potable water well field, a potable water supply pipeline, extraction and monitoring wells, a discharge structure, and a treated wastewater effluent, land disposal system), as described in detail in [Section 3.4, \*Environmental Setting\*](#), and illustrated on [Exhibit 3-4, \*Existing Site Conditions\*](#). The Project site is predominantly vegetated with annual grassland and ruderal vegetation, with some willow riparian forest and a single stand of Monterey Pine.

A project is generally considered to have a significant visual/aesthetic impact if it substantially changes the character of a project site such that it becomes visually incompatible or visually unexpected when viewed in the context of its surroundings. Such changes would degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

The SWF altered the existing water facilities, including the San Simeon well field, percolation pond system, and Van Gordon Reservoir, by adding various visible components, as described in [Section 3.5.1, \*Sustainable Water Facility\*](#), and illustrated on [Exhibit 3-5, \*SWF Project Facilities\*](#). Visible Project components include the following: aboveground pipelines (approximately 4,630 linear feet (LF) at grade); one new injection well (up to 3.0 feet in height); one new monitoring well (MW-4) (up to 3.0 feet in height); an Advanced Water Treatment Plant (AWTP) (two transfer tanks, one fire protection water tank, concrete pad-mounted outdoor pumps, as well as key equipment housed within six shipping containers (with all containers located within an overall area of approximately 100 by 170 feet, with each container being approximately 15 feet in height)); an impermeable liner within the re-graded/modified evaporation pond (previously Van Gordon Reservoir); and five mechanical spray evaporators (up to 12.6 feet in height), each with three-sided sound enclosures. Two overhead power drops (lines) were constructed along Van Gordon Creek Road and along the onsite well access road. Additionally, new wood power poles (up to 35 feet in height) were installed.

As discussed in [Section 3.4, \*Environmental Setting\*](#), the Project site is developed with the CCSD-owned San Simeon well field and effluent land disposal system (which includes an existing percolation pond system and the Van Gordon Reservoir). Thus, the new water facilities appear generally similar in nature and character to the existing onsite water and wastewater facilities, as well as the surrounding agricultural facilities. The new facilities do not change the Project site's character, such that it becomes visually incompatible or visually unexpected when viewed in the context of the existing CCSD public utility site where they are located. The lower profile SWF components (i.e., pipelines and wells) are generally indistinguishable in the context of the existing CCSD public utility site. Higher profile SWF components (i.e., AWTP and evaporators/enclosures) are notable. Concerning the AWTP, in the context of the existing CCSD public utility site, it does not degrade the visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings. However,



the evaporators/enclosures appear to conflict with the existing environment, as seen from the surrounding community (including adjacent campgrounds). In order to ensure that significant impacts regarding the degradation of character/quality do not result, Mitigation Measure AES-2, which requires removal of the mechanical spray evaporators and their enclosures, is recommended. Because removal of the mechanical equipment would make operating the SWF infeasible, the proposed Project modifications described within Mitigation Measure AES-2 include offsite RO concentrate disposal and repurposing the evaporation pond to a potable water supply storage basin. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, impacts concerning the degradation of character/quality, as a result of the evaporators/enclosures, would be avoided, as these features would no longer be present/visible. The SWF is further subject to compliance with CZLUO standards, which influence the site's visual character and enhance visual compatibility, as discussed below.

**CZLUO Chapter 23.04, Site Design Standards.** This Chapter establishes standards for the design and layout of sites for land uses. The Project was designed in height, bulk, and style to be subordinate to, and blend with, the area's rural character:

- The evaporation pond was sited in the same location and footprint occupied by the CCSD's unused wastewater effluent storage (Van Gordon Reservoir). Thus, except for its mechanical evaporators, the evaporation pond is not dissimilar to the original reservoir.
- Although, the evaporators/enclosures have been color-treated, such that they blend in with the surrounding landscape, they are sited atop the evaporation pond's manufactured berm, along its western boundary. Therefore, they appear more dominant in character compared to the existing water facilities, particularly for the San Simeon Campground to the west. Additionally, vegetation that had overgrown the Van Gordon Reservoir was replaced with RO concentrate. In order to ensure that significant impacts regarding the degradation of character/quality do not result, implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, which requires removal of the evaporators/enclosures, would be required. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, impacts pertaining to the degradation of character/quality as a result of the evaporators/enclosures would be avoided, as these components would no longer be present/visible.
- The AWTP is sited in lower-lying elevation such that its features do not rise above the visible skyline, as seen from public vantage points. It is not visible from Highway 1 nor San Simeon Creek Road due to its lower location and surrounding topography. However, the AWTP, can be seen when viewed from the Washburn Primitive Campground and hiking trail located to the south of the site. The background of the predominant grasslands surrounding the SWF change in color from a light shade of faded yellow during the dry summer season, to a lush green color during the seasonal wet season. Although the SWF was painted in an effort to match the lighter dry season background, its features are generally lighter in color, particularly during the wet season when the surrounding



grasslands change to a darker green. Additionally, the transfer tanks are black, while the fire-protective water tank is light green. To blend the SWF's overall appearance when contrasted with the seasonal variation of the background grassland, Mitigation Measure AES-3 requires that the AWTP be color-treated such that it more uniformly blends in with the surrounding landscape. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-3, impacts pertaining to the degradation of character/quality as a result of the AWTP would be reduced to less than significant when viewed from the Washburn Primitive Campground and its associated hiking trail to the south of the Project site.

- Project implementation resulted in the disturbance of onsite vegetation; see Section 5.3, Biological Resources. In order to ensure that the existing character/quality is maintained, the Project is required to comply with Mitigation Measure AES-4, which requires that all areas where native vegetation was removed and where water facilities were not located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants to minimize changes in visual character. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-4, impacts pertaining to the degradation of character/quality as a result of the disturbance of onsite vegetation would be reduced to less than significant.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.124, Height Limitations.** The AWTP containers and tanks are approximately 15 feet in height, thus, would be below CZLUO's 35-foot height limitation.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening.** According to CZLUO Section 23.04.190a, fencing and screening is required within urban and village reserve lines, and Commercial Retail and Recreation land use categories in rural areas. The Project site is located in a rural area and is designated Agriculture (AG). Therefore, is not subject to compliance with this standard.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.210, Visual Resources.** The Project site is not located within a Critical Viewshed or Scenic Corridor, however, portions of the Project site are designated SRA Combining Designation. The AWTP is located in the least visible portion of the site and with compliance with Mitigation Measure AES-3, would not be readily visible. The evaporators/enclosures are visible from their location atop the evaporation pond's manufactured berm. They were sited atop the berm, in order to "reuse" the Van Gordon Reservoir and ensure the necessary RO concentrate evaporation is achieved. Siting these evaporators/enclosures atop the berm was necessary to allow them to operate properly (e.g., they cannot be submerged) and allow access for operation and maintenance purposes. Thus, there was no feasible, alternative, non-visible location. As discussed above, the spray evaporators/enclosures would result in significant visual impacts. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, these features would be removed, and thus, avoiding impacts in this regard. Moreover, as concluded above, the remainder of the new water facilities were designed to be subordinate to, and blend with, the area's character (Mitigation Measure AES-3), and the AWTP container and tank heights (15 feet) are well below the allowable 35 foot limitation.





**CZLUO Section 23.05.064, Tree Removal Standards.** No trees were removed in association with SWF construction. Further, no Monterey pine trees were disturbed, as a result of any SWF improvements. SWF implementation did result in the disturbance of onsite vegetation, since it was obstructing improvements that could not be reasonably designed to avoid their removal; see [Section 5.3, \*Biological Resources\*](#). The SWF is required to comply with Mitigation Measure AES-4, which requires that all areas where native vegetation was removed and where water facilities were not located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants to minimize changes in visual character; see *CZLUO Chapter 23.04 Section* above.

Therefore, following compliance with CZLUO standards and Mitigation Measure AES-2 through AES-4, the SWF does not substantially degrade the existing visual character/quality of the site and its surroundings. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard. Further, implementation of LCP Policies 1, 2, 4, and 7 is achieved through compliance with CZLUO Chapter 23.04, Section 23.04.124, Section 23.04.190, Section 23.04.210, and Section 23.05.064, which are discussed above. Refer to [Table 5.6-2, \*LCP Consistency Analysis\*](#), for further discussion concerning the Project's consistency with LCP policies.

#### **MITIGATION MEASURES (PROJECT MODIFICATIONS)**

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2 would result in Project modifications, which require the construction of additional on-site facilities; see [Section 3.5.2, \*Project Characteristics – Mitigation Measures \(Project Modifications\)\*](#). These Project modifications, which generally involve evaporation pond repurposing, mechanical spray evaporator/enclosure removal, offsite RO concentrate disposal, surface water treatment, and modified surface discharge, are illustrated on [Exhibit 3-12, \*Mitigation Measures \(Project Modifications\)\*](#). Visible features associated with the Project modifications would include the repurposed evaporation pond (potable water supply storage basin), a SWTP (sited adjacent and immediately east of the AWTP), and Baker tanks (each tank would be approximately 8 feet by 46.5 feet, and approximately 13 feet in height). The mechanical spray evaporators/enclosures would no longer be visible, since they would be removed. Additionally, the articulating concrete block (ACB) lining (or similar erosion prevention measure) that would be installed at the San Simeon Creek channel bank could also be visible. ACB would allow for the continued growth of riparian vegetation, further protecting the channel from any potential erosion.

The Project modifications would appear generally similar in nature and character to the existing onsite water and wastewater facilities (that is pre-SWF construction), and the surrounding agricultural facilities, as well as the SWF. The Project modifications would not substantially change the Project site's character, such that it becomes visually incompatible or visually unexpected when viewed in the context of the existing CCSD public utility site and the SWF, following compliance with Mitigation Measures AES-3 and AES-4. Moreover, the Project modifications would be subject to compliance with CZLUO standards, which influence the site's visual character and enhance visual compatibility, as discussed below.



**CZLUO Chapter 23.04, Site Design Standards.** The Project modifications would be designed in height, bulk, and style to be subordinate to, and blend with, the area's rural character, similar to the SWF:

- The SWTP would be sited in lower-lying elevation such that its features would not rise above the visible skyline, as seen from public vantage points. Moreover, Mitigation Measure AES-3 requires that the SWTP be color-treated such that it blends in with the surrounding landscape.
- Implementation of the Project modifications resulted in the disturbance of onsite vegetation; see Section 5.3, Biological Resources. In order to ensure that the existing character/quality is maintained, the Project modifications would be required to comply with Mitigation Measure AES-4, which requires that all areas where native vegetation would be removed, and where water facilities would not be located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants to minimize changes in visual character.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.124, Height Limitations.** The SWTP containers and associated tanks would be approximately 15 feet in height, thus, would be below CZLUO's 35-foot height limit.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening.** The Project site is located in a rural area and is designated Agriculture (AG). Therefore, the Project modifications are not subject to compliance with this standard.

**CZLUO Section 23.04.210, Visual Resources.** The Project site is not located within a Critical Viewshed or Scenic Corridor, however, portions of the Project site are designated SRA Combining Designation. The SWTP would be located in the least visible portion of the site and the evaporators/enclosures would be removed. As concluded above, the remainder of the Project modifications would be designed to be subordinate to, and blend with, the area's character, and the SWTP container and associated tank heights (15 feet) would be well below the allowable 35 foot limitation.

**CZLUO Section 23.05.064, Tree Removal Standards.** All Project modifications would be subject to compliance with Mitigation Measure AES-4, which requires that all areas where native vegetation would be removed and where water facilities would not be located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants to minimize changes in visual character; see *CZLUO Chapter 23.04 Section* above.

Based on the analyses presented above, and following compliance with CZLUO standards and Mitigation Measures AES-3 and AES-4, the Project modifications would not substantially degrade the existing visual character/quality of the site and its surroundings. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard. Further, implementation of LCP Policies 1, 2, 4, and 7 would be achieved through compliance with CZLUO Chapter 23.04, Section 23.04.124, Section 23.04.190, Section 23.04.210, and Section 23.05.064, which are discussed above.



## Standards and Regulations:

### LCP Policies

- Policy 1, Protection of Visual and Scenic Resources;
- Policy 2, Site Selection for New Development;
- Policy 4, New Development in Rural Areas; and
- Policy 7, Preservation of Trees and Native Vegetation.

### CZLUO

- Chapter 23.04, Site Design Standards;
- Section 23.04.124, Height Limitations;
- Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening; and
- Section 23.05.064, Tree Removal Standards.

## Mitigation Measures:

- AES-2 Within one year of completion of the SEIR process and completion of all necessary regulatory agency permits, the CCSD shall remove the five mechanical spray evaporators along with their enclosures. The evaporation pond shall be repurposed as a potable water supply storage basin. The AWTP RO concentrate shall be discharged to four (4) Baker tanks for storage prior to offsite disposal, instead of the evaporation pond.
- AES-3 Within one year of completion of the SEIR process and completion of all necessary regulatory agency permits, the CCSD shall color treat the Advanced Water Treatment Plant (AWTP), where reasonable, such that the facilities blend into the surrounding area. Color treatments shall be recommended by a licensed Landscape Architect and by the County. Prior to installation, the Surface Water Treatment Plant (SWTP) shall be color treated, where reasonable, consistent with the AWTP.
- AES-4 Within one year of completion of the SEIR process and completion of all necessary regulatory agency permits, the CCSD shall hydroseed areas where native vegetation has been removed, where feasible. The County shall confirm that all species selected for hydroseed are indigenous to the area. .

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.

## IMPACT 5.1-3 SCENIC VISTAS/CORRIDORS

- WOULD THE PROJECT HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE AFFECT ON A SCENIC VISTA OR CORRIDOR?



## Impact Analysis:

### SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY

#### OPEN AREAS (SCENIC VISTAS)

The open area visual resources described above contribute to the scenic vistas that are present in the Project area; see [Section 5.1.1, \*Environmental Setting\*](#).

Notable SWF components, including the AWTP, evaporation pond, and evaporators/enclosures, do not impact scenic views of ridgelines, coastal beaches, or the Pacific Ocean. Views of naturally vegetated open space within the San Simeon Creek and Van Gordon Creek corridors are not disturbed by these or other Project components. The AWTP was constructed on a site containing ruderal vegetation and the evaporation pond, which also contains ruderal vegetation, was sited in the same location and footprint occupied by the Van Gordon Reservoir. However, these Project components, as well as the evaporators/enclosures, are within the scenic vistas afforded from the San Simeon Trail and Washburn Primitive Campground. The SWF's effects on the surrounding scenic vistas are further discussed below.

**From the South (San Simeon Trail and Washburn Primitive Campground).** As noted above, recreational users along the trail experience middle-ground views of the Project site. The SWF components (i.e., AWTP, evaporation pond, and evaporators/enclosures) are intermittently visible from portions of the San Simeon Trail; see [Exhibit 5.1-3, \*Views from Washburn Primitive Campground\*](#). The Monterey pine which grow along the ridgeline buffer the campers' southerly views of the SWF components. The lighter-colored AWTP contrasts with the surrounding open spaces. Mitigation Measure AES-3 requires that the AWTP be color-treated such that it blends in with the surrounding landscape. With implementation of AES-3, the SWF would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard. Views of the evaporation pond and evaporators/enclosures are also afforded from this vantage point. However, they are located more than 1,600 feet away and are darker color such that they blend into their surroundings; see [Exhibit 5.1-3](#). The evaporation pond and evaporators/enclosures would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard. It is noted that with implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, the mechanical spray evaporators with their enclosures would be removed, avoiding these view impacts, as these features would no longer be present/visible.

SWF implementation resulted in the disturbance of onsite vegetation, which also contributed to this scenic vista. Mitigation Measure AES-4 requires that all areas where native vegetation was removed and where water facilities were not located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants. With implementation of AES-3 and AES-4, the SWF would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.





**From the West (San Simeon Creek Campground).** As noted above, campers experience views of the Project site in the foreground (Van Gordon Reservoir) and middle-ground, and agricultural and natural lands in the background. The SWF components (i.e., evaporation pond and evaporators/enclosures) are directly visible from the campground; see Exhibit 5.1-2, Views from Upper San Simeon Creek Campground. The evaporation pond would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista, since it was sited in the same location and footprint occupied by the Van Gordon Reservoir, and the evaporation pond is not dissimilar to the original reservoir. Due to their proximity to the campground, the evaporators/enclosures would have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista unless mitigated. AES-2 would require removal of the evaporators/enclosures, which would avoid all visual impacts pertaining to these features. Further, AES-2 and AES-3 would ensure that the SWF components blend in with the surrounding area and that the area is re-vegetated with indigenous plants. With implementation of AES-2 through AES-4, the SWF would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Overall, with implementation of the specified mitigation measures, the Project's impacts to scenic vistas are less than significant.

## SCENIC CORRIDORS

Based on SLO County Conservation and Open Space Element Table VR-2, *Suggested Scenic Corridors*, there are no suggested scenic corridors located in the viewshed of the Project site. Therefore, the SWF would not have a substantial adverse effect on any of the County's suggested scenic corridors.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES (PROJECT MODIFICATIONS)**

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2 would result in Project modifications that require the construction of additional on-site facilities in order to accommodate removal of the evaporators/enclosures. Visible features associated with the Project modifications would include the potable water supply storage basin, a SWTP (sited near the AWTP), and Baker tanks. The mechanical spray evaporators/enclosures would no longer be visible, since they would be removed. Additionally, the ACB lining that would be installed at the San Simeon Creek channel bank could also be visible.

## OPEN AREAS (SCENIC VISTAS)

The open area visual resources contribute to the scenic vistas that are present in the Project area. Notable Project components, including the SWTP, potable water supply storage basin, and Baker tanks, would not impact scenic views of ridgelines, coastal beaches, or the Pacific Ocean. The proposed ACB would not impact views of naturally vegetated open space within the San Simeon Creek corridor, since it would be installed at the creek bank and the existing riparian vegetation



would buffer views. Additionally, the proposed ACB would allow for the continued growth of riparian vegetation, which would minimize visual impacts. The Project modifications would be sited within the scenic vistas afforded from the San Simeon Trail and the San Simeon Campground. The Project modification's effects on the surrounding scenic vistas are further discussed below.

**From the South (San Simeon Trail and Washburn Primitive Campground).** As noted above, recreational users along the trail experience middle-ground views of the Project site, which is located approximately 1,200 feet to the north. The Project modifications (the SWTP and potable water supply storage basin) would be intermittently visible from portions of the San Simeon Trail; see Exhibit 5.1-3, Views from Washburn Primitive Campground. The Monterey pine which grow along the ridgeline would buffer the campers' southerly views of the SWTP and potable water storage supply basin (the AWTP is approximately 2,100 feet from the Washburn Primitive campground sites). Mitigation Measure AES-3 requires that the SWTP be color-treated such that it blends in with the surrounding landscape. With implementation of AES-3, the SWTP would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard. Views of the potable water supply storage basin would also be afforded from this vantage point. However, the potable water supply storage basin is located greater than 1,600 feet away; see Exhibit 5.1-3. Further, the potable water supply storage basin would operate in place of the evaporation pond, which was sited in the same location and footprint as the Van Gordon Reservoir. The potable water supply storage basin would not be dissimilar to the evaporation pond or original Van Gordon Reservoir. Therefore, the potable water supply storage basin would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Implementation of the Project modifications may result in disturbance of onsite vegetation, which also contributed to this scenic vista. Mitigation Measure AES-4 requires that all areas where native vegetation would be removed and where water facilities would not be located, be re-vegetated with indigenous plants. With implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-3 and AES-4, the Project modifications would not have a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

**From the West (San Simeon Creek Campground).** As noted above, campers experience views of the Project site in the foreground (Van Gordon Reservoir) and middle-ground, and agricultural and natural lands in the background. The Project modifications (i.e., potable water supply storage basin) would be visible from the campground; see Exhibit 5.1-2. However, the potable water supply storage basin would operate in place of the evaporation pond, which was sited in the same location and footprint as the Van Gordon Reservoir. The potable water supply storage basin would not be dissimilar to the evaporation pond or original reservoir. Therefore, the potable water supply storage basin would not result in a substantial adverse effect on this scenic vista and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.



Overall, with implementation of the specified Mitigation Measures, the Project modification's impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

## SCENIC CORRIDORS

Based on SLO County Conservation and Open Space Element Table VR-2, *Suggested Scenic Corridors*, there are no suggested scenic corridors located in the viewshed of the Project site. Therefore, the Project modifications would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic corridor.

### Standards and Regulations:

#### LCP Policies

- Policy 1, Protection of Visual and Scenic Resources;
- Policy 2, Site Selection for New Development;
- Policy 4, New Development in Rural Areas; and
- Policy 7, Preservation of Trees and Native Vegetation.

#### CZLUO

- Chapter 23.04, Site Design Standards;
- Section 23.04.124, Height Limitations;
- Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening; and
- Section 23.05.064, Tree Removal Standards.

**Mitigation Measures:** Refer to Mitigation Measures AES-2, AES-3, and AES-4.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.

## IMPACT 5.1-4 STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS

- WOULD THE PROJECT SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGE SCENIC RESOURCES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, TREES, ROCK OUTCROPPINGS, AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS, WITHIN A STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY?

### Impact Analysis:

#### SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY

The Project site is located approximately 0.2 mile inland (to the east) of SR-1, an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway and an All-American Road (San Luis Obispo North Coast Byway). When looking inland towards the east, motorists traveling northbound on SR-1 are



afforded very brief views (approximately seven seconds) of the mechanical spray evaporators/sound enclosures, which are sited atop the evaporation pond's berm.

NCAP Standard AW-6, *Site Selection*, specifies that primary site selection for new development be at locations not visible from Highway 1 (SR-1). NCAP Standard AW-6 requires that sites be selected where hills and slopes would shield development "unless no alternative location exists." The evaporators/enclosures were sited atop the berm, in order to "reuse" the Van Gordon Reservoir and ensure the necessary RO concentrate evaporation is achieved. There was no feasible, alternative, non-visible location for citing the evaporators/enclosures. Although, the evaporators/enclosures have been color-treated, such that they blend in with the surrounding landscape, they are visible from SR-1. Therefore, the SWF would result in a potentially significant impact in this regard. Mitigation Measure AES-2 requires that the evaporators/enclosures be removed, thus, avoiding this view impact. Further, no trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings were previously situated where the evaporators/enclosures and evaporation pond are situated. Therefore, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, the SWF would avoid visual impacts associated with SR-1 and no impact would occur in this regard.

#### **MITIGATION MEASURES (PROJECT MODIFICATIONS)**

As discussed above, Mitigation Measure AES-2 requires that the evaporators/enclosures be removed, thus, avoiding view impacts associated with SR-1. Upon removal of the evaporators/enclosures, the Project Modifications, including the SWTP, would not be visible from SR-1. No impact would occur in this regard.

#### **Standards and Regulations:**

##### NCAP

- AW-6, Site Selection.

**Mitigation Measures:** Refer to Mitigation Measure AES-2.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.

#### **IMPACT 5.1-5 LIGHT AND GLARE**

- WOULD THE PROJECT CREATE A NEW SOURCE OF LIGHT OR GLARE, WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAY OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS IN THE AREA?

**Impact Analysis:** The light sensitive land use located nearest the Project site is the San Simeon Creek Campground.





### **SUSTAINABLE WATER FACILITY**

No nighttime SWF construction occurred and the construction equipment did not create a substantial source of daytime light or glare. Therefore, no impact occurred in this regard.

SWF operations involve new potential sources of daytime glare, as well as nighttime lighting features. New daytime glare sources potentially result from the evaporation pond and evaporators/enclosures. Mitigation Measure AES-2 requires removal of the evaporators/enclosures, thus, any potential daytime glare associated with this feature would be avoided and no impact would occur in this regard. The evaporation pond was sited in the same location and footprint occupied by the Van Gordon Reservoir, and is filled only intermittently with RO concentrate. Further, any potential glare would appear similar in character to the surrounding agricultural uses in the area, which also use ponds and daytime irrigation. Thus, impacts in this regard are less than significant.

The SWF includes lighting features at the AWTP and evaporators/enclosures solely for security purposes and only during AWTP operations. The nearest light sensitive receptors to the Project site are the San Simeon Creek Campground to the west and the Washburn Primitive Campground to the south. Lighting generated by the SWF does not cause significant spillover impacts to these receptors, due to the distance that exists (between the AWTP and evaporators/enclosures and these existing uses) and the intervening vegetation. Further, only the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve essential security illumination was provided. The Project is also subject to compliance with CZLUO Section 23.04.320 (Outdoor Lights), in order to avoid spillover effects. Following compliance with CZLUO Section 23.04.320, the Project does not create a new source of light that would adversely affect nighttime views. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES (PROJECT MODIFICATIONS)**

The Project modifications would not require nighttime construction and construction equipment would not create a substantial source of daytime light or glare. Introduced operational lighting features associated with the Project modifications would include security lighting necessary for the new SWTP and Baker tanks (sited near the AWTP). As with the SWF, only the nominal amount of lighting necessary to achieve essential security illumination is proposed. The Project modifications would also be subject to compliance with CZLUO Section 23.04.320 (Outdoor Lights).

New daytime glare sources for the potable water supply storage basin would be as described above for the evaporation pond. The potable water supply storage basin would operate in place of the evaporation pond, which was sited in the same location and footprint as the Van Gordon Reservoir. Although, the potable water supply storage basin would not be dissimilar to the evaporation pond it would be filled with potable water the majority of the time. Any potential



glare would appear similar in character to the surrounding agricultural uses in the area, which also use ponds and daytime irrigation. Thus, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Following compliance with CZLUO Section 23.04.320, the Project modifications would not create a new source of light that would adversely affect nighttime views. A less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

### **Standards and Regulations:**

#### CZLUO

- Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening; and
- Section 23.04.320, Outdoor Lights.

**Mitigation Measures:** Refer to Mitigation Measures AES-2.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.

## **5.1.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

- **WOULD THE PROJECT, COMBINED WITH OTHER CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT CAUSING RELATED IMPACTS, RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT CUMULATIVE AESTHETIC/LIGHT AND GLARE IMPACTS?**

**Impact Analysis:** For purposes of aesthetic resource analyses, cumulative impacts are considered for projects proposed throughout the North Coast Planning Area, and according to the WMP; see [Section 4.0, \*Basis of Cumulative Analysis\*](#). Cumulative projects would have the potential to affect aesthetics at their respective sites, since they would involve alterations to the baseline conditions.

As summarized above, WMP implementation could cause an adverse change to visual resources and aesthetics. Although not considered significant, grading and construction activities associated with the WMP improvements may temporarily alter the existing visual character/quality of the construction sites and their surroundings on a short-term basis. Implementation of the WMP could also alter the long term visual character/quality of the sites and their surroundings. Also, a scenic vista or resource, including those along Highway 1 could be impacted by the implementation of the WMP improvements and further review may be necessary on a project-by-project basis. However, a less than significant impact to the long term visual character/quality and scenic vistas or visual resources would occur following compliance with SLO County requirements and implementation of the recommended mitigation. Further, new lighting from WMP improvements could cause spillover light and glare impacts, potentially impacting views.



## SHORT-TERM CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

No cumulative projects are located within the viewshed of the Project site; see [Table 4-1, Cumulative Projects List](#). The Project would not degrade the character/quality of the site and surrounding area during construction. Construction activities associated with the other cumulative projects would not be visible concurrent with Project construction. Thus, an overall cumulatively considerable impact would not result and the Project would not contribute to the cumulative degradation of character/quality at the Project site.

## LONG-TERM CHARACTER/QUALITY IMPACTS

None of the cumulative projects are located within the viewshed of the Project as a result of existing topographic conditions. Further, the Project results in less than significant impacts to the change in character/quality following compliance with the applicable standards/regulations and recommended Mitigation Measures AES-2 through AES-4. Therefore, the Project, in conjunction with other cumulative projects in the vicinity of the Project site, would not result in cumulative visual impacts to the degradation of character/quality in the area. The Project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts in this regard.

## SCENIC VISTAS/CORRIDORS

None of the cumulative projects are located within the Project's viewshed. Further, the Project results in less than significant impacts to the scenic vistas following compliance with Mitigation Measures AES-2 through AES-4. As no cumulative projects are located within the viewshed of the Project site, as seen from the San Simeon Trail and campgrounds, cumulative impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant, and the Project would not contribute to cumulative long-term visual impacts in this regard.

## STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS

None of the cumulative projects are located within the viewshed of Highway 1 in the Project's vicinity. Further, with implementation of the recommended Mitigation Measure AES-2, the proposed Project would not be visible from Highway 1. Therefore, the Project, in conjunction with other cumulative projects in the vicinity of the Project site, would not result in cumulative visual impacts to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway. The Project does not result in cumulatively considerable impacts in this regard.

## LIGHT AND GLARE

Project implementation would result in new potential daytime glare sources and safety lighting features. Following compliance with the CZLUO Sections 23.04.180, 23.04.190, and 23.04.320, impacts in this regard would be less than significant. Thus, an overall cumulatively considerable



impact would not result and the Project would not contribute to cumulative nighttime lighting impacts within the Project area.

### **Standards and Regulations:**

#### NCAP

- AW-6, Site Selection.

#### CZLUO

- Chapter 23.04, Site Design Standards;
- Section 23.04.124, Height Limitations;
- Section 23.04.180, Landscape, Screening, and Fencing;
- Section 23.04.190, Fencing and Screening;
- Section 23.04.210, Visual Resources;
- Section 23.04.320, Outdoor Lights; and
- Section 23.05.064, Tree Removal Standards.

**Mitigation Measures:** Refer to Mitigation Measures AES-1 through AES-4.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.

## **5.1.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

Following compliance with the specified standards/regulations and Mitigation Measures AES-1 through AES-4, the Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on aesthetics.

## **5.1.8 SOURCES CITED**

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California Department of Transportation Website, California Scenic Highway Program, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16\\_livability/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm), Accessed October 10, 2015.

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