

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a brief description of the current environmental conditions in the proposed project area. The County divides land uses within all planning areas into various categories. The official maps of the County Land Use Element (LUE) show the precise locations where land use categories and combining designations are applied, and define regulations for land uses, densities and intensity of use.

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING

Located along the Central Coast of California, San Luis Obispo County is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Monterey County to the north, Kern County to the east, and Santa Barbara County to the south (refer to Figure 2.2-1). The San Luis Obispo County region is moderately urbanized, but remains as a generally low density, rural and agricultural area of California that has grown as a major tourist destination. The region includes seven incorporated cities: Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo. The seven incorporated urban areas include approximately 55% of the county's total population (2010 Census). Urban concentrations in the unincorporated portions of the county include Avila Beach, Cambria, Cayucos, Heritage Ranch, Los Osos/Baywood Park, Nipomo, Oceano, San Simeon, Santa Margarita, San Miguel, Shandon, and Templeton. All of the urban areas within San Luis Obispo County are linked to Highways 1 and 101, which are the primary transportation corridors serving the region.

~~Population growth in the county increased~~ The county's population grew approximately 13.6% between the years 1990 and 2000, and approximately 9.3% between 2000 and 2010 (based on US Census). As of January 2011, 270,966 residents live in San Luis Obispo County (California Department of Finance). This population growth has resulted in an increased demand for housing in the county. The City of San Luis Obispo is the employment, entertainment, education, and shopping center of the region both geographically and economically. Commercial and residential development has increased in the North County and Nipomo, as slower rates of growth have occurred and costs have risen in the San Luis Obispo and North Coast regions.

3.2 COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

San Luis Obispo County is divided into two major regions: 1) the Coastal Zone, established as a result of the California Coastal Act of 1976; and 2) the Inland area. Each of these two large areas is further broken down into more manageable "planning areas." The proposed ordinance amendments would affect 9 of the County's 15 planning areas. The following paragraphs describe the physical setting and land uses found within each planning area that could be affected by the program. These affected planning areas are shown in Figure 3.2-1. The proposed program would not affect the Nacimiento, Las Pilitas, Los Padres, Shandon-Carrizo, San Luis Bay Coastal, or South County Coastal planning areas



Adelaida Planning Area. The Adelaida planning area occupies approximately 207,978 acres (325 square miles) and encompasses the central northwest portion of the county. The area's terrain descends from the rugged, mountainous western slope of the Santa Lucia Range to rolling farmlands in the eastern portion of the planning area. The primary land use in the area is agriculture, with steeper and more remote areas providing grazing capabilities. The Adelaida Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2003) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The area is predominantly agricultural land uses (approximately 73%) with rural lands and public facilities each accounting for 13% of the area's land use. There are no urban or village areas in the Adelaida planning area.

El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area. The El Pomar-Estrella planning area covers approximately 132,000 acres (206 square miles) of rolling hills east of the Salinas River and west of the Shandon-Carrizo planning area. The planning area is characterized by its rural landscape with agricultural operations consisting mainly of vineyards in flatter areas and livestock grazing on steeper slopes. Residential rural developments are also scattered throughout the planning area. The El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. Agriculture is the predominant land use in the planning area (approximately 80.2%) with rural lands and residential rural making up approximately 10.4 and 9.0%, respectively. There are no urban areas in the El Pomar-Estrella planning area, but there is one village: Creston.

Estero Planning Area. The Estero planning area occupies approximately 42,335 acres (66 square miles) of the central coastal area of the county from Point Estero on the north to Point Buchon on the south. The planning area occupies a narrow strip along the coast north of the City of Morro Bay and south of the unincorporated community of Los Osos. The planning area includes large portions of the Morro and Little Morro Creek watersheds on the north, a portion of the Irish Hills on the south, and a portion of Cuesta College on the east. The Estero planning area consists predominantly of agricultural land uses (approximately 74%) with extensive recreational, open space and residential uses. The Estero Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2004) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The Estero planning area encompasses the Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay urban areas. This planning area is entirely in the Coastal Zone.

Huasna-Lopez Planning Area. The Huasna-Lopez planning area occupies 103,673 acres (162 square miles) in the south central portion of the county. It is a predominantly agricultural (approximately 82%) and rural lands (approximately 14%) planning area that is bordered by the Los Padres National Forest to the north and east, Santa Barbara County to the south, and the range of hills (Newsom and Temattate Ridges) that separate the Huasna Valley from Nipomo Valley on the west. The Huasna-Lopez Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2007) designates land uses within the planning area. There are no urban or village areas within the Huasna-Lopez planning area.

North Coast Planning Area. The North Coast planning area includes approximately 167,216 acres (261 square miles) extending from the Monterey County line on the north to Point Estero on the south and inland to the main ridge of the San Lucia Mountains. The planning area includes the communities of Cambria and San Simeon as well as the Hearst Ranch, which occupies almost half of the planning area. Agriculture-designated land occupies the majority of



the planning area (approximately 93%). The North Coast Land Use Element and Local Coastal Program (San Luis Obispo County, 2008) designate land use categories within the planning area. The North Coast planning area includes the Cambria urban area and San Simeon Acres village, and is located entirely within the Coastal Zone.

Salinas River Planning Area. The Salinas River planning area occupies approximately 90,823 acres (142 square miles) and includes the urban communities of Paso Robles, Atascadero, Templeton, San Miguel, and Santa Margarita, and the village of Garden Farms. The Salinas River Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates land use categories within the planning area. This planning area contains predominantly agriculture and open space land use designations (approximately 74%) with some residential rural, residential suburban, and residential single-family land designations (approximately 16%).

San Luis Bay Inland Planning Area. The San Luis Bay Inland planning area encompasses 61,018 acres (95 square miles) in the south central coastal portion of the county, extending from and including most of Montana de Oro on the north to the Nipomo Mesa on the south. It includes the non-coastal zone portions of the Five Cities urban areas of Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Oceano and Halcyon, and Avila Beach outside the coastal zone. The San Luis Bay Inland Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2002) designates land use categories within the planning area, with agriculture (approximately 40%) and rural lands (approximately 30%) as the dominant land uses. Outside of the urban and village reserve lines, an area of residential rural and residential suburban designated land, known as the Arroyo Grande fringe, covers approximately 16 percent of the planning area. The San Luis Bay Inland planning area includes the urban area of Arroyo Grande and portions of the urban areas of Avila Beach, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Oceano.

San Luis Obispo Planning Area. The San Luis Obispo planning area includes approximately 63,630 acres (99 square miles), including the City of San Luis Obispo and surrounding unincorporated agricultural and rural lands. The planning area extends to the Los Padres National Forest on the north and east, Cuesta College and Camp San Luis Obispo to the west, and the Irish Hills and Arroyo Grande fringe to the south. As with other planning areas in the county, the San Luis Obispo planning area primarily contains agricultural and rural lands (approximately 85%). The San Luis Obispo Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The San Luis Obispo planning area includes the urban area of San Luis Obispo and the Edna/Los Ranchos village. The San Luis Obispo urban area outside of city limits includes a large area of industrial and commercial service designated land around the county airport.

South County Inland Planning Area. The South County Inland planning area includes approximately 82,000 acres (128 square miles) extending from the urban boundaries of the "Five Cities" area to the north, the coastal range to the east, the Santa Maria River to the south, and the coastal zone boundary along Highway 1 and the Southern Pacific Railroad to the west. The entire Nipomo Urban Area, the five village areas of Black Lake, Palo Mesa, Los Berros, Woodlands, and Callender-Garrett, and South County rural areas are included within this planning area. The South County Inland Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2007) designates land uses within the planning area outside of the coastal zone. As with much of the county, land uses within the South County Inland planning area are predominantly agricultural (approximately 59%).



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3.3 CUMULATIVE PROJECTS SETTING

CEQA defines “cumulative impacts” as two or more individual events that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. This method of cumulative impact analysis allows an EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines indicates that cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.

According to the Guidelines, the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:

- *A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or*
- *A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or areawide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the Lead Agency.*
- *The discussion shall also include a summary of the expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects with specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available, and a reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects. The EIR shall examine reasonable options for mitigating or avoiding any significant cumulative effects of a proposed project.*

Cumulative impacts are discussed within each of the specific impact analysis discussions in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. The cumulative analysis for each of the appropriate issue areas is based on either: 1) build-out estimates included in the County General Plan, or 2) a cumulative projects list provided by the County of San Luis Obispo. The specific impacts of future development projects are not known at this time. Therefore, several assumptions are used for each individual environmental issue area for determining the potential for cumulative impacts.



Table 3.3-1: Cumulative Projects List

| Name | Project # | Map # | Location | Development | Status |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------|---|--|------------------|
| County Agricultural Cluster Subdivisions | | | | | |
| Estrella River Vineyard | SUB2006-00138 | TR 2905 | Estrella Road, near Paso Robles | 18 residences | EIR in process |
| Gardner | SUB2007-00055 | CO 10-0025 | Orcutt Road, near San Luis Obispo | 3 residences | Approved |
| Jack Ranch | S000323 U | TR 2429 | Edna/Los Ranchos area | 13 residences | EIR in process |
| Laetitia | SUB2003-00001 | TR 2606 | Laetitia Vineyard Drive, near Arroyo Grande | 100+ residences | EIR in process |
| Smith/Cooper | SUB2003-00352 | CO 04-0275 | Highway 58, Carrizo Plains | 6 residences | Accepted |
| County Standard Agricultural Subdivisions | | | | | |
| Biaggini | SUB2009-00045 | TR 3023 | Hwy 41, near Morro Bay | 2 lots | Information Hold |
| Cross Canyon | SUB2008-00094 | CO 09-0023 | Ranchita Canyon Road, near San Miguel | 6 lots | Approved |
| Munak | SUB2006-00206 | CO 07-0057 | River Road, near Paso Robles | 2 lots | Approved |
| Porter | SUB2006-00230 | CO 07-0069 | Estrella Road, near Paso Robles | 2 lots | Pending Hearing |
| Speizer | SUB2010-00031 | CO 10-0085 | Orcutt Road | 3 lots | Information Hold |
| Silverado SLO Vineyards | SUB2008-00025 | CO 08-0085 | Branch Road, near Paso Robles | 4 lots | Information Hold |
| Large Scale Projects | | | | | |
| Chevron Tank Farm | SUB2008-00004 LRP2008-00001 | TR 2988 | Tank Farm Road, near San Luis Obispo | Rezoning for master planned development | EIR in Process |
| Dalidio Ranch | SUB2006-00201 | N/A | Madonna Road, near San Luis Obispo | 35 lots (mix of uses) | Information Hold |
| Los Osos Sewer and Wastewater Treatment | DRC2008-00103 | N/A | Los Osos | Sewer system for the community of Los Osos | Approved |
| LanDev LLC | SUB2006-00067 | TR 2652 | Nipomo CBD | 112-unit assisted living, mixed use | Approved |
| Nipomo Center | SUB2004-00091 | TR 2312 | Nipomo CBD | Mixed use, 59 residences, commercial | Approved |
| Gray Trust | S010354 U | TR 2441 | Grande Avenue, Nipomo | 39 residences | Approved |



| Name | Project # | Map # | Location | Development | Status |
|---|--------------------------------|---------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Jack Ready Park | DRC2009-00062 | N/A | South end of Nipomo | Community park | Approved |
| Shapiro | SUB2004-00169 | TR 2611 | Nipomo CBD | Mixed use, 51 residences, commercial | Approved |
| Marinai | DRC2005-00007 | N/A | Nipomo CBD | 71-unit hotel | Approved |
| Templeton Properties | SUB2008-00041 | TR 2994 | Main Street, Templeton | 108 residences | Approved |
| Resource Extraction / Similar Uses | | | | | |
| Calkins/Viborg | DRC2006-00039 | N/A | Estrella Road, near Paso Robles | Surface Mine | Appealed |
| Chicago Grade | DRC2008-00026 | N/A | Homestead Road, near Atascadero | Waste-to-Energy Facility | EIR in Process |
| Cold Canyon | DRC2005-00170 DRC2006-00001 | N/A | Highway 227, near Edna | Landfill Expansion | EIR in Process |
| Excelaron | DRC2009-00002 | N/A | Huasna Townsite Road, near Huasna | Oilfield | EIR in Process |
| First Solar | DRC2008-00009 | N/A | Bitterwater Road, Carrizo Plains | 550 MW Solar Plant | Approved |
| Mainini | DRC2007-00016 | N/A | Old Creek Road, near Cayucos | Expansion of Surface Mine | EIR in Process |
| Oster | DRC2009-00025 | N/A | Calf Canyon Hwy, Santa Margarita | Surface Mine | EIR in Process |
| Pankey | DRC2005-00193 | N/A | Indian Valley Road, near San Miguel | Surface Mine | EIR in Process |
| Pehl | DRC2005-00027 | N/A | River Road, near San Miguel | Surface Mine | Accepted for Processing |
| Perozzi | DRC2005-00211 | N/A | Orcutt Road, near San Luis Obispo | Greenwaste Recycling | Accepted for Processing |
| Sun Power | DRC2008-00097 | N/A | Highway 58, Carrizo Plains | 250 MW Solar Plant | Approved |
| Twisselman | DRC2009-00004 | N/A | Carrizo Plains | Surface Mine | Approved |
| Twisselman | DRC2007-00073 | N/A | Prefumo Canyon Road, near San Luis Obispo | Access Road for approx. 20 Certificated Parcels | Accepted for Processing |
| Weyrick | DRC2007-00125 | N/A | Monterey Road, near Paso Robles | Surface Mine | Information Hold |



| Name | Project # | Map # | Location | Development | Status |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Wineries / Events / Tourism | | | | | |
| Armstrong | DRC2008-00156 | N/A | Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles | Large Winery + Tasting + Events | Accepted for Processing |
| Benson | DRC2007-00198 | N/A | Anderson Road, near Templeton | Expansion of Winery | Approved |
| Bethel Properties | DRC2008-00044 | N/A | Bethel Road, near Templeton | Expansion of Tasting Room | Approved |
| Burbank | DRC2009-00083 | N/A | El Pomar Drive, near Templeton | Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Cherry | DRC2008-00158 | N/A | Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles | Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Colmar | DRC2008-00029 | N/A | Willow Creek Road, near Templeton | Expansion of Winery | Approved |
| Gill | DRC2009-00023 | N/A | Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles | Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Glossner | DRC2009-00079 | N/A | Booker Road, near Templeton | Small Winery | Approved |
| L'Aventure | DRC2009-00048 | N/A | Live Oak Road, near Templeton | Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Lemm | DRC2007-00176 | N/A | Nacimiento Lake Drive, near Paso Robles | Temporary Events | Approved |
| Martinelli | DRC2007-00199 | N/A | Camp 8 Road, near Creston | Winery | Approved |
| Rasmussen | DRC2009-00055 | N/A | Harvest Ridge Way, near Paso Robles | Small Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Saunders | DRC2008-00132 | N/A | River Road, near San Miguel | Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Schmidt | DRC2007-00197 | N/A | Adelaida Road, near Templeton | Winery + Tasting + Events | Approved |
| Shadow Run | DRC2008-00143 | N/A | La Panza Road, east of Creston | Winery | Approved |
| Stanton | DRC2009-00047 | N/A | Las Tablas Willow Creek Road, near Templeton | Small Winery | Approved |
| Tackitt | DRC2009-00013 | N/A | Von Dollen Road, near Paso Robles | Small Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Teckman | DRC2008-00152 | N/A | Vineyard Drive, near Templeton | Small Winery | Approved |
| Thomsen | DRC2009-00083 | N/A | Fairhills Road, near Templeton | Small Winery + Tasting | Approved |
| Vina Robles | DRC2007-00200 | N/A | Union Road, near Paso Robles | Large Winery | Approved |
| Waddell | DRC2008-00110 | N/A | Highway 1, near Cayucos | Temporary Events | Scheduled for Hearing |



| Name | Project # | Map # | Location | Development | Status |
|--|---------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Other Development on Agricultural Lands | | | | | |
| Kaminaka | LRP2004-00006 | N/A | Pomeroy Road, near Nipomo | Rezone Ag Land to REC | Authorized for Processing |
| LA District Church | DRC2009-00016 | N/A | Coyote Creek Lane, near Creston | Organizational Camp | Information Hold |
| Templeton CSD | LRP2007-00015 | N/A | Creekside Ranch Road, Templeton | Rezone Ag Land to PF | Pending Authorization |
| Warren | LRP2006-00009 | N/A | San Simeon Creek Road, near Cambria | Rezone Ag Land to CS | Authorized for Processing |
| Long Range Planning / Policy Changes | | | | | |
| Climate Action Plan | N/A | N/A | Countywide | Reduction of Greenhouse Gases | In Process |
| Conservation/Open Space Element | N/A | N/A | Countywide | Conservation of resources | Adopted |
| Events Ordinance | N/A | N/A | Countywide | Regulation of events, including events on agricultural land | Authorized for Processing |
| Land Use/Circulation Element Update | N/A | N/A | Countywide (outside of URL/VRL) | Long range growth and development | Authorized for Processing |
| San Miguel Community Plan Update | N/A | N/A | San Miguel area | Long range growth and increase in density | In Process |
| Green Building Ordinance | N/A | N/A | Countywide | Sustainable development | In Process |
| Shandon Community Plan | N/A | N/A | Shandon area | Expansion of the Shandon Urban Reserve Line; Increase in density | EIR in Process |



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