

5.11 RECREATION

5.11.1 Setting

San Luis Obispo County is one of California's fastest growing coastal counties. The county population is projected to grow 30% to 323,100 by the year 2010. This anticipated growth will place additional burdens on local government to sustain even current levels of public services, including parks and recreation.

Currently, the County of San Luis Obispo Parks Division (County Parks) operates roughly 18 parks, 3 golf courses, and 10 Special Places which include natural areas, coastal access, and historic facilities. Overall, Urban Regional Parks account for 644 acres, Rural Regional Parks for 11,398 acres, and mini, neighborhood and community parks for 214 acres. However, within the County's unincorporated areas there are very few neighborhood parks; the few neighborhood parks provided are less than 10 acres in size.

Due to the limited availability of funding for parkland acquisition and maintenance, some of the County's community and regional parks serve dual functions. For example, Nipomo Community Park, located within the region of the proposed project, is a community park that provides neighborhood and community recreation. This 140-acre park is the only developed public park in Nipomo and thus must meet a variety of community needs including programs such as the pre-school and before/after school curriculum for school age children, youth and teen activities, and sports events such as the basketball program. In addition, the facility is also available for rental (County of San Luis Obispo, 2003).

Experience has shown that most communities, including San Luis Obispo County, have not been able to consistently meet the standards set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). For example, projected 2005 population for the county would require the immediate acquisition and development of an additional 2,700 acres of local and regional parkland based on traditional park planning standards. However, as the population and the number of tourists continue to grow, so will the need for additional parkland. Because of the historically high population growth rate in the South County area, including Nipomo, and the low number of neighborhood and community parks, recreation is an important issue.

Due to the growing recognition of recreation and parkland demand, the need should be met by a host of providers acting in cooperation; further planning for parkland acquisition should focus on flexible and adaptive strategies. Specifically, the existing Parks and Recreation Element suggests that target parkland acreage established by the National Parks and Recreation Association Standards may not be realistic given many community funding limitations (Jan Di Leo pers. comm., January 13, 2005).

The County Board of Supervisors adopted a Trails Plan in 1991. In accordance with this plan, County Parks has proposed a Santa Maria River Trail which would provide a trail along the north bank of the Santa Maria River between Highway 101 and the ocean. Completion of the trail would provide pedestrian and equestrian access from the community of Nipomo with the ocean (J. Di Leo, pers. comm.).

5.11.2 Impact Analysis

5.11.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would:

- 1) Increase the use or demand for parks or other recreation opportunities; and/or
- 2) Affect the access to trails, parks or other recreation opportunities.

5.11.2.2 Asphalt Plant Impacts

Short term impacts

No short term impacts to parks and recreational facilities are anticipated to occur as a result of construction of the proposed asphalt plant facility.

Long term impacts

The following are the long term impacts associated with the operation of the proposed asphalt facility:

Impact REC-1: Construction of the proposed asphalt plant would not greatly affect the need for parks and recreational facilities.

Discussion: Parks and Recreational facilities are currently based on standards outlined by the 1983 National Recreation and Park Association Standards. These standards determine the parks and recreational requirements and are based largely on regional population estimates.

Development impact fees (Quimby fees) have been the major funding source for new or expanded neighborhood and community parks in San Luis Obispo County. In the early 2000s, the County collected roughly \$2 million annually in park development impact fees¹⁴. Since impact fees are assessed on new development, this source of revenue generation fluctuates with the rate of residential growth. In recent years, development impact fees have made possible the replacement and expansion of playgrounds and restrooms at community parks throughout the County.

Development Impact Fees are intended to provide new facilities which offset the impact of new residential development on existing service levels. These fees are assessed on new residential development only, because commercial and industrial development typically does not result in significant impacts to parks and recreational facilities. Construction and operation of the asphalt plant will not result in significant impacts to parks and recreational facilities.

Impact Category: Insignificant

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 1

Mitigation Measure: No mitigation required

Impact REC-2: The proposed asphalt plant would be built within a parcel of land which is targeted by the County of San Luis Obispo Parks Division as a potential location for the Santa Maria River Trail according to the County Trails Plan.

Discussion: According to the County Trails Plan, County Parks is proposing to build a trail system adjacent to the proposed project which would connect the community of Nipomo to the ocean via the floodplains and upland habitat of the Santa Maria River. This trail would be primarily used by equestrians and pedestrians and would require an easement of 25 feet in width. The project site does not currently provide a trail for equestrian use through the project site; however, equestrians and pedestrians have utilized the floodplains of the Santa Maria River for navigation past the project site. These existing pathways are targeted by County Parks for the establishment of the proposed Santa Maria Trail. Secondary impacts to riparian vegetation within the Santa Maria River associated with the 25-foot trail easement are described in Section 5.4 Biological Resources (Impact BIO-8).

Impact Category: Significant but Mitigable

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 2

Mitigation Measure REC-2: To ensure permanent establishment of the Santa Maria River Trail would take place in accordance with the County's adopted Trails Plan, prior to obtaining building permits for the proposed plant the applicant will grant a permanent easement to the County for the proposed trail corridor (25-foot wide minimum). The location of the trail and the offer to dedicate shall be reviewed and approved by County Parks prior to the applicant receiving a building permit. Based on discussions with County Parks and the applicant, the approximate location of this easement shall be located to the south of the project site, parallel to the Santa Maria River and the southern boundary of the proposed asphalt plant. See Figure 5.11-1 for the proposed location of the trail. Secondary impacts to riparian vegetation associated with the 25-foot trail easement are described in Section 5.4 Biological Resources (Impact BIO-8).

5.11.2.3 LUO/LUE Amendment Impacts

The proposed LUO/LUE amendment would result in a land use change from RS and CS to IND. For the purposes of impact analysis, it is assumed that the chemical products manufacturing or metal manufacturing facility land use would be the worst-case scenario under the Industrial category.

Impact REC-3: The proposed LUO/LUE amendment would decrease the acreage of land which could be potentially utilized for recreational purposes.

Discussion: Because the LUO/LUE amendment project involves changing the land use designation of areas currently designated as RS and CS to IND, it reduces the potential for recreational land uses. The existing RS and CS land use categories within the project area would allow for various recreational uses including: golf driving ranges, outdoor athletic activities, public parks and playgrounds, swim and racquet clubs, and swim and racquet clubs with spectator facilities land uses, indoor amusement and recreational facilities, amusement parks, recreation equipment rental (both motorized and non-motorized), and public assembly and entertainment facilities land uses. None of these recreational uses would be allowed under the proposed Industrial land use category.

Although there is a high demand for recreational facilities in the South County area, it is unlikely that recreational uses would be compatible under the existing land use categories, based on the existing surrounding land uses and proximity to likely users of such facilities. As such, the proposed LUO/LUE amendment would result in impacts that are considered to be less than significant.

Impact Category: Insignificant

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 1, 2

Mitigation Measure: None required.

Impact REC-4: Future development under the LUO/LUE amendment could reduce the availability of land which is suitable for the proposed Santa Maria River Trail Plan.

Discussion: The proposed Santa Maria River Trail Plan intends to link the community of Nipomo to the ocean via the northern banks of the Santa Maria River. Current sand mining operations within the southern portion of the project area are incompatible with the proposed Santa Maria River Trail due to hazards associated with current operations in the area. Future development or land use activities (i.e., sand mining) under the existing CS or proposed Industrial category could also limit the availability of land which would be considered suitable for providing a trail easement along the northern banks of the Santa Maria River.

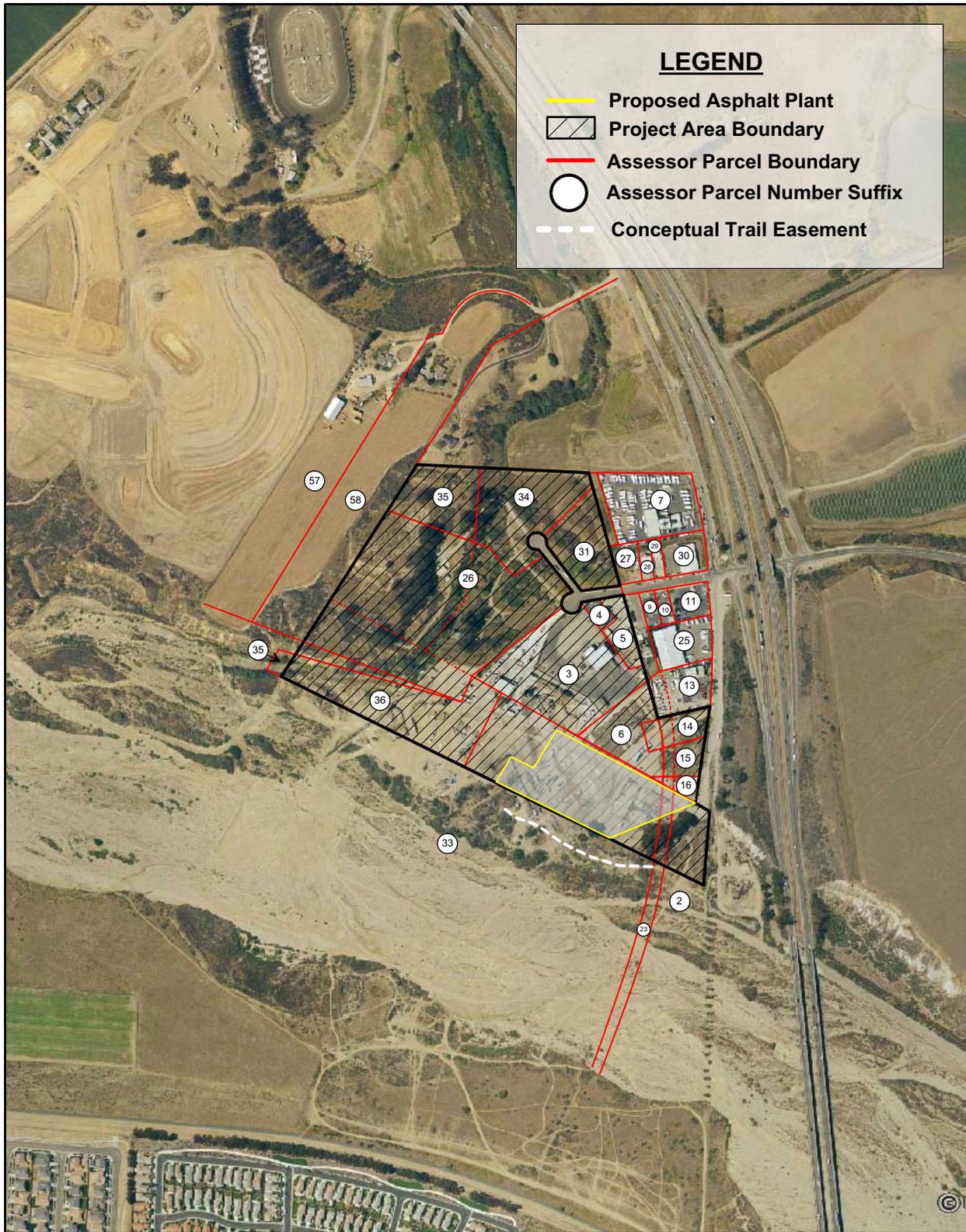
Impact Category: Significant but Mitigable

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 2

Mitigation Measure REC-4: Future development projects along the southern boundary of the project area that require discretionary permits shall require coordination with the County of San Luis Obispo Parks Division to determine the feasibility of establishing a trail easement through the subject parcel.

5.11.1.2 Cumulative Impacts

As discussed in Section 8.2 of this EIR, cumulative projects include the Caldwell Minor Use Permit, Loomis Minor Use Permit, and the Troesch Land Use Ordinance Amendment. The Caldwell Minor Use Permit involves the construction of one office building/warehouse and one warehouse with appurtenant vehicle storage. The Loomis Minor Use Permit involves the construction of a modular office building. The Troesch Land Use Ordinance Amendment involves the development of a commercial composting facility for receiving and processing green material. All three projects occur in previously developed areas and all of the projects have been determined to have no significant effect on recreation, according to review performed by the County of San Luis Obispo. Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to have any significant cumulative impacts on recreation in the area.



Source: County of San Luis Obispo; West Coast Environmental

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