A. AESTHETIC RESOURCES

The Aesthetic Resources section assesses visual impacts which may result from the proposed project. This analysis determines if a change in the visual environment would occur, whether that change would be perceived as a positive or negative one, and the significance of any change relative to the existing setting. The focus of the Aesthetic Resources section is on the potential for the Landfill expansion to result in impacts to sensitive visual resources, primarily as seen from public roadways and viewing areas.

1. Existing Conditions

The project site is located along the southwestern edge of the Edna Valley, approximately six miles south of the City of San Luis Obispo (refer to Figure III-1 and 2). Steep hills and rock outcroppings are located just west of the project site, and the Santa Lucia Mountains are located to the east. The Santa Lucias define the eastern limits of the Edna Valley. The project site is located south of the juncture of Price Canyon and the Edna Valley. As part of the valley's edge, the topography of the project site and the surroundings consists of several knolls and ridges transitioning from the valley floor to the adjacent hills. The Landfill fronts Highway 227, an important local north/south transportation corridor between San Luis Obispo and the City of Arroyo Grande to the south. The Landfill occupies the area between the Highway 227 and a ridge to the east. The Landfill creates its own topography, which can be seen rising from Highway 227 toward the ridge to the east.

The land uses surrounding the project site are primarily Rural Residential and Agriculture. Public roadways in the project vicinity are Highway 227, Corbett Canyon Road to the east, and Price Canyon Road to the northwest (refer to Figure III-3). From these roadways, the area is largely defined by rolling hills, with scattered ranches and individual residences visible in the landscape. Portions of the existing Landfill visible from these public roads are increasingly noticeable, but do not dominate the views. The visual character of the area is semi-rural.

The quality of the existing visual environment of the area is moderately high. The topographic variety of the hills and the natural vegetative patterns combine in an attractive visual backdrop and help define an aesthetic character valued by County of San Luis Obispo planning documents. Coast live oaks are the predominate native trees seen on the hillsides, and rock outcroppings in the area add to the visual quality. South of the project site along Highway 227, eucalyptus forests line the roadway. Although not native, these trees contribute to the vegetative character of the area.

The existing Landfill is most noticeable by its large embankment slopes rising from Highway 227. Much of the active operations of the Landfill are not seen from the roadway; however, the engineered appearance of the landforms is apparent. The entry road to the Landfill includes concrete block retaining walls along each side where it intersects with Highway 227.

The proposed expansion area is south of the existing Landfill and includes flat to mildly sloping topography. Oak and pine trees are located along the highway frontage. Canada Verde Creek establishes the southern perimeter of the disposal area.

2. Regulatory Setting

The proposed project is located within the jurisdiction of the County of San Luis Obispo. The regulatory setting pertaining to visual resources includes review of the proposed development's consistency with various elements of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan and the County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Ordinance (Title 22), in addition to the review of findings made in this document per CEQA Guidelines.

a. ~~Agriculture~~ Conservation and Open Space Element

The State of California mandates that every jurisdiction have an Open Space Element in their General Plan. As noted in Chapter ~~1~~9, the purpose of the Visual Resources chapter ~~open space portion~~ of this element is to guide "the appropriate placement of development so that the natural landscape continues to be the dominant view in rural parts of the county and to ensure that visual character contributes to a robust sense of place in urban areas."~~"identify open space lands that are worthy of protection for their intrinsic value, and establish goals, policies and implementation measures that will enable the long-term protection of those resources."~~

Visual Resources Policy VR 4.1 *Designation of Scenic Corridors*~~Open Space Policy 24 (OSP24) identifies~~ prioritizes potentially scenic corridors that warrant further study to determine whether or not portions of these corridors should be officially designated a scenic resource by the County. ~~Highway 227 and~~ Corbett Canyon ~~are~~ is not on the list. Price Canyon Road ~~is~~ and Highway 227 are on the list (refer to Conservation and Open Space Element, Table VR-2).

Visual Resources Policy VR 7.1 *Nighttime Light Pollution* recommends protecting the clarity and visibility of the night sky within communities and rural areas, by ensuring that exterior lighting is designed to minimize light pollution.

b. San Luis Obispo County General Plan Land Use Element –San Luis Obispo Area Plan

The proposed project is located within the San Luis Obispo Inland planning area. The San Luis Obispo Area Plan includes the following Vision Statement:

> *This plan's vision for the future includes continued opportunities for economic vitality and growth, along with the opportunity to maintain the environmental attributes that have themselves contributed to the area's historically healthy economy. The community's excellent living environment and educational opportunities can act to attract or retain businesses providing high quality job opportunities for local residents, enabling them to afford housing within the area, while also enhancing local tax revenues needed for public services.*
>
> *The planning area should maintain a rural character in harmony with agriculture, business, recreational, environmental and residential opportunities.*

San Luis Obispo Area Plan Goals relating to visual aspects are as follows (as numbered in Area Plan):

2. Protect and, where it has been degraded, enhance wildlife habitat areas.

3. Protect the scenic values of natural landforms.

4. Protect important historic or archaeological resources.

6. Focus urban development within established urban and village areas.

7. Devote the remainder of the planning area to a "greenbelt" consisting of production agriculture and low-density development. (Also see Framework for Planning).

15. Encourage economic development balanced with the natural resources that enhance the natural beauty and character, and supports the social and environmental health of the planning area.

Section 5A, *Scenic Roads and Highways* defines the area within 100 feet of Highway 227 as a "Highway Corridor Design Area" subject to the standards of development described in Section 22.108 of the County Land Use Ordinance (Title 22) for Sensitive Resource Areas (SRA). The Land Use Element states the following regarding the highway corridor design areas:

Foreground views along highways and railroads are identified in a highway corridor design area. These areas are close enough to the viewing public to reveal individual trees, rock outcrops, creeks, hillsides, and historic structures such as farm houses and barns. These elements of the scenic corridors have their own scenic values, while they also serve to frame and enhance views of the more distant scenic backdrops."

Article 9 of the County's LUO for the San Luis Obispo planning area includes areawide "Highway corridor design standards." However, these standards apply to the following uses: residences, residential accessory structures, residential access roads, signs, and certain agricultural accessory structures, not public facilities.

1) San Luis County General Plan Land Use Ordinance

Highway 227, adjacent to the project, is subject to the Highway Corridor Design Standards as defined in the San Luis County General Plan Land Use Element and Land Use Ordinance. These standards include the following applicable requirements:

22.108.030.B.3d. *Ridgetop Development* - Structures within the corridor boundaries shall not be located so they are silhouetted against the sky as viewed from the scenic highway.

22.108.030.B.3g~~2g~~. *Building Features* - Maximum building height is 25 feet above natural grade. Building architecture shall include pitch roofs with a minimum pitch of 3:12. Building colors shall be similar to surrounding natural colors that are no brighter than six in chroma and value on the Munsell Color scale on file in the Department of Planning and Building.

22.108.030.B.3h~~2h~~. *Landscaping* - A landscaping plan per the Land Use Ordinance is required that will insure at least 50 percent screening of the structure at plant maturity.

2) The San Luis Obispo County Design Guidelines

This document prepared by the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building consists of "design objectives, guidelines, and examples that will help retain and enhance the unique character of the unincorporated communities and rural areas of San Luis Obispo County." The following design objectives apply to the project site:

> **RC-7a.** Where possible, large cuts and graded pads should be avoided to minimize the alteration of natural contours.
>
> **RC-7e.** Artificial slopes that are visible to the public should match the natural contours in the immediate vicinity.

3. Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the County of San Luis Obispo.

In addition to comparing the proposed project to relevant policies and standards, this section identifies which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view, and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis was combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities, and viewing duration in order to determine the overall level of impacts. Specifically, the proposed project would be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

a. California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines

The significance of potential aesthetic resources impacts are based on thresholds identified within Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. According to the Guidelines, aesthetic impacts would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

A substantial adverse impact to a scenic vista would occur if the proposed project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, or in particular county or state-designated scenic roadways, or from other public areas. The degree of potential impact on scenic vistas varies with factors such as viewing distance, duration, viewer sensitivity, and the visual context of the surrounding area.

The aesthetics section analyzes the extent that the proposed development would alter the visual quality of the project site and its surroundings. The specific characteristics that define important vistas are identified and the project's effect on those characteristics is assessed. If the fundamental quality of the vistas are substantially reduced, significant impacts would result.

County planning documents and regulations do not set a specific threshold regarding the degradation of a scenic vista or visual resources. However, review of applicable planning

document language indicates that among other features, views of the coast and shoreline, hillsides, ridgelines, and substantial stands of native vegetation are among the resources considered aesthetically important.

Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Highway 227, located adjacent to the project site, is not identified by the State of California as an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway. As a result, this CEQA threshold does not apply to the project.

Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Project related actions would be considered to have a significant impact on the visual character of the site if they altered the area in a way that significantly changed, detracted from, or degraded the visual quality of the site and was inconsistent with community policies regarding visual character. The degree to which that change reflects documented community values and meets viewers' aesthetic expectations is the basis for determining levels of significance. Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact that the project may have on the visual quality of the site. If a strong contrast occurred where project features or activities attract attention and dominate the landscape setting, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of the site.

Project components that are not subordinate to the landscape setting could result in a significant change in the composition of the landscape. Consideration of potential significance includes analysis of visual character elements such as land use and intensity, visual integrity of the landscape type, and other factors.

Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjected viewers from public roads or adjacent residences to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visibility at night, or if the collective lumination of the project resulted in a noticeable spill-over effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements, and atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. The degree of impact caused by night lighting would consider the type of lighting proposed by the project along with the lighting reasonably expected to be generated by future users of the property.

b. Consistency with County of San Luis Obispo Plans and Policies

County of San Luis Obispo planning documents do not contain specific criteria for determining thresholds of significance regarding aesthetic resources. However, in comparing the project to the above CEQA Guideline thresholds, substantial consideration was given to the project's consistency with public policies, plans, goals, and regulations concerning scenic vistas, scenic

roadways, visual character, and night lighting. The goals, policies, and guidelines listed in the Regulatory Setting provide a basis for determining levels of potential impact as well as an indication of aesthetic values and sensitivity to visual change.

4. Impact Assessment and Methodology

The findings of this section are based on field visits conducted over several weeks, including review of the entire site as well as the surrounding area. Resource inventories were conducted both on foot and from moving vehicles. The existing developed features of the Landfill were surveyed along with the natural areas. The complete extent of potential visibility of Landfill expansion elements and programs were defined, with particular attention given to public roadways. Existing visual resources and site conditions were photographed and recorded on aerial maps and field notes. Assessment of project elements and programs was based on plans and descriptions provided by the applicant. County planning documents and previous environmental studies relevant to the project and surrounding area were referred to for gaining an understanding of community aesthetic values.

In addition to direct field observation, Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to calculate all project visibility, viewsheds, perspective views, data development, and scene generation. AutoCAD drawings containing contours of the current and future surfaces were utilized, with a modeling resolution of two feet. United States Geological Survey (USGS) data was used for the area surrounding the project site. Project visibility, along with viewsheds of the current landform and the future Landfill expansion, was calculated using GIS spatial analyst software tool. Accuracy of photo simulations was based in part on landform modeling generated by the GIS calculations.

a. Project Visibility Maps

Project visibility maps show the extent to which the proposed project would be visible as seen from several Key Viewing Areas (KVAs) surrounding the project site. Locations of the KVAs are shown in Figure V.A.-1. The project visibility maps indicate the visible portions of the Landfill after complete build-out (approximately 25 years).

b. Photo-Simulations

Photographic images and simulations are a valuable tool for understanding and disclosing the estimated visual effect of the proposed project. It is important to note, however, that photographs do not represent the same level of visual acuity and sensitivity to detail as the human eye. As a result, photo-simulations tend to understate the anticipated perception of impacts.

Photo-simulations were prepared in order to better understand and communicate the potential visual changes associated with the proposed project. Photo-simulation locations were selected to best show critical views, how the project would compare to applicable planning policy, or from viewpoints which would provide a good representation of the overall project character. No specific architectural styles are proposed for the entry feature, or any buildings proposed by the project. The simulated entry feature shown in Figure V.A.-9 is based on the appearance and scale of the entry feature that currently exists.

The photo-simulations show the project at two phases of development. One set of simulations depicts the expansion at an interim point in time prior to complete build-out. Because the active disposal areas of the Landfill would be relocated over time throughout the site, at some point they would be visible from each of the KVAs. As a result, the "intermediate" simulations show the project at a time when the active work area would be visible from that particular viewpoint. The screening vegetation shown in these interim simulations is depicted at a time period approximately five years after planting.

The second set of simulations show the project at full build-out, after the disposal area would have reached its final form, and the exposed slopes have been reseeded. The build-out of the project is estimated to occur after approximately 25 years. The screening vegetation shown in these full build-out simulations are depicted at a time period approximately 20 years after planting.

For the purpose of this section, short-term visual impacts were considered to be those changes that would be visible for ten years or less. Long-term impacts would be those alterations to the visual environment that would be in effect for a period greater than ten years.

5. Project Visibility

a. Highway 227

From southbound Highway 227, the proposed project would first come into view at a distance of approximately 0.4 mile north of the existing Landfill entrance. From this somewhat elevated viewpoint, the northern and western portions of the disposal area would be the most visible (refer to FiguresV.A.-2 through 11 for visibility maps, photographs and simulations as seen from Highway 227). Continuing south along Highway 227, the existing Landfill rises up east of the roadside. Along this section of Highway 227, the existing and proposed landform nearest the roadway would block much of the visibility to the interior of the project. The proposed disposal area would extend the existing landform approximately 1,700 feet south along Highway 227. Visibility of the project from southbound Highway 227 would be approximately 1.2 miles in length, with an approximate viewing duration of 78 seconds at the posted speed limit.

From northbound Highway 227, the proposed project would first be visible at a viewing distance of approximately 1.2 miles. The total viewing duration from a moving vehicle in the northbound lane would be 70 seconds at the posted speed limit of 50 mph. When first visible, the project would be partially screened by roadside vegetation, although the top would be clearly visible. Along the straight section of Highway 227 north of the eucalyptus grove and the gravel pit, the existing Landfill can be easily seen. The proposed expansion would increase that visibility and add to the visual mass of the landform.

b. Price Canyon Road

The proposed project would be visible from an approximately 0.4 mile section of Price Canyon Road, at a viewing distance of approximately one mile. Along the majority of Price Canyon Road, views of the proposed project would be blocked by intervening landform, roadside vegetation, or both. However, from this section of roadway, the northern and western slopes of the disposal area would be clearly visible (refer to Figures V.A.-12 and 13). Portions of the

existing Landfill are currently visible and the expanded disposal area would be seen extending to the west and south.

c. Corbett Canyon Road

From Corbett Canyon Road, the project would be primarily visible from the northbound direction of travel. Although existing topography would limit much of the views to the project, the Landfill expansion would be seen to the northwest from an approximately 0.8 mile section of northbound Corbett Canyon Road (refer to Figures V.A.-14 and 15). In the southbound traveling direction, the project would be somewhat less visible because of the perpendicular viewing angle combined with the adjacent topography. The total viewing duration from Corbett Canyon Road to the project would be approximately 50 seconds at the posted speed limit. Currently the southeastern portion of the Landfill can be seen from northbound Corbett Canyon Road. The proposed expansion would increase views of the Landfill and would extend the landform to the south.

6. Project-specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a. Landforms (Disposal Area)

The Landfill is currently permitted to reach a maximum height of 500 feet above sea level, with a coverage area of approximately 88 acres. The proposed project would increase the disposal area to 134 acres, but the maximum height would remain 500 feet above sea level. The landform of the project would take many forms throughout its service life, and be in a continual state of visual change. The Landfill expansion would be increased by constructing seven new modules. The modules would direct the phasing of refuse placement, compaction, and cover operations. The estimated time period required for completion of all seven modules is approximately 25 years. Many variables would affect the potential visibility and visual effect of the Landfill expansion throughout its years of on-going construction. Construction of modules closer to public roads would be more visible than modules away from roadways. Construction activities at lower elevation individual "lifts," which make-up modules, would generally be more visible when viewed from near the Landfill, while construction of lifts at higher elevations in a module would potentially be more visible from greater distances. Higher lifts within modules closest to the road would be less visible when viewed from near the Landfill because the lower portion of the landform and upward view-angle would block views.

During the approximately 25 years of project construction, the disposal area would be seen with angular slope faces and engineered-appearing topography. Because of the variability of module locations and continually changing elevations of lift construction, the proposed disposal area would appear scarred and as an unnatural landform from many of the viewpoints surrounding the site (refer to Figures V.A.-5, 7, and 11).

After approximately 25 years, with complete build-out of the proposed project, the overall topography of the site would still appear unnatural due primarily to the uniform slope angles, benching, and the flattened "top-deck" proposed at the northern portion of the Landfill (refer to Figure V.A.-13).

Permanent and temporary access roads and slope benching for drainage purposes would be highly noticeable and would contribute to the unnatural appearance of the disposal area in the short- and long-term. Concrete lined drainage swales would be seen as contrasting elements from great distances. Visibility of on-going construction activities would increase noticeability of the engineered landforms throughout the life of the proposed project (refer to Figure V.A.-5).

Although the visual context already includes the existing Landfill and related operations, by approximately doubling the size of the landform the proposed project would substantially increase visibility of the facility in the surrounding landscape. The visual scale would greatly increase and the expanded uses would intensify activity (customers, haul trucks, sorting lines, wood grinders, etc.) associated with the Landfill operation.

The proposed larger landform would block views of the natural ridgelines of distant hills as seen from viewpoints on Highway 227, Corbett Canyon Road, and Price Canyon Road. The upper approximately 150 feet or more of the proposed landform would have to be eliminated in order to retain distant ridgeline views. From several viewpoints along Highway 227, the new landform would block views of a portion of the ridgeline now created by the existing Landfill (refer to Figures V.A.-13 and 15).

AES Impact 1 **The interim and final topography of the Landfill would be highly noticeable, appear unnatural, and contrast with the existing natural settings of the Highway 227, Corbett Canyon Road, and Price Canyon Road corridors.**

AES/mm-1 **Prior to initiation of any components of the proposed project**, the applicant shall receive an initial Notice to Proceed from the County Department of Planning and Building. The Notice shall not be issued until all relevant mitigation measures and conditions of approval have been met. Additional Notices shall be required prior to initiation of each module.

AES/mm-2 **Prior to issuance of the Notices to Proceed**, the applicant shall provide funding for an environmental monitor for all phases requiring environmental mitigation to ensure compliance with County Conditions of Approval and EIR mitigation measures. The environmental monitor shall be under contract to the County of San Luis Obispo. The monitor shall prepare a construction monitoring plan that will include (1) goals, responsibilities, authorities, and procedures for verifying compliance with environmental mitigations; (2) lines of communication and reporting methods; (3) daily and weekly reporting of compliance; (4) construction crew training regarding environmental sensitivities; (5) authority to stop work; and (6) action to be taken in the event of non-compliance.

AES/mm-3 Upon submittal to the Department of Planning and Building, the grading plans for the proposed project shall include the following:

a. All slopes constructed by the project shall be contour-graded and shall include variable slope angles where feasible ranging from 2:1 to 4:1 or flatter to reduce the uniform appearance of the embankments. If needed, contour grading could be done on the exterior of modules to avoid loss of module capacity.
b. Slope-rounding shall be used on all access roads and slope benches to eliminate sharp earthwork angles.
c. All interim (five years or more) and finished slopes shall emphasize ~~include 50 percent~~ native shrubs and naturalized grasses in the erosion control seeding mix. Native shrubs shall include at least three different species and shall be the type found in the surrounding natural landscape. Plant species used shall be shallow rooted to avoid damage to the landfill cover.
d. All concrete lined drainage ditches used on slope benches and access roads shall be colored dark brown-grey.

Residual Impact In spite of the measures listed above, over the approximately 25-year duration of project construction, the project would always be in some state of change and would always have highly visible engineered slopes and forms including active modules, excavation scars, slope benches and access roads. After Landfill closure the topography would still require benching, access roads, and other engineered elements for continuing maintenance and monitoring. AES/mm-3 would reduce the unnatural appearance but not to a less than significant level. With implementation of mitigation, the unnatural and engineered landform would result in short and long-term *significant and unavoidable adverse impacts (Class I).*

AES Impact 2 **The interim and final topography of the Landfill would silhouette above ridgelines as viewed from Highway 227, Corbett Canyon Road and Price Canyon Road, significantly impacting the short and long term visual quality of the surrounding area.**

Implement AES/mm-3 ~~and 12~~.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, the unnatural and engineered landform would result in short and long-term *significant and unavoidable adverse impacts (Class I).*

b. ~~Compost Operation (CO)~~Green Waste Processing Operations

The project applicant has eliminated the CO from future consideration as part of this EIR; however, as part of Landfill operations, green and wood waste would continue to be accepted. The greenwaste would be used for Alternative Daily Cover (ADC) and the wood waste would be processed for use at cogeneration facilities interested in purchasing the material. The green waste would be processed at various locations at the Landfill with the objective of processing activities being located as close to the working face of the active module as possible. At this time, and into the foreseeable future, green waste would continue to be processed on the top deck of the Landfill (in the location formerly proposed for the compost operation). Processing of the

greenwaste includes hauling to the top deck, storing in piles, chipping, and hauling to the working face on an as-needed basis. Equipment required for processing green waste includes a chipper, loader, and roll-away dumpsters. In addition to processing green waste on the top deck, the applicant proposes to utilize the top deck for other activities in the future (e.g., storage of materials and equipment) due to its accessibility, flatness, and close proximity to the working face.

~~The CO is proposed to increase in size from 12 to 23 acres. The CO, which would include the placement of windrows approximately seven feet tall and 18feet wide, would be relocated to the "top deck" of the Landfill (refer to Figure III-8). Mitigation developed in the Noise section would require the CO to be moved within one year of the initial Notice to Proceed. A service road along the eastern side of the Landfill would access the CO area. Because of the on-going work associated with theCO, large trucks and other equipment would be visible on the "top deck" and access roads as seen from more distant viewpoints on Highway 227, Corbett Canyon Road, and Price Canyon Road. Views to the CO from closer locations on Highway 227 would generally be blocked by the upward view angle and intervening slopes (refer to Figure V.A.-13).~~

AES Impact 3 ~~**The Compost Operation**~~**Green waste processing activities and other staging activities, including trucks and equipment, at the uppermost portion of the Landfill would appear as a perpetual construction site and would draw attention to the Landfill.**

AES/mm-4 ~~**Upon submittal of the grading plans**~~**Prior to receipt of the Notice to Proceed**, the applicant shall show the following:

a. An earthen berm around the edges of the "top deck" to reduce visibility of equipment and trucks associated with the ~~compost~~ green waste storage, chipping, and loading operations.
b. The berm shall be contour-graded, use slope-rounding, be continuous, and include a variable height profile ranging from ten to 25 feet above the adjacent grade of the top deck.

AES/mm-5 **Within one year of issuance of the ~~grading permit~~Notice to Proceed (or incrementally as portions of the top deck are completed)**, the berm required by AES/mm-4 shall be constructed.

Residual Impact ~~The composting material emits steam during the process. In addition, the CO includes use of the compost turner and heavy trucks to deliver raw materials and haul compost away, all of which emit smoke while operating.~~ The processing of green waste and staging of other activities on the uppermost portion of the Landfill would result in ~~These~~ emissions that would be visible from public roads despite implementation of AES/mm-4 and would draw attention to the Landfill. However, with implementation of this measure the impact would be reduced to a *level of insignificance (Class II).*

Secondary Impact The construction of an earthen berm around the edges of the top deck as recommended above would increase construction and operational emissions and result in air quality impacts. These impacts would be mitigated to level of insignificance through implementation of AQ/mm-2 and 3.

c. Resource Recovery Park (RRP)

The RRP would be relocated to the southeast portion of the property and expanded from two to four acres in size. The existing topography in that area would be leveled by cutting into the existing slope along the eastern side (refer to Figure III-8). A new 30-foot by 80-foot metal building would be constructed, along with a maintenance building and an approximately 28-foot tall elevated construction and demolition sorting line structure. Because of intervening topography and vegetation, visibility to the RRP and its associated earthwork and buildings would be limited to a brief glimpse along Highway 227 at the new entrance road. From this viewpoint, however, the industrial appearance of the RRP would be evident (refer to Figure V.A.-9).

AES Impact 4 **Buildings and equipment associated with the RRP would increase the industrial appearance of the Landfill, adversely affecting the local rural character.**

AES/mm-6 **Prior to issuance of construction permits for the RRP**, the applicant shall submit architectural and engineering plans to the Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Plans shall include the following:

a. Exterior colors of all new, expanded, and existing buildings and permanent equipment shall be limited to dark muted earth-tones. No reddish-browns shall be used and exterior colors shall be no brighter than six in chroma and value on the Munsell Color Scale on file in the Department of Planning and Building.

AES/mm-7 **Prior to issuance of construction permits for the RRP,** the applicant shall submit landscape plans to the Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Plans shall include the following:

a. The plans shall show screen planting along the western, southern, and eastern sides of the RRP.
b. The screen plants shall include evergreen trees and shrubs for the purpose of screening the structures as seen from the surrounding area. Screen planting shall achieve a 100 percent screening of the structures at plant maturity. Trees shall be densely planted and shall be from a minimum 15-gallon container size.
c. Mitigation trees and shrubs shall be maintained in perpetuity or until such time as the RRP is removed as part of site closure.

AES/mm-8 **Prior to issuance of construction permits for the RRP**, a cost estimate for a planting plan, installation of landscaping, and maintenance of landscaping for a period of ten years shall be prepared by a qualified individual (e.g., landscape contractor) and shall be reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Building. **Prior to issuance of construction permits for the RRP,** a performance bond, equal to the cost estimate, shall be posted by the applicant.

AES/mm-9 To guarantee the success of the landscaping, the applicant shall retain a qualified individual (e.g., arborist, landscape architect/ contractor, nurseryman) to monitor the new trees' survivability and vigor until the trees are successfully established, and prepare monitoring reports, on an annual basis, for no less than ten years or until buildings are fully screened, whichever comes first. Based on the submittal of the initial planting letter, the first report shall be submitted to the County Environmental Coordinator one year after the initial planting and thereafter on an annual basis until the monitor, in consultation with the County, has determined that the initially-required vegetation is successfully established. Additional monitoring will be necessary if initially-required vegetation is not considered successfully established. The applicant, and successors-in-interest, agrees to complete any necessary remedial measures identified in the report(s) to maintain the population of initially planted vegetation and approved by the Environmental Coordinator.

Residual Impact Using muted colors would reduce the noticeability of proposed structures and short and long-term noticeability of the project. Screen planting would over time remove much of the structure visibility from view and would cause RRP to blend with the setting. This reduced visibility, when combined with the other measures recommended in this study, would result in a *less than significant impact (Class II)*. No additional mitigation is required.

d. Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

Expansion and enhancement of the MRF would involve increasing the square footage of the processing building from 55,000 to 65,800 square feet (refer to Figure III-8). The new construction would have a maximum height of approximately 40 feet, similar to the existing building. Covered outdoor storage and an office building would also be included. Due to existing and proposed topography and vegetation, the expanded MRF would only be partially visible when viewed from Highway 227 near the new entrance road. Construction of the proposed stockpile south of the relocated entry road would in time entirely block views to the MRF (refer to Figure V.A.-9).

AES Impact 5 **Buildings, overhead covers, and equipment associated with the MRF would increase the visibility and industrial appearance of the project, adversely affecting the existing rural character.**

Implement AES/mm-6, 7, 8, and 9, as they relate to the MRF.

Residual Impact With implementation of these measures, the impact would be mitigated to a *level of insignificance (Class II).* No additional mitigation is required

e. Stockpiles

The proposed stockpile adjacent to the relocated gatehouse would be visible from Highway 227 near the new facility entrance (refer to Figure III-9). By its nature, the stockpile would look like an on-going construction operation. Views from this location on Highway 227 would be brief, and would change depending on the timing and phasing of construction needs, as well as the success of the proposed oak tree planting west and south of the stockpile.

The expansion of existing Stockpile 3 at the northern portion of the project would be seen from locations on northbound Corbett Canyon Road. From this viewpoint, the deposition and removal construction activities associated with the stockpile would draw attention to the proposed project and would contribute to the engineered appearance of the project. After the closure of the Landfill and stockpiles, Stockpile 3 would contribute to the unnatural appearance of the land form due mostly to its uniform south facing slope.

AES Impact 6 **The interim and final topography of the stockpiles and the associated on-going construction activities of the Landfill would be evident from public roads, substantially degrading the short- and long-term visual quality of the surrounding area.**

Implement NS/mm-1 and 2.

AES/mm-10 ~~**Upon submittal of the grading plans**~~**Prior to issuance of Notice to Proceed**, the applicant shall show the following:

a. All stockpiles shall be contour-graded and shall include variable slope angles to reduce the uniform appearance of the embankments.
b. Slopes shall employ mechanical erosion control methods such as erosion control blanket as necessary to prevent erosion on contour graded slopes.
c. Slope-rounding shall be used on all access roads and slope benches to eliminate sharp earthwork angles.
d. All interim and finished slopes shall include 50 percent native shrubs in the erosion control seeding mix.

Residual Impact NS/mm-1 requires the applicant to construct an earthen noise berm adjacent to the southern property line along Patchett Road. This berm would also serve as visual mitigation, shielding views of the project from Patchett Road. With implementation of these measures, the impact would be mitigated to a *level of insignificance (Class II).* No additional mitigation is required.

f. Entry Features and Roadway

The proposed new entrance would be relocated south on Highway 227 approximately 2,800 feet from the current location (refer to Figure III-8). No specific plans or elevations for the proposed entry gate or scalehouse are available at the time of this report, although the proposal does indicate that the gate would be lighted and would identify the facility. This report assumes that new entry monument walls similar to the existing ones would be constructed. The existing entry road, walls, gate, scalehouse, and scales would be removed. Left and right turn lanes would be constructed on Highway 227 at the new entrance. If the new entry feature is visually compatible with the rural setting, adverse visual effects of constructing the new entry feature and widening the highway may be offset by the removal of the existing entry and roadway. The scalehouse would be located approximately 1,200 feet east of Highway 227, and, as such, would have limited visibility from off-site locations (refer to Figure V.A.-9).

AES Impact 7 **The entry monument sign, gate, or gatehouse would potentially contrast with the existing setting, adversely affecting the existing rural character.**

AES/mm-11 **Prior to submittal of construction permits for the entry monument sign, gate, and gatehouse**, the applicant shall develop construction plans that include the following:

a. Exterior colors of the gatehouse shall be limited to dark muted earth-tones. No reddish-browns shall be used and exterior colors shall be no brighter than six in chroma and value on the Munsell Color Scale on file in the Department of Planning and Building.
b. The proposed entry sign or monument shall be of an appropriate scale and proportion for the rural character and the two-lane highway setting (i.e., consistent with Section 22.20.010 of the LUO).
c. The proposed entry sign or monument shall utilize natural-appearing materials such as stone and/or wood. Material colors and finishes other than lettering and emblems shall be muted earth tones with low reflectivity.

AES/mm-12 **Prior to issuance of construction permits for any new structures**, the applicant shall submit lighting plans (per Section 22.10.060 of the LUO) to the Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Plans shall include the following:

a. The point source of all exterior lighting shall be shielded from off-site views.
b. All required security lights shall utilize motion detector activation.
c. Light trespass from exterior lights shall be minimized by directing light downward and utilizing cut-off fixtures or shields.
d. Lumination from exterior lights shall be the lowest level allowed by public safety standards.
e. Lighting shall not be directed such that it illuminates areas beyond the property line, or hills and slopes visible from offsite.

f. Light standard heights shall be no higher than necessary.

Residual Impact With implementation of these measures, the impact would be mitigated to a *level of insignificance (Class II)*. No additional mitigation is required.

g. Vegetation Removal and Proposed Landscaping

In order to accommodate the Landfill expansion project, approximately 43 mature oak trees would be removed. In addition, dozens of non-native landscape trees would require removal in the vicinity of the existing entrance, RRP, and nearby detention basin (refer to Figure III-8). Most of these existing trees can be seen directly from Highway 227. The cumulative effect of this tree removal would adversely change the scenic character of the area.

A substantial amount of willows would be saved adjacent to the new entry road near the highway. In addition, many of the existing pines and other non-native trees south of the existing entrance would remain. These remaining trees would help preserve some of the existing vegetative character and would help filter views to the Landfill and related operations.

The proposed project includes planting 2.8 acres of oak woodland, mostly in the area of Canada Verde Creek and the relocated entry road. An additional one acre of screen planting is also proposed along the parcel's western perimeter adjacent to Highway 227. The potential success of the proposed revegetation and screen planting would depend on several factors including soil suitability, water availability, and maintenance practices. It is estimated that it would take approximately seven to ten years for the proposed oak trees and other screen planting to provide substantial visual benefit in terms of character or screening. The proposed screen planting plan does not specify any certain plant material.

AES Impact 8 **Visibility of the Landfill along Highway 227 near the existing entrance combined with potential inadequacy of the proposed screen planting to the south would adversely affect the visual setting and character.**

Implement AES/mm-8 and 9.

AES/mm-13 **Prior to approval of any new construction permits**, the applicant shall submit landscape plans to the Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Plans shall include the following:

a. The landscape plan shall show screen planting along the entire length of the Landfill frontage along Highway 227.
b. Plantings may be required within the Highway 227 right of way if shown to be effective and acceptable to Caltrans.
c. Planting shall include screening of the access road parallel to Highway 227 and the detention basin south of the existing entrance.
d. The screen plants shall include evergreen trees and shrubs emphasizing natives and other species common in the area that are drought tolerant. Screen planting shall achieve a 100% screening density at plant maturity. Trees shall be planted from a minimum 15-

gallon container size, except oak trees, 1/3 of which should be from 1-gallon container.

e. Screening trees shall be planted in a manner that reflects natural growth. Straight rows and even spacing shall be avoided.
f. Screening trees and shrubs shall be protected from browsing and burrowing animals, and maintained in perpetuity.

Residual Impact With implementation of this measure, the impact would be mitigated to a *level of insignificance (Class II)*. No additional mitigation is required.

h. Night Lighting

Although no lighting plan was included with the project proposal, new sources of night lighting are expected be included with all new or expanded buildings proposed by the project. Security and safety lighting associated with staff and public parking areas, the entry gate, and road would likely be required. Proposed extended hours of operation would require increased night lighting needs. Because of this increase in lighting, the project has the potential to create an adverse effect on night-time views due to visibility of source glare, light spillover onto adjacent properties, as well as reflective illumination of adjacent landforms.

AES Impact 9 **Visibility of new night lighting associated with structures, work areas, parking areas, and the entry signs would adversely affect the visual setting and character.**

Implement AES/mm-12.

Residual Impact With implementation of this measure, the impact would be mitigated to a *level of insignificance (Class II)*. No additional mitigation is required

7. Cumulative Impacts

The discussion of cumulative impacts relates to the potential for the proposed project to contribute to an aggregate change in visual quality of the area. The Highway 227 corridor through the region has undergone a moderate amount of visual change in recent years. Commercial development has been occurring approximately four miles north of the project, near the San Luis Obispo County Airport. Residential development has been steadily increasing along the Highway 227 and Corbett Canyon Road corridors, with substantial new development visible on the adjacent hillsides. Implementation of the proposed project would contribute to the developed character of the area. This change in character would not be based on the visibility of new structures at the facility, but rather on the manipulated landforms and engineered topography of the project.

With the expansion of the disposal area, ~~the CO,~~ the RRP, and the MRF, a cumulative increase in visible construction, maintenance, and vehicles hauling material on and off site is expected. Throughout the approximately 25 year life of the project, much of this activity would be visible on the disposal area slopes and vicinity. This increased visibility of vehicles and equipment would draw attention to the site and would detract from the rural character of the area. Visibility

of heavy earthmoving equipment combined with potential hillside scarring would at times appear similar to a mining operation as seen from certain viewpoints.

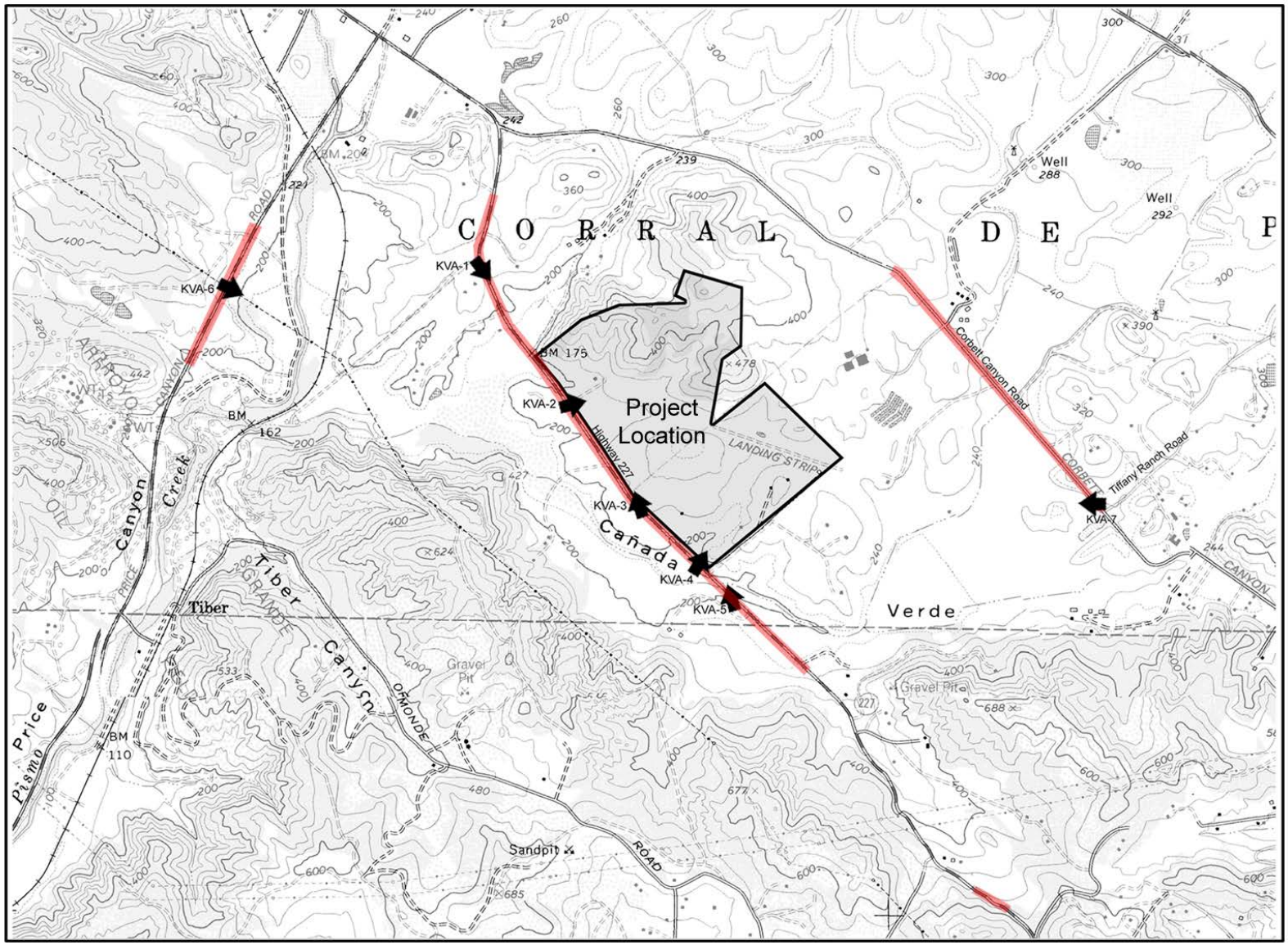
AES Impact 10 **The appearance of the proposed large engineered landform combined with visibility of on-going construction and maintenance activities, when considered cumulatively in conjunction with other visible development, including residential development would alter the rural character of the Highway 227, Price Canyon, and Corbett Canyon Road corridors.**

Implement AES/mm-1 through13 and NS/mm-1 and 2.

Residual Impact In spite of the measure listed above, over the duration of project construction, the project would always be in some state of change and would always have highly visible engineered slopes and forms including active modules, excavation scars, slope benches and access roads. After Landfill closure, the topography would still require benching, access roads, and other engineered elements for continuing maintenance and monitoring. The above measures would reduce the cumulative adverse appearance of the project but not to a less than significant level. With implementation of mitigation, the unnatural and engineered landform and related activities would result in short and long-term *significant and unavoidable cumulative adverse impacts (Class I).*

a. Short- and Long-Term Effects

Both short- and long-term adverse effects would occur as a result of the project. Short-term effects (those lasting five years or less) would be the result of on-going scarring and manipulation of the landform, and visible construction and hauling activities. Because of the approximately 25 year duration of project construction, long-term impacts (lasting more than five years) would also be the result of on-going scarring and manipulation of the landform, and visible construction and hauling activities. In addition, after closure of the Landfill, the unnatural looking slope benches and access roads would remain in place, resulting in a permanent alteration of the visual landscape. Perpetual maintenance and monitoring, along with any other continuing activities would add to the long-term noticeability and adverse effects of the project.



Key Viewing Area Location Map
FIGURE V.A.-1

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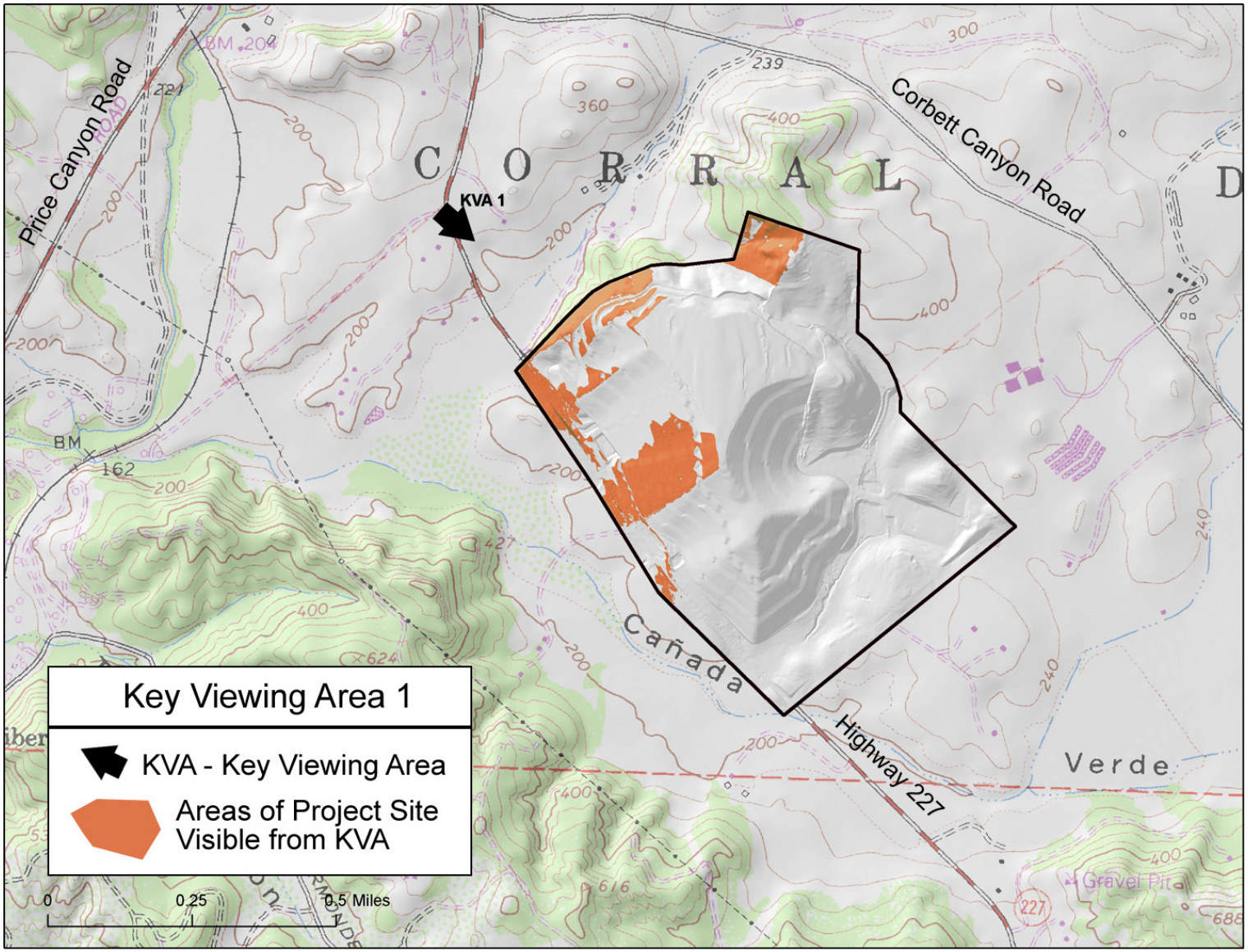

NORTH
Scale as Shown

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 1
FIGURE V.A.-2

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 1
FIGURE V.A.-3

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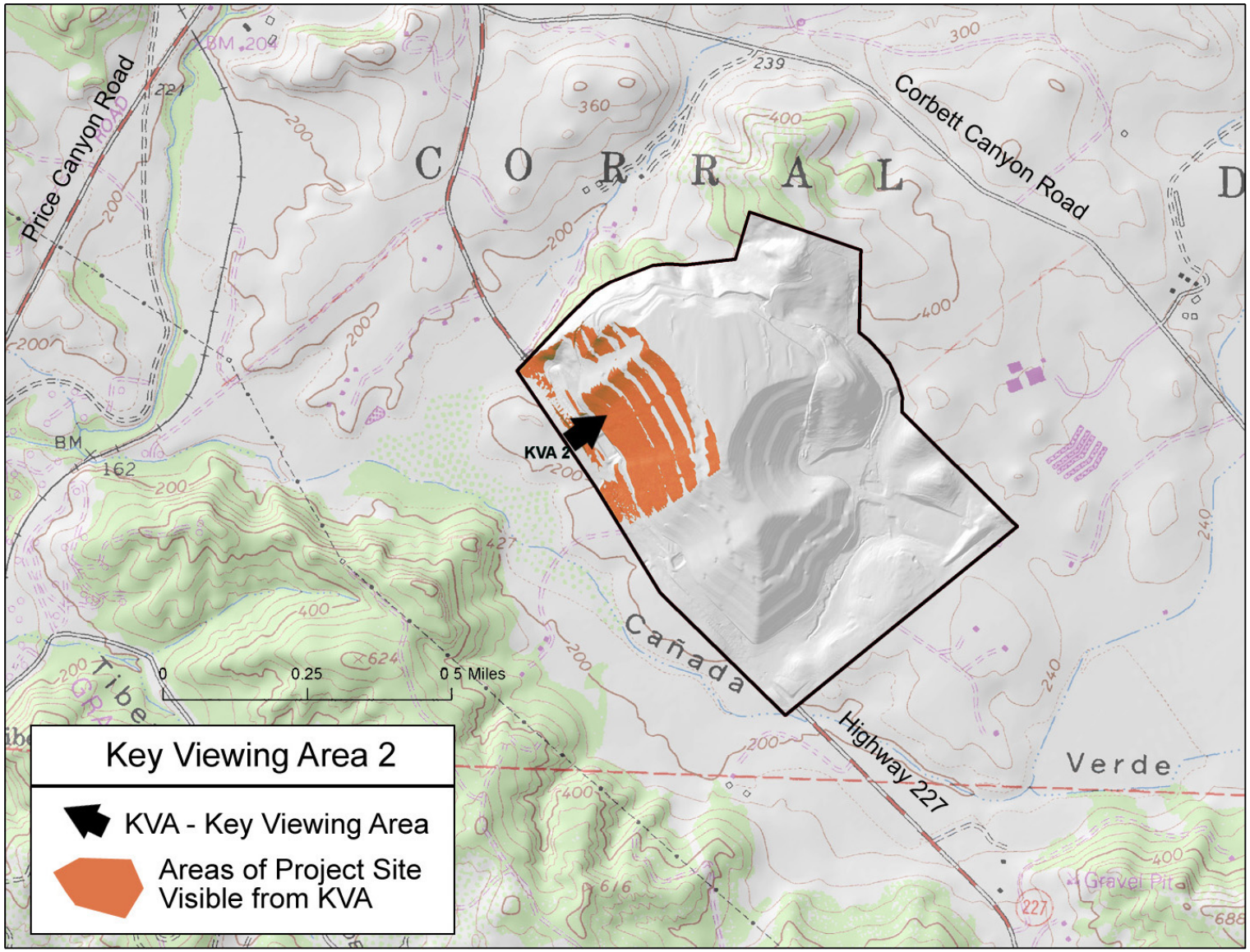

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 2
FIGURE V.A.-4

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 2
FIGURE V.A.-5

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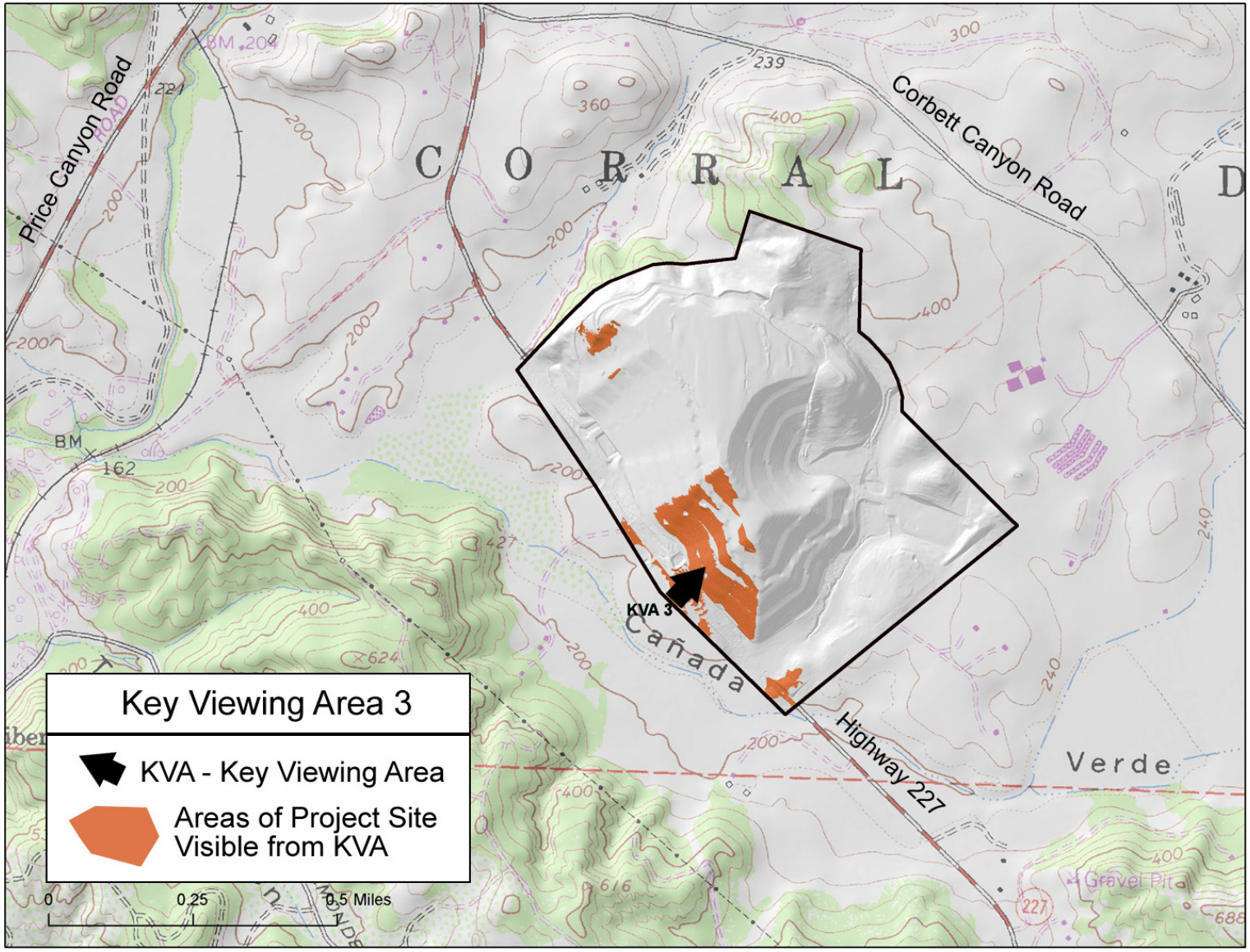

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 3
FIGURE V.A.-6

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 3
FIGURE V.A.-7

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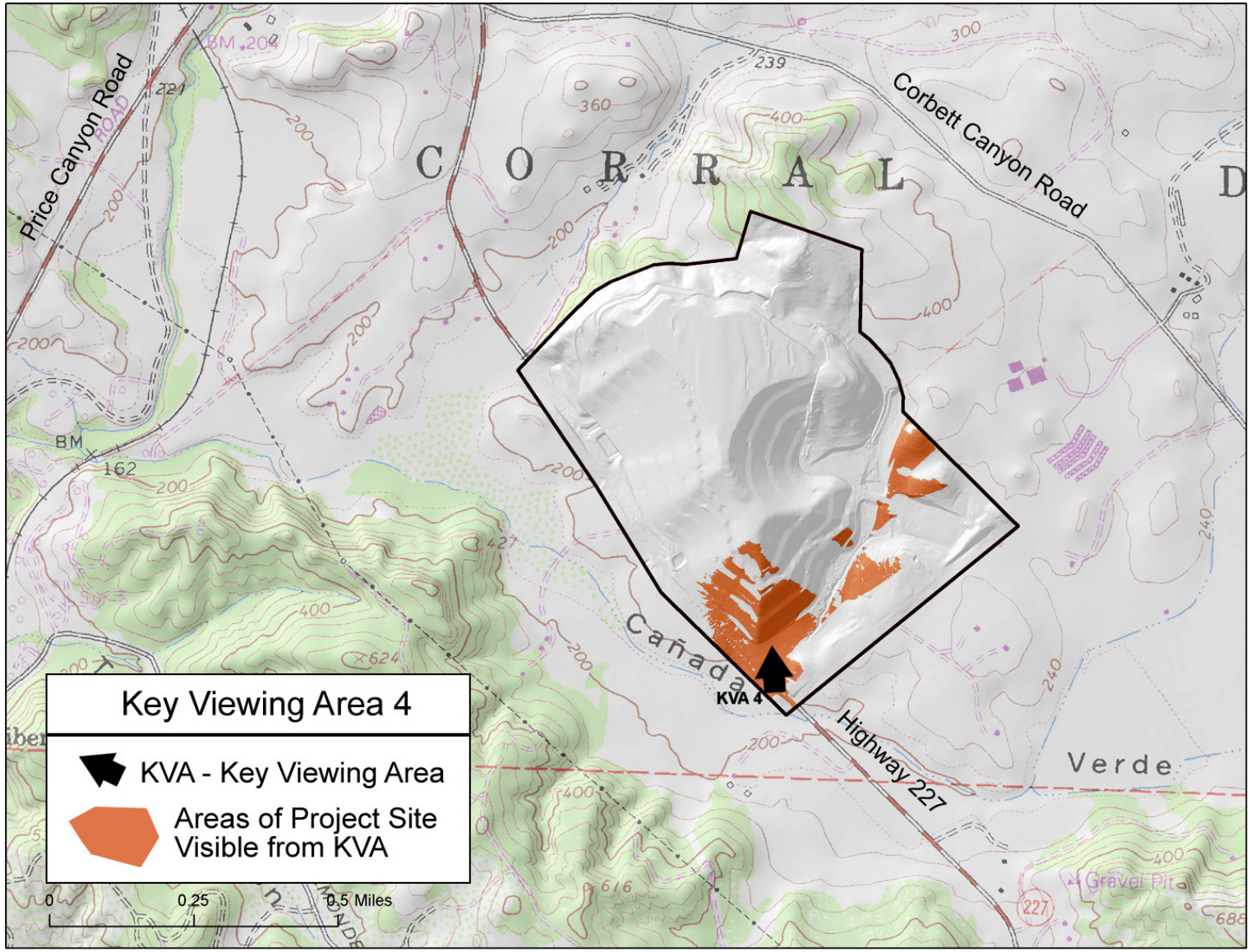

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Scale as Shown

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 4
FIGURE V.A.-8

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 4
FIGURE V.A.-9

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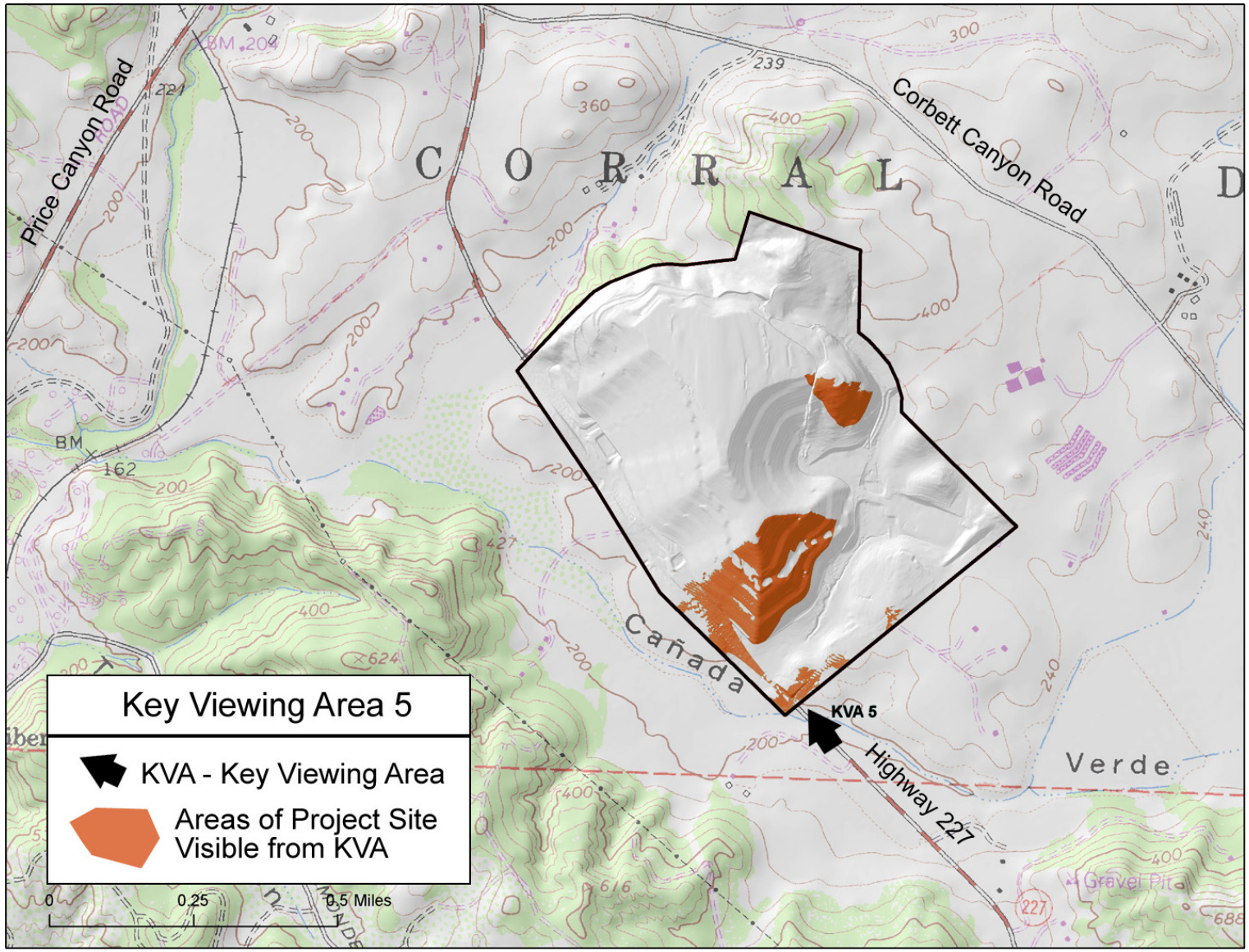

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Scale as Shown

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 5
FIGURE V.A.-10

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 5
FIGURE V.A.-11

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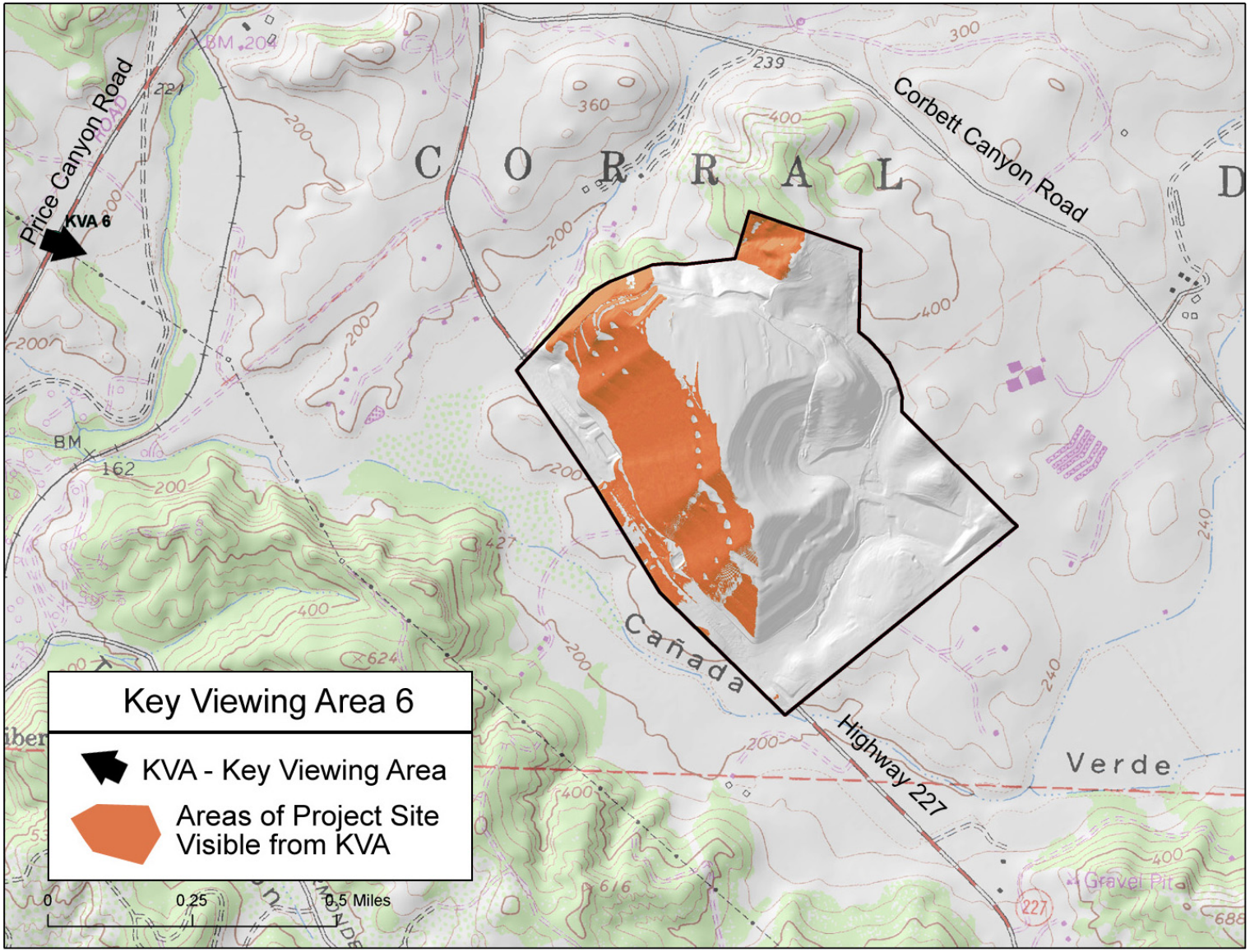

NORTH
Scale as Shown

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 6
FIGURE V.A.-12

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 6
FIGURE V.A.-13

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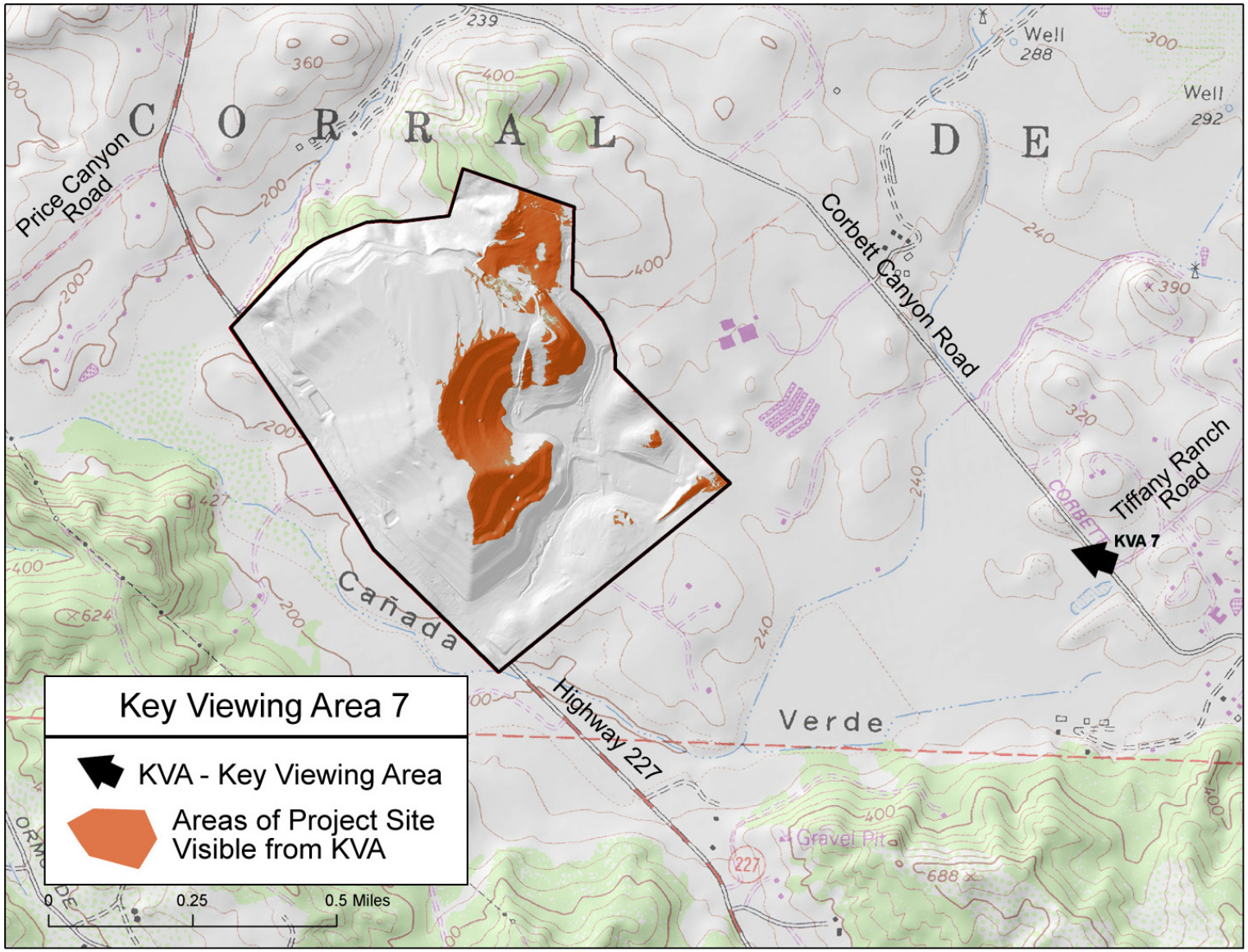

Project Visibility Map - Key Viewing Area 7
FIGURE V.A.-14

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Photo Simulations
Key Viewing Area 7
FIGURE V.A.-15

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