

## 4.2 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

This section describes the aesthetic qualities and visual resources of the Proposed Project area and its surrounding vicinity, and how these attributes would be affected by implementation of the Proposed Project.<sup>1</sup> The following discussion describes the existing conditions of the Proposed Project area, identifies and analyzes impacts to visual resources and aesthetic qualities that would result from Project implementation, and recommends measures to reduce or avoid significant adverse impacts, as applicable. In addition, existing laws and regulations relevant to aesthetics and visual resources are described. Compliance with these laws and regulations serves to reduce or avoid certain impacts that might otherwise occur during Project implementation.

Firsthand knowledge of the aesthetic qualities and visual resources of the Proposed Project site and surrounding area was gathered through a site visit on October 30, 2012. In addition, the following resources were consulted:

1. San Luis Obispo County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element (County of San Luis Obispo, 2010)
2. San Luis Obispo County Code, Title 22, Land Use Ordinance (County of San Luis Obispo, 2013a)
3. San Luis Obispo County Design Guidelines (County of San Luis Obispo, 1998)
4. San Luis Obispo County Revised Draft North County Area Plan (County of San Luis Obispo, 2013b)
5. California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, Appendix G (Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3)
6. Lehigh-Hanson Quarry Extension Visual Analysis Report. (Wallace Group, 2012)
7. Images of the Santa Margarita area available on Google Earth and Google Maps websites.

### Scoping Issues Addressed

No public or agency comments related to aesthetics and visual resources were received during the Project's NOP scoping period.

### 4.2.1 Existing Conditions

#### Setting

The Proposed Project site is situated along the Central Coast Mountain Range. The visual character of this part of the County derives from a combination of its natural and built environments. Most development in the region is located within urban areas along the U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 41 corridors, several miles west and north of the Project site. The terrain varies from gently rolling hills with oak savanna and open grassland to steeper hills with dense oak woodland. Oak woodlands are a prominent unifying feature throughout the area. Dense chaparral is the predominant cover on the mountains at the Project site and in the mountainous areas to the east of the site.

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly, "aesthetics" deals with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, including the appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes referred to as judgments of sentiment and taste. In this analysis of environmental impacts, the word aesthetics often is used interchangeably with the term visual resources. In practice, this type of analysis asks "what do I see" (visual resources) and "how and why do I react to what I see" (aesthetics).

The mining and processing areas of the existing quarry are situated near the west bank of the Salinas River, in a canyon where the river enters the mountains comprising the east side of the Santa Margarita Valley. The quarry is situated approximately 3 miles northeast of the unincorporated town of Santa Margarita. The line of sight between the town and the quarry is interrupted by an oak and grass covered upland area known as Chalk Hill, screening the quarry from view. Public roads nearest the quarry are El Camino Real and State Route 58 (Calf Canyon Highway); both of them are two lane roads. From Santa Margarita, El Camino Real extends north through the middle of the Santa Margarita Valley. At its closest point, the road is approximately one mile from the existing quarry's operation. Access to the quarry is by way of a private road off of El Camino Real. State Route 58 extends east from Santa Margarita before turning northeast and entering Calf Canyon, approximately 0.75 mile south of the quarry, and 0.5 mile south of the existing quarry's processing area. State Route 58 is the major east-west transportation route between the City of San Luis Obispo, Santa Margarita and the Central Valley, connecting the County's coastal region to Kern County.

The Santa Margarita Valley at the western edge of the Project site consists of grassland and rangeland, with low density residential and agricultural uses west of El Camino Real. East of El Camino Real, from the road to the Project site, the landscape is primarily made up of rangeland with scattered oaks on rolling hills and knolls. South of Santa Margarita and State Route 58, limited flatland areas support irrigated crops between upland hills. The mountains forming the edge of the Santa Margarita Valley are heavily incised and are characterized by their rugged oak and chaparral-covered terrain.

### **Visual Character**

The visual landscape character in the vicinity of the Project site is predominantly rural to the west and mountainous to the east. Santa Margarita, El Camino Real, and a part of State Route 58 are situated in a valley between two north-south trending Central Coast Mountain Range ridges. Existing mining at the quarry takes place within the mountains at the east edge of the valley and is largely screened from off-site public vantage points by existing topography and vegetation. Processing, stockpiling, and plant operations areas at the quarry are south of the mining area, at the foot of the mountains on a bend in the Salinas River (see Figure 2.5-2). Rural homes on narrow streets, paddocks, farmsteads, and a few businesses are found west of El Camino Real. State Route 58 passes through similar terrain as is found along El Camino Real, with grassland and oaks predominant in the rolling topography to the north of the highway and a few rural businesses and residences located to the south. Local geography limits a viewer's ability to see and be seen over great distances in this part of the County. This is in contrast to locations elsewhere in the County, such as the Carrizo Plain, where views are open and largely unobstructed.

The absence of significant urban development in the Project vicinity has allowed the area to retain a rural character that presents the viewer with mixed natural and agricultural countryside. Overall, the area west of the Project site is characterized by flat to rolling valley topography, with dense stands of trees on hills and uplands and open grassland and scattered oaks in lower topography. The mountainous area surrounding the quarry's existing excavation pit supports oak and chaparral.

The grassland at lower elevations and in rolling terrain is interspersed with oaks; at higher elevations and in steeper terrain the land cover is predominantly oaks or thick chaparral. Following winter rains, the landscape exhibits a rich green hue due to new grassland growth. In summer and fall, the area presents a subdued color pallet of tans, olives, and sage hues.

## 4.2.2 San Luis Obispo County Plans and Policies

The County's Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) establishes goals and policies that address visual resources (County of San Luis Obispo, 2010). These include:

**Goal VR 1:** *The natural and agricultural landscape will continue to be the dominant view in rural parts of the county.*

**Goal VR 2:** *The natural and historic character and identity of rural areas will be protected.*

**Policy VR 2.1** *Develop in a manner compatible with historical and visual resources*

*Through the review of proposed development, encourage designs that are compatible with the natural landscape and with recognized historical character, and discourage designs that are clearly out of place within rural areas.*

**Goal VR-4:** *Protect visual resources within visual sensitive resource areas (SRAs) for scenic corridors.*

*Policies for this goal include developing work plans and studies to designate candidate roads and highways as scenic and establish applicable policies and standards. Table VR-2 Suggested Scenic Corridors identifies Highway 58 from the Santa Margarita urban reserve line to the Kern County Line as a potential scenic corridor.*

**Policy VR 4.1** *Designation of Scenic Corridors implements the goal of protection of visual resources within visually sensitive resource areas (SRA's) for scenic corridors. COSE Chapter 12 – Glossary, defines Scenic Corridors as view areas, or “viewsheds” from public roads and highways that have unique or outstanding scenic qualities. .... Scenic highways and roads are scenic corridors that are designated to conserve and enhance their scenic beauty*

**Goal VR 7:** *Views of the night sky and its constellations of stars will be maintained.*

**Policy VR 7.1** *Nighttime light pollution*

*Protect the clarity and visibility of the night sky within communities and rural areas, by ensuring that exterior lighting, including streetlight projects, is designed to minimize nighttime light pollution.*

In addition, Title 22 of the County's Land Use Ordinance provides the following:

### **County Code, Title 22, Land Use Ordinance**

*Section 22.10.060 includes requirements for onsite lighting, including the height of fixtures and the prevention of glare and light spillage onto adjacent properties.*

The County also provides the following guidelines and goals for proposed development.

### **San Luis Obispo County Design Guidelines**

**Part I** *(Introduction, Applicability) states that County's Design Guidelines consist 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.*

**Goal 1.** *(Conservation of Resources and the Environment) identifies, as sub-goal b, the following: Conserve special areas which are considered as having high visual sensitivity. Examples of resources to conserve and enhance include undeveloped ridgelines and major geologic features such as the Morros.*

### 4.2.3 Regulatory Setting

**California Environmental Quality Act, Appendix G. Environmental Checklist.** The State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, recommends resource topics for a project's environmental review and the questions that an analyst or decision maker might consider. These are not mandated, but are widely used in the environmental review process and to comply with CEQA's analysis and disclosure requirements. The County, after full consideration of State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, has also adopted its own policies for the environmental review of proposed development (County of San Luis Obispo, 1995). Full consideration of the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G and the County's adopted CEQA policies have been applied to this analysis.

**Surface Mining and Reclamation Act Regulations (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 2, Chapter 8, Subchapter 1).** Section 3704.1(e) of the SMARA regulations stipulates that the final slopes of reclaimed areas must be capable of being revegetated and must blend in visually with the local topography. The Applicant's Proposed RPA complies with all SMARA requirements, as detailed in Proposed RPA Chapter 5 (Conformance with Reclamation Standards), including those standards related to visual effects, such as revegetation, backfilling, regarding, slope stability, and recontouring (EnviroMINE, 2013). Please refer to Appendix B for details regarding the Proposed Project's RPA goals and activities.

**County of San Luis Obispo Conditional Use Permit.** The County's CUP for the existing mine will apply to the proposed quarry expansion (Appendix B). With regard to visual impacts, the quarry's existing CUP requires that: "All lighting at the plant shall be shielded and directed onto the site to minimize light impacts on adjacent residences. The applicant shall prepare a lighting plan for review and approval by the Department of Planning and Building. The plan shall indicate existing and proposed lighting and its purpose (e.g., security, vehicle safety, etc.). Lights approved for nighttime operation shall only be used during the hours approved for operation."

### 4.2.4 Environmental Impact Methodology

#### Significance Criteria

The following significance criteria were derived from previous environmental impact assessments and from the State CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, Section I). Impacts of the Proposed Project would be considered significant and would require mitigation if they would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway.
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The assessment of aesthetics and visual resources involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective, even when done in a consistent and rigorous manner. There are no absolute standards or quantifications of aesthetic values. Different viewers react to views and aesthetic conditions differently, bringing to the experience their personal prior experiences, expectations, interests, knowledge, and aesthetic sensitivities. The evaluation in this section measures the existing visual resources at the Project site and in the vicinity of

the Proposed Project, analyzing the nature of anticipated changes. The County's General Plan and ordinances were reviewed for policy instruction relative to visual resources.

The thresholds used to assess the significance of visual impacts resulting from a project take into consideration federal, State, and local policies and guidelines pertaining to visual resources. These have been adapted as set forth below for the analysis that follows:

- Project implementation would cause a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Project implementation would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within view of a State Scenic Highway.
- Project implementation would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding landscape. [Note: Substantial degradation results from higher levels of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage. Visual contrast relates to spatial characteristics, visual scale, texture, form, line, and color.]
- Project implementation would create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area or be hazardous to motorists or pedestrians.
- Project implementation would result in an inconsistency with local regulations, plans, and standards applicable to the protection of visual resources.
- The presence of the Proposed Project would add to a cumulative visual alteration.

An adverse visual impact occurs within public view when an action perceptibly changes existing physical features of the environment so that they no longer appear to be characteristic of the locality or region. Changes that seem uncharacteristic are those that appear out of place, discordant, or distracting. The degree of the visual impact depends on how noticeable the adverse change may be. The noticeability of a visual impact is a function of project features, context, and viewing conditions (angle of view, distance, primary viewing directions, and duration of view).

A project that would have a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect is considered to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. The introduction of changes in the landscape that are incongruous with their surroundings or visually degrade public scenic views would be considered to have a negative visual impact. Such effects may include long-term intrusion into a landscape, or short-term disruption that is especially intrusive or highly visible. A project will be considered to result in a significant aesthetic impact if it conflicts with the visual resources goals, policies and guidelines.

Impacts are categorized per the significance classification system provided in EIR Section 4.1 (Environmental Analysis, Introduction, Impact Significance Classification Scheme).

### **Study Area**

The study area used in the evaluation of aesthetic impacts of a project typically extends to include the area within about 5 miles of the project's boundaries. Beyond this distance, objects are indistinct and obscured by natural haze, if visible at all. Because of its topographic location, areal extent, and physical characteristics, only a portion of the quarry site is and would be visible from locations within about one mile of the Project site. Therefore, for purposes of evaluating visual impacts of the Proposed Project, the study area is here defined as a 2-mile radius around the Project site. Within this 2-mile radius, the closest public views of the Project are available from segments of public roads, El Camino Real and State Route 58. The Proposed Project is potentially visible to some rural residential properties west of El Camino Real and south of State Route 58. Otherwise the Project site is screened from view by topography and vegetation.

### Approach to Impact Analysis

The approach to assessing the impacts of the Proposed Project on visual resources includes consideration of: (1) scenic quality of the project site and vicinity; (2) available visual access and visibility, (3) frequency and duration that the landscape is viewed; (4) viewing distance and degree to which project elements would dominate the view of the observer; (5) contrast of the proposed activities with existing landscape characteristics; (6) the extent to which project features or activities would block views of higher value landscape features; and (7) the level of public interest in the existing landscape characteristics and concern over potential changes.

The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective, even when done in a consistent and rigorous manner. There are no absolute standards or quantifications of aesthetic values. However, following widely recognized professional practice, certain broad principles are applied in this analysis to characterize the aesthetic “baseline” conditions and potential impacts.

First, visual impacts are a function of the existing visual quality of the project landscape setting. Impacts to landscapes of high visual quality are more likely than impacts to settings of poor quality.

Second, visual impacts are a function of the sensitivity and response of viewers to visual change. Where there are no viewers, no impacts can occur, and the intensity of impacts is partly a function of the sensitivity and concern of viewers to project-caused visual changes. Viewer sensitivity is generally evaluated in terms of such measures as: degree and duration of viewer exposure, viewer distance, number of viewers, viewer activity types and corresponding viewer scenic expectations; public policies expressing special concern with particular scenic features or values, including designated scenic vistas or road corridors; and other factors reflecting viewer concern and response.

Lastly, the level of impact is determined by the degree of project-caused visual change. This is generally described in terms of the anticipated level of visual contrast and dominance, as well as potential for blockage of scenic views. Visibility of a project feature per se is not typically identified as a significant impact. Rather, a substantial level of visual change, experienced by viewers with high levels of sensitivity to visual change, is normally recognized as a prerequisite to significant visual impact, except under unusual circumstances.

In addition, consistency with stated local policies is applied as a standard for impacts. Inconsistencies with such policies are identified as a potentially significant impact.

### Existing and Future Conditions

Visibility of the Proposed Project site from El Camino Real and State Route 58 is limited. The majority of the site is screened from public views by local topography and vegetation. A portion of the existing excavated area at the mine is visible from State Route 58. Portions of future excavated areas would be visible to vehicle traffic along sections of State Route 58 and El Camino Real as the mining activities progress in a northwesterly direction. Primary viewers would be persons in vehicles on these two roadways. Average daily traffic volumes in the Project vicinity are provided in EIR Table 4.14-1 (Existing Roadway Segments Levels of Service). Motorists on El Camino Real would be traveling in a north or south direction, perpendicular to the Project site, which is approximately one mile west of the quarry’s access road. On State Route 58, eastbound motorists would have an opportunity to view the existing cut rock face of the quarry, while westbound motorists would be behind this view as they travel from Calf Canyon toward Santa Margarita

Existing and future processing operations are at lower elevations of the Project site and are not visible from either roadway. Figure 4.2-1 shows the location of the Proposed Project relative El Camino Real



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-1**

**Point of View (POV) Locations**

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and State Route 58, and the areas along each road where the project would be visible. This and other figures in this section are adapted from the Lehigh-Hanson Quarry Extension Visual Analysis Report (Wallace Group, 2012) prepared on behalf of the Applicant. A position on each road, known as a Point of View (POV), was identified for the purposes of the analysis. From each POV, a photograph of existing conditions is provided. Using this base photograph, a photo simulation of the future view from this location is prepared showing conditions when the proposed expansion is complete. A third image is provided from the locations illustrating post-remediation conditions. To provide scale and points of reference, 10-foot square panels were temporarily installed at three points on the ridgeline. These are indicated in Figure 4.2-1 as Story Poles A, B, and C. Reference Point D was a person positioned on the ridge. These aided in determining the extent of project visibility from vehicles traveling on the roadways.

**View from El Camino Real – POV 1.** From POV 1, located on El Camino Real near the access road leading to the quarry, three figures show existing conditions (Figure 4.2-2a), future conditions at the completion of the Proposed Project (Figure 4.2-2b), and future conditions with site reclamation (Figure 4.2-2c).

The ridgeline at the east edge of Santa Margarita Valley defines the western boundary of the proposed quarry expansion and is the primary topographic site feature of the quarry property visible from El Camino Real and other vantage points west of the Project site. Most of the proposed quarrying would occur on the backside of the ridge, out of view.

Approximately 500 feet of the western ridgeline facing El Camino Real would be removed from the backside of the ridge during excavation of the proposed expansion area. This would lower the horizon line slightly. Figure 4.2-2b indicates the maximum extent of the Project's potential visual impacts as seen from El Camino Real, approximately 1.4 miles distant from the ridge. A short section of the existing ridge would be lower slightly, as viewed from this direction. Reclamation would not affect the appearance of the modified area. While U.S. Highway 101 shares this line-of-sight, the view of the altered ridgeline from the highway is significantly reduced due to the intervening distance of nearly 2.9 miles. This visual change would not create "an aesthetically incompatible site open to public view" since the lowered ridgeline would provide an open and unobstructed view of the horizon. No structures or other uses would be established on the affected ridgeline or in any other areas visible from the west, particularly from El Camino Real. This visual change would be considered minimal and would not alter the visual character of the area. Since all Project activity would occur on the opposite side and below the western ridgeline of the site, no glare or night lighting impacts would be created that could impact surrounding areas. This topographic change would not impact any unique geological resources.

The Proposed RPA to be implemented would add vegetation to disturbed areas near the western boundary of the Project site. However, as shown in Figure 4.2-2d, because the altered section of slope faces away from the viewpoint, there would be to no visual change in views from the west from revegetation.

**View from State Route 58 – POV 2.** From POV 2, located on State Route 58 south of the quarry, three figures show existing conditions (Figure 4.2-3a) future conditions at the completion of mining (Figure 4.2-3b), and future conditions with site reclamation (Figure 4.2-3c).

As shown in Figure 4.2-3a, a portion of the existing excavated area in the quarry is clearly visible from approximately 3,000 lineal feet of State Route 58. This is an existing cut and as such is part of baseline conditions. The slope, visible from State Route 58, has been significantly altered by vegetation removal and blasting. Consequently, this portion of the quarry stands out prominently against the adjacent vegetated areas, and the colors of the exposed rock contrast sharply with the muted colors of undisturbed lands in the area.

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Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-2a**  
**POV-1 Existing View toward Project**  
**from El Camino Real**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-2b**  
**POV-1 Proposed Alterations**  
**as Viewed from El Camino Real**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-2c**  
**POV-1 Simulated Future View**  
**from El Camino Real**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-2d**  
**POV-1 Simulated Post-Reclamation View**  
**from El Camino Real**

Views of other mined areas at the site are otherwise blocked by intervening rolling hills and vegetation. If mining was limited to the current entitlement and did not extend northwest into the proposed expansion area, the final extent of the exposed quarry face visible from State Route 58 when existing quarry reserves are depleted would be similar to the current view.

As shown in Figure 4.2-3b, under the Proposed Project, approximately half of the existing mined slope visible from POV2 would be removed by future mining as it moves northwest, away from the highway and into the expansion area behind the ridge. This would reduce the amount of mined slope area visible from off site as compared to existing conditions. Mining of the area that would be removed would begin in Phase I (please refer to EIR Section 2.5.3, Proposed Quarry Phasing). As a result of the future extractive mining, views of a portion of the existing ridgeline and exposed slope would be replaced with views of the distant hillsides and open space areas to the north and east of the site, as shown in Figure 4.2-3c. However, a portion of the more distant northern cut slope of the quarry would become visible. This is the brighter-hued area to the right of the near cut slope in Figure 4.2-3c. The width of proposed benches is slightly wider (25 feet) under the Proposed RPA as compared to the 1981 Reclamation Plan and the 2005 bench modification, potentially allowing for more screening vegetation.

The Proposed Project would not alter the level or intensity of existing quarry operations; therefore, little change in glare or night lighting impacts would occur that could affect surrounding views. The extent of topographic alteration could be considered a significant impact upon a unique geological or physical feature, and the extent of topographic alteration that is visible from the south could be considered a significant alteration of the visual character of the area. However, given baseline conditions, which include the existing exposed slope, the change resulting in a smaller visible mined slope could be considered beneficial. The proposed mining expansion would reduce the extent of the quarry's existing highly visible features. Additionally, the change would occur sooner than it would reclamation under the current entitlement.

The RPA proposed to be implemented at Project completion would add vegetation to the benches on the exposed quarry slope that remains visible from State Route 58. Two feet of soil would be placed on the benches and planted with a seed mix of chaparral and scrub species matching the existing vegetation. This would help reduce the impact of the exposed slope over time. However, as seen in Figure 4.2-3d, extensive areas of exposed rock would remain visible.

#### **4.2.5 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Under the Proposed Project, excavation and reclamation activities would be between one and 0.5 mile from the nearest public roads. Reclamation activities would result in vegetation being established on the horizontal bench surfaces of the mine. This outcome would be marginally visible from these distances. There would be no noticeable difference as viewed from El Camino Real (compare Figures 4.2-2c and 4.2-2d). The only noticeable difference as viewed from State Route 58 would be the lines of vegetation that would traverse the exposed rock face (compare Figures 4.2-3c and 4.2-3d). Therefore, the distinction between visual impacts related to excavation and reclamation are not discussed separately below.

<b>Impact AE-1: Cause significant visibility of mining activities, equipment, and night lighting</b>
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Mining would occur over a nearly 60-year period, with the level and types of activity at the quarry continuing similar to current operations. During the proposed expansion period, rock would be blasted from the mountain then crushed and processed for sale. The crushing and processing facilities and their associated equipment and vehicles are not visible off site from public vantage points. Extensive vertical rock faces are created by blasting rock from the mountain.

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Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-3a**  
**POV-2 Existing View toward Project**  
**from State Highway 58**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-3b**  
**POV-2 Proposed Alterations**  
**as Viewed from State Highway 58**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-3c**  
**POV-2 Simulated Future View**  
**from State Highway 58**



Source: Wallace Group, 2012.



**Figure 4.2-3d**  
**POV-2 Simulated Post-Reclamation View**  
**from State Highway 58**

An existing exposed rock face is visible to eastbound vehicles on State Route 58 for approximately 3,000 feet of roadway. This rock face is the result of past and current operations and, as such, is considered a baseline condition. A portion of the existing visible rock face would be removed by future mining, eventually reducing the total amount of rock face visible from off site. A minor ridgeline alteration would be visible for approximately 500 feet along El Camino Real.

Dust can be mobilized into the air during blasting and processing of rock, as well as from vehicles traveling on dirt roads within the site. Dust may be mobilized by wind from stockpiles and exposed ground surfaces. This has the potential create dust conditions that are visible off site, creating a condition that would detract from the quality of the aesthetic experience of viewers in the valley. However, the Applicant would continue existing watering practices to minimize dust per the requirements of the County Air Pollution Control District's (APCD's) adopted Particulate Matter Report and Rules 401 and 402 (see EIR Section 4.4, Air Quality). Therefore, dust would continue to be managed as under existing conditions and would not increase from existing conditions. Impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

With regard to lighting, no increase in lighting is proposed and nighttime operations are infrequent. As a condition of project permitting, a lighting plan is required. Glare could be created by sunlight or lighting reflecting from surfaces such as windshields or windows. However, areas where this potential exists are not visible off site. Therefore, nighttime lighting and glare impacts are considered less than significant (Class III).

<b>Impact AE-2: Introduce significant visual contrast and view blockage</b>
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The only elements of the Proposed Project visible off site would be the periodic drilling and blasting of rock from the mountainside, and the bare rock surfaces that would result. Because of the orientation of the Proposed Project relative to existing off-site view points, this would be limited. Views of existing conditions and simulations of the Proposed Project (end of mining and post-reclamation), as seen from El Camino Real and State Route 58 are provided in Figures 4.2-2a through 4.2-2d, and 4.2-3a through 4.2-3d, respectively. At POV 2, the exposed granite rock face contrasts sharply with the surrounding land, which is cloaked in the olive green and sage colors associated with oaks and chaparral and the summer tans and spring greens associated with grassland. The vertical rock faces that result from blasting also contrast with the nature of existing topographic surfaces by creating steep, flat, uniform surfaces as compared to the irregular steep native mountain slopes and ridges.

The Proposed Project would increase the amount of vertical exposed rock surface within the site, but this is not visible off site. At the conclusion of mining, the visible vertical rock surface that has resulted from current and past operations and is visible from State Route 58 would be reduced in size. This is a beneficial effect as compared to existing conditions. An area of the northeast mine wall created by future mining would become visible with removal of the wall closer to the highway, but this would be a smaller surface than what would be removed and would be more distant from the viewer. Rather than introduce view blockage, the proposed mining would be subtractive, increasing somewhat the amount of distant vista (sky and far ridges) visible. Although the existing mine wall visible from off site stands in sharp contrast to its surroundings, it is an existing condition. Expansion of the mining operation would not introduce additional visible visual contrast off site; it would reduce the total area of contrast when a portion of the existing wall is removed. Therefore, the project would have a less than significant impact (Class III) with regard to introducing visual contrast and view blockage.

**Impact AE-3: Substantially damage scenic resources or adversely affect a scenic vista**

As described for Impact AE-2, the Proposed Project would be slightly visible on a distant ridge as seen from a short segment of El Camino Real. Along State Route 58, eastbound motorists would have a view of the quarry's exposed rock walls for an estimated 3,000 feet of travel. The existing extent of exposed rock wall visible would be reduced in the future by continual mining, which would remove a portion of the existing wall. Consequently, by not introducing substantial new elements into the visual environment seen from public vantage points, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant effect on scenic resources (Class III). In the future, State Route 58 may be designated a scenic corridor. However, at the time of any such designation, the landscape would include the existing or reduced rock wall visible from the highway. Therefore, the project would not adversely affect a scenic vista.