

4.6 Biological Resources

This section describes the biological resources that have the potential to occur in the Project area and may be affected from the expansion and continued operation of the Proposed Project. This section describes effects to these resources and recommends measures to reduce or avoid impacts anticipated from the expansion and operation of the Proposed Project. Existing laws and regulations relevant to biological resources are described in EIR Section 4.6.3 (Regulatory Setting). In some cases, impacts to biological resources would be reduced or avoided by compliance with these regulations. EIR Section 5 (Cumulative Effects) describes cumulative impacts to biological resources from the Proposed Project, and EIR Section 6 (Alternatives) analyzes impacts of Proposed Project's alternatives.

Scoping Issues Addressed

One comment was received regarding biological resources during the Proposed Project's public scoping meeting that was held on June 27, 2013. The commenter noted three California condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*), a federally and State-listed endangered bird, have been seen near the western boundary of the proposed expansion area. The commenter further noted bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), both protected species, are known to occur in the Proposed Project area.

In addition to the above, and as summarized in Table ES-1 and Appendix A, the County's Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures submitted comments on the scope of this EIR, and suggested that the Proposed Project include conditions of approval for dust control and invasive weed management. This analysis provided below addresses these comments and other special-status species that could be affected by the Proposed Project.

4.6.1 Existing Conditions

This section provides a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the Proposed Project at the time that the NOP was published (June 20, 2013). Information contained in this section focuses on the Proposed Project area and considers the operation of the active quarry as part of existing, or "baseline," conditions. This section is premised on a peer review of materials provided by the Applicant, including a vegetation mapping, special-status species locations, and federal waters information, as well as additional data sources as listed below:

- Rare Plant Survey Report (WRA, 2012a);
- Oak Woodland Assessment Report for the Santa Margarita Quarry (WRA, 2012b);
- Biological Resources Assessment Report for the Santa Margarita Quarry (WRA, 2012c);
- Rare Plant Survey Report Addendum for the Santa Margarita Quarry (WRA, 2012d);
- Determination of Waters of the U.S. for the Santa Margarita Quarry (WRA, 2013a);
- Santa Margarita Quarry Extension – Biological Resources Assessment Addendum (WRA, 2013b);
- Reclamation Plan Amendment for the Santa Margarita Quarry (EnviroMINE, 2013);
- Drainage Report for the Santa Margarita Quarry (Chang, 2012).
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB);
- Aerial photographs, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps; and,
- Existing reports and regional planning documents (applicable sections of the County's General Plan and land use ordinance [Title 22 of the County Code], and other applicable EIRs).

In addition, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and local biological resource experts was completed (e.g., Diel, 2013); and a reconnaissance-level survey of the Proposed Project site was conducted on October 30, 2012 and September 11, 2013 to verify the Applicant's data and document the Proposed Project site's conditions.

Regional Setting

The Proposed Project is located in the Santa Margarita Valley near the base of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range, north of the City of San Luis Obispo, as shown in Figure 2.1-1. This valley, located in the San Luis Obispo County Salinas River Planning Area (SRPA), is relatively narrow with low topographical relief between its eastern and western foothills. Elevations range from 1,400 feet at the southeastern end of the valley (south of Santa Margarita Lake) to approximately 900 feet to the northwest (south of the Atascadero).

There are roughly seven major native plant communities within the SRPA that provide important habitat for wildlife: valley oak woodland; blue oak woodland; central coast live oak riparian forest; central coast cottonwood sycamore riparian forest; central coast riparian scrub; freshwater seeps; and, claypan vernal pools (County of San Luis Obispo, 2009). A diverse assemblage of State or federally listed rare and/or endangered species is found in these habitats. Transitional areas between different plant communities often act as migration corridors for wildlife (County of San Luis Obispo, 2009). The headwaters of the Salinas River occur in the Los Padres National Forest to the southeast of the Proposed Project site and it, along with its associated uplands, is an important movement corridor for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.

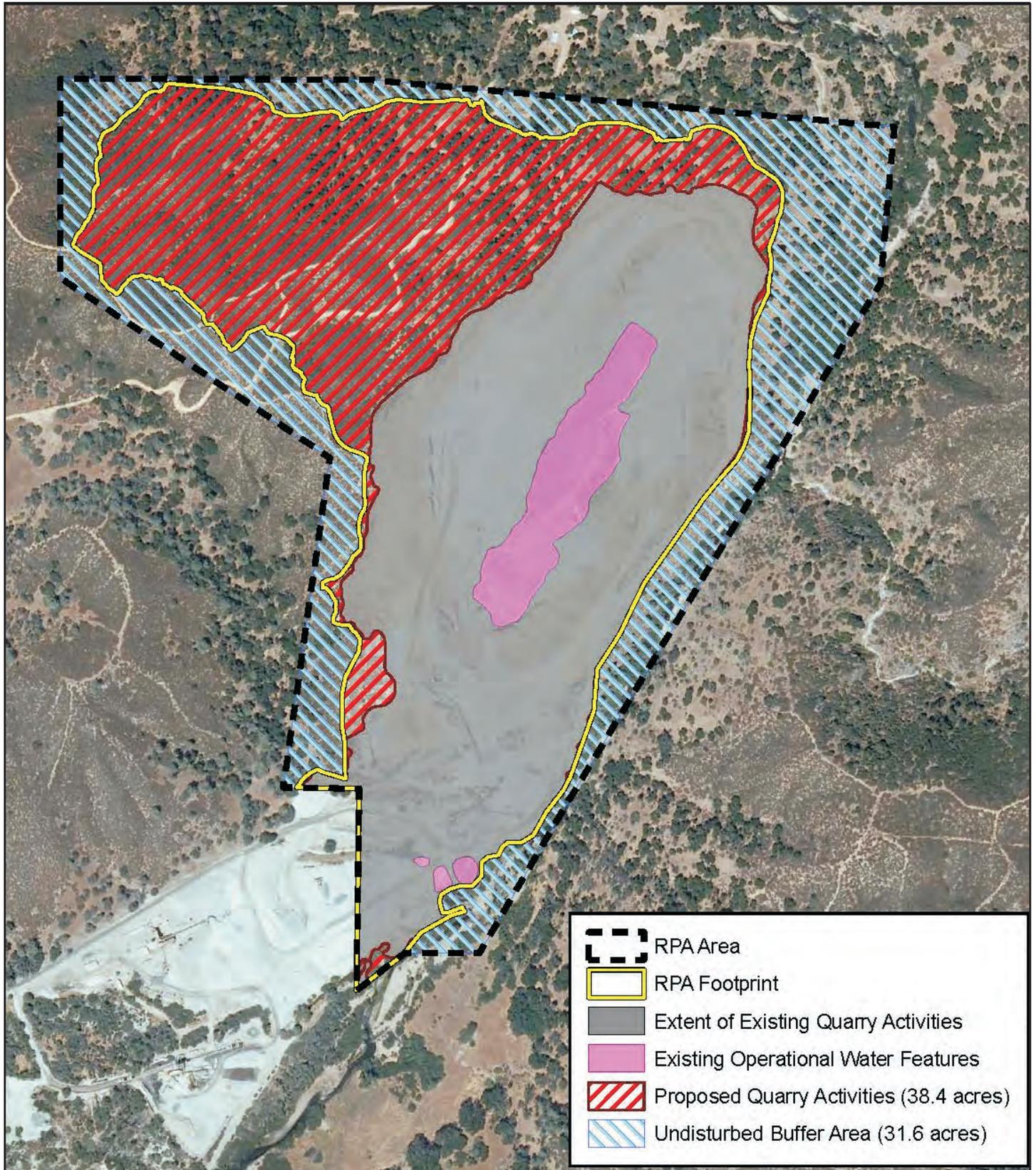
Project Setting

The Proposed RPA area is located on the west facing foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountains, approximately 16 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. The Salinas River borders the Proposed RPA area to the north and east, flowing in a northerly direction. The Proposed RPA area comprises 193.1 acres of land, and includes the active quarry, processing facilities, and surrounding undeveloped land. The Proposed RPA area additionally includes the proposed 33.2-acre quarry expansion area, which collectively make up the Proposed Project "footprint," as shown in Figure 4.6-1. Topography within the Proposed RPA area (excluding the existing quarry pit and operations area) consists of rolling hills and shallow valleys (EnviroMINE, 2013). Land uses surrounding the Proposed RPA footprint include cattle grazing, agriculture, oil and gas operations, and rural residential. A small network of trails and dirt roads cross the Proposed RPA area.

Vegetation

Five vegetation communities occur within the Proposed RPA area including coast live oak woodland, riparian woodland, chamise chaparral, northern mixed chaparral, and non-native annual grassland (Figure 4.6-2). Table 4.6-1 identifies the approximate acreage of each vegetation community in the Proposed RPA area. Jurisdictional ephemeral and perennial streams were identified as a subcomponent of these community types and are discussed below.

Coast live oak woodland is considered a sensitive community by the CDFW. Coast live oak is the most conspicuous species element of this community type although other trees and shrubs may be present to some degree. Oak woodlands play an important role in the ecology of common and sensitive wildlife by providing food, cover, and nesting or denning habitat. Barrett (1980) lists at least 20 mammal species of this region that use oaks for food, cover, or both. Similarly, Verner (1980) identified 110 birds that use oak habitats in California during the breeding season.



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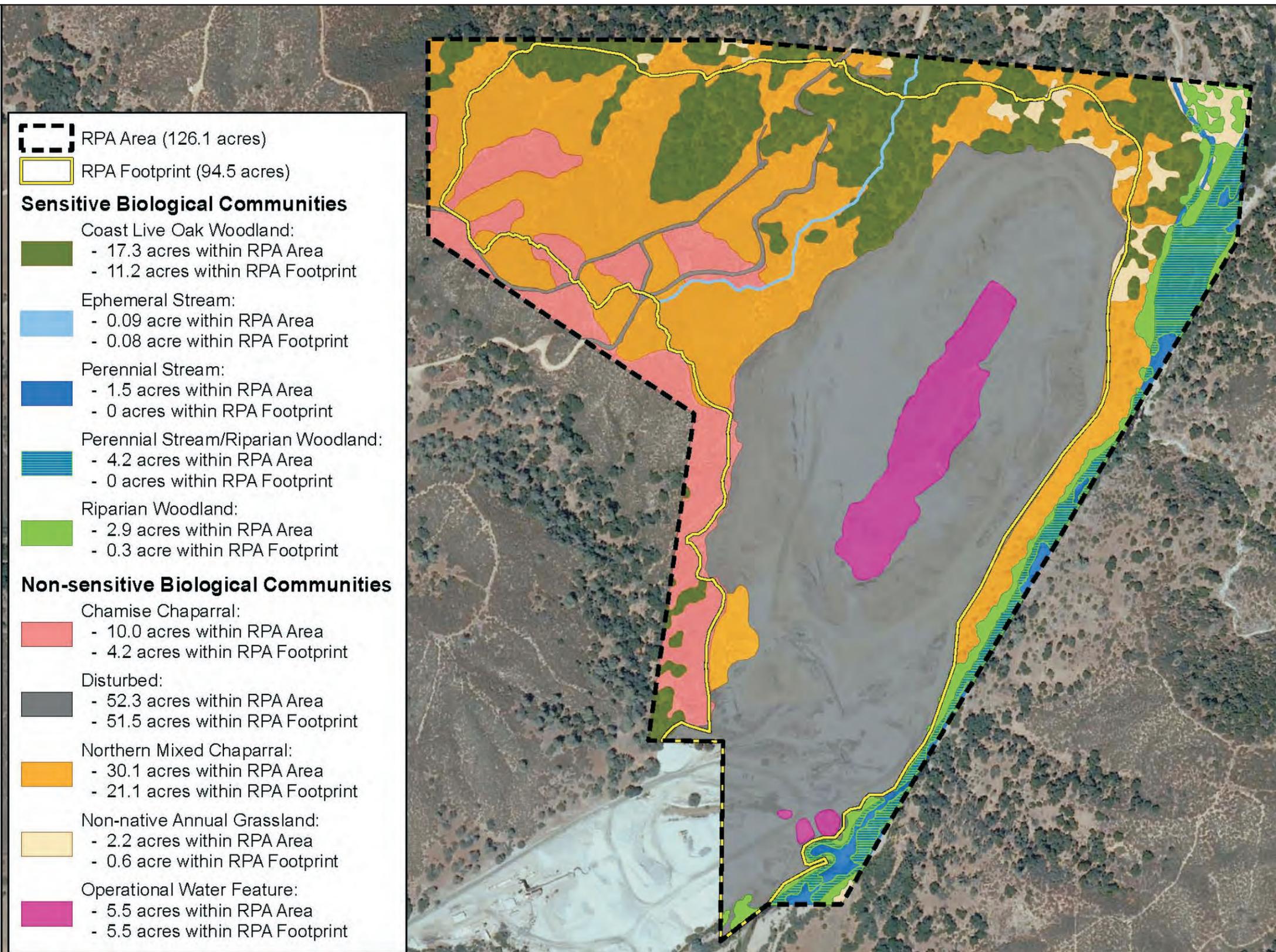
Figure 4.6-1

Existing Quarry Activities, Proposed Quarry Activities, and Undisturbed Buffer Area



Source: WRA, 2012c.

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Source: WRA, 12012c.



Figure 4.6-2

Existing Vegetation Communities
Within the Proposed RPA Area

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The CDFW considers riparian woodland a sensitive community. Riparian woodland habitat within the Proposed RPA area is comprised of Central Coast riparian scrub as described by Holland (1986) (WRA, 2013c). Riparian woodland habitats provide food and shelter to a variety of wildlife and are important seasonal habitats for migrating birds. The contribution of living and dead riparian vegetation contributes to the foundation of stream food webs and is integral in providing the food and shelter required by aquatic insects (Cal Poly, 2013).

Jurisdictional and Other Waters

The Applicant conducted a delineation of jurisdictional waters and wetlands in 2008 and 2012 with a final verification received from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in October 2013. Reconnaissance surveys conducted in 2013 for this EIR determined the preliminary jurisdictional waters and wetlands delineation for federal jurisdictional waters reflected existing conditions at the Proposed Project site, as shown in Figure 4.6-3.

A total of 0.44 acre of perennial in-stream wetlands and 5.27 acres (4,114 linear feet) of perennial stream were mapped within the Salinas River. An additional 0.09 acres (1,564 linear feet) of ephemeral stream were mapped within the Proposed RPA area just west of the existing quarry operations. The operational water feature occurring at the bottom of the existing quarry pit is considered a non-jurisdictional waters feature. These ephemeral drainages fall under the jurisdiction of the USACE, State Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and CDFW.

Ephemeral drainages, not mapped as part of the Applicant’s delineation, were observed within the northwestern portion of the Proposed RPA area during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013. These drainages would likely be considered as State jurisdictional waters by the CDFW.

Common Wildlife

Invertebrates. Habitat conditions in the Proposed RPA area provide a suite of microhabitat conditions for a wide variety of terrestrial and aquatic insects, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Focused insect surveys within the Proposed RPA area have not been completed; however, a suite of common insects are known from the area. These include common spiders, bees, wasp, moths, mites, ticks and other arthropods.

Five native gastropods are known to occur in the County including the Palomar banana slug (*Ariolimax columbianus stramineus*), suboval ambersnail (*Catinella vermeta*), northwest striate (*Striatura pugetensis*), and the quick gloss (*Zonitoides arboreus*) (Roth and Sadeghian, 2003). Roth and Sadeghian (2003) list at least 71 species-rank helminthoglyptid (shoulderband snail) taxa in California. Although the ecology of these species is not well understood, these species are found in association with microhabitats that provide adequate soil moisture which are present in portions of the Proposed RPA area.

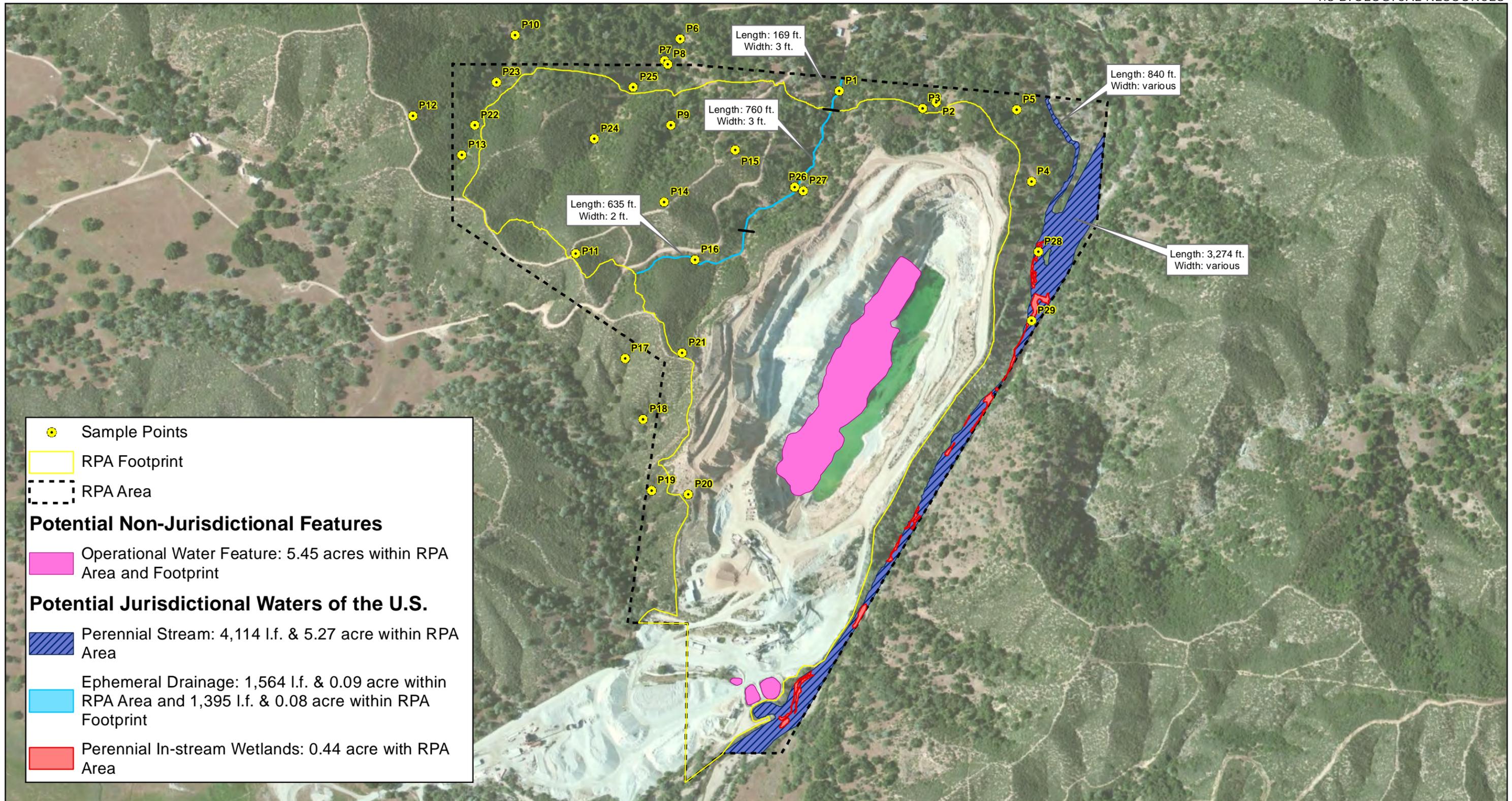
Fish. No perennial streams or drainages occur in the Proposed RPA area; however, the Salinas River provides year round flow. Species such as pike minnow (*Ptychocheilus grandis*), largemouth bass (*Microp-terus salmoides*), sunfish (*Lepomis sp.*), striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), and mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) are commonly found within the Salinas River and its tributaries. Pike minnow were observed in the river during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013.

Table 4.6-1. Vegetation Community Acreages within the Proposed RPA area

Vegetation Communities	Approximate Acres
Coast Live Oak Woodland ¹	17.3
Riparian Woodland ¹	2.9
Riparian Woodland/Perennial Stream ¹	4.2
Chamise Chaparral	10.0
Northern Mixed Chaparral	30.1
Non-native Annual Grassland	2.2
Disturbed/Operational Water Feature ²	57.8
Total	124.5

1 - Sensitive Community
2 - Represents existing quarry pit and operational areas

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● Sample Points
 RPA Footprint
 RPA Area

Potential Non-Jurisdictional Features

Operational Water Feature: 5.45 acres within RPA Area and Footprint

Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S.

Perennial Stream: 4,114 l.f. & 5.27 acre within RPA Area

Ephemeral Drainage: 1,564 l.f. & 0.09 acre within RPA Area and 1,395 l.f. & 0.08 acre within RPA Footprint

Perennial In-stream Wetlands: 0.44 acre with RPA Area

Source: WRA Environmental Consultants, 2013.



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Feet

Figure 4.6-3

Preliminary Section 404 Jurisdictional Map

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Reptiles. Four common reptiles were observed in the Proposed RPA area during biological surveys conducted for the Applicant (WRA, 2012c). These includes western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), California whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris mundus*), southern alligator lizard (*Gerrhonotus multicarinatus*), and California whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis*).

A variety of other common reptiles are known from the area. Some of these include western skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), common king snake (*Lampropeltis getulus*), gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), and valley garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi*).

Amphibians. Surveys conducted for the Applicant in 2008, 2012 and 2013, all years of below average rainfall, did not result in the detection of individuals, larvae, or egg masses of common amphibian species. Although not observed, western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas halophilus*) and pacific tree frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) are known to occur in the area (Stebbins, 2003).

Birds. Thirty-six species of birds were observed in or adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. The majority of these observations (35 of 36) were common species that hold no special or sensitive status. Species observed during these surveys included California quail (*Callipepla californica*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), yellow-rumped warbler (*Setophaga [dendroica] coronata*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), and lesser goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*) (WRA, 2012c).

Northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), and a large unidentified raptor were observed during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013.

Birds of prey, including raptors and owls, were routinely observed within the Project area. These included turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). Turkey vultures routinely perch on a fence above the quarry. In addition, one stick nest within the Proposed RPA area in oak woodland and two stick nests in adjacent oak riparian woodland were observed during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013. Cavities in the oaks and thick brush provide nest sites for a variety of birds.

Additional common bird species, while not observed during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013, have the potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area. These include, but are not limited to, Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), white-throated swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), ash-throated flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*).

Mammals. A variety of common mammals would be expected to occur in the Proposed RPA area. Sign including scat and tracks of coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) were observed within the Proposed RPA area during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013. Wide ranging carnivores such as mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) are likely periodic visitors to the Proposed Project area. Small mammals were common especially on the margins of riparian habitat and included Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), and dusky-footed wood rat (*Neotoma fuscipes*).

Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) are known to occur in the region, and other common species including long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), California vole (*Microtis californicus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and common gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) would be expected to occur.

Focused bat surveys have not been conducted within the Proposed RPA area and were any observed during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013. Although not observed on-site the hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) and Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) are known to occur in the Project area (BLM, 2013). Portions of the Proposed RPA area provide foraging habitat for bat species, and the large oak trees on-site may provide roosting habitat. Large cavities or exfoliating bark may provide hibernaculum for bats.

Special-Status Species

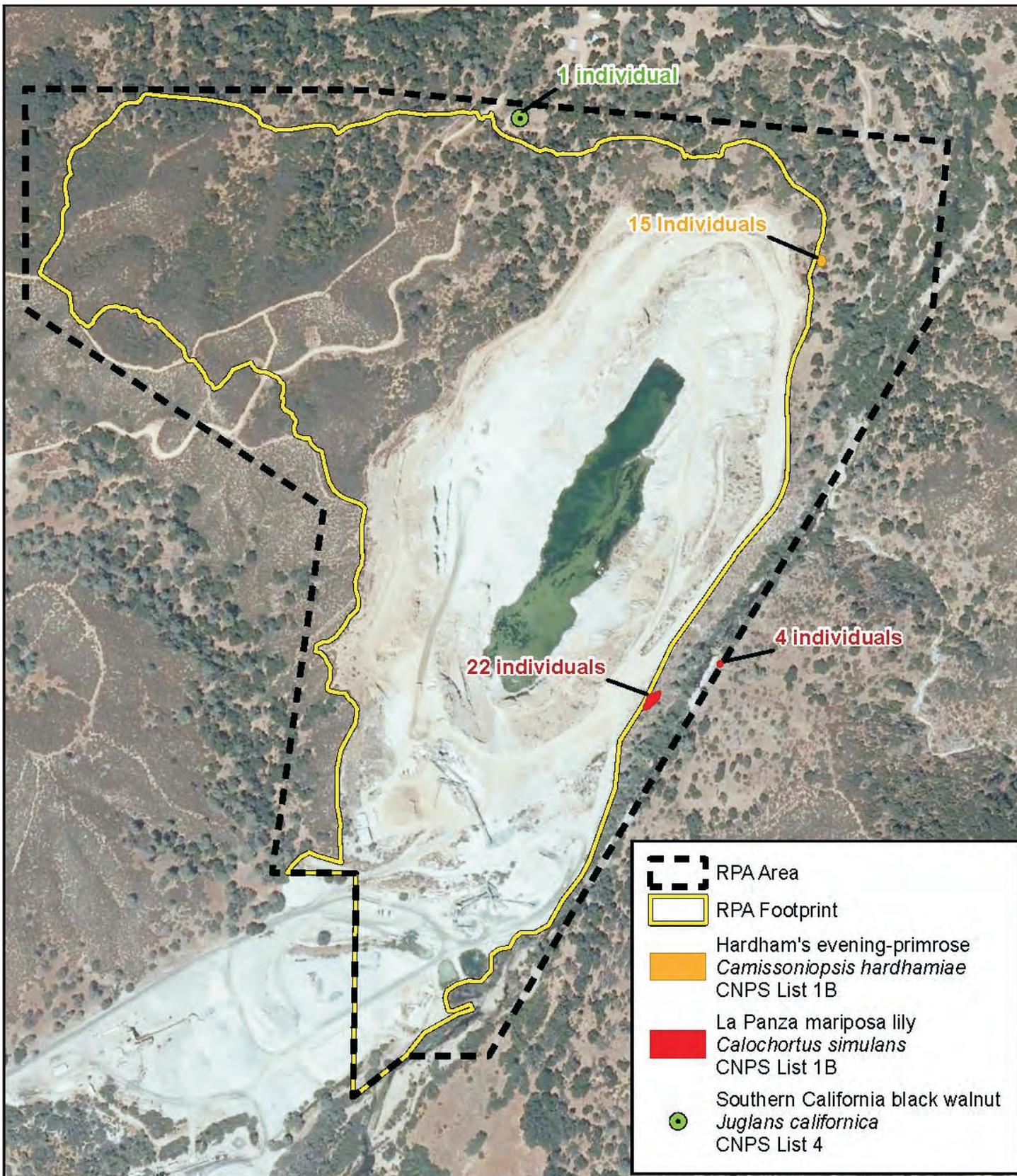
Special-status species are defined as plants or animals that meet the following criteria:

- Have been designated as either rare, threatened, or endangered by CDFW or the USFWS, and are protected under the California or federal Endangered Species Act (ESA); or
- Are candidate species being considered or proposed for listing under these same acts; or
- Are considered Species of Special Concern by CDFW; or
- Are fully protected by the California State Fish and Game Code, Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, or 5515; or
- Are classified as California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1, 2, 3, or 4 by CDFW and CNPS; or are of express concern to resource/regulatory agencies, or local jurisdictions.
- Are listed on watch lists or provided with special conservation designations by professional working groups/societies (i.e., Western Bat Working Group).

Special-Status Plant Species. Approximately 67 special-status plant species are known to occur in the vicinity of the Proposed RPA area (WRA, 2012a). Habitat in the Proposed RPA area has the potential to support approximately 27 species of listed or special-status plant species, as provided in Table 4.6-2. Two special-status plant species, including the La Panza mariposa lily (*Calochortus simulans* [CRPR 1B]) and Hardham's evening-primrose (*Camissoniopsis [Camissonia] hardhamiae*) [CRPR 1B]) were documented in the Proposed RPA area during botanical surveys conducted in 2008 and 2012 (Figure 4.6-4). A single southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), a CRPR List 4 species, was also observed.

Special-status plant species that are present or have the potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area are listed in Table 4.6-2 and shown graphically on Figure 4.6-5. Potential for occurrence is defined as follows:

- **Present:** Species or sign of their presence recently observed on the site.
- **High:** Species or sign not observed on the site, but reasonably certain to occur on the site based on conditions, species ranges, and recent records.
- **Moderate:** Species or sign not observed on the site, but conditions suitable for occurrence and/or an historical record exists in the vicinity.
- **Low:** Species or sign not observed on the site, and conditions marginal for occurrence.
- **Not likely to occur:** Species or sign not observed on the site, outside of the known range, and conditions unsuitable for occurrence.



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Figure 4.6-4

Rare Plants Observed in the RPA Area



Source: WRA, 2012d.

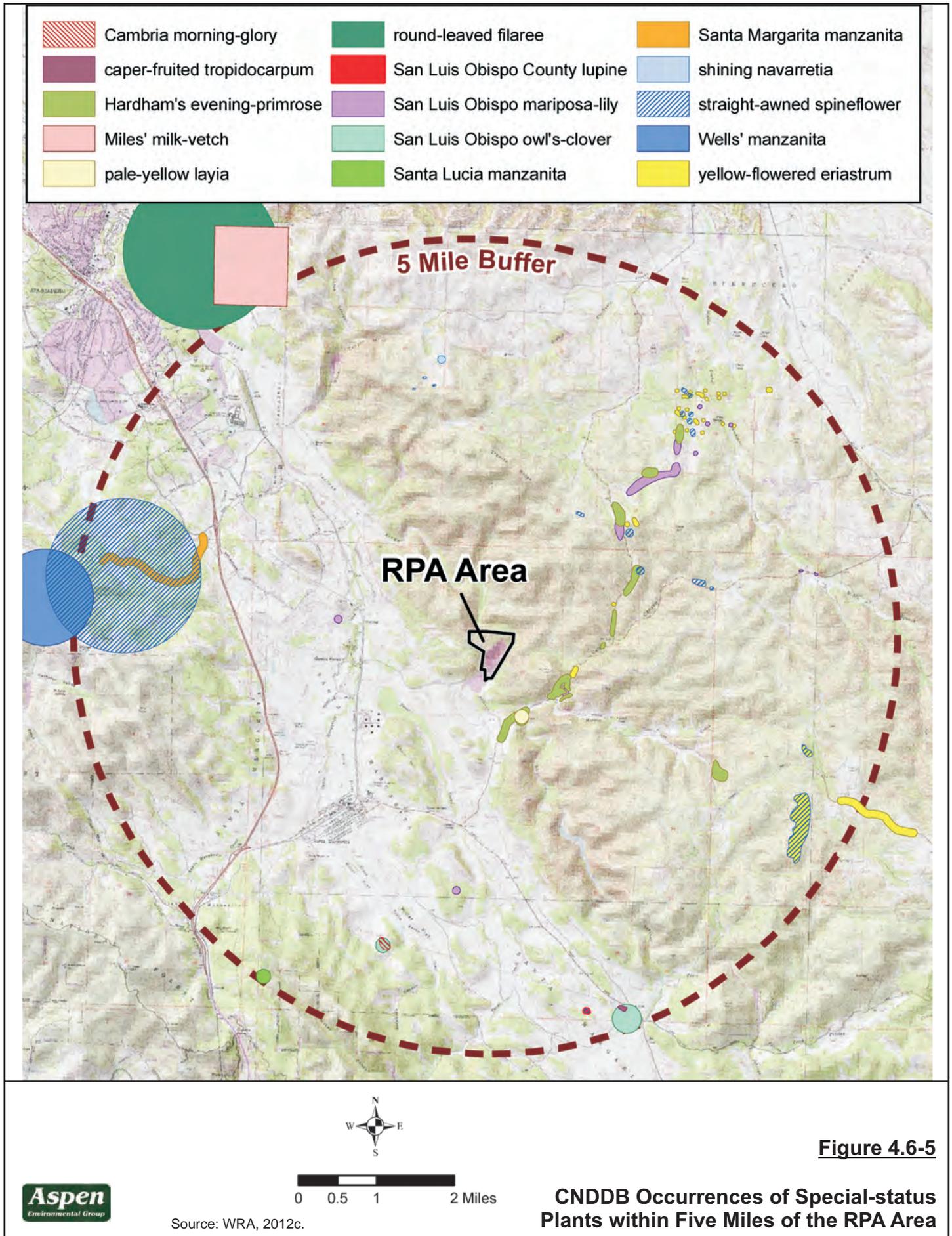


Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
Plants			
<i>Agrostis hooveri</i> Hoover's bent grass	1B.2	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, closed-cone coniferous forest, valley and foothill grassland. Sandy sites. Blooms Apr-Jul. Elevations of 195 to 2,000 feet.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitat occur in the Project footprint. Nearest record approx. 7 miles south of Project site.
<i>Arctostaphylos cruzensis</i> Arroyo de la Cruz manzanita	1B.2	Broad-leafed upland forest, Coastal bluff scrub, Closed-cone coniferous forest, Chaparral, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland. Sandy sites. Blooms Dec-Mar. Elevations of 195 to 1,015 feet.	Not likely to occur. Although suitable woodland and chaparral habitat may be present in the Proposed RPA area, the only <i>Arctostaphylos</i> species observed during surveys was <i>A. glauca</i> .
<i>Arctostaphylos luciana</i> Santa Lucia manzanita	1B.2	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland/shale. Blooms Dec-Mar. Elevations of 1,145 to 2,790 feet.	Not likely to occur. Although suitable woodland and chaparral habitat may be present in the Proposed RPA area, the only <i>Arctostaphylos</i> species observed during surveys was <i>A. glauca</i> . No shale substrates exist in the Proposed RPA area, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Arctostaphylos morroensis</i> Morro manzanita	FT, 1B.1	Chaparral (maritime), cismontane woodland, coastal dunes (pre-Flandrian), coastal scrub/sandy loam. Blooms Dec-Mar. Elevations of 15 to 675 feet.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable maritime chaparral habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Arctostaphylos pechoensis</i> Pecho manzanita	1B.2	Closed-cone coniferous forest, chaparral, coastal scrub/siliceous shale. Blooms Nov-Mar. Elevations of 410 to 2,790 feet.	Not likely to occur. Although suitable chaparral habitat may be present in the Proposed RPA area, the only <i>Arctostaphylos</i> species observed during surveys was <i>A. glauca</i> . No shale substrates exist in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Arctostaphylos pilosula</i> Santa Margarita manzanita	1B.2	Closed-cone coniferous forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland on shale substrates. Blooms Dec-May. Elevations of 555 to 3,610 feet.	Not likely to occur. Although suitable woodland and chaparral habitat may be present in the Proposed RPA area, the only <i>Arctostaphylos</i> species observed during surveys was <i>A. glauca</i> . No shale substrates exist in the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Arenaria paludicola</i> Marsh sandwort	FE, SE, 1B.1	Sandy soils in wetland habitats in Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo Counties from 10 to 560 feet. Blooms May-Aug.	Moderate. Suitable marsh or swamp habitat may be present along the Salinas River nearby, especially on river margins and backwaters, but the Project footprint does not support potential habitat.
<i>Astragalus didymocarpus</i> <i>var. milesianus</i> Miles' milk-vetch	1B.2	Coastal scrub in clay soils at elevations of 65 to 295 feet. Blooms Mar-Jun.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable coastal scrub habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>California macrophylla</i> Round-leaved filaree	1B.1	Cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grasslands in clay soils at elevations of 50 to 3,940 feet. Blooms Mar-May.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable clay soils.
<i>Calochortus obispoensis</i> San Luis mariposa lily	1B.2	Chaparral, coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland/often serpentine. Blooms May-Jul. Elevations of 245 to 2,395 feet.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitat occurs in the Project footprint.
<i>Calochortus simulans</i> La Panza mariposa lily	1B.3	Occurs in the understory of chaparral, woodland, and forest habitats, as well as in open grasslands on decomposed granite in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 1,295 to 3,610 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Present. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint. Surveys of the Proposed RPA area in 2012 identified 26 plants.
<i>Calycadenia villosa</i> Dwarf calycadenia	1B.1	Occurs in the understory of chaparral and woodland habitats, as well as in open grasslands, meadows, and seeps along the central coast of California at elevations from 785 to 4,430 feet. Blooms May-Oct.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Calystegia subacaulis</i> ssp. <i>episcopalis</i> Cambria morning-glory	4.2	Occurs in chaparral and cismontane woodland at elevations of 200 to 1,640 feet. Blooms Mar-Jul.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Camissoniopsis [Camissonia]</i> <i>hardhamiae</i> Hardham's evening primrose	1B.2	Occurs in the understory of chaparral and woodland habitats in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 460 to 2,000 feet. Blooms Mar-May.	Present. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint. Surveys of the Proposed RPA area in 2012 identified 15 plants.
<i>Carex obispoensis</i> San Luis Obispo sedge	1B.2	Occurs in the understory of forest, chaparral and scrub habitats, as well as in open grasslands and coastal prairies in Monterey, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 30 to 2,590 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitats occur in the Project footprint.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Castilleja densiflora</i> var. <i>obispoensis</i> San Luis Obispo owl's-clover	1B.2	Valley and foothill grassland at elevations of 30 to 700 feet. Sometimes on serpentine. Blooms Mar-May.	Not likely to occur. No serpentine substrates are present in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Caulanthus californicus</i> California jewel-flower	FE, SE, 1B.1	Chenopod scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland, valley and foothill grassland/sandy. Blooms Feb-May. Elevations of 230 to 3,280 feet.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland, and sandy grassland habitat.
<i>Caulanthus lemmonii</i> Lemmon's jewel-flower	1B.2	Pinyon-juniper woodland, valley and foothill grasslands at elevations of 260 to 4,000 feet. Blooms Mar-May.	Low. Most known occurrences of this species in the vicinity of the Proposed RPA area are historic. Additionally, the Proposed RPA area lacks commonly associated species reported in CNDDDB occurrence records.
<i>Centromadia parryi</i> ssp. <i>congdonii</i> Congdon's tarplant	1B.1	Valley and foothill grassland on alkaline soils (sometimes described as heavy white clay) at elevations of 0 to 800 feet. Blooms May-Nov.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable alkaline grassland habitat, and the Project site is just above the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Centromadia parryi</i> ssp. <i>parryi</i> appose tarplant	1B.2	Coastal prairie, meadows and seeps, coastal salt marsh, valley and foothill grassland. Vernal mesic, often alkaline sites. Blooms May-Nov. Elevations of 5 to 1,380 feet.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable habitat for this species.
<i>Chlorogalum pomeridianum</i> var. <i>minus</i> Dwarf soaproot	1B.2	Chaparral, valley and foothill grasslands on serpentine soils at elevations of 785 to 3,180 feet. Blooms May-Aug.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils.
<i>Chlorogalum purpureum</i> var. <i>purpureum</i> Purple amole	FT, 1B.1	Occurs in the understory of woodland habitats as well as in open grasslands in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 670 to 1,265 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Moderate. Suitable woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Chlorogalum purpureum</i> var. <i>reductum</i> Comata Canyon amole	FT, SR, 1B.1	Cismontane woodland (serpentine). Blooms Apr-May. Elevations of 1,965 to 2,070 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils in cismontane woodland habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Chloropyron maritimum</i> ssp. <i>maritimum</i> [<i>Cordylanthus maritimus</i> ssp. <i>maritimus</i>] Salt marsh bird's beak	FE, SE, 1B.2	Coastal dunes, marshes and swamps (coastal salt). Blooms May-Oct. Elevations of 0 to 100 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable dune, marsh, and swamp habitats, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Chorizanthe breweri</i> Brewer's spineflower	1B.3	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, closed-cone coniferous forest on rocky or gravelly serpentine sites, usually in barren areas. Elevations of 150 to 2,625 feet. Blooms Apr-Aug.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils.
<i>Chorizanthe rectispina</i> Strait-awned spineflower	1B.3	Occurs in the understory of chaparral, woodland, and coastal scrub habitats in Monterey, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 280 to 3,395 feet. Blooms Apr-Jul.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Cirsium fontinale</i> var. <i>obispoense</i> Chorro Creek bog thistle	FE, SE, 1B.2	In serpentine seeps in chaparral and cismontane woodland. Elevations of 115 to 1,200 feet. Blooms Feb-Sep.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils.
<i>Cirsium occidentale</i> var. <i>lucianum</i> Cuesta Ridge thistle	1B.2	In openings in chaparral on serpentine. Often on steep rocky slopes and along disturbed roadsides. Elevations of 1,640 to 2,460 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Cirsium scariosum</i> var. <i>loncholepis</i> [<i>C. loncholepis</i>] La Graciosa thistle	FE, ST, 1B.1	Cismontane woodland, coastal dunes, coastal scrub, marshes and swamps (brackish), valley and foothill grassland/mesic, sandy. Blooms May-Aug. Elevations of 10 to 720 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Clarkia speciosa</i> ssp. <i>immaculata</i> Pismo clarkia	FE, SR, 1B.1	Sandy soils in openings in chaparral and woodland and in grasslands in San Luis Obispo County from 80 to 610 feet. Blooms May-Jul.	Not Likely to Occur. Although it is known from more maritime-influenced portions of the County, chaparral, woodland and grassland habitats with sandy soils in the Proposed RPA area may provide suitable habitat for this species. However, the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Delphinium parryi</i> ssp. <i>blochmaniae</i> Dune larkspur	1B.2	Chaparral, maritime coastal dunes. On rocky areas and dunes at elevations of 0 to 660 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable coastal and maritime habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Delphinium parryi</i> ssp. <i>eastwoodiae</i> Eastwood's larkspur	1B.2	Chaparral, valley and foothill grassland on serpentine soils at elevations of 250 to 1,640 feet. Blooms Feb-Mar.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks serpentine soils.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Dudleya abramsii</i> ssp. <i>bettinae</i> Betty's dudleya	1B.2	Coastal scrub, chaparral, valley and foothill grassland. On rocky, barren serpentine exposures within scrub vegetation. Elevations of 665 to 590 feet. Blooms May-Jul.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Dudleya abramsii</i> ssp. <i>murina</i> Mouse-gray dudleya	1B.3	Chaparral, cismontane woodland. On serpentine outcrops. Elevations of 295 to 985 feet. Blooms May-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils and outcrops.
<i>Dudleya blochmaniae</i> ssp. <i>blochmaniae</i> Blochman's dudleya	1B.1	Coastal scrub, coastal bluff scrub, valley and foothill grassland. On open, rocky slopes, often in shallow clays over serpentine or in rocky areas with little soil. Elevations of 15 to 1,480 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable clay or serpentine soils.
<i>Eremalche parryi</i> ssp. <i>kernensis</i> [E. <i>kernensis</i>] Kern mallow	FE, 1B.1	Chenopod scrub, valley and foothill grassland. On dry, open, sandy to clayey soils; usually within saltbush scrub. Blooms Mar-May. Elevations of 230 to 3,280 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable chenopod scrub or alkaline grassland habitat.
<i>Eriastrum luteum</i> Yellow-flowered eriastrum	1B.2	Occurs in the understory of forest, chaparral, and woodland habitats in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 950 to 3,280 feet. Blooms May-Jun.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Eriodictyon altissimum</i> Indian Knob mountainbalm	FE, SE, 1B.1	Chaparral (maritime), cismontane woodland, coastal scrub /sandstone. Blooms Mar-Jun. Elevations of 260 to 885 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable maritime chaparral habitat.
<i>Eryngium aristulatum</i> var. <i>hooveri</i> Hoover's button-celery	1B.1	Alkaline depressions, vernal pools, roadside ditches and other wet places near the coast. Elevations of 5 to 150 feet. Blooms Jul-Aug.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable vernal pool habitat and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Fritillaria agrestis</i> Stinkbells	4.2	Generally found in chaparral, valley grassland, foothill woodlands, or wetland riparian habitats from 15 to 5,380 feet in elevation.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitats occur in the Project footprint.
<i>Fritillaria ojaiensis</i> Ojai fritillary	1B.2	Occurs in the understory of chaparral and forest habitats in Sonoma, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties at elevations from 985 to 3,275 feet. Blooms Feb-May.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitats occur in the Project footprint.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Fritillaria viridea</i> San Benito fritillary	1B.2	On serpentine soils in chaparral. Elevations of 655 to 5,000 feet. Blooms Mar-May.	Not Likely to Occur. Most records of this species in the vicinity of the Proposed RPA area are associated with serpentine soils. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils.
<i>Grindelia hirsutula</i> [<i>G. h. var. maritima</i>] San Francisco gumplant	3.2	Coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland; on sandy or serpentine soils. Blooms Jun-Sep. Elevations of 50 to 1,315 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable habitat.
<i>Horkelia cuneata</i> var. <i>puberula</i> Mesa horkelia	1B.1	On sandy or gravelly sites in chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub. Elevations of 230 to 2,660 feet. Blooms Feb-Sep.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable maritime chaparral and coastal scrub habitat.
<i>Juglans californica</i> Southern California black walnut	4.2	Typically in alluvial settings on sandy or gravelly soils. Blooms Mar-Aug.	Present. One sapling was observed in 2012 in oak woodland within the Proposed RPA area outside the Proposed RPA footprint.
<i>Juncus luciensis</i> Santa Lucia dwarf rush	1B.2	Vernal pools, ephemeral drainages, wet meadow habitats, and streamsides in lower montane coniferous forest, chaparral, and Great Basin scrub. Elevations of 980 to 6,700 feet. Blooms Apr-Jul.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA footprint lacks suitable wetland habitat, but suitable habitat may be present along the Salinas River within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Layia carnososa</i> Beach layia	FE, SE, 1B.1	Coastal dunes, coastal scrub (sandy). Blooms Mar-Jul. Elevations of 0 to 200 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable dune and coastal scrub habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Layia heterotricha</i> Pale-yellow layia	1B.1	Cismontane woodland, pinyon/juniper woodland, as well as valley and foothill grassland where soil is alkaline or fine, friable clay at elevations of 984 to 5,592 feet. Blooms Mar-Jun.	Moderate. CNDDDB record within 5 miles of site. Suitable woodland habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Layia jonesii</i> Jones' layia	1B.2	On clay soils and serpentine outcrops in chaparral, valley and foothill grassland. Elevations of 15 to 1,315 feet. Blooms Mar-May.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Lupinus ludovicianus</i> San Luis Obispo County lupine	1B.2	In open areas on sandy soil, Santa Margarita formation. Chaparral and cismontane woodland. Elevations of 165 to 1,725 feet. Blooms Apr-Jul.	Moderate. CNDDDB occurrence within 5 miles of Project site. Suitable chaparral habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Lupinus nipomensis</i> Nipomo Mesa lupine	FE, SE, 1B.1	Coastal dunes. Blooms Dec-May. Elevations of 30 to 165 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable coastal dune habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Malacothamnus palmeri</i> var. <i>involutus</i> Carmel Valley bush-mallow	1B.2	Talus hilltops and slopes, sometimes on serpentine, in cismontane woodland and chaparral. Fire follower. Elevations of 100 to 3,600 feet. Blooms May-Oct.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Malacothamnus palmeri</i> var. <i>palmeri</i> Santa Lucia bush-mallow	1B.2	In chaparral on dry rocky slopes, mostly near summits but occasionally extending down canyons to the sea. Elevations of 200 to 1,200 feet. Blooms May-Jul.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area
<i>Monardella palmeri</i> Palmer's monardella	1B.2	On serpentine, often associated with Sargent cypress forests. Cismontane woodland, chaparral. Elevations of 655 to 2,625 feet. Blooms Jun-Aug.	Not Likely to Occur. Most records of this species in the vicinity of the Proposed RPA area are associated with serpentine soils. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soils.
<i>Monolopia [Lembertia, Eatonella] congdonii</i> San Joaquin woolly-threads	FE, 1B.2	Chenopod scrub, valley and foothill grassland (sandy). Blooms Feb-May. Elevations of 195 to 2,625 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable habitat.
<i>Nasturtium [Rorippa, Cardamine] gambelii</i> Gambel's watercress	FE, ST, 1B.1	Marshes and swamps (freshwater or brackish). Blooms Apr-Sep. Elevations of 15 to 1,085 feet.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA footprint lacks suitable freshwater or brackish marsh habitat, however suitable habitat may be present along the Salinas River within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Navarretia fossalis</i> Spreading navarretia	FT, 1B.1	Vernal pools, chenopod scrub, marshes and swamps, and playas. On San Diego hardpan and San Diego claypan vernal pools; in swales and vernal pools, often surrounded by other habitat types. Elevations of 95 to 2,150 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable scrub, swamp, playa, and vernal pool habitat.
<i>Navarretia nigelliformis</i> ssp. <i>radians</i> Shining navarretia	1B.2	Cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland and vernal pools; at elevations of 655 to 3,280 feet. Blooms Apr-Jul.	Moderate. Species occurrence records within 5 miles of Proposed RPA area. Suitable woodland and grassland habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Orcuttia californica</i> California orcutt grass	FE, SE, 1B.1	Vernal pools. Blooms Apr-Aug. Elevations of 50 to 2,165 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable vernal pool habitat.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Plagiobothrys uncinatus</i> Hooked popcorn flower	1B.2	On sandstone outcrops and canyon sides; often in burned or disturbed areas. Chaparral, cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland. Elevations of 985 to 2,500 feet. Blooms Apr-May.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and cismontane habitat is present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum</i> White rabbit-tobacco	2B.2	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, riparian woodland/sandy, gravelly. Blooms (Jul) Aug-Nov (Dec). Elevations of 0 to 6,890 feet.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral and woodland habitats may be present within Proposed RPA area.
<i>Sanicula maritima</i> Adobe sanicle	SR, 1B.1	On moist clay or ultramafic soil in meadows and seeps, valley and foothill grassland, chaparral, and coastal prairie. Elevations of 100 to 790 feet. Blooms Feb-May.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable clay or serpentine soils, and the Proposed RPA area is above this species' elevation range.
<i>Senecio aphanactis</i> Chaparral ragwort	2B.2	Drying alkaline flats in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub. Elevations of 50 to 2,625 feet. Blooms Jan-Apr.	Moderate. Suitable chaparral habitat may be present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Sidalcea hickmanii ssp. anomala</i> Cuesta Pass checkerbloom	SR, 1B.2	On rocky serpentine soil, associated with Sargent cypress forest. Elevations of 1,970 to 2,625 feet. Blooms May-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soil.
<i>Sidalcea hickmanii ssp. parishii</i> Parish's checkerbloom	SR, 1B.2	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest. Blooms Jun-Aug. Elevations of 3,280 to 7,005 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. Proposed RPA area is below species' elevation range.
<i>Streptanthus albidus ssp. peramoenus</i> [<i>Streptanthus glandulosus ssp. glandulosus</i>] Most beautiful jewel-flower	1B.2	On serpentine outcrops on ridges and slopes in chaparral, valley and foothill grassland, and cismontane woodland. Elevations of 390 to 2,395 feet. Blooms Mar-Oct.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable serpentine soil.
<i>Suaeda californica</i> California seablite	FE, 1B.1	Marshes and swamps (coastal salt). Blooms Jul-Oct. Elevations of 0 to 50 feet.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable coastal salt marsh or swamp habitat, and the Project site is outside of the known elevation range for this species.
<i>Symphotrichum defoliatum</i> San Bernardino aster	1B.2	Cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, marshes and swamps, valley and foothill grassland (vernally mesic); near ditches, streams, springs. Blooms Jul-Nov. Elevations of 5 to 6,695 feet.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA footprint lacks suitable habitat, however suitable habitat may be present along the Salinas River within the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-2. Special-Status Plant Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed RPA Area

Species	Status*	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Trifolium hydrophilum</i> [<i>T. depauperatum</i> var. <i>hydrophilum</i>] Saline clover	1B.2	In mesic, alkaline sites in marshes and swamps, valley and foothill grassland, and vernal pools. Elevations of 0 to 985 feet. Blooms Apr-Jun.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable mesic alkaline grassland and swamp habitat.
<i>Tropidocarpum capparideum</i> Caper-fruited tropidocarpum	1B.1	On alkaline clay in valley and foothill grasslands at elevations of 0 to 1,495 feet. Blooms Mar-Apr.	Not Likely to Occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable alkaline grassland habitat.

*Federal Rankings:

FE – Federally Endangered
FT – Federally Threatened

*State Rankings:

SE – State Endangered
ST – State Threatened
SR – State Rare

*CRPR Rankings:

CRPR 1A – Presumed extinct in California
CRPR 1B – Rare or endangered in California and elsewhere
CRPR 2 – Rare or endangered in California, more common elsewhere
CRPR 3 – More information needed
CRPR 4 – Limited distribution (Watch List)

For each CRPR Ranking, the following sub-categories apply:

- .1 = Seriously endangered in California (over 80 percent of occurrences threatened / high degree and immediacy of threat)
- .2 = Fairly endangered in California (20 to 80 percent occurrences threatened)
- .3 = Not very endangered in California (less than 20 percent of occurrences threatened or no current threats known)

Special-Status Wildlife Species. Eight State or federally listed species, State fully protected species, or species proposed for listing have the potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area, as shown in Figure 4.6-6. Critical habitat for the steelhead, federally listed as threatened, is designated in the Salinas River adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. Golden eagle, a fully protected species in California, was observed in the proposed RPA area. In addition, 33 species identified as California Species of Special Concern (CSSC) or species with special conservation designations (e.g., birds of conservation concern or CDFW Special Animals) have a moderate or high potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area. One CSSC, the western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), was observed in the Salinas River. Information for each of these species is described below and summarized in Table 4.6-3.

Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Invertebrates. Focused surveys for gastropods were not conducted by the Applicant; however, some portions of the Proposed RPA area have the potential to support shoulderband snails. Shoulderband snails are a group of pulmonate (air-breathing) snails that includes one federally endangered taxon, the Morro Bay shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta walkeriana*). Shoulderband snails can occur in areas with suitable micro-habitat such as rock or debris piles, dead vegetation, or small drainages where soil moisture persists. The Proposed RPA area is out of the known range for Morro Bay shoulderband snail. The closest documented occurrence for this species is approximately 16 miles southwest of the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013). The Kern shoulderband snail (*H. callistoderma*), which is a candidate for federal listing, has been documented approximately 84 miles east of the Project site.

Focused surveys for fairy shrimp were not conducted within the Proposed RPA area and the Proposed RPA area does not contain suitable vernal pool habitat; therefore, listed fairy shrimp are not expected to occur. Multiple observations of California linderiella (*Linderiella occidentalis*) have been reported approximately one mile to the east; one occurrence was along the access road to the quarry and the second approximately 0.5 miles north of the access road (CNDDDB, 2013).

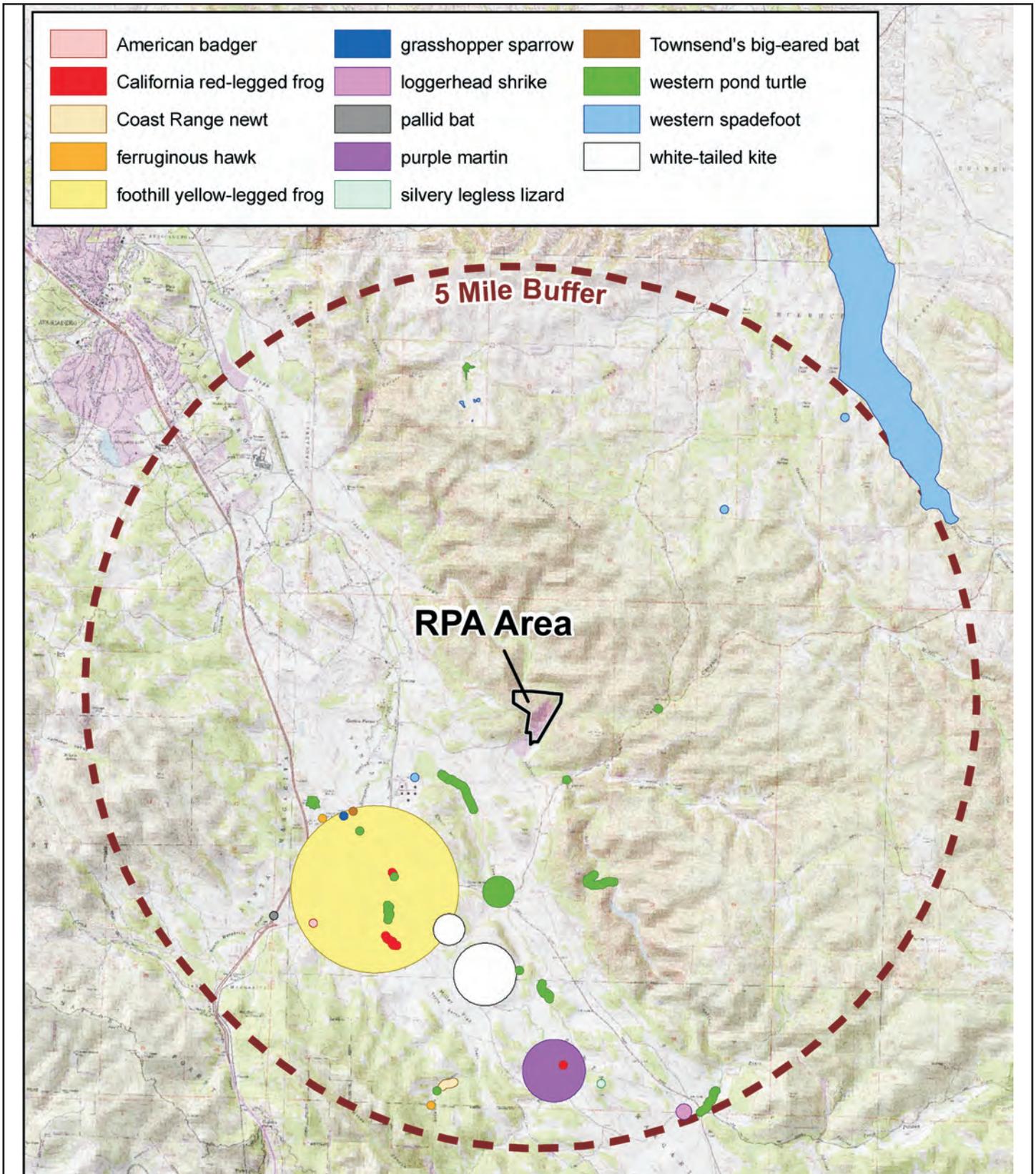
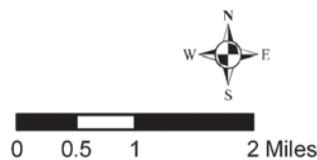


Figure 4.6-6



Source: WRA, 2012c.

CNDDB Occurrences of Special-status Wildlife within Five Miles of the RPA Area

Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Fish. Perennial flowing streams and drainages are not present within the boundaries of the Proposed RPA area and therefore sensitive fish would not occur within the Proposed RPA. However, the Salinas River, located immediately adjacent to the Proposed RPA area, provides nearly continuous year round water and aquatic habitat. The upper Salinas River, including the segment adjacent to the Proposed RPA area, has been designated as Critical Habitat for federally threatened steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*), south/central California coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS). This DPS refers to the populations in watersheds from the Pajaro River in Monterey County south to Arroyo Grande Creek in San Luis Obispo County (NMFS, 2012).

Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Reptiles. The Proposed RPA is outside the geographic range of any State or Federally listed reptile species and none are expected to occur. Four CDFG Species of Special Concern are known to occur in the general Project area including western pond turtle, coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*), silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*), and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*). Although not observed in the Proposed RPA area, western pond turtles were observed in the active channel of the Salinas River during the site reconnaissance surveys conducted in September 2013. Western pond turtles and two-striped garter snakes are known to disperse and forage within upland areas, and may utilize habitat within the Proposed RPA area (Bury, 1972 in Ernst et al., 1994; Holland, 1994; Rathburn et al., 1993; Reese and Welsh, 1997).

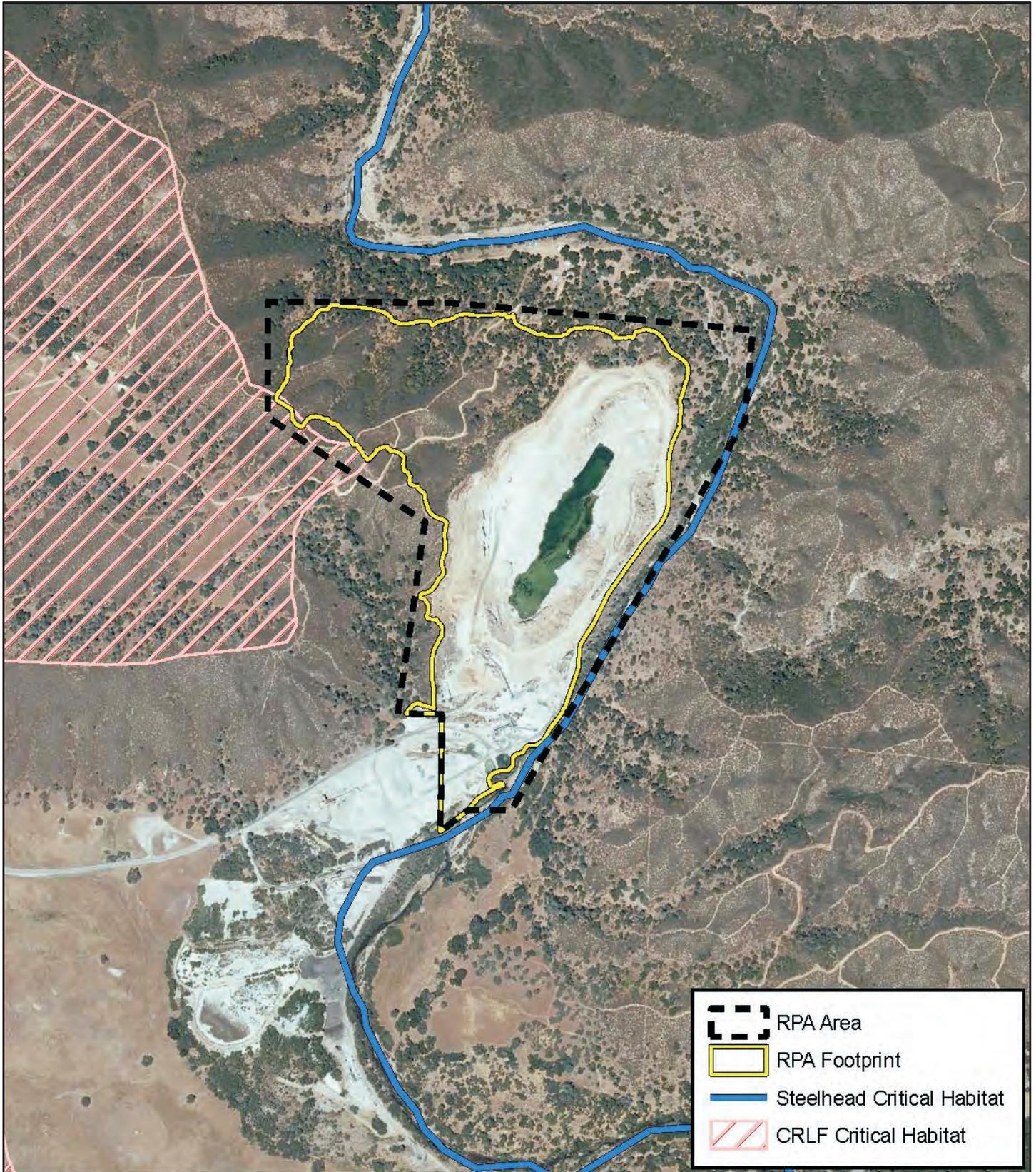
Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Amphibians. Surveys conducted for the Applicant did not detect any special-status amphibian species in the Proposed RPA area. However, protocol surveys for listed amphibians were not conducted. California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), federally listed as threatened, is known to occur within the watershed and Critical Habitat for this species abuts the Proposed RPA area in the northwest corner, as shown in Figure 4.6-7. Known occurrences of California red-legged frog have reported from Yerba Buena Creek, a tributary to the Salinas River, approximately two miles to the southwest (CNDDDB, 2013). Suitable habitat for this species is present in the Salinas River, adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. The western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*) is also known from the region and may occur on portions of the Project site adjacent to the Salinas River.

Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Birds. Only one special-status bird species, golden eagle, which were displaying aerial courtship behavior in the Proposed RPA area, were observed during surveys conducted by the Applicant in January 2008 (WRA, 2012c). Although no focused golden eagle surveys were conducted these raptors likely forage within the Proposed RPA area and suitable nesting habitat is present. No nesting golden eagles have been observed.

Twenty-six additional special-status species have at least a moderate to high potential to occur within the Proposed RPA area. Some of these species include Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*), and California condor.

According to the USFWS Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), a State and federally listed species, has been recently observed on the Salinas River approximately 23 miles north of the Proposed RPA area, near San Miguel (Diel, 2013). Although focused surveys for this species have not been conducted in or adjacent to the Proposed RPA area suitable nesting and foraging habitat is present along the Salinas River.

Threatened, Endangered or Special-Status Mammals. State or federally listed mammals were not observed, and are not expected to occur in the Proposed RPA area. The ringtail cat (*Bassariscus astutus*), a California fully protected species, has the potential to occur and suitable habitat for this species is present in the Proposed RPA area. Although not observed, suitable habitat for American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), a California species of special concern, is present in the Proposed RPA area and this species is known from the region.



0 250 500 1,000
Feet



Figure 4.6-7

Critical Habitat within the RPA Area



Source: WRA, 2012c.

Focused bat surveys were not conducted in the Proposed RPA area. However, the Salinas River and oak woodland habitat could support a number of species including pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Townsend’s big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*), and fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*).

A complete list of special-status wildlife species that are present or have the potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area are listed in Table 4.6-3. Potential for occurrence is defined as:

- **Present:** Species or sign of their presence recently observed on the site.
- **High:** Species or sign not observed on the site, but reasonably certain to occur on the site based on conditions, species ranges, and recent records.
- **Moderate:** Species or sign not observed on the site, but conditions suitable for occurrence and/or an historical record exists in the vicinity.
- **Low:** Species or sign not observed on the site, and conditions marginal for occurrence.
- **Not likely to occur:** Species or sign not observed on the site, outside of the known range, and conditions unsuitable for occurrence.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
Invertebrates			
<i>Branchinecta longiantenna</i> Longhorn fairy shrimp	FE	Endemic to the eastern margin of the central coast mountains in seasonally astatic grassland vernal pools. Inhabit small, clear-water depressions in sandstone and clear-to-turbid clay/grass-bottomed pools in shallow swales.	Not likely to occur. No suitable vernal pool habitat is present in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Branchinecta lynchi</i> Vernal pool fairy shrimp	FT	Inhabit small, clear-water sandstone depression pools, grassy swales, slumps, or basalt-flow depression pools.	Not likely to occur. No suitable vernal pool habitat is present in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Danaus plexippus</i> Monarch butterfly	SA	Winter roost sites extend along the coast from northern Mendocino to Baja California, Mexico. Roosts located in wind-protected tree groves (eucalyptus, Monterey pine, cypress), with nectar and water sources nearby.	Low. Species may occur intermittently on the site. No suitable winter roosting habit known to occur within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Euphilotes enoptes smithi</i> Smith's blue butterfly	FE	Most commonly associated with coastal dunes and coastal sage scrub plant communities in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Hostplant: <i>Eriogonum latifolium</i> and <i>Eriogonum parvifolium</i> are utilized as both larval and adult food plants.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA Area is outside the known range of this species, and no suitable habitat is present in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Helminthoglypta walkeriana</i> Morro shoulderband snail	FE	Coastal strand in the immediate vicinity of Morro Bay. Inhabits the duff beneath <i>Haplopappus</i> , <i>Salvia</i> , <i>Dudleya</i> , and <i>Mesembryanthemum</i> .	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA Area is outside the known range of this species.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Linderiella occidentalis</i> California linderiella	SA	Inhabit small, clear-water sandstone depression pools, grassy swales, slumps, or basalt-flow depression pools.	Low. No suitable vernal pool habitat is present in the Proposed RPA area; however, this species has been reported approximately one mile east along the access road to the quarry.
<i>Polyphylla nubila</i> Atascadero June beetle	SA	Known only from sand dunes in San Luis Obispo County.	Not likely to occur. Suitable habitat is not present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Pyrgulopsis taylori</i> San Luis Obispo pyrg	SA	Known only from freshwater habitats in San Luis Obispo County.	Low. Suitable habitat may be present within the aquatic habitat at the bottom of the existing quarry; suitable habitat is present within the adjacent Salinas River.
<i>Trimerotropis occulens</i> Lompoc grasshopper	SA	Known only from Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. Generally found on or around exposed, weathered Monterey or sisquoc shale.	Not likely to occur. Suitable habitat is not present within the Proposed RPA area.
Fishes			
<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus</i> Steelhead - south/central California coast DPS	FT, CSSC	Federal listing refers to runs in coastal basins from the Pajaro River south to Arroyo Grande Creek. Anadromous adults migrate upstream to spawn in cool, clear, well-oxygenated streams. Juveniles remain in fresh water for 1 or more years before migrating downstream to the ocean.	Present. The Proposed RPA footprint provides no suitable aquatic habitat for this species. However, designated critical habitat for this species is present in the Salinas River adjacent to the Proposed RPA area.
Amphibians			
<i>Anaxyrus californicus</i> Arroyo toad	FE, CSSC	Endemic to southern California and northern Baja California. Habitat is highly specialized: breeding occurs only in overflow pools adjacent to the inflow channel of 3rd- and greater order streams that are free of predatory fishes. Pools with sand or gravel substrates are preferred. Terrestrial habitat consists of sand or gravel banks and washes with some scrub and/or riparian cover in the vicinity of breeding pools.	Low. The Proposed RPA area currently provides limited breeding habitat for this species. While portions of the Salinas River in the Proposed RPA area provide some habitat elements, the only documented population of this species in San Luis Obispo County (within the Salinas River drainage) is considered extirpated (WRA, 2012c).

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Ambystoma californiense</i> California tiger salamander	FT, ST	Inhabits annual grassland habitats, with most time spent in mammal burrows and other underground refugia. Breeds in vernal pools and other seasonal aquatic features.	Not likely to occur. Suitable grassland habitat and seasonal pools are not present in the Proposed RPA area, and the Proposed RPA area is outside of this species' recognized range (WRA, 2012c).
<i>Rana boylei</i> Foothill yellow-legged frog	CSSC	Found in or near rocky streams in shallow, flowing water, usually in moderate-sized streams with some cobble-sized substrate. Highly aquatic; not inclined to terrestrial dispersal.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area provides no suitable aquatic habitat for this species. The Salinas River in the Proposed RPA area provides some suitable habitat elements. Although potentially present historically, this species is likely extirpated from southern San Luis Obispo County (WRA, 2012c).
<i>Rana draytonii</i> California red-legged frog	FT	Endemic to California. Associated with quiet perennial to intermittent ponds, stream pools and wetlands. Prefers shorelines with extensive riparian and/or emergent vegetation. Documented to disperse through upland habitats after rains.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA area provides no suitable aquatic habitat for this species. Potentially suitable breeding habitat occurs along the adjacent Salinas River. The species may also use upland habitat in the Proposed RPA area. There are documented occurrences within 2 miles of the Proposed RPA area along Yerba Buena Creek (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Spea hammondi</i> Western spadefoot	CSSC	Occurs primarily in lowland habitats with sandy or gravelly soils such as washes and floodplains, also in grassland, chaparral and woodland. Breeds in temporary rain pools that are inundated for at least three weeks.	Moderate. Limited amounts of breeding habitat occur within and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. The CNDDDB reports an occurrence of this species approximately 1.4 miles to the southwest of the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Taricha torosa torosa</i> Coast Range newt	CSSC	Coastal drainages from Mendocino County to San Diego County; SSC status applies only from the Salinas River south. Lives in terrestrial habitats (generally forest and woodland) and will migrate over 1 kilometer to breed in ponds, reservoirs and slow moving streams.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA area does not provide suitable aquatic breeding for this species; although there is a documented occurrence within 4 miles of the Proposed RPA area in Yerba Buena Creek (CNDDDB, 2013). Depending on flow conditions potential habitat may occur within the adjacent Salinas River.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
Reptiles			
<i>Anniella pulchra pulchra</i> Silvery legless lizard	CSSC	Burrowing species found in loose sandy or loamy soils within beach, chaparral, woodland and other habitats. Soil must be suitably moist for survival.	Moderate. Sandy soils within chaparral and other higher elevation habitats within the Proposed RPA footprint are likely too dry to support this species; it has potential to occur in the lower portions of drainages where more moisture is retained, as well as along adjacent portions of the Salinas River in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Emys marmorata</i> Western pond turtle	CSSC	Occurs in perennial ponds, lakes, rivers and streams with suitable basking habitat (mud banks, mats of floating vegetation, partially submerged logs), submerged shelter and terrestrial nest sites. Requires friable soil for breeding. Documented to disperse and wander over upland habitats.	Present. This species was observed adjacent to the Proposed RPA area in the Salinas River by Aspen in September 2013. Suitable aquatic habitat in the Proposed RPA area is limited to the bottom of the existing quarry pit. This species can disperse from the Salinas River to the adjacent uplands in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i> Coast horned lizard	CSSC	Loose, fine soils in a variety of habitats including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, grassland, coniferous forest, oak woodland, riparian woodland, and the margins of higher-elevation deserts in juniper desert chaparral. Abundant prey base of native ants and other insects required.	High. Open sandy areas within chaparral provide suitable habitat throughout much of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Thamnophis hammondi</i> Two-striped garter snake	CSSC	Occurs in coastal California from vicinity of Salinas to northwest Baja California. Highly aquatic, found in or near freshwater. Often along streams with rocky beds and riparian growth.	High. The Salinas River provides suitable aquatic habitat with adjacent riparian cover, as well as prey base (small fishes). This species can disperse from the Salinas River to the adjacent uplands in the Proposed RPA area.
Birds			
<i>Accipiter cooperii</i> Cooper's hawk	WL	Woodland, chiefly of open, interrupted, or marginal type; nest sites mainly in riparian growths of deciduous trees.	High. Although not observed within the Proposed RPA area, there are EBird records from Santa Margarita Lake. Suitable habitat is present within and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Accipiter striatus</i> Sharp-shinned hawk	WL	Prefers, but not restricted to riparian habitats; breeds in ponderosa pine, black oak, riparian deciduous, mixed conifer, and Jeffrey pine habitats; requires north-facing slopes with perches.	High. Although not observed within the Proposed RPA area there is known EBird records from Santa Margarita Lake. Suitable habitat is present within and Adjacent to the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Agelaius tricolor</i> Tricolored blackbird	CSSC	Highly colonial species, most numerous in central valley & vicinity. Largely endemic to California. Requires open water, protected nesting substrate, & foraging area with insect prey within a few km of the colony.	Low. The preferred habitat for this species is not present within the Proposed RPA area but may be present in the adjacent Salinas River. An EBird occurrence reports this species from Santa Margarita Lake approximately 0.77 miles to the south near the intersection of State Route 58 and Pozo Road.
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i> Grasshopper sparrow	CSSC	Dense grasslands on rolling hills, lowland plains, in valleys and on hillsides on lower mountain slopes. Favors native grasslands with a mix of grasses, forbs & scattered shrubs. Loosely colonial when nesting.	Low. The Proposed RPA area does not provide suitable grassland habitat for this species. The nearest record of this species is from Santa Margarita Ranch approximately 3.3 miles southwest of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Amphispiza belli</i> Bell's sage sparrow	BCC	Resident, though shows seasonal movements. Prefers dense chaparral and scrub habitats for breeding; associated with chamise. Also occurs in more open habitats during winter.	High. Chaparral and scrub vegetation along the upper ridge areas of the Proposed RPA area provides typical breeding habitat for this species.
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Golden eagle	CFP, BCC	Resident, though wanders widely. Found in rolling foothill and mountain areas, sage-juniper flats, desert. Cliff-walled canyons provide nesting habitat in most parts of range.	Present. This species was observed within the Proposed RPA area during the initial site visit (courtship displays) and again during the 2011 site visit. Suitable nesting habitat is available in oak woodland habitat; may also nest in nearby areas and forage within the Proposed RPA area. EBird records are report occurrences in the Santa Margarita valley.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Asio otus</i> Long-eared owl	CSSC	Resident and visitor in the region. Nests in a variety of woodland habitats, including oak and riparian. Requires adjacent open land with rodents for foraging, and the presence of old nests of crows, hawks, magpies etc. for breeding.	High. Suitable nesting habitat, including thickly wooded areas, is present in the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Athene cunicularia</i> Burrowing owl	CSSC	Resident and winter visitor in open, dry annual or perennial grasslands and scrub habitats with low-growing vegetation, perches and abundant mammal burrows. Preys upon insects and small vertebrates. Nests and roosts in old mammal burrows, generally those of ground squirrels.	Low. Suitable open grassland habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. Open grassland habitat does occur west of the Proposed RPA area north and south of the quarry access road.
<i>Buteo regalis</i> Ferruginous hawk	BCC	Winter visitor. Frequents open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, low foothills surrounding valleys and fringes of pinyon-juniper habitats.	Moderate. Typical open grassland habitat is not present for foraging. This species is a winter visitor and does not breed in the region. The CNDDDB reports and occurrence of the species approximately 2.6 miles to the west, north of Santa Margarita, along U.S. Highway 101.
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i> Swainson's hawk	ST	Breeds in grasslands with scattered trees, juniper sage flats, riparian areas, savannahs, and agricultural or ranch land. Requires suitable foraging areas such as grasslands, or alfalfa or grain fields supporting rodent populations.	Moderate. Limited suitable habitat is present with the Proposed RPA area but may be present within surrounding habitats. EBird records report this species from below Santa Margarita Lake to the south and along Traffic Way in Atascadero to the north.
<i>Calypte costae</i> Costa's hummingbird	BCC	Resident in chaparral, scrub and woodland habitats with nectar flowers and insect populations. Nest constructed in a variety of trees and shrubs, often near water.	High. Oak woodland and chaparral habitats within the Proposed RPA area provide suitable habitat.
<i>Carduelis lawrencei</i> Lawrence's goldfinch	BCC	A summer visitor in coastal southern California, generally uncommon and local. Typically found in arid open woodlands, including oak savannah. Breeding distribution is erratic from year to year.	Moderate. Oak woodland and chaparral habitats within the Proposed RPA area provide suitable breeding habitat. May also occur along adjacent portions of the Salinas River.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Chaetura vauxi</i> Vaux's swift	CSSC	Summer resident. Breeds in woodlands and low-elevation coniferous forest in portions of the Coast Ranges. Nests in tree cavities, typically located in tall, isolated tree/snag.	Moderate. Although this species has not been documented breeding in San Luis Obispo County, EBird records report multiple occurrences of this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area. One record is approximately 0.5 miles south of the Proposed RPA at the State Route 58 bridge over the Salinas River.
<i>Circus cyaneus</i> Northern harrier	CSSC	Resident and winter visitor. Forages in open meadows, savannah, and grassland habitats, often in association with wetlands. Nests on ground in emergent or shrubby vegetation, the latter usually in wet areas. Generally avoids forested and mountainous habitats.	Moderate. Suitable open grassland or marsh habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. EBird records report multiple occurrences of this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area. One record is approximately 0.5 miles south of the Proposed RPA at the State Route 58 bridge over the Salinas River.
<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i> Western yellow-billed cuckoo	FC, SE, BCC	Summer resident, breeding in well-developed riparian woodlands and forest. Utilizes densely foliated deciduous trees and shrubs for foraging and nesting. Eats large insects, mostly caterpillars. Current breeding distribution within California very limited and fragmented.	Not likely to occur. The Proposed RPA area lacks suitable habitat however riparian habitat is present along the adjacent Salinas River. There are no recent breeding records from San Luis Obispo County.
<i>Contopus cooperi</i> Olive-sided flycatcher	CSSC, BCC	Summer resident. Typical breeding habitat is montane coniferous forests. At lower elevations, also occurs in wooded canyons and mixed woods.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA area provides oak woodland/forest habitat with some inter-mixed pines and is within the San Luis Obispo County breeding range per a recent monograph (WRA, 2012c). May also occur adjacent to the Proposed RPA area along the Salinas River. EBird reports multiple occurrences of this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Setophaga petechia</i> Yellow warbler	CSSC	Summer resident throughout much of California. Breeds in riparian vegetation close to water, including streams and wet meadows. Microhabitat used for nesting variable, but dense willow growth is typical. Occurs widely on migration.	High. Suitable nesting habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area, though this species may be present during migration. This species may breed in adjacent riparian habitat on the Salinas River. Multiple occurrences have been reported in eBird within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area including one in nearby Trout Creek.
<i>Elanus leucurus</i> White-tailed kite	CFP	Resident of coastal and valley lowlands. Preys on small diurnal mammals as well as other vertebrates and insects. Nests in small to large trees, often at habitat edges.	Moderate. Open grassland habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. However this species is known to breed and forage along riparian corridors. Recent breeding records in within 2.5 miles of the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> Southwestern willow flycatcher	FE, SE	Summer resident in the southern third of California and the Southwest. Typically breeds in dense riparian vegetation associated with standing water. Vegetative microhabitats used for nesting variable; willows, mulefat, blackberry and cottonwood are commonly used. Nests typically within ten feet of the ground.	Not Likely to Occur. Riparian habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. Potentially suitable habitat exists along the adjacent Salinas River.
<i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i> California horned lark	CSSC	Coastal regions, chiefly from Sonoma County to San Diego County. Also main part of San Joaquin Valley and east to foothills. Short grass prairie, "bald" hills, mountain meadows, open coastal plains, fallow grain fields, and alkali flats.	Low. The preferred habitat for this species is not present within the Proposed RPA area but may be found in adjacent areas. eBird reports an occurrence of this species approximately 4 miles to the northeast.
<i>Falco columbarius</i> Merlin	SA	Wide-variety of habitats including marshes, deserts, seacoasts, open woodlands, fields.	Moderate. Limited habitat for this species is present within the Proposed RPA area and adjacent areas. Historic CNDDDB records and recent eBird occurrences have been reported for this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Falco mexicanus</i> Prairie falcon	BCC	Resident and winter visitor. Inhabits dry, open terrain, including grasslands, scrub and desert. Breeding sites typically located on remote cliffs. Forages widely.	Moderate. Suitable cliff habitat for breeding is not present in the Proposed RPA area, or along the adjacent Salinas River. May occasionally fly or forage over the Proposed RPA area. EBird reports multiple occurrences of this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> American peregrine falcon	CFP	Resident and winter visitor. Winters throughout the Central Valley and along portions of the coast; breeds at various coastal sites. Requires protected cliffs and ledges for nesting. Feeds primarily on water birds.	Moderate. Suitable cliff habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. May occasionally fly or forage over the Proposed RPA area. Multiple EBird records report occurrences of this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Gavia immer</i> Common loon	CSSC	Prefer quiet, remote freshwater lakes but will frequent lakes, rivers, estuaries and coastlines during winter migration.	Low. Habitat within the Proposed RPA area is limited to the water feature at the bottom of the existing quarry. May be present in adjacent Salinas River. Multiple occurrences are reported by EBird to the north near Atascadero Lake.
<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i> California condor	FE, SE	Resident, though home range can be very large. Requires vast expanses of open savannah, grasslands, foothill chaparral and canyons. Nests on cliffs and in caves; roosts in large trees and snags. Forages over wide areas for the carcasses of large animals.	Moderate. Grassland, savannah and other typical foraging habitats are not present within the Proposed RPA area, and potential forage (e.g. dead cattle) is extremely limited. Suitable cliff breeding habitat is also absent within and immediately adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. This species has been documented to use open habitats approximately 15 miles south of the Proposed RPA area and may soar over the Proposed RPA area or forage within adjacent agricultural areas.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> Bald eagle	SE	Ocean shore, lake margins, and rivers for both nesting and wintering. Most nests within 1 mi of water. Nests in large, old-growth, or dominant live tree w/open branches, especially ponderosa pine. Roosts communally in winter.	Moderate. The Proposed RPA area lacks large bodies of standing water and does not provide the typical habitat for this species. Bald Eagles are uncommonly observed in the greater vicinity and may fly over the Proposed RPA area. Unlikely to nest along the Salinas River due to limited extent of water; breeding in San Luis Obispo County is strongly associated with reservoirs. EBird reports multiple occurrences from within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area; this includes an observation approximately 1.8 miles south at the intersection of State Route 58 and Pozo Road.
<i>Icteria virens</i> Yellow-breasted chat	CSSC	Summer resident, utilizing riparian areas with an open canopy, dense understory, and trees for song perches. Nests in thickets of willow, blackberry, and wild grape.	Moderate. Patches of dense riparian understory vegetation along the Salinas River provide suitable nesting habitat for this species, but it is not expected to breed in the Proposed RPA footprint.
<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> Loggerhead shrike	CSSC	Resident in open woodland, grassland, savannah and scrub. Prefers open areas with sparse shrubs, trees, posts, and other suitable perches for foraging. Preys upon large insects and small vertebrates. Nests are well-concealed above ground in densely foliated shrub or tree.	Moderate. Preferred open grassland or savannah habitat is not present in the Proposed RPA area. Likely does not breed within the Proposed RPA area but may pass through and/or forage in the Proposed RPA area. Multiple EBird occurrences are reported within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Melanerpes lewis</i> Lewis' woodpecker	BCC	Resident and irregular visitor. Nests in loose colonies in open pine-oak woodlands, oak savanna, and oak woodland habitats. Nests are typically in large hollow trees or snags. Often associated with burned areas.	Moderate. Oak woodland within the Proposed RPA area provides suitable habitat for this species.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Picoides nuttallii</i> Nuttall's woodpecker	BCC	Resident. A relatively common species in much of its range. Occurs in woodlands, primarily those dominated by oaks.	High. Oak woodland in the Proposed RPA area provides suitable habitat. Multiple EBird occurrences are reported within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area including one less than a mile west of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Progne subis</i> Purple martin	CSSC	Summer resident, breeding low-elevation coniferous forests and woodlands. Nests in cavities, of trees and also anthropogenic structures (e.g. utility poles, bridges). Nest sites typically in located in tall, isolated trees or snags. Abundant flying insect prey also important.	Moderate. May occasionally fly over the Proposed RPA area during migration but is not expected to nest on-site. Multiple EBird occurrences are reported for this species within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area including several along State Route 58 just south of the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i> Osprey	WL	Forages and nests along rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.	Moderate. Suitable nesting habitat is present in riparian areas of the Proposed RPA area and the adjacent Salinas River. Multiple occurrences are reported from EBird within 10 miles of the Proposed RPA area including one less than one mile to the west.
<i>Strix occidentalis occidentalis</i> California spotted owl	CSSC, BCC	Resident in old growth forest, including coniferous and pine-oak. Requires a relatively closed tree canopy and the presence of dead and dying trees. Often occurs in wooded canyons. Nests in tree cavities and hollow stumps.	Not likely to occur. Very limited suitable habitat for this species may occur within the Proposed RPA area however there are no records of this species within the general vicinity.
<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i> Least Bell's vireo	FE, SE	Summer visitor. Breeds in riparian woodland and scrub along perennial or nearly perennial streams; prefers early successional vegetation. Willows and mulefat typically used for nesting.	Moderate. Limited riparian habitat is present in the Proposed RPA area. Suitable habitat present along the Salinas River. According to USFWS recent surveys have observed this species downstream of the Proposed RPA area near San Miguel (Diehl, 2013, personal reference).

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i> Yellow-headed blackbird	CSSC	Prefer to breed in freshwater wetlands with dense, emergent vegetation (i.e., cattails).	Moderate. The preferred habitat for this species is not present within the Proposed RPA area but may be present in the adjacent Salinas River. An eBird occurrence reports this species from Santa Margarita Lake approximately 7 miles to the south.
Mammals			
<i>Antrozous pallidus</i> Pallid bat	CSSC	Deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. Roost sites include old ranch buildings, rocky outcrops and caves within sandstone outcroppings. Roosts must protect bats from high temperatures. Very sensitive to disturbance of roosting sites.	High. Suitable rock crevices and hollow trees are present throughout the Proposed RPA area. This species has been documented within 3.7 miles of west the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Bassariscus astutus</i> Ringtail cat	CFP	Occurs in chaparral, coastal sage scrub, riparian scrub, oak woodlands, and riparian woodlands in proximity to permanent water.	Moderate. Suitable habitat is present within the Proposed RPA area. Salinas River provides a permanent water source.
<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i> Townsend's big-eared bat	CST, CSSC	Wide variety of habitats but most common in mesic sites. Day roosts highly associated with caves and mines. Need appropriate roosting, maternity, and hibernacula sites free from human disturbance.	Moderate. Suitable roost habitat is not present within the Proposed RPA area but may forage within the Proposed RPA area. This species, however has been documented within 2.3 miles of the Proposed RPA area along Santa Margarita Creek (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Dipodomys heermanni morroensis</i> Morro Bay kangaroo rat	FE, SE, CFP	Coastal sage scrub on the south side of Morro Bay. Needs sandy soil, but not active dunes, prefers early seral stages with little vegetation.	Not likely to occur. Suitable habitat is not present, and the Proposed RPA area is outside the known range for this species.
<i>Dipodomys ingens</i> Giant kangaroo rat	FE, SE	Annual grasslands on the western side of the San Joaquin Valley, marginal habitat in alkali scrub. Need level terrain and sandy loam soils for burrowing.	Not likely to occur. Suitable habitat is not present, and the Proposed RPA area is outside the known range for this species.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i> Western mastiff bat	CSSC	Wide variety of open, arid and semi-arid habitats. Distribution appears to be tied to large rock structures which provide suitable roosting sites, including cliff crevices and cracks in boulders.	Moderate. Suitable roost habitat is not present within the Proposed RPA area but may forage within the Proposed RPA area. This species, however, has been documented within 9.5 miles southwest of the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Lasiurus blossevillii</i> Western red bat	CSSC	Typically solitary, roosting primarily in the foliage of trees or shrubs. Day roosts are commonly in edge habitats adjacent to streams or open fields. There may be an association with intact riparian habitat.	High. Suitable habitat is present in riparian woodlands within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Myotis thysanodes</i> Fringed myotis	WBWG	Wide variety of habitats, including various woodland types. Buildings, mines and large snags are important day and night roosts.	High. Suitable forest and woodland habitat, with many large snags, is present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Myotis volans</i> Long-legged myotis	WBWG	Generally associated with woodlands and forested habitats, but habitat highly variable. Large hollow trees, rock crevices and buildings are important day roosts. Other roosts include caves, mines and buildings.	High. Suitable forest and woodland habitat, with many large snags, is present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Myotis yumanensis</i> Yuma myotis	WBWG	Preferred habitats are open forests and woodlands with sources of water over which to feed. Distribution is closely tied to bodies of water. Maternity colonies occur in caves, mines, buildings, or crevices.	High. Suitable forest and woodland habitat is present within the Proposed RPA area.
<i>Taxidea taxus</i> American badger	CSSC	Most abundant in drier open stages of most shrub, forest, and herbaceous habitats, with friable soils. Requires friable soils and open, uncultivated ground. Preys on burrowing rodents.	Moderate. Limited suitable habitat is present within and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. The CNDDDB reports an occurrence approximately 3.5 miles to the southwest of the Proposed RPA area (CNDDDB, 2013).
<i>Vulpes macrotis mutica</i> San Joaquin kit fox	FE, ST	Found in annual grasslands or grassy open stages with scattered shrubby vegetation. Need loose textured sandy soils for burrowing, and suitable prey base.	Not likely to occur. Suitable habitat is not present within the Proposed RPA area.

Table 4.6-3. Special-Status Wildlife Species with Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project Area

Species	Status	Habitat Associations	Potential to Occur
Federal Rankings: FE = Federally Endangered FT = Federally Threatened FC = Federal Candidate for Listing BCC = USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern	State Rankings: SE = State Endangered ST = State Threatened CST = Candidate for listing as State Threatened CFP = California Fully Protected SA = CDFW Special Animal WL = CDFW Watch List CSSC = California Species of Special Concern WBWG = Western Bat Work Group Species of Concern		

Wildlife Movement

The Salinas River and adjacent uplands provide a mosaic of habitats that support resident and migratory species. The Lower North Salinas River riparian corridor, including the Proposed RPA area, has been identified as a landscape linkage that connects the Santa Lucia and Diablo Ranges. This corridor provides connectivity for steelhead, “stepping stone” or “migratory stopover” habitat for neotropical migratory birds, and movement linkages for large and small mammals (Penrod et al., 2001). The Proposed RPA area provides habitat for a broad array of species and it is likely that many species use the area for movement. Wildlife corridors and functions must be evaluated in the context of individual species and their ecology. For example, low mobility species including snakes, lizards, and small mammals often have restricted home ranges. Animals in this group reproduce with animals in adjacent habitat and gene flow moves slowly along a region. Conserving open areas and linkages for these species is important to prevent species from becoming isolated from other populations. Wide ranging species including mountain lions have broad territories which require the preservation of wildlife corridors and linkages to natural lands.

Wildlife corridors facilitate movement between habitats that would otherwise be isolated. These corridors include habitat linkages between natural areas, greenbelts, and refuge systems. They can divert wildlife across permanent physical barriers to aid dispersal (e.g., underpasses and ramps that help wildlife cross highways and dams) (Haas, 2000; Simberloff et al., 1992). Noss (1987) suggests several benefits of corridors, including the promotion of species richness and diversity, decreased probability of extinction, maintenance of genetic variation, increased mix of habitat and successional stages, and alternative refugia from large disturbances.

The following corridor functions are important in evaluating impacts to wildlife movement corridors:

- **Movement corridors** are physical connections that allow wildlife to move between patches of suitable habitat.
- **Dispersal corridors** are linear landscape features that link two or more areas of suitable habitat that would otherwise be fragmented and isolated from one another by rugged terrain, changes in vegetation, or human-altered environments (Beier and Noss, 1998). Dispersal corridors provide physical links for genetic exchange and allow animals to access alternative territories as dictated by fluctuating population densities.
- **Landscape habitat linkages** (or simply linkages) are relatively large open space areas that contain natural habitat and provide connection between at least two larger adjacent open spaces that can provide for both diffusion and dispersal of many species (USACE and CDFG, 2010).

- **Wildlife buffers** are areas between the urban development edge and an important biological resource. These buffers protect the resource from adverse edge effects such as habitat degradation, increased occurrence of non-native and urban-related species, increased predation from domestic animals and mesopredators (e.g., raccoons, skunks, snakes, foxes), and other edge effects. (USACE and CDFG, 2010)

4.6.2 San Luis Obispo County Plans and Policies

The County’s COSE was adopted in 2010 and addresses the identification, protection and management of open space and biological resources. Additionally, the County has incorporated State and federal approaches to wetlands into its Land Use Ordinance (Title 22 of the County Code) for both the inland and coastal portions of the County. The County’s relevant plans and policies related to biological resources are provided in Table 4.6-4.

Table 4.6-4. San Luis Obispo County – Applicable Plans and Policies

Source	Policy, Plan, or Standard
County of San Luis Obispo General Plan	
Framework for Planning (Inland): The Land Use and Circulation Elements of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan (County, 2013)	
Planning Principle 1, Policy 3	Preserve and sustain important water resources, watersheds and riparian habitats.
Planning Principle 2, Policy 1	Maintain rural areas in agriculture, low-intensity recreation, very low-density residential uses, and open space uses that preserve and enhance a well-defined rural character.
Conservation and Open Space Element (May 2010)	
Policy BR 1.1	Protect Sensitive Biological Resources. Protect sensitive biological resources such as wetlands, migratory species of the Pacific flyway, and wildlife movement corridors through: 1) environmental review of proposed development applications, including consideration of cumulative impacts, 2) participation in comprehensive habitat management programs with other local and resource agencies, and 3) acquisition and management of open space lands that provide for permanent protection of important natural habitats.
Policy BR 1.2	Limit Development Impacts. Regulate and minimize proposed development in areas that contain essential habitat for special-status species, sensitive natural communities, wetlands, coastal and riparian habitats, and wildlife habitat and movement corridors as necessary to ensure the continued health and survival of these species and protection of sensitive areas.
Policy BR 1.3	Environmental Review. Require environmental review of development applications pursuant to CEQA and County procedures to assess the impact of proposed development on native species and habitat diversity, particularly special-status species, sensitive natural communities, wetlands, and important wildlife nursery areas and movement corridors.
Policy BR 1.4	No Net Loss. Require that development projects are approved with conditions and mitigation measures to ensure the protection of sensitive resources and to achieve “no net loss” of sensitive habitat acreage, values, and function. Give highest priority to avoidance of sensitive habitat. When avoidance is not feasible, require provision of replacement habitat onsite through restoration and/or habitat creation. When onsite mitigation is not feasible, provide for offsite mitigation that reflects no net loss.

Table 4.6-4. San Luis Obispo County – Applicable Plans and Policies

Source	Policy, Plan, or Standard
Policy BR 1.9	Preserve Ecotones. Require that proposed discretionary development protects and enhances ecotones, or natural transitions between habitat types because of their importance to vegetation and wildlife. Ecotones of particular concern include those along the margins of riparian corridors, bay lands and marshlands, vernal pools, and woodlands and forests where they transition to grasslands and other habitat types.
Policy BR 1.10	Identify and Protect Ecologically Sensitive Areas. Protect and enable management of ecologically sensitive areas to the maximum extent feasible.
Policy BR 1.11	Protect Wildlife Nursery Areas and Movement Corridors. Identify, protect, and enable the management of connected habitat areas for wildlife movement. Features of particular importance to wildlife for movement may include, but are not limited to, riparian corridors, shorelines of the coast and bay, and ridgelines. Identification and designation of wildlife corridors will not interfere with agricultural uses on private lands. (Refer to AGP 29 in the Agriculture Element).
Policy BR 1.12	<p>Development Impacts to Corridors. Ensure that important corridors for wildlife movement and dispersal are protected as a condition of discretionary permits. Provide linkages and corridors as needed to connect sensitive habitat areas such as woodlands, forests, and wetlands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 1.12.1 Identify and protect wildlife corridors. Require all discretionary development applications in rural areas, including land divisions, to identify and protect wildlife corridors, and avoid disturbance of identified key wildlife corridors as the primary method of protection. • Implementation Strategy BR 1.12.2 Mitigate impacts to wildlife corridors. If avoidance is not feasible, re-establish and/or restore important wildlife corridors that may have been damaged or disrupted.
Policy BR 1.13	Maintain Safe Wildlife Movement. Maintain and enhance existing stream channels and riparian corridors to provide for wildlife movement at roadway crossings.
Policy BR 1.15	<p>Restrict Disturbance in Sensitive Habitat during Nesting Season. Avoid impacts to sensitive riparian corridors, wetlands, and coastal areas to protect bird-nesting activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 1.15.1 Identify setbacks from bird nesting areas. Design land divisions and development with adequate setbacks from sensitive habitat areas that are occupied during the nesting season to protect bird nesting, rearing, and fledging activities. • Implementation Strategy BR 1.15.2 Preconstruction surveys for bird nesting areas. Require preconstruction surveys, using established protocols, where development is proposed in sensitive habitat areas during the nesting season in order to protect nests in active use.
Policy BR 2.1	<p>Coordinate with Trustee Agencies. The County will consult with trustee and other relevant state and federal agencies during environmental review when special-status species, sensitive natural communities, marine resources, or wetlands may be affected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 2.1.1 Coordination with trustees during discretionary review. During review of discretionary development applications, coordinate with relevant trustee agencies and require evidence of compliance with any necessary permits from federal and state agencies prior to issuance of grading or building permits.
Policy BR 2.2	<p>Promote Early Consultation with Other Agencies. Require applicants to consult with all agencies with review and/or permit authority for projects in areas supporting wetlands and special-status species at the earliest opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 2.2.1 Promote pre-application activities. Inform applicants during pre-application review or other presubmittal activities about other agencies that may have jurisdiction, and the policies and standards of those agencies that may regulate proposed development activities.
Policy BR 2.4	<p>Species Recovery Programs. Support recovery programs for endangered and threatened species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 2.4.1 Require consistency with recovery plans. Require that applications for discretionary land use projects and land divisions located in the habitat for endangered or threatened species be consistent with applicable recovery plans.

Table 4.6-4. San Luis Obispo County – Applicable Plans and Policies

Source	Policy, Plan, or Standard
Policy BR 2.6	<p>Development Impacts to Listed Species. Ensure that potential adverse impacts to threatened, rare, and endangered species from development are avoided or minimized through project siting and design. Ensure that proposed development avoids significant disturbance of sensitive natural plant communities that contain special-status plant species or provide critical habitat to special-status animal species. When avoidance is not feasible, require no net loss of sensitive natural plant communities and critical habitat areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 2.6.1 Use of biological resource surveys. Require applications for discretionary projects and land divisions to provide a biological resource survey performed by a qualified biologist when needed to address special-status animal and plant species and their associated habitats. • Implementation Strategy BR 2.6.2 Use of habitat preservation ratio. Where avoidance, restoration, or replacement of habitat of special status species is not feasible, require preservation and/or enhancement of similar habitat at a minimum 2:1 ratio to avoid significant cumulative loss of valuable habitats and to achieve no net loss of habitat value. • Implementation Strategy BR 2.6.3 Use of easements to protect habitat. Obtain easements or dedications to protect habitat, especially where it is connected to other large areas of unique or sensitive habitat. Natural open space areas in development projects should be contiguous to natural areas adjacent to the site wherever possible. • Implementation Strategy BR 2.6.4 Use of habitat banking or TDC program. As an alternative to onsite mitigation and habitat protection, consider participation in an established habitat banking or Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program if the project meets the criteria of the program. (Also refer to Policy OS 1.15.)
Policy BR 2.8	<p>Invasive Plant Species. Promote and support efforts to reduce the effects of noxious weeds on natural habitats. The County will work with local resource and land management agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to controlling the spread of non-native invasive species and reducing their extent on both public and private land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 2.8.3 Require removal of invasive exotic plants. Require the removal of invasive exotic plant species, to the extent feasible, when reviewing discretionary development projects, and include monitoring to prevent re-establishment in managed areas. Support educational programs that inform property owners about appropriate vegetation management techniques.
Policy BR 3.1	<p>Native Tree Protection. Protect native and biologically valuable trees, oak woodlands, trees with historical significance, and forest habitats to the maximum extent feasible.</p>
Policy BR 3.2	<p>Protection of Native Trees in New Development. Require proposed discretionary development and land divisions to avoid damage to native trees (e.g., Monterey Pines, oaks) through setbacks, clustering, or other appropriate measures. When avoidance is not feasible, require mitigation measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 3.2.1 Tree replacement in new development. If avoidance of damage to native specimen trees is not feasible in discretionary land use permits and land divisions, require mitigation measures such as tree replacement using native stock at specified ratios, replanting plans, reseeded disturbed open areas with native, drought, and fire resistant species. A long-term monitoring plan will also be required.
Policy BR 3.3	<p>Oak Woodland Preservation. Maintain and improve oak woodland habitat to provide for slope stabilization, soil protection, species diversity, and wildlife habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 3.3.1 Implement Oak Woodlands Preservation Act. Comply with the Oak Woodlands Preservation Act (PRC Section 21083.4) through the review of proposed discretionary development by maintaining the integrity and diversity of oak woodlands, chaparral communities, and other significant vegetation. • Implementation Strategy BR 3.3.3 Oak Woodlands Management Plan. Prepare an Oak Woodlands Management Plan that includes significance standards and mitigation requirements for discretionary projects that affect oak woodlands. The plan should also identify a conceptual reserve system that, if preserved, would ensure that oak woodlands achieve long-term sustainability in the county. Mitigation for impacts to oak woodlands could be directed to the reserve system. If an in lieu fee is required for small projects, the fees should be used to purchase easements within the reserve system from willing landowners. Prepare and release the public review draft management plan by the end of 2013.
Policy BR 3.5	<p>Non-native Trees. Protect healthy and non-hazardous, non-native trees (e.g., eucalyptus groves) and forests that provide raptor nesting or roosting sites or support colonies of monarch butterflies.</p>

Table 4.6-4. San Luis Obispo County – Applicable Plans and Policies

Source	Policy, Plan, or Standard
Policy BR 4.1	<p>Protect Stream Resources. Protect streams and riparian vegetation to preserve water quality and flood control functions and associated fish and wildlife habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 4.1.1 Approach to stream protection. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Require preservation of natural streams and associated riparian vegetation in an undisturbed state to the greatest extent feasible in order to protect banks from erosion, enhance wildlife passageways, and provide natural greenbelts. b. Include stream and riparian corridors as part of a network of wildlife corridors. c. Protect stream corridors and setback areas through easements or dedications. d. Protect the needs of wildlife when watercourse alteration is undertaken, explore alternatives to alteration, and assure that stream diversion structures protect habitats.
Policy BR 4.2	<p>Minimize Impacts from Development. Minimize the impacts of public and private development on streams and associated riparian vegetation due to construction, grading, resource extraction, and development near streams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 4.2.1 Setbacks from streams and riparian vegetation. Set back development on public lands and all private development subject to discretionary review a minimum of 50 feet from the top of the bank of any stream or outside the drip line of riparian vegetation, whichever distance is greater, as shown in Figures BR-6 and BR-7[of the General Plan]. (Top of creek bank is the uppermost ground elevation paralleling a creek or watercourse where the gradient changes from a more defined vertical component to more horizontal.) Locate buildings and structures outside the setback; public trails may be located within this required setback only if trail design and construction avoid or mitigate environmental impacts. Provide for adjustments where alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging, but require a minimum 30-foot building setback consistent with the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan. The following apply to applications subject to this strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do not grade inside the established setback, unless the applicant provides justification that alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging. When grading is permitted within the setback, require erosion control during construction and habitat restoration following grading. 2) Limit the alteration of riparian vegetation. 3) Allow stream alterations for water supply and flood control projects, road maintenance, maintenance of existing channels, improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, or where no practical alternative is available. 4) Assure that stream diversion structures protect habitats. 5) When there is no practical alternative to a significant impact to stream or riparian resources, implement a County-approved mitigation and monitoring plan that will lessen the impact. The plan shall be prepared and implemented by a qualified professional funded by the applicant. 6) Where a nexus exists with the proposed project, restore damaged riparian habitats as a condition of approval. 7) Where possible, protect stream corridors and setback areas through easements or dedications. 8) Locate parcel lines in land divisions that include stream or 9) Direct polluting drainage away from the creek or include appropriate filters consistent with Low Impact Development (LID) and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program 10) Minimize all ground disturbance and native vegetation removal. 11) To offset possible losses of riparian woodland, provide and maintain similar quality and quantity of replacement habitat or in-kind funds to an approved wildlife habitat improvement and acquisition fund in San Luis Obispo County.
Policy BR 4.5	<p>Encourage Stream Preservation on Private Lands. Encourage private landowners to protect and preserve stream corridors in their natural state and to restore stream corridors that have been degraded.</p>
Policy BR 5.1	<p>Protect Wetlands. Require development to avoid wetlands and provide upland buffers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 5.1.1 Wetland delineations for new development. Require development applications to include wetland delineation for sites with jurisdictional wetlands and wetlands that support rare, threatened, or endangered species and to demonstrate compliance with these wetlands policies, standards, and criteria, and with state and federal regulations.

Table 4.6-4. San Luis Obispo County – Applicable Plans and Policies

Source	Policy, Plan, or Standard
Policy BR 5.2	<p>No Net Loss of Wetlands. Ensure that all public and private projects avoid impacts to wetlands if feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, ensure no net loss of wetlands, consistent with state and federal regulations and this Element.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 5.2.1 Identify wetlands and minimize impacts. For projects subject to discretionary review: 1) require a report from a qualified biologist to determine the extent of wetlands, potential impacts of the project and recommended mitigation measures, and 2) minimize impacts to wetlands through measures such as a clustering development, low impact development (LID) and use of vegetated swales.
Policy BR 6.1	<p>Avoid Impacts to Fisheries. Require all proposed discretionary land use projects and land divisions to avoid impacts to freshwater and saltwater fisheries and wildlife habitat to the maximum extent feasible. When avoidance is not feasible, offset potential losses of fisheries and wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategy BR 6.1.1 Prohibitions in special-status fish spawning areas. Prohibit construction activities within the channel of any waterway identified to contain existing or potential spawning habitat for special-status fish species during periods of spawning activities.

4.6.3 Regulatory Setting

The following regulations, plans, and standards, have been reviewed and considered in this analysis. Appendix C includes full descriptions of each of these applicable regulations, plans, and standards as related to biological resources.

4.6.3.1 Federal Policies

- **Federal Endangered Species Act.** Administered by the USFWS, this Act protects federally listed threatened and endangered species.
- **Migratory Bird Treaty Act.** This Act prohibits killing, possessing, or trading migratory birds.
- **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.** This Act prohibits the taking, possession, and commerce of bald and golden eagles without a permit, and establishes civil penalties for violation of the act.
- **Regulated Habitat.** Areas meeting the regulatory definition of “Waters of the U.S.” (Jurisdictional Waters) are subject to the jurisdiction of the USACE under provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (1972) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (1899).

4.6.3.2 State Policies

- **California Endangered Species Act.** Administered by the CDFW, this Act regulates activities that may result in take of State-listed threatened and endangered species.
- **Regulated Habitats.** Those waters determined to be “Waters of the State” under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and found to be jurisdictional under Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code.
- **Oak Woodlands Conservation.** California Public Resources Code Section 21083.4 requires each county in California to consider a project’s impacts to oak woodlands during the CEQA environmental review process. If a county determines that there would be significant impacts to oak woodlands, it must require one or more specified mitigation alternatives to mitigate the significant effect of the conversion of oak woodlands.

4.6.3.3 Other Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

- **California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rare Plant Program.** This Program provides current and accurate information on California's rare and endangered plants.
- **Voluntary Oak Woodlands Management Plan for San Luis Obispo County.** This Plan describes conservation and mitigation strategies for oak trees and oak woodlands in the County. These guidelines are voluntary.

4.6.4 Assessment Methodology

The existing conditions described in EIR Section 4.6.1 provide the basis for evaluating potential impacts of the Proposed Project. For the purposes of this analysis, only activities conducted in the proposed expansion area are evaluated for potential impacts to biological resources. Ongoing operation of the existing quarry, including activities adjacent to the Salinas River are considered to be part of "baseline" conditions and are not evaluated because they are considered to be part of the Applicant's vested rights, as outlined in EIR Section 2.4, Project History and Description of Existing Entitlements. Potential impacts to biological resources for the entire Proposed RPA area were considered for the reclamation phase of the Proposed Project.

Significance Criteria

To satisfy requirements of CEQA, conclusions are made regarding the significance of each identified impact that would result from the Proposed Project. Appropriate criteria have been identified and utilized to make these significance conclusions. The following significance criteria for biological resources were derived from the San Luis Obispo County Environmental Checklist, previous environmental analyses, and State CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, Section IX). Impacts would be considered significant and would require mitigation if the Proposed Project would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS.
- Have an adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species listed as endangered, threatened, or proposed or critical habitat for these species.
- Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS.
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
- Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.
- Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinances.
- Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), or other approved local, regional, or state HCP.

The Proposed RPA area is not within or near any adopted HCP, NCCP, or other conservation plan area. Therefore, no impact would occur under the last significance criterion.

4.6.5 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Direct impacts are defined under CEQA as those that result from a project and occur at the same time and place. For biological resources, direct impacts can include the removal of vegetation, disturbance to wildlife from project-related activities, or the crushing of burrows. Indirect impacts are those that are caused by a project, but can occur later in time or are farther removed in distance but are reasonably foreseeable and related to the project. Indirect impacts can include the disruption of native seed banks, spread of invasive plant species, changes to soil or hydrology that adversely affects native species over time, disruption of prey base, or increased predation through alterations of the physical landscape from project features. Indirect impacts may also include increased traffic and human disturbance.

Permanent and Temporary Impacts

Permanent Project-related impacts include the conversion of land to a new use, such as the construction of new roads or the removal of topsoil and vegetation for excavation. Although the Proposed Project's excavated areas would ultimately be reclaimed, for the purposes of this analysis excavation is considered to result in a permanent loss of habitat because of the extended time frame of the Proposed Project (59 years of mining and 5 years for reclamation; resulting in a degradation of habitat for 64 years). Vegetation established on reclaimed areas would take several years to re-establish and may never replace the full functional habitat values that were present prior to excavation. The duration of time that functioning habitat would be absent from the Proposed Project's footprint effectively precludes multiple generations of most wildlife from effectively residing or foraging in the Proposed RPA area.

Temporary impacts are considered activities that are of short duration (i.e., six to 12 months) and that do not result in a permanent land use conversion. Temporary impacts of the Proposed Project include noise, human disturbance, and vehicle traffic associated with active excavation in the proposed expansion area. These impacts would be temporary at any given location while active mining is occurring, but would be ongoing over the course of the Project's lifetime within the greater Proposed RPA area.

Quarry operations would occur in four overlapping phases. Each phase would include vegetation removal, topsoil salvaging, overburden stripping, resource extraction, and reclamation. Concurrent reclamation would occur with mining where practicable on benches that have achieved final contours. Final reclamation of the Proposed RPA area would be completed in Phase IV and during the Final Reclamation phase. It is anticipated that all four phases of mining and final reclamation would be completed in approximately 64 years (EnviroMINE, 2013).

The Applicant has proposed several mitigation measures ("APMs") to avoid or minimize impacts per the recommendations of the Proposed Project's Biological Resource Assessment (WRA, 2012c). Where applicable, these measures have been incorporated into the mitigation measures proposed in this analysis and, therefore, are considered to supersede the APMs. Where APMs were considered insufficient to reduce impacts to a level of less than significant, additional mitigation measures have been recommended. The original APMs for impacts to biological resources include the following:

- **APM 1.1.** Prior to proposed removal of jurisdictional waters, regulatory permits may need to be obtained, subject to consultation and coordination with the appropriate agencies. Any mitigation required will be determined in coordination with the agencies.

- **APM 1.2.** A minimum setback of approximately 130 feet from the Salinas River and associated riparian woodland habitat will be put in place during all quarry extension grading.
- **APMs 1.3 and 9.2.** A detailed Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to avoid increased sediment loads within the downslope portions of the Proposed RPA area and Salinas River will be prepared and implemented. Best management practices (BMPs) will prevent debris and increased sediment loads from entering the river and obstructing or degrading the migration corridor.
- **APM 2.1.** Removal of oak woodland will occur incrementally within each [quarry] phase to reduce impacts in both space and time.
- **APM 2.2.** The proposed quarry extension will temporarily impact approximately 11.2 acres of oak woodland, in four phases over an approximately 38-year period. Public Resources Code Section 21083.4 requires the County to determine whether these impacts constitute a significant effect on oak woodlands, and if so, to require mitigation using conservation easements, replanting oaks, contributing to an oak woodland conservation fund, or other methods developed by the County. Appropriate mitigation for these impacts will be determined in consultation with the County during the application review process. There is opportunity for onsite oak woodland preservation and enhancement on adjacent parcels in the event that mitigation is called for.
- **APM 2.3.** To reduce the potential for spread of sudden oak death and other pests, all grubbed woody material will be chipped, spread out to dry, and disposed of on-site or otherwise responsibly disposed of.
- **APM 3.1.** Riparian vegetation located within the Proposed RPA area will be avoided during reclamation. If avoidance is not possible, any riparian woodland removed will be replaced during reclamation activities through replanting activities.
- **APM 3.2.** Riparian vegetation is generally regulated by the CDFW under Section 1602 of Fish and Game Code and, due to its association with steelhead trout Critical Habitat, it is also within the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). If this vegetation cannot be avoided during reclamation activities, consultation with appropriate agencies may be needed.
- **APMs 4.1 and 4.2.** If special status plant species are observed within the Proposed RPA area during the Proposed Project's 2012 biological surveys (WRA, 2012a and 2012d), proposed mitigation should include avoidance of the population. If avoidance is not feasible, additional mitigation can include conservation of populations on adjacent lands through use of a conservation easement or similar instrument or buying credits in a mitigation bank, if available.
- **APMs 5.1 and 5.2.** The removal of potential bat roost habitat (i.e., large trees, snags, vertical rock faces or rockpiles with interstitial crevices) will take place from September 1 to October 31 when possible to avoid potential impacts to bat maternity or hibernation roosts. If the September 1 to October 31 work window is not feasible, prior to removal of potential bat roost habitat, pre-construction bat roost surveys will be conducted in the Proposed RPA area within 100 feet of the proposed disturbance area, to determine if bats are occupying roosts; work should be completely avoided November 1 to March 31 when bats are hibernating.
- **APM 5.3.** If bats are present, a suitable buffer around each occupied roost site will be instated, or bats will be excluded from the roost using methods recommended by a qualified biologist.
- **APMs 6.1 and 6.2.** The removal of potential breeding bird habitat (i.e., vegetation) or initial ground disturbance will take place from September 1 to January 31 to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If the September 1 to January 31 work window is not feasible, prior to removal of potential breed-

ing bird habitat or initial ground disturbance, preconstruction breeding bird surveys will be conducted covering the impacted area(s) and surrounding areas within 200 feet. If work occurs from February 1 to June 15, pre-construction surveys will be performed within 14 days prior to such activities; if work occurs from June 16 to August 31, pre-construction surveys will be performed within 30 days prior to such activities.

- **APM 6.3.** If nesting birds are found during pre-construction surveys, a suitable exclusion buffer will be instated around each active nest and maintained until the nest is inactive. Buffer sizes will be determined by a qualified biologist and will vary between species and disturbance contexts surrounding nests; buffers will be larger for special status species.
- **APMs 7.1 and 7.2.** The removal of vegetation or initial ground disturbance will take place from September 1 to January 31 to avoid potential impacts to golden eagle. If the September 1 to January 31 work window is not feasible, prior to removal of vegetation or initial ground disturbance, pre-construction golden eagle nest surveys will be conducted covering the impacted area(s) and surrounding areas within 0.25 mile. If work occurs from February 1 to June 15, preconstruction surveys will be performed within 14 days prior to such activities; if work occurs from June 16 to August 31, pre-construction surveys will be performed within 30 days prior to such activities.
- **APM 7.3.** If nesting golden eagles are found during pre-construction surveys, an exclusion buffer of 0.25 mile will be instated around each active nest and maintained until the nest is inactive. Buffers may be reduced in size if a qualified biologist determines that a reduced buffer will not result in adverse impacts and there is concurrence by CDFG.
- **APM 8.1** Prior to the removal of vegetation or initial ground disturbance, preconstruction surveys for coast horned lizard and silvery legless lizard will be conducted by a qualified biologist within each phased area of the quarry extension. Survey effort will be focused on microhabitats most suitable for each species. All individuals of both species captured will be relocated to suitable habitat outside of the Proposed RPA area.
- **APM 8.2.** During all vegetation removal and grubbing activities, a qualified biological monitor (or monitors) will be present to supervise the work, and capture and relocate as many individuals of both special status reptile species as is feasible. The biological monitor(s) will have the authority to temporarily halt work to avoid impacts to special status reptiles or other protected biological resources.
- **APMs 9.3 and 11.3.** Consultation with NMFS may be required for potential indirect impacts to steelhead and steelhead Critical Habitat.
- **APM 10.2.** The 0.18 acre of California red legged frog Critical Habitat will be reclaimed and revegetated by approximately 2081, after resources are extracted, and should resemble its pre-impact state under future conditions.

General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources

The following discussion provides a summary of the overall types of impacts to biological resources that could occur due to excavation within the proposed expansion area. This general discussion is subsequently detailed in the analysis for Impact BIO-1 through Impact BIO-5, further below.

The excavation process begins with grubbing vegetation and the removal of topsoil and overburden. Overburden materials include soils, clays, and low quality granite that are not suitable for immediate quarry use or sale. Once the area is cleared of vegetation, topsoil and overburden is salvaged and stockpiled for use in reclamation. Drilling and blasting is then conducted and the rock is fed into a primary crushing plant that feeds an overland conveyor, or otherwise is transported via haul trucks to the pro-

cessing plants; both of these methods would be used at various times during the Proposed Project's lifetime. General excavation impacts to vegetation would involve direct effects including clearing vegetation, and indirect effects such as fugitive dust and the spread of nonnative and invasive weeds (especially to adjacent habitats off site). Excessive fugitive dust can reduce photosynthetic capacity in plants over time and inhibit reproduction by physically coating reproductive structures or excluding insect pollinators.

Direct impacts to wildlife could occur from excavation activities as a result of mechanical crushing, road kill, loss of breeding sites, disturbance from human activity and vehicles, and trampling. Disturbances to wildlife would be associated with the removal of vegetation, blasting, and large-scale alterations of existing topographical and hydrological conditions. Indirect impacts to wildlife could include noise and vibration from blasting and earthmoving, fugitive dust, the degradation of water quality, changes in water runoff due to alterations in topography, increased erosion and sediment transport, and the spread of noxious weeds. Increased lighting during low-light periods and noise can cause some species to leave the area and can disrupt foraging, breeding, or other activities. Many insects are drawn to light, and species that prey on insects, such as bats, may be attracted to lighted areas which would increase the potential for disturbance or mortality. General direct impacts to wildlife are summarized in Table 4.6-5.

Table 4.6-5. Direct Impacts to Wildlife from Excavation Activities

Activity	Impacts
Mammals	
Earth moving, grading, habitat/vegetation removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct mortality to small or less mobile species ▪ Crushing of burrows, disruption of soil surfaces, compaction of soils, and displacement of native species ▪ Reduced use of area as a foraging or movement corridor ▪ Fugitive dust and habitat loss ▪ Creation of barriers disrupting movement between denning and foraging areas
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interference with breeding or foraging activities and movement patterns ▪ Avoidance of areas adjacent to the excavation zone ▪ Interference with hearing resulting in increased predation ▪ Abandonment of burrows
Man-made sources of light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disturbance or mortality to species that prey on insects attracted to light sources
Placement and use of access roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crushing of burrows, disruption of soil surfaces, compaction of soils, and displacement of native species ▪ Establishment of ruts or depressions that can alter soil conditions and hydrology ▪ Alteration of physical characteristics of soil underneath roads (placement of roads increases compaction up to 200 times relative to undisturbed sites) ▪ Effect on animal behavior by altering home range use, affect movement patterns, reduce reproductive success, alter escape response, and increase physiological stress
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accidental mortality of small diurnal animals from vehicle collision ▪ Secondary vehicular mortality of opportunistic predators feeding on road kill
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ingestion of ethylene glycol antifreeze
Birds	
Earth moving, grading, habitat/vegetation removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Displacement of breeding birds and the abandonment of active nests (during breeding season) ▪ Loss of eggs and nestlings ▪ Loss of foraging habitat

Table 4.6-5. Direct Impacts to Wildlife from Excavation Activities

Activity	Impacts
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interference with breeding or foraging activities and movement patterns ▪ Avoidance of areas adjacent to the disturbance zone ▪ Interference with hearing resulting in increased predation ▪ Abandonment of nests
Man-made sources of light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disturbance or mortality to species that prey on insects attracted to light sources
Placement and use of access roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crushing of ground nests
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accidental mortality of opportunistic predators and scavengers (such as carrion birds) feeding on road kill ▪ Disruption of breeding, foraging, and movement of bird species resulting in nest, roost, or territory abandonment and subsequent reproductive failure (during breeding season)
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ingestion of microtrash (i.e., broken glass, paper and plastic waste, and small pieces of metal) or ethylene glycol antifreeze (particularly California condors)
Amphibians and Reptiles	
Earth moving, grading, habitat/vegetation removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct mortality to small or less mobile species ▪ Crushing of burrows, disruption of soil surfaces, compaction of soils, and displacement of native species ▪ Fugitive dust and habitat loss ▪ Degradation of water quality in breeding areas from erosion and sedimentation
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interference with breeding or foraging activities and movement patterns ▪ Avoidance of areas adjacent to the excavation zone ▪ Interference with hearing resulting in increased predation ▪ Abandonment of burrows
Placement and use of access roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unintentional entombment within burrows or aestivation sites ▪ Establishment of ruts or depressions that can alter soil conditions and hydrology ▪ Effect on animal behavior by altering home range use, affect movement patterns, reduce reproductive success, alter escape response, and increase physiological stress
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accidental mortality of small diurnal animals from vehicle collision ▪ Secondary vehicular mortality of opportunistic predators and scavengers feeding on road kill

General Reclamation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources

The following discussion provides a summary of the overall types of impacts to biological resources that could occur due to proposed reclamation of the entire Proposed RPA area. This description is subsequently detailed in the analysis for Impact BIO-1 through Impact BIO-5, further below.

Reclamation is the preparation of mined lands for alternative post-mining land uses, as well as the removal of residual mining hazards. Reclamation occurs after the completion of excavation, and generally consists of equipment removal, rough and finish grading, re-soiling, revegetation, and monitoring until reclamation performance standards are met. Reclamation of the Proposed RPA area would include establishing seasonal water storage, oak woodland habitat, riparian woodland habitat, and chaparral vegetation.

Final reclamation of the Proposed RPA area would take place after all excavation activities are completed. Any un-reclaimed areas would be reclaimed in this phase. Final Reclamation for the Proposed Project would include the removal of existing facilities and equipment, the establishment of remaining quarry benches, grading, ripping compacted areas, finish grading, and the distribution of an appropriate growth medium to support vegetation. Restoration would include the application of a native seed mix, direct planting, long term monitoring, and maintenance.

During site preparation and earth moving in the initial stages of reclamation, direct and indirect impacts to vegetation and wildlife would be similar to those described for excavation. Beneficial impacts from

the re-establishment of habitat would be realized as reclaimed vegetation matures. However, because excavation activities would continue to occur in areas within close proximity to reclaimed lands, these reclaimed areas would not provide the same functional habitat values as natural lands. Additionally, although reclamation would “restore” habitat, these reclaimed areas may never obtain the same functional value as pre-disturbance conditions. Nevertheless, reclaimed areas would support some native wildlife and vegetation, and, over time, the species composition and diversity of the Proposed RPA area would be expected to increase if native vegetation matures and additional native vegetation becomes established.

Impact BIO-1: Impact native vegetation, including sensitive communities

Native vegetation communities that occur in the Proposed RPA area include northern mixed chaparral, coast live oak woodland, chamise chaparral, riparian woodland, and ephemeral stream. Oak woodlands, riparian woodland, and ephemeral stream are sensitive vegetation communities. There are an estimated 753 oak trees in the Proposed RPA footprint; all would be removed during the excavation phase (WRA, 2012b).

Sensitive Communities. Some coast live oak woodland associations are of high priority for inventory by CDFW (CDFG, 2010). Oak forests and woodlands provide food, cover, and nesting or denning habitat for a variety of species. Oaks are the most evident vegetation, but the forests and woodlands are made up of diverse assemblages of understory shrubs, vines, herbs, grasses, and parasites (e.g., mistletoe). Standing dead trees and fallen logs provide essential habitat structure. Acorns, fruits, leaves, insects, seeds, mushrooms, and other fungi all provide food for wildlife. Oak woodlands and forests provide thermal cover for large mammals including deer, and escape cover for many other animals. Oak canopies and foliage provide perching, roosting, and nesting sites for a variety of birds. Cavities in the limbs or trunks of oak trees are used as nesting and denning sites by birds and mammals. Dead oak trees provide nest sites for woodpeckers (which build nesting cavities) and “secondary cavity nesters” which use old woodpecker nests. Woodpeckers and many secondary cavity nesters feed largely on insects, perhaps preventing large-scale insect outbreaks from killing off forest stands.

Some associations of arroyo willow thickets are also of high priority for inventory by CDFW (CDFG, 2010). Much of the natural riparian vegetation in California has been lost or degraded due to land use conversions to agricultural, urban, and recreational uses; channelization for flood control; sand and gravel mining; ground water pumping; water impoundments; and various other changes.

Riparian habitats, including ephemeral and perennial streams, are biologically productive and diverse, and are the exclusive habitat of several threatened or endangered wildlife species and many other special-status species. Riparian and wetland habitats are highly productive ecosystems that also provide drinking water sources and foraging, nesting, and cover habitat for a diverse assemblage of wildlife species, both within the riparian habitats and adjacent upland habitats. Many wildlife species are wholly dependent on riparian habitats throughout their life cycles, and many others use riparian habitats only during certain seasons or life history phases. For example, certain mammals require drinking water or cool shaded cover during summer but otherwise may live in upland habitats. Numerous amphibians breed in aquatic habitats but spend most of their lives in uplands.

In an otherwise arid landscape, primary productivity in riparian habitats is high due to year-round soil moisture. High plant productivity leads to increased habitat structural diversity and high food availability for herbivorous and (in turn) predatory animals. Insect productivity is also high, among both aquatic and terrestrial species. Insect numbers are very high during warm months, and serve as a prey base for a diverse breeding bird fauna, including several special-status birds. Habitat structure in riparian vegetation is also more diverse than in most regional uplands. Riparian woodlands tend to have multiple-layered

herb, shrub and tree canopies, whereas most upland shrublands are relatively simple in structure. The varied vertical habitat structure provides a greater diversity of nesting and feeding sites for birds compared with non-riparian communities. Similarly, mammal diversity is greater in riparian communities due to high biological productivity, denning site availability, thermal cover, and water availability.

Excavation

Excavation would occur over 59 years and would include the removal of 33.2 acres of intact vegetation.

Loss of Native Vegetation. Direct and indirect impacts to native vegetation would occur as described above under *General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources*. During excavation, a total of 33.2 acres of vegetation would be removed. Although this would be spread out over the 59-year mining phase, all vegetation in the Proposed RPA area and adjacent lands would be subject to indirect effects such as dust and the potential introduction or spread of weeds over the life of the Project. While the spread of weeds could occur from erosion control materials or from weed propagules via vehicles and equipment, this impact would be minor during the excavation phase because active mining areas would not support soils or suitable substrates for establishment of weeds, and most equipment working in the Proposed Project area would stay on site. However, weed propagules could be distributed into native vegetation in adjacent areas, including sensitive communities, either by wind or water runoff. Mitigation Measure BIO-1.2 requires erosion control materials to be weed free. Implementation of this measure would reduce potential weed impacts to less than significant (Class II).

The functional loss of 33.2 acres of vegetation over the 59-year excavation phase is considered a permanent impact because of the substantial temporal loss of habitat. This would be a significant and adverse impact. To mitigate this impact, Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1 requires compensatory mitigation for native vegetation at a 1:1 ratio for non-sensitive communities, and 3:1 ratio for sensitive riparian and oak woodland communities. Mitigation would not be required for impacts to areas already disturbed by current quarry operations, operational water features, and nonnative annual grassland because most of the areas are mapped as vested rights associated with the Quarry’s existing operations. Estimated direct impacts and associated mitigation for vegetation types in the Proposed RPA area are shown in Table 4.6-6. Only impacts to native vegetation in the proposed expansion area require mitigation, which can include onsite preservation, offsite acquisition and preservation, payment to an appropriate in-lieu fee program, or a combination these actions. Although APMs 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2 address sensitive vegetation, these APMs lack specificity and performance standards. The intent of these APMS has been incorporated into Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1 along with greater specificity to ensure enforceability. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts from the loss of vegetation to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Table 4.6-6. Vegetation Impacts

Vegetation Type ¹	Acres in RPA Footprint ²	Mitigation Ratio	Acres of Mitigation Land ³
Disturbed	51.5	0	0
Northern Mixed Chaparral	21.1	1:1	4.2
Coast Live Oak Woodland	11.2	3:1	33.6
Operational Water Feature	5.5	0	0
Chamise Chaparral	4.2	1:1	4.2
Nonnative Annual Grassland	0.6	0	0
Riparian Woodland	0.3	3:1	0.9

Table 4.6-6. Vegetation Impacts

Vegetation Type¹	Acres in RPA Footprint²	Mitigation Ratio	Acres of Mitigation Land³
Ephemeral Stream	0.08	3:1	0.24
Total			43.14

1 - Vegetation types listed in **bold** are sensitive communities.

2 - Approximate acreages as reported in WRA, 2012c (e.g., the acreage of each vegetation type that would be permanently impacted by the quarry's proposed expansion and therefore require mitigation, as documented in WRA, 2012c).

3 - Mitigation acres are approximate as some vegetation types overlap in the Proposed RPA footprint. In areas of overlap, the highest applicable mitigation ration will be required.

Dust. Earth moving, blasting, extraction, and processing of materials and associated vehicle travel on dirt roads would result in increased fugitive dust. Wind-blown dust can degrade soils and vegetation over a wide area (Okin et al., 2001). Dust can have deleterious physiological effects on plants and may affect their productivity and nutritional qualities (Sharifi et al., 1997). Fugitive dust can kill plants by burial and abrasion, interrupt natural processes of nutrient accumulation, and allow the loss of soil resources. The destruction of plants and soil crusts by windblown dust exacerbates the erodibility of soil and accelerates the loss of nutrients (Okin et al., 2001). As described in EIR Section 4.4 (Air Quality), all existing activities are subject to dust control requirements and prohibitions on visible emissions (APCD Rule 401) and are prohibited from causing dust at a level that constitutes a nuisance (APCD Rule 402). In addition, Mitigation Measure AQ-1 requires the control of fugitive dust as related to PM10. Compliance with these regulations and mitigation measure would ensure that the generation of fugitive dust is minimized. Impacts from dust would be considered less than significant with mitigation incorporated (Class II) and no further mitigation is warranted.

Reclamation

Proposed reclamation would include revegetation of four acres of riparian woodland, 26.6 acres of chaparral, and 12 acres of oak woodland within the Proposed RPA area (EnviroMINE, 2013).

Reclamation would occur concurrently with active mining for much of the life of the Project. Areas where extraction is complete would be reclaimed while extraction occurs at other locations in the Proposed RPA area. After completion of the quarry's 59-year operational phase, reclamation would continue for an additional five years to ensure that all of the Proposed RPA area is restored to open space condition. Beneficial impacts from re-establishment of habitat would be realized as reclaimed vegetation matures, but the functional value of reclaimed areas would not be re-established for a substantial period of time (extending beyond the life of the Project). Therefore, reclamation is not considered mitigation for impacts to native vegetation, as described under "Excavation," above.

Nonnative, Invasive Weeds. An indirect effect of reclamation activities would be the introduction or spread of nonnative, invasive weeds. Invasive weeds can displace native species, supplant food plants or other wildlife habitat elements (e.g., cover), alter natural habitat structure and ecological function, alter natural wildfire patterns, or displace special-status plant occurrences and habitat. The spread of invasive plants is an important threat to biological resources in California. Human activities can affect weed distribution and abundance through introduction of new weed species to an area, and facilitation or propagation and spread of weeds already present.

New weed introductions occur when seeds are inadvertently introduced to a site, most often with mulch, hay bales, or wattles used for erosion control, or when they are carried on equipment tires from off site. Invasive weeds generally spread most readily in disturbed, graded, or cultivated soils.

Control of weeds in the reclamation areas will be important to ensure successful establishment of native vegetation. However, herbicide use can result in indirect impacts to vegetation and wildlife in the reclamation area and in offsite riparian and aquatic habitat. Most aquatic herbicides, and several terrestrial herbicides, are non-selective and could adversely impact non-target vegetation. Accidental spills and herbicide drift from treatment areas could be particularly damaging to non-target vegetation. Should herbicides be used as a component of the reclamation activities, it is preferable to select an herbicide that has low toxicity, would not move from its target or leach into groundwater (low water solubility), and would not remain in the environment for a long period of time (low persistence).

Mitigation Measure BIO-1.2 would require the Applicant to implement a Weed Management Plan, which would include guidelines for the use of herbicides. Implementation of this mitigation measure in conjunction with the Proposed RPA's weed management provisions (RPA Section 4.15) would reduce impacts from invasive weeds to a level of less than significant (Class II).

BIO-1.1 Compensate for permanent excavation-phase impacts to vegetation. To compensate for permanent impacts to vegetation in the Proposed RPA footprint, the Applicant will implement one or more of the following: (1) onsite preservation of vegetation (in Proposed RPA area but outside of the Proposed RPA footprint), (2) acquisition and preservation of offsite lands, or (3) payment to an appropriate in-lieu fee program in the region. Compensation will be required at the following ratios (acres preserved to acres removed):

- Oak woodlands: 3:1
- Riparian woodland or scrub: 3:1
- Northern mixed chaparral: 1:1
- Chamise chaparral: 1:1
- Nonnative annual grassland, disturbed, and operational water features: no mitigation required

Compensatory mitigation lands shall be private lands and contain the same quality and types of vegetation impacted by the Proposed Project. A conservation easement shall be recorded on the mitigation lands to protect the existing plant and wildlife resources in perpetuity, and the Applicant shall fund an endowment for the management of compensation lands. The conservation easement shall be recorded immediately upon the dedication or acquisition of the land.

The Applicant shall either donate conservation easements or provide funds for the acquisition of conservation easements to a "qualified easement holder" (defined below). To qualify as a "qualified easement holder" a private land trust must have:

- Substantial experience managing conservation easements that are created to meet mitigation requirements for impacts to special-status species;
- Adopted the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices; and
- A stewardship endowment fund to pay for its perpetual stewardship obligations.

The County shall determine whether a proposed easement holder meets these requirements.

The Applicant shall also be responsible for providing the qualified easement holder fees sufficient to cover: (1) administrative costs incurred in the creation of the easement (appraisal, documenting baseline conditions, etc.); (2) funds to implement initial site clean-up and reha-

bilitation/restoration, as necessary; and, (3) funds in the form of a non-wasting endowment to cover the cost of monitoring and enforcing the terms of the easement in perpetuity. The amount of these administrative and stewardship fees shall be determined by the easement holder in consultation with the County.

The conservation easement(s) shall:

- Be held in perpetuity by a qualified easement holder (defined above).
- Be subject to a legally binding agreement that shall: (1) be recorded with the County Recorder(s); and (2) name CDFW or other approved organization to which the easement(s) will be conveyed if the original holder is dissolved.

Prior to County issuance of a Notice to Proceed, the Applicant shall obtain County approval of the location of mitigation lands, the holder of conservation easement(s), and the restrictions contained in said easement(s) created for the permanent protection of these lands. Documentation of recorded conservation easement(s) shall be submitted to and approved by the County prior to issuance of the Notice to Proceed. Verification of having met habitat mitigation requirements shall be reviewed and approved prior to the beginning of each Project phase by the County.

BIO-1.2 Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan during all Project phases. Prior to County issuance of a Notice to Proceed, the Applicant shall retain a County qualified restoration ecologist or biologist to prepare a comprehensive adaptive Weed Control Plan (WCP) to be administered during the excavation and reclamation phases of the Proposed Project. The WCP shall be submitted to the County for review and approval, in consultation with the CDFW, and shall be updated and utilized for weed eradication and monitoring for the life of the Proposed Project. The WCP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Conduct a pre-disturbance survey for weeds in all presently undisturbed areas that are proposed for ground-disturbing activity in the Proposed RPA footprint. Weed populations that are rated high or moderate for negative ecological impact in the California Invasive Plant Inventory Database (Cal-IPC, 2006) shall be mapped and described according to density and area covered. Areas with weed infestations shall be treated prior to ground disturbance in presently undisturbed areas according to control methods detailed below and BMPs for invasive weed populations.
- b. Weed control treatments shall include legally permitted herbicide, manual, and mechanical methods approved for application. The application of herbicides shall be in compliance with State and federal laws and regulations under the prescription of a Pest Control Advisor (PCA), where concurrence has been provided by the County of San Luis Obispo, and implemented by a Licensed Qualified Applicator. Herbicides shall not be applied during or within 72 hours of a scheduled rain event. Where manual or mechanical methods are used, plant debris will be disposed of at an appropriate offsite location. The timing of the weed control treatment shall be determined for each plant species with the goal of controlling populations before they start producing seeds. Consultation with a County qualified wildlife biologist or botanist shall be required prior to weed control treatments to develop strategies to avoid any adverse impacts to plants and wildlife in the area.
- c. Herbicides known to have residual toxicity, such as pre-emergents and pellets, will not be used in natural areas or within channels (engineered or not) where they could run off

into downstream areas. Only the following application methods may be used: wick (wiping onto leaves); inner bark injection; cut stump; frill or hack & squirt (into cuts in the trunk); basal bark girdling; foliar spot spraying with backpack sprayers or pump sprayers at low pressure or with a shield attachment to control drift, and only on windless days, or with a squeeze bottle for small infestations.

- d. Throughout the Project excavation and reclamation phases, all sites impacted by the Project (including access roads within the Proposed RPA area) will be surveyed annually for new invasive weed populations, and identified weed populations will be treated and monitored. Treatment of all identified weed populations shall occur at a minimum of once annually. When no new seedlings or re-sprouts are observed at treated sites for three consecutive, normal rainfall years, the weed population can be considered eradicated and weed control efforts may cease for that impact site.

Weed control efforts shall be timed annually to reduce invasive weed seed production. This entails conducting weed removal when flowering has just started, but before seeds have been produced. All plant debris shall be disposed of at an approved location. Weed control efforts shall generally commence in early spring (February), or as determined each year by a qualified restoration ecologist or biologist.

- e. All seeds and straw materials used during Project excavation and reclamation phases shall be weed-free rice straw or other weed-free product, and all gravel and fill material shall be weed free. Any deviation from this will be approved by the County of San Luis Obispo. All plant materials used during restoration shall be native, certified weed-free, and approved by the County of San Luis Obispo.

The above measures shall be implemented by the Applicant or Project owner as specified in the WCP. An environmental monitor shall be retained to ensure the compliance with weed control measures.

Impact BIO-2: Impact jurisdictional waters

The Applicant conducted a delineation of jurisdictional waters and wetlands in 2008 and 2012. The delineation was approved by the USACE in October 2013 (Wallace, 2013). Approximately 0.44 acre of perennial in-stream wetlands and 5.27 acres of non-wetland waters were mapped within the Salinas River. These areas are within the Proposed RPA area but occur outside of the Proposed RPA footprint. An additional 0.09 acre of ephemeral stream was mapped within the Proposed RPA area just west of the existing quarry operations. Approximately 0.08 acre of this feature is within the Proposed RPA footprint. Approximately 5.45 acres of operational water features (sedimentation basins) were mapped within the Proposed RPA footprint, including the bottom of the existing quarry pit. These basins are man-made structures constructed in uplands for the purpose of settling suspended solids, are actively managed as part of the ongoing quarry production process, and are not considered "Waters of the U.S." (see Figure 4.6-3).

A number of additional ephemeral drainages and swales were identified in the Proposed RPA area, including the Proposed RPA footprint, but were determined not to be under federal jurisdiction. These areas did not support riparian vegetation however they provide increased habitat values for many species and are direct tributaries to the Salinas River. These features may be considered jurisdictional under Fish and Game Code Section 1602. As required by law and recognized in APM 1.1, the Applicant would comply with the regulations regarding potential impacts to water bodies under the jurisdiction of the State and

federal government. As such the Applicant would be required to obtain required permits pursuant to Section 401 and 404 of the CWA, the State Porter-Cologne Act, and Fish and Game Code 1600 *et seq.*

Excavation

Direct impacts to wetland habitats would include the removal of native riparian vegetation, the discharge of fill, degradation of water quality, and increased erosion and sediment transport. Indirect impacts would include alterations to the existing topographical and hydrological conditions and may result in the introduction of non-native, invasive plant species. Indirect impacts to the Salinas River could occur if sediment laden waters flow off the site. However, the Proposed Project has been designed such that drainage and runoff from the expanded quarry operation would be directed to the quarry pit and prevented from flowing directly into the Salinas River. Indirect impacts to jurisdictional resources would be further reduced through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2.1, which requires implementation of BMPs to minimize impacts to juridical areas, and Mitigation Measure HYD-1.1 and APMs 1.3 and 9.2, which require preparation of a site-specific SWPPP. APM 1.2 requires a minimum setback of 130 feet from the Salinas River and associated riparian habitat; this has been incorporated into Mitigation Measure BIO-2.1.

In accordance with the CWA, there would be no net loss of wetlands from implementation of the Proposed Project. Impacts to riparian or wetland habitat would be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio (Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1). Direct impacts to riparian or wetland habitat in the Salinas River would not be expected to occur. Implementation of these mitigation measures and compliance with Section 401 and 404 of the CWA, the State Porter-Cologne Act, and Fish and Game Codes will reduce impacts to jurisdictional waters to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Reclamation

Direct impacts to jurisdictional waters could occur during reclamation from heavy equipment use and re-contouring of the Proposed Project site. Indirect impacts such as spread of weeds or degradation of water quality in adjacent areas could also occur during reclamation. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-1.2, BIO-2.1, and HYD-1.1 (please refer to EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply) and compliance with Section 401 and 404 of the CWA, the State Porter-Cologne Act, and Fish and Game Code 1602 would reduce impacts to jurisdictional waters to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Mitigation for Impacts to Jurisdictional Waters

BIO-1.1 Compensate for permanent excavation-phase impacts to vegetation.

BIO-1.2 Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan during all Project phases.

BIO-2.1 Implement Best Management Practices to Minimize Impacts to Jurisdictional Areas during all Project phases. Prior to County issuance of a Notice to Proceed, the Applicant shall provide a copy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Streambed Alteration Agreement and Clean Water Act Section 401 and 404 permits, or a written determination that such permit(s) are not necessary. The Applicant will implement all mitigation measures and conditions contained within the Streambed Alteration Agreement obtained from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for impacts to jurisdictional areas, as well as any requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, upon determination of jurisdiction and permit issuance by all three agencies. In addition, the following BMPs will be implemented during all excavation and reclamation activities in or near ephemeral drainages or the Salinas River:

- a. No vehicles or equipment shall be refueled within 100 feet of an ephemeral drainage or wetland unless a bermed and lined refueling area is constructed. Spill kits shall be maintained on site in sufficient quantity to accommodate at least three complete vehicle tank failures of 50 gallons each. Any vehicles driven and/or operated within or adjacent to drainages or wetlands shall be checked and maintained daily to prevent leaks of materials.
- b. Vehicles and equipment will not operate in ponded or flowing water except as described in the Streambed Alteration Agreement.
- c. The Applicant shall prevent water containing mud, silt, or other pollutants from grading or other activities to enter ephemeral drainages or be placed in locations that may be subjected to high storm flows.
- d. Spoil sites and topsoil/overburden stockpiles will not be located within 30 feet from the boundaries of drainages or in locations that may be subjected to high storm flows, where materials might be washed back into drainages.
- e. No equipment maintenance will occur within 150 feet of any category 3, 4, or 5 streambed or any streambed greater than 10 feet wide unless the maintenance area is bermed to contain leakage and no petroleum products or other pollutants from the equipment will be allowed to enter these areas or enter any off-site state-jurisdictional waters under any flow.
- f. No debris, soil, silt, sand, bark, slash, sawdust, rubbish, or other organic or earthen material will be allowed to enter into, or placed where it may be washed by rainfall or runoff into, off-site state- or federal-jurisdictional waters.
- g. The cleanup of all spills will begin immediately. The County and the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control will be notified immediately by the Applicant of any spills and will be consulted regarding clean-up procedures.
- h. A minimum setback of 130 feet from the Salinas River and associated riparian woodland habitat will be put in place during all quarry extension grading.

HYD-1 Prepare and Implement Site-Specific SWPPP.

Impact BIO-3: Impact listed and other special-status species

A variety of listed and other special-status plants and wildlife occur in the Project region, and several have the potential to occur in or adjacent to the Proposed RPA area, as detailed in EIR Section 4.6.1, Existing Conditions. Riparian habitat adjacent to the Proposed Project site associated with the Salinas River could support a number of species that could be subject to direct and indirect Project effects. The majority of impacts to plants and wildlife are described above under “*General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources* and *General Reclamation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources*,” above; the following discussions highlight individual species that could be impacted by the Proposed Project and identify any unique impacts that could occur based on an individual species’ ecology.

Several mitigation measures have been developed to reduce impacts to special-status species. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.1 requires the Applicant to implement a Worker Environmental Education Program (WEED) to educate quarry workers on the sensitive biological resources that could occur within the Proposed Project site. The WEED will define the legal protection afforded sensitive plants and wildlife, mitigation requirements, and protocols for reporting incidents involving special-status species. Mitigation

Measure BIO-3.2 requires implementation of BMPs to minimize impacts to plants and wildlife. BMPs include but are not limited to management of trash, prohibition of domesticated animals, reduced vehicle speed. These mitigation measures, in conjunction with Mitigation Measure 3.3 (biological monitoring during all vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance activities) would reduce impacts to special-status species. Mitigation measures for specific species or groups of species are described below.

Excavation

Plants. The Applicant conducted three rare plant surveys of the Proposed RPA area in March, May, and July 2012. Although no rare plants were found in the Proposed RPA footprint, three special-status plants were recorded in the Proposed RPA area immediately adjacent the footprint: La Panza mariposa lily (CRPR 1B.3), Hardham's evening primrose (CRPR 1B.2), and southern California black walnut (CRPR 4.2). An additional 24 species have a moderate potential to occur on site, including three listed species: marsh sandwort (federally and state-listed endangered), purple amole (federally listed threatened), and Gambel's watercress (federally listed endangered, state-listed threatened). Table 4.6-2 identifies plants with the potential to occur in the Proposed RPA area.

Direct impacts to special-status plants would include removal of plants and their habitat in the Proposed RPA footprint. Although none have been found in the proposed disturbance areas, potential habitat for several species would be removed during excavation. If present indirect impacts from dust, weeds, sedimentation, and degradation of water quality could occur to rare plants located adjacent to the Proposed Project. Impacts to special-status plants would be significant absent mitigation.

Oak trees are not ranked in the CRPR system but are considered sensitive by the County. Impacts to oak trees are generally mitigated at the community level, as described under Impact BIO-1. However, oak trees in California are susceptible to several diseases, including sudden oak death. Several pests can also cause damage or death to oak trees. To minimize the potential for spread of disease or pests, APM 2.3 requires all grubbed woody material to be chipped, spread out to dry, and disposed of on site or at an appropriate facility. This requirement has been incorporated into Mitigation Measure BIO-3.2, which lists BMPs to minimize impacts to plants and wildlife.

Although APMs 4.1 and 4.2 address special-status plants, the measures lack specificity and rely on the results on 2012 botanical surveys which would be outdated prior to most Project excavation work. Therefore, Mitigation Measure BIO-3.4 has been developed and requires the Applicant to conduct appropriately timed protocol surveys for rare plants in each disturbance area prior to vegetation removal. Surveys will be valid for three years provided they are conducted during a period of adequate rainfall. If federally or state-listed plants are found in the proposed disturbance areas, the Applicant must avoid impacts to these species and consult with the USFWS and CDFW, as appropriate, for take authorization. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3.4 would reduce direct impacts to special-status plants (CRPR 1, 2, or 3) by requiring the Applicant to either: (1) salvage individual plants from the site prior to excavation (for appropriate species such as mariposa lilies); (2) avoid impacts to populations on site; or (3) to provide compensation lands with extant populations of the affected species. The Project's impacts to CRPR 4 species, while adverse, does not warrant further mitigation. As described above, compliance with local air quality regulations would ensure indirect impacts from dust are minimized. Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1 requires compensatory mitigation habitat loss. Mitigation Measure BIO-1.2 requires weed management, and Mitigation Measure HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply) requires the Applicant to implement BMPs to control sedimentation and erosion. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to special-status plants to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Fish. The Salinas River and tributaries support the federally listed threatened steelhead (south/central California coast DPS) and is designated as Critical Habitat for this species. The designated Critical Habitat does not extend into the Proposed RPA footprint. The Applicant has determined that the portion of the Salinas River within the Proposed RPA area is unlikely to provide suitable spawning habitat because it lacks the water quantity and quality conditions and other habitat components necessary. However, the river is a known migration corridor free of obstruction, and both in-and out-migration of adult steelhead and out-migration of steelhead smolts likely occurs (WRA, 2012c).

While direct impacts to Critical Habitat or any areas supporting this species would not occur, indirect effects could include erosion, sedimentation, and degradation of water quality. Drainage and runoff from the expanded quarry operation would be directed to the quarry pit and therefore prevented from flowing directly into the Salinas River. The creation of a larger internally drained area would reduce the potential for erosion and sediment generated at the Proposed Project site to reach the Salinas River. Sediment contribution to the Salinas River would be reduced from current levels because under existing undeveloped conditions, some sediment is entrained in runoff and is discharged to the river. With these design features and implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply) and BIO-2.1, which require BMPs to avoid impacts to jurisdictional waters, water quality impacts would be less than significant (Class II).

Large-scale earth moving and redirection of flows into the quarry pit would result in a reduction of runoff to the Salinas River. However, the relative small size of the watershed from the Project site is not expected to substantially affect downstream flows. The quarry currently diverts some water from the Salinas River for use in its operational water features. However, the primary source of water for site operations is, and will continue to be, internal impoundments fed by rainfall and runoff. Salinas River water use would increase by three acre-feet during a maximum production year under the Proposed Project (see EIR Section 4.16, Water Quality and Supply, for more information on Project water use and sources). The annual flow in the Salinas River ranges from a low of 808 afy to over 80,000 afy, with a median value of 8,660 afy (URS, 2013). The maximum increase over baseline water use from the Salinas River is less than one percent of the lowest recorded annual flow, and this maximum would only occur during the highest production years. Generally, this would be an insignificant effect. However, if water is diverted from the Salinas River during an extreme drought year, downstream flows could be affected and could result in stranding of steelhead or the creation of barriers to movement. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.2 prohibits diversion from the Salinas River if it would completely curtail flows just downstream of the diversion. Mitigation Measures HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply), BIO-2.1, and BIO-3.2 would minimize indirect effects to water quality and avoid potential curtailment of flow to downstream areas. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to steelhead and its critical habitat to a level of less than significant (Class II). The Applicant has not determined whether consultation with NMFS for indirect impacts to steelhead and its critical habitat is required (WRA, 2012c)(see APMs 9.3 and 11.3).

Amphibians and Reptiles. Several special-status amphibians and reptiles could occur in the Proposed RPA area and RPA footprint, including the following California Species of Special Concern: Coast Range newt, western spadefoot, silvery legless lizard, coast horned lizard, and two-striped garter snake. The California red-legged frog, a federally listed threatened and a California Species of Special Concern, is known from the area and could disperse into the Proposed RPA area and footprint. The western pond turtle, a California Species of Special Concern, has been observed on several occasions in the adjacent Salinas River and tributaries.

The Applicant assessed habitat in the Proposed RPA area for its potential to support California red-legged frogs and concluded that the Project area is unlikely to support this species because of steep terrain and absence of perennial waters (WRA, 2013b). Therefore, protocol or focused surveys have not been conducted in the Proposed RPA area. The Applicant has also concluded that the potential for California red-legged frog in the adjacent Salinas River is negligible due to the presence of predatory fish. However, this species has been recorded at numerous locations in the region, including Santa Margarita less than three miles to the southwest. Additionally, the Trout Creek watershed is within designated Critical Habitat Unit SLO-3 and provides connectivity to the Salinas River. This unit is occupied by the species (USFWS, 2010). Trout Creek is less than one mile southwest of the quarry, and its designated Critical Habitat extends into the Proposed RPA area, including 0.18 acre within the Proposed RPA footprint. While California red-legged frog is highly aquatic, this species has been documented making overland movements of several hundred meters and up to one mile during a winter-spring wet season in Northern California (Bulger et al., 2003; Fellers and Kleeman, 2007) and 2,860 meters (1.8 miles) in the County (Rathbun and Schneider, 2001). Frogs traveling along water courses exceeded these distances. This is particularly true on nights with high humidity or precipitation. While the terrain on the east side of the quarry adjacent to the Salinas River is steep, it would not preclude frogs making overland movements. The western and northern sides of the quarry are less steep, and this species could move over slopes or up ravines leading into the site. Therefore, this species cannot be discounted in the Proposed RPA area or Proposed RPA footprint. Impacts to the California red-legged frog would require take authorization from the USFWS. The Applicant conducted early coordination with the USFWS regarding impacts to this species' Critical Habitat, and has indicated that mitigation for impacts within the Proposed RPA footprint is not warranted because (1) the area of overlap is very small (0.18 acre within the Proposed RPA footprint), and (2) none of the primary constituent elements essential to the species are present in this location (WRA, 2013b).

The presence of California red-legged frogs in the Proposed RPA area is currently unknown because surveys have not been conducted. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.6 requires protocol surveys for red-legged frogs in all riparian areas and surrounding uplands in new excavation areas, and the implementation of avoidance measures if red-legged frogs are found. These include full-time biological monitoring, exclusion fencing, seasonal restrictions, and stopping work if a red-legged frog is found in any work areas.

As the movements of wildlife species are more intensively studied using radio-tracking devices, there is mounting evidence that many species do not restrict their movements to some obvious landscape element, such as a riparian corridor. For example, radio-tracking and tagging studies of newts, California red-legged frogs, and western pond turtles found that long-distance dispersal involved radial or perpendicular linear movements away from a one water source to another with little regard to the orientation of the assumed riparian "movement corridor" (Fellers and Kleeman, 2007; Semlitsch, 1998; Reese and Welsh, 1997). Therefore, adequate setbacks from potential habitat are important to ensure impacts to semi-aquatic species are avoided.

If present, excavation activities may result in direct impacts to special-status reptiles and amphibians in the Proposed RPA area as described above under "General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources," above. Animals in the adjacent Salinas River and tributaries could be subject to indirect impacts including degradation of water quality or decreased flows from water diversion under extreme drought conditions. Impacts would be significant absent mitigation.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3.1 requires a Worker Environmental Education Program to educate site personnel on the species that could occur on site, their legal protections, mitigation requirements, and report-

ing procedures in the event a special-status species is killed or injured. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.2 requires BMPs to minimize impacts to special-status species, including the prohibition of water diversion from the Salinas River in extreme drought conditions if it would result in curtailment of downstream flows. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.3 requires biological monitoring during activities that could directly impact special-status species. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.5 requires surveys for special-status species and relocation of non-listed species out of the work areas. APMs 8.1 and 8.2 are superseded by Mitigation Measure BIO-3.5, which covers all special-status reptiles and amphibians that could occur, not just coast horned lizard and silvery legless lizard. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to special-status reptiles and amphibians to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Native Birds. The Santa Margarita Valley and surrounding areas, including the Proposed RPA area, are identified as an Important Bird Area by Audubon California (Audubon California, 2008). Native birds are protected under the California Fish and Game Code and federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (see EIR Section 4.6.3, Regulatory Setting and EIR Appendix C). Most of these species have no other special conservation status. The Proposed Project could also result in specific impacts to special-status birds, dependent on the behavior, seasonality, and habitat requirements of each species. These are discussed in more detail for each species or group of species, below.

Vegetation throughout the Proposed RPA area and surrounding habitats, including riparian vegetation along the Salinas River, provides suitable nesting habitat for numerous resident and migratory birds. Bird species diversity at the site is described in EIR Section 4.6.1.4 and in the Proposed Project's Biological Resources Assessment Report (WRA, 2012c). Neotropical migrants, resident passerines, and a variety of raptors occur.

Depending on specific activities the potential for nesting birds in and immediately adjacent to active quarry areas is likely low due to ongoing noise and disturbance. However, birds likely nest in undisturbed habitat located away from active quarry operations in the Proposed RPA area. Many adult birds would flee from equipment during vegetation clearance for excavation in currently undisturbed areas. However, nestlings and eggs would be vulnerable to impacts during excavation, and are protected by the MBTA and Fish and Game Code Sections 3503 and 3513. If grading or vegetation removal were to occur during nesting season, it would likely destroy bird nests including eggs or nestling birds.

Noise and vibration would occur from excavation activities including vegetation removal, earth moving and grading, drilling and blasting, and extraction and processing of shot-rock. This can disturb birds nesting in adjacent offsite areas, including riparian habitat at the Salinas River. Birds may abandon nests from the disturbance, or knock eggs or nestlings out of the nest during a startle flight from sudden loud noise. Loss of native birds or their nests, eggs, or nestlings would be significant absent mitigation.

Project impacts to nesting birds can be reduced or offset through implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-3.1, and BIO-3.3. These measures would require biological monitoring during vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance, worker environmental awareness training, and compensation for directly impacted habitat at a minimum 1:1 ratio. In addition, Mitigation Measure BIO-3.7 requires surveys, implementation of buffers, and other requirements to avoid bird mortality during the Proposed Project. This measure would supersede APMs 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3, as it includes greater detail to ensure that the measure is effective and enforceable. These measures are expected to effectively minimize adverse impacts to nesting birds on the site and to offset habitat loss through the acquisition and management of compensation lands. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to native birds to a level of less than significant (Class II).

California Condor. The California condor is listed as endangered under the federal and State ESAs, and is present in the region. Although the nearest recorded condor occurrence is 15 miles south of the Proposed Project site, a commenter noted during Project scoping that three condors have been seen near the proposed expansion area to the west (see Introduction to Section 4.6, Scoping Issues Addressed). Although condors are not known to regularly use the Proposed RPA area, they periodically occur in nearby mountain ranges (USFWS, unpublished data), and could fly over the Proposed Project area during foraging trips. However, due to ongoing disturbance from active mining operations along with a limited prey base in the Proposed RPA area, condors would be expected to only rarely if ever be present on the Proposed Project site. Nearby agricultural areas likely provide higher quality foraging habitat for condors that may occur in the region.

Direct impacts to condors, if present, could occur through the loss of or disruption of foraging habitat, the introduction of microtrash, and exposure to ethylene glycol antifreeze. Indirect effects could include disturbance from excavation activities that cause disruption of normal foraging activity, or collision risk from vehicles if California condors are attracted to road kill. Adverse effects to condors have been documented by their collection of microtrash, such as broken glass, paper and plastic waste, and small pieces of metal. This waste is often brought back to nest sites where young birds ingest the material, which can kill or injure young birds. Ethylene glycol, a component in antifreeze and petroleum products, can also cause death if ingested.

California condors require vast expanses of open savannah, grasslands, and foothill chaparral, with cliffs, large trees, and snags for roosting and nesting (Zeiner et al., 1990). As opportunistic scavengers, California condors travel up to 140 miles per day (Snyder and Snyder, 2000). However, the loss of foraging habitat from the Proposed Project would be less than significant as condors are not known to forage in the Proposed RPA area. Impacts to condors from exposure to ethylene glycol, disturbance, or microtrash ingestion could be significant without mitigation. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.1 requires a Worker Environmental Education Program that will educate site personnel on how to prevent impacts to sensitive species including condors. BIO-3.2 requires trash be secured in animal-proof containers and micro-trash to be removed from the work area. Implementation of these measures would minimize potential impacts to condors to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Golden Eagle. Golden eagles are protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) as well as the MBTA (see EIR Appendix C). Golden eagles have been documented flying over the Proposed RPA area and could forage in undisturbed habitat in and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. The many large trees on the site could provide nesting habitat. Human intrusions near golden eagle nest sites have resulted in nest abandonment; high nestling mortality when young go unattended due to altered behavior by the parent birds; premature fledging; and ejection of eggs or young from the nest (Pagel et al., 2010). Under the BGEPA, nest abandonment or decreased golden eagle reproductive success caused by substantial interference with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, would constitute “take.”

Golden eagles may forage in the Proposed RPA area at any time of year. Implementation of the Proposed Project would eliminate approximately 33 acres of intact habitat that could be used by foraging eagles. Impacts to golden eagle foraging habitat can be offset through Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1, which would require a minimum 1:1 compensation ratio for Project impacts to native vegetation.

Although eagles likely do not nest in proximity to current quarry operations, Project excavation activities in undisturbed areas could cause substantial direct disturbance (e.g., noise, vibration, lighting, visual disturbance) to any golden eagle nest sites within one mile direct line of site of the disturbance. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3.8 requires annual surveys during nesting season and estab-

ishment of disturbance-free buffers around nests. This measure supersedes APMs 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3, as it includes greater specificity and reporting standards. Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1 would offset loss of foraging habitat through compensatory mitigation requirements. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to golden eagles to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Other Special-Status Raptors. Several other special-status raptors have been reported on or near the Project site, and likely occur in the area during migration, winter, or as resident birds. These include Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-eared owl, northern harrier, white-tailed kite, merlin, American peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, and osprey. Excavation would eliminate or degrade foraging habitat for these species throughout the Proposed RPA area. Impacts to raptor foraging habitat can be offset through Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1, which requires compensation for permanent impacts to native vegetation at a minimum 1:1 ratio. Swainson's hawk is state-listed threatened, but impacts to nesting Swainson's hawks would not occur because this species is not known to nest in the Proposed RPA area. Impacts to nesting raptors would be the same as described above for native birds, and these impacts would be minimized through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3.7. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to other special-status raptors to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Special-Status Passerines. The vegetation and adjacent mountains provide foraging, cover, and breeding habitat for resident and migratory birds. In addition to the species described above, 13 special-status birds have a moderate to high likelihood of occurring in or adjacent to the Proposed RPA area:

- Bell's sage sparrow
- Costa's hummingbird
- Lewis' woodpecker
- Nuttall's woodpecker
- Lawrence's goldfinch
- Vaux's swift
- Loggerhead shrike
- Olive-sided flycatcher
- Yellow warbler
- Yellow-breasted chat
- Purple martin
- Yellow-headed blackbird
- Least Bell's vireo

Purple martin and Vaux's swift are unlikely to use the Proposed Project site except during migration. Each of the other species may nest on or adjacent to the Proposed RPA area (see potential for occurrence in Table 4.6-3).

Least Bell's vireo has been reported from the Salinas River watershed, and could potentially nest in riparian habitat in and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area. Least Bell's vireo is a state and federally listed endangered species, and impacts to breeding vireos would not be allowed outside of the context of take authorization under the federal and California ESA. To avoid impacts to least Bell's vireo, Mitigation Measure BIO-3.7 requires protocol surveys for least Bell's vireo in and near riparian habitat that could be subjected to noise levels over 60 dBA from activities in the expansion area during the breeding season. If found a 500-foot buffer would be established and noise levels could not exceed 60 dBA in the active territory.

Potential impacts to special-status birds would be the same as those described for nesting native birds. These impacts can be mitigated through implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-3.1, and BIO-3.3. These measures would require biological monitoring during vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance, worker environmental awareness training, and compensation for directly impacted habitat at a minimum 1:1 ratio. In addition, Mitigation Measure BIO-3.7 describes surveys, buffer areas, and other requirements to avoid bird mortality including implementation of a Nesting Bird Management Plan. These measures would be expected to effectively minimize adverse impacts to nesting special-status birds on the site and to offset habitat loss through the acquisition and management of compensation

lands. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to special-status birds to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Special-Status Bats. Several special-status bats (pallid bat, western red bat, western mastiff bat, Yuma myotis, fringed myotis, long-legged myotis, and Townsend's big-eared bat) could use the site for foraging or roosting. Roosting habitat for special-status bats varies by species, but most regional special-status bats roost in habitats such as trees, caves, tunnels, buildings, or crevices in cliffs and rock outcrops (see Table 4.6-3). The majority of adverse impacts to bat populations in the region result from disturbance of roosting or hibernation sites, especially where large numbers of bats congregate; physical closures of old mine shafts, which eliminates roosting habitat; elimination of riparian vegetation which is often productive foraging habitat; more general habitat loss or land use conversion; and agricultural pesticide use which may poison bats or eliminate their prey-base (Pierson and Rainey, 1998).

Bat life histories vary widely. Some species hibernate during winter, or migrate south. During the breeding season, bats generally roost during the day, either alone or in communal roost sites, depending on species. All special-status bats that could occur in the Proposed RPA area are insectivorous, catching their prey either on the wing or on the ground. Some species feed mainly over open water where insect production is especially high, but others forage over open shrublands. Both are found in the Proposed RPA area (open water associated with operational water features).

Special-status bats in the Proposed RPA area likely avoid areas in and immediately adjacent to the existing quarry operations due to noise and ongoing disturbance. However, the Proposed Project could significantly impact special-status bats in undisturbed areas of the Proposed RPA through the elimination of foraging and potential roosting habitat. Noise, vibration, and human activity could disrupt maternity roosts during the breeding season. Other direct and indirect impacts are as described above under "General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources," above. Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-3.1, and BIO-3.2 would require worker training to minimize disturbances, biological monitoring and reporting of Project disturbances, and compensate for habitat loss. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.9 requires the Applicant to conduct surveys for maternity and hibernation roosts and establish disturbance-free buffers. It also outlines methods and timing for eviction of bats from roost sites that are scheduled to be removed. This measure supersedes APMs 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3, as it includes details regarding surveyor qualifications, more protective buffers for specific Project activities, and details on roost eviction methodology. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to special-status bats to a level of less than significant level (Class II).

Ringtail Cat. The ringtail cat, a fully protected species in California, has the potential to occur in chaparral, oak woodlands, and riparian habitats in and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area, particularly the Salinas River riparian corridor. Ringtails are similar to raccoons in that they are often found within 0.6 mile (1 kilometer) of a permanent water source (Zeiner et al., 1990). The home range of a ringtail is typically between 50 and 336 acres (Poglayan-Neuwall and Toweill, 1988). Loss of habitat in the Proposed RPA footprint would be significant if ringtail is present, but the most likely impact to this species during excavation is the disruption of breeding from noise and vibration disturbance or loss of denning areas.

Dens may be in a hollow tree, a rock pile, a crevice in a cliff, or in abandoned burrows or woodrat nests (Zeiner et al., 1990). Ringtails change dens frequently and an individual rarely spends more than three days in the same shelter. However, females with young remain in the same den for 10 to 20 days after giving birth. After that time dens may be changed daily (Poglayan-Neuwall and Toweill, 1988). Noise, vibration, dust, human presence, or ground disturbance could result in the abandonment of these nest sites or result in mortality of juvenile animals. Other direct and indirect impacts would be as described above under *General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources*.

The ringtail cat is a California fully protected species and loss of this species is prohibited. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.10 includes avoidance and minimization measures for this species. If excavation activities occur during the breeding season (March 1 through June 30) in areas potentially supporting this species, surveys would be required to identify maternity dens in or adjacent to the proposed work area. If present, work would be redirected to adjacent areas and a protected disturbance-free buffer would be established around the den(s). Implementation of this measure would reduce impacts to ringtail to a level of less than significant (Class II).

American Badger. The American badger is a California Species of Special Concern. There is a CNDDDB record from 2003 on Santa Margarita Ranch, approximately 3 miles southwest of the Proposed RPA area. Badgers could occur broadly in the area, and could forage and den in areas of the expansion area that currently support native vegetation or annual grasslands. Potential direct and indirect impacts to American badger, if present, would be as described above under *General Excavation Phase Impacts to Biological Resources*. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-3.1, BIO-3.2, and BIO-3.3 would minimize or offset these impacts. These measures require biological monitoring during vegetation removal and initial site disturbance, moving special-status wildlife out of harm's way, worker environmental awareness training, and compensation for permanently impacted habitat at a minimum 1:1 ratio. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.11 would require the Applicant to conduct surveys for badgers and to passively relocate any found denning in the expansion area footprint. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to American badgers to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Reclamation

Over time, reclamation will result in a net benefit to wildlife species as habitat becomes re-established. Wildlife use of reclaimed areas is expected to increase in diversity and complexity as habitat matures, although pre-disturbance habitat functions would not be achieved in the 64-year lifetime of the Project (which includes the 5-year post-excavation reclamation period for all areas not previously reclaimed).

Impacts to special-status species during reclamation would generally be the same as described for excavation. Reclamation involves substantial earth moving, and disturbance from these activities would be similar to disturbance from excavation phase activities. As described under Impact BIO-1, indirect impacts from invasive weeds would be more substantial during reclamation activities compared with excavation. It will be especially important to control invasive weeds during the reclamation period to avoid indirect impacts to special-status species and to support success of the reclamation efforts. Mitigation measures to minimize these impacts would include Mitigation Measure HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply), Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1, BIO-1.2, BIO-2.1, and BIO-3.1 through 3.11. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to special-status species to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Mitigation for Impacts to Special-Status Species

- BIO-1.1** **Compensate for permanent excavation-phase impacts to vegetation.**
- BIO-1.2** **Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan during all Project phases.**
- BIO-2.1** **Implement Best Management Practices to minimize impacts to jurisdictional areas during all Project phases.**
- BIO-3.1** **Implement a Worker Environmental Education Program (Biological Resources) during all Project phases.** Prior to any activities within the proposed expansion area, a Worker Environmental Education Program (WEEP) shall be implemented by a County qualified

biologist(s). The WEEP shall be submitted to the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning for review and approval, and implemented throughout the duration of excavation and reclamation activities. The WEEP shall be implemented once for current employees, and then incorporated into overall facility training for new employees such that all employees that will be involved in ground-disturbing activities will have received the WEEP training one time. The WEEP shall include, at a minimum, the following items:

- a. Training materials and briefings shall include but not be limited to: a discussion of the Federal and California Endangered Species Acts, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; the consequences of non-compliance with these acts; identification and values of plant and wildlife species and significant natural plant communities; hazardous substance spill prevention and containment measures; a contact person and phone number in the event of the discovery of dead or injured wildlife; and a review of mitigation requirements.
- b. A discussion of measures to be implemented for avoidance of the sensitive resources discussed above and the identification of an on-site contact in the event of the discovery of sensitive species on the site. This will include a discussion on microtrash and its potential harmful effects on California condors.
- c. Protocols to be followed when road kill is encountered in the work area or along access roads during all Project phases to minimize potential for additional mortality of scavengers, including listed species such as the California condor, and the identification of an on-site representative to whom the road kill will be reported. Road kill shall be reported to the appropriate local animal control agency within 24 hours.
- d. Maps showing the known locations of special-status wildlife, populations of rare plants and sensitive vegetation communities, seasonal depressions and known water bodies, wetland habitat, exclusion areas, and other activity limitations (e.g. limited operating periods, buffer zones, etc.).
- e. Literature and photographs or illustrations of potentially occurring special-status plant and wildlife species.
- f. The Project Applicant shall provide to the County evidence that all on-site personnel have completed the WEEP prior to the start of ground disturbance in the expansion areas. A hardhat sticker or wallet size card shall be issued to all personnel completing the training, which shall be carried with the trained personnel at all times while on the Project site. All new personnel shall receive this training as part of the overall facility training for new employees, and may work in the quarry for no more than 5 days without participating in the WEEP. A log of all personnel who have completed the WEEP training shall be kept on site.
- g. A weather-protected bulletin board or binder shall be centrally placed or kept on site in an easily accessible area for the duration of Project excavation and reclamation phases. This board or binder will provide key provisions of regulations or Project conditions as they relate to biological resources or as they apply to earth-moving activities. This information shall be easily accessible for personnel in all active work areas.

BIO-3.2 Implement Best Management Practices to minimize impacts to plants and wildlife during all Project phases. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented as standard operating procedures during all excavation and reclamation activities to avoid or minimize

Project impacts to plants and wildlife. These BMPs will include but are not limited to the following:

- a. All general trash, food-related trash items (e.g., wrappers, cans, bottles, food scraps, cigarettes, etc.), and other human-generated debris will be stored in animal proof containers or removed from the site each day. No deliberate feeding of wildlife will be allowed.
- b. Use of chemicals, fuels, lubricants, or biocides will be in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations. All uses of such compounds shall observe label and other restrictions mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other state and federal legislation, as well as additional Project-related restrictions deemed necessary by the USFWS and CDFW (e.g. through conditions in an incidental take authorization, if applicable).
- c. Any contractor or employee that inadvertently kills or injures a special-status animal, or finds one dead, injured, or entrapped, will immediately report the incident to the on-site representative identified in the WEEP. The representative will contact the USFWS, CDFW, and County by telephone by the end of the day, or at the beginning of the next working day if the agency office is closed. In addition, formal notification shall be provided in writing within three working days of the incident or finding. Notification will include the date, time, location and circumstances of the incident. Any threatened or endangered species found dead or injured will be turned over immediately to CDFW for care, analysis, or disposition.
- d. New light sources will be minimized, and lighting will be designed to limit the lighted area to the minimum necessary (e.g., by using downcast lights).
- e. Workers will be trained on the issue of microtrash – what it is, its potential effects to California condors, and how to avoid the deposition of microtrash. In addition, daily sweeps of the work areas will occur to collect and remove microtrash.
- f. To reduce the potential for spread of sudden oak death and other pests, all grubbed woody material will be chipped, spread out to dry, and disposed of on site or at an appropriate facility.
- g. In consultation with the County Department of Planning and Building, no diversions from the Salinas River will occur if the diversion would result in a complete curtailment of downstream flows below the diversion.

Compliance with BMPs will be documented and provided to the County in a written report on an annual basis. The report shall include a summary of the excavation and reclamation activities completed, a review of the sensitive plants and wildlife encountered, a list of compliance actions and any remedial actions taken to correct the actions, and the status of ongoing mitigation efforts.

BIO-3.3 Implement biological monitoring during all Project phases. Prior to any Project excavation and reclamation activities, the Project Applicant shall retain a County qualified biologist(s) with demonstrated expertise with special-status plants and wildlife that could occur on site to monitor, on a daily basis, all vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance in previously undisturbed areas. Any listed plants shall be flagged for avoidance. Any special-status reptiles, amphibians, or terrestrial mammals (excluding listed species such as the California red-legged frog) found within a Project impact area shall be relocated to suitable

habitat outside the impact area by the biological monitor(s). Clearance surveys for special-status species shall be conducted by the biological monitor(s) prior to the initiation of vegetation removal each day. The biological monitor(s) will have the authority to temporarily halt work to avoid impacts to special-status species or other protected biological resources. Once initial ground disturbance and vegetation removal is complete, daily monitoring may cease at that location.

If the biological monitor observes a dead or injured listed or other special-status wildlife species on the Project site, a written report shall be sent to the County, CDFW, and USFWS (as applicable) within five calendar days. The report will include the date, time of the finding or incident (if known), and location of the carcass and circumstances of its death (if known). The biological monitor shall, immediately upon finding the remains, coordinate with the onsite foreman to document the events that caused the mortality, if known, and implement measures to prevent future incidents. Details of these measures shall be included with the report. Species remains shall be collected and frozen as soon as possible, and CDFW and/or USFWS shall be contacted regarding ultimate disposal of the remains.

BIO-3.4 Conduct surveys for special-status plants and mitigate impacts during the excavation phase. The Applicant shall implement the following measures to mitigate the Project's direct and indirect impacts to special-status plants.

- **Surveys.** Prior to initial ground disturbance at each new excavation area, the Applicant shall conduct surveys for special-status plants (State and federally listed Threatened and Endangered, Proposed, Petitioned, and Candidate plants and CRPR 1, 2, and 3 plants) in all areas subject to ground-disturbing activity and the surrounding areas within 50 feet. Surveys are required in all currently vegetated areas that would be subject to ground disturbance or vegetation removal. The surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate blooming period(s) by a qualified plant ecologist/botanist according to protocols established by the USFWS, CDFW, and California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Surveys will be valid for a period of three years. If vegetation removal or initial site disturbance in a surveyed area does not occur within three years, surveys will be repeated. All listed plant species found shall be marked and avoided. Any populations of special-status plants found during surveys will be fully described, mapped, and a CNPS Field Survey Form or written equivalent shall be prepared. The results of each rare plant survey will be provided to the County in a report within three months of survey completion.
- **Avoidance.** Prior to grading or vegetation removal at each new excavation area, any populations of special-status plant species identified during the surveys within the Proposed RPA footprint and surrounding 50-foot area shall be protected and a disturbance-free buffer established around each population. The buffer shall be of sufficient size to eliminate potential disturbance to the plants from human activity and any other potential sources of disturbance including trampling, erosion, and dust. The size of the disturbance-free buffer depends upon the activities to be conducted in the immediately adjacent lands, and includes consideration of the plant's ecological requirements (e.g., sunlight, moisture, shade tolerance, physical and chemical characteristics of soils) that are identified by a qualified plant ecologist or botanist. The buffer for herbaceous and shrub species shall be, at minimum, 50 feet from the perimeter of the population or the individual. A smaller buffer may be established, provided there are adequate measures in place to avoid the take of the species, in coordination with the USFWS, CDFW, and County

of San Luis Obispo. Highly visible flagging shall be placed along the buffer area and remain in good working order during the duration of any excavation activities in the area.

Where impacts to listed plants cannot be avoided, the USFWS and/or CDFW shall be consulted for authorization, with notification to the County. Additional mitigation measures to protect or restore listed plant species or their habitat, including but not limited to a salvage plan including seed collection and replanting, may be required by the USFWS or CDFW before impacts are authorized.

If Project activities result in the loss of more than 10 percent of an onsite population of any CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plant species, compensatory mitigation will be required as described below.

- **Off-site compensation.** If Project activities result in the loss of more than 10 percent of the onsite population of any CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plant species, compensatory mitigation will be required. Compensation will be required for all impacts that exceed the 10 percent threshold (e.g. impacts to 15 percent of a population will only require compensation for 5 percent or the amount of impacts that exceed the 10 percent threshold). To compensate for direct impacts to CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plant species, habitat that is not already public land shall be preserved and managed in perpetuity at a 1:1 mitigation ratio (one acre preserved for each acre impacted). This may include preservation of areas within the undisturbed buffer portions of the Proposed RPA area, mitigation lands outside of the Project site, or a combination of both. The preserved habitat for a significantly impacted plant species shall be of equal or greater habitat quality to the impacted areas in terms of soil features, extent of disturbance, and vegetation structure and composition, and will contain verified extant populations, of the same size or greater, of the CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plant populations that are impacted.

Habitat shall be preserved through the use of permanent conservation easements. Mitigation lands cannot be located on land that is currently publicly held. Compensation requirements for impacts to CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plants may be “nested” in mitigation lands for impacts to vegetation (Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1) provided the compensation lands support the target species as required in this measure. Conservation easement requirements, including funding, shall be as described in Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1.

- **Salvage.** Any CRPR 1, 2, or 3 plants within the Proposed RPA footprint shall be salvaged prior to vegetation removal (for all populations, regardless of the proportion of the population being impacted), including La Panza mariposa lily and Hardham’s evening primrose. These individuals shall be transferred to suitable habitat within the Proposed RPA area buffer that will not be disturbed by Project activities. The Project Applicant will develop and submit to the County a Salvage and Relocation Plan, based on the life history of the species affected. The Plan will include at minimum: (a) collection/salvage measures for plants or seed banks, to retain intact soil conditions and maximize success likelihood; (b) details regarding storage of plants or seed banks; (c) location of the proposed recipient site, and detailed site preparation and plant introduction techniques; (d) time of year that the salvage and replanting or seeding will occur and the methodology of the replanting; (e) a description of the irrigation, if used; (f) success criteria; and (g) a detailed monitoring program, commensurate with the Plan’s goals. The Plan will be submitted to the County for approval at least 30 days prior to commencement of salvage activities.

BIO-3.5 Complete focused surveys for special-status reptiles and amphibians and implement avoidance measures during all Project phases. The Applicant shall retain a qualified biologist

approved by the County to conduct focused surveys immediately prior to vegetation removal and grading in previously undisturbed areas during all Project phases. If special-status reptiles or amphibians are found within the disturbance area, the biologist will relocate non-listed animals to a safe location outside the Project disturbance area in suitable habitat. Listed species such as the California red-legged frog will not be handled or harassed, and will be avoided. If the Project Applicant does not have take authorization for listed species, the area will be avoided until the animal has left on its own. The biologist will notify the USFWS, CDFW, and the County within 24 hours of the observation of listed species. A final report identifying the number of non-listed animals moved, any mortality identified during the relocation event, and the general health of the species shall be completed and submitted to the County on a monthly basis during all Project phases.

BIO-3.6 Conduct protocol surveys for California red-legged frogs and implement avoidance measures during all Project phases. The Applicant shall retain a qualified biologist approved by the County to conduct surveys for California red-legged frogs in accordance with the most current USFWS protocol. Surveys will be conducted in all riparian areas in the RPA footprint, and 500 feet of surrounding vegetated uplands around each riparian area. Survey results are valid for two years; surveys must be repeated if more than two years passes between the initial survey and site disturbance. Surveys are required prior to initial ground disturbance in riparian and surrounding upland habitats at each new excavation area, and in all riparian areas and surrounding 500-foot buffer areas that would be affected by reclamation activities.

If California red-legged frogs are identified during surveys, measures to avoid impacts shall be implemented. These include, but are not limited to:

- A full-time biological monitor will monitor all vegetation clearing and initial site grading in occupied California red-legged frog habitat during Project excavation and reclamation phases.
- Where initial site disturbance can occur in presently undisturbed habitat where red-legged frogs are widely distributed, work areas will be fenced in a manner that prevents equipment and vehicles from straying from the designated work area into adjacent habitat. The authorized biologist will assist in determining the boundaries of the area to be fenced in consultation with the USFWS, CDFW, and the County. All workers will be advised that equipment and vehicles must remain within the fenced work areas. Fencing to exclude red-legged frogs will be at least 24 inches in height.
- The authorized biologist will direct the installation of the fence and conduct a minimum of three nocturnal surveys to identify any red-legged frogs within the fenced area. If red-legged frogs are observed at any time in fenced areas, no activity will occur in the fenced area and the authorized biologist will consult with the USFWS and the County. No handling of red-legged frogs is authorized without take authorization from the USFWS.
- If red-legged frogs are found in a work area where fencing was deemed unnecessary, work will cease and the authorized biologist will notify the USFWS and the County. The authorized biologist in consultation with USFWS, CDFW, and the County will then determine whether additional surveys or fencing are needed.
- Vegetation clearing and initial site grading activities for all Project phases that may occur immediately adjacent to breeding pools or other areas where large numbers of red-

legged frogs may congregate will be conducted during times of the year (winter) when individuals have dispersed from these areas or the species is dormant, unless otherwise authorized by the County, CDFW, and USFWS. The authorized biologist will assist the Project Applicant in scheduling its work activities accordingly.

- No handling of red-legged frogs will occur unless take authorization is obtained from USFWS.
- The authorized biologist will have the authority to stop all activities until appropriate corrective measures have been completed.
- The Project Applicant shall restrict work to daylight hours, except during an emergency, in order to avoid nighttime activities when red-legged frogs may be present.
- No stockpiles of materials will occur in areas occupied by California red-legged frogs.

BIO-3.7 Nesting Bird Management Plan, nest surveys, and impact avoidance measures for migratory and nesting birds during all Project phases. Prior to County issuance of a Notice to Proceed, the Applicant shall retain a County qualified biologist to prepare a draft Nesting Bird Management Plan describing measures to detect native birds that may nest on and adjacent to the Proposed RPA area and to avoid impacts to or take of those birds or their nests during all Project phases. The draft Nesting Bird Management Plan will be submitted to the CDFW, USFWS for review and comment, and to the County for approval. The Plan will be finalized by the Applicant prior to issuance of the Notice to Proceed. The Nesting Bird Management Plan will describe avoidance measures, such as buffer distances from active nests. The qualified biologists implementing the Plan can determine appropriate buffer distances from active nests, based on consideration of the specific nature of Project activities, noise or other disturbance of those activities, the bird species and conservation status, and other pertinent factors. The Plan will specify 500 feet as a standard buffer distance for listed birds. Additionally, the Plan will list all Project vegetation removal and ground-disturbing activities and rank them in terms of noise and other potential disturbance to nesting birds.

The Plan will identify specific measures (if any) to prevent or reduce bird nesting activity on Project facilities. The Plan will include specific monitoring measures to track any active bird nest within or adjacent to the excavation and reclamation activities, bird nesting activity, Project-related disturbance, and fate of each nest.

Surveys for nesting birds shall be conducted prior to any vegetation removal or initial ground disturbance in presently undisturbed areas that will occur during the breeding period (from February 1 through August 31). The authorized biologists conducting the surveys shall be experienced bird surveyors and familiar with standard nest-locating techniques. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the following guidelines.

- a. Surveys shall cover all potential nesting habitat within disturbance areas and within a 500-foot buffer of these areas;
- b. Surveys shall be conducted no more than 7 days prior to the start of vegetation removal or ground-disturbing activity in previously undisturbed areas. Additional follow-up surveys may be required if ground disturbance and vegetation removal activities do not occur for one or more weeks in any given area (an interval during which birds may establish a nesting territory and initiate egg laying and incubation);

- c. If active nests are detected during the survey, the Project Applicant will implement avoidance measures identified in the Nesting Bird Management Plan, and the authorized biologist will be responsible for monitoring the implementation, conformance, and efficacy of those measures, according to the monitoring requirements of the Nesting Bird Management Plan.
- d. The Applicant shall prepare and implement a monitoring protocol as part of the Nesting Bird Management Plan to ensure no disturbance to active nests occurs within or adjacent to the new vegetation removal and ground disturbance areas. The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the County, in coordination with USFWS and CDFW prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities;
- e. Prior to the start of any new Project-related ground disturbance activities, the authorized biologist shall provide the County a report or memorandum describing the findings of the nest surveys, including the time, date, and duration of the survey; identity and qualifications of the surveyor(s); and a list of species observed. If active nests are detected during the surveys, the report shall include descriptions of avoidance zones and methods used to determine avoidance zones and maps or aerial photos identifying nest locations and the boundaries of no-disturbance buffer zones;
- f. The authorized biologist shall monitor active nests until nestlings have fledged and dispersed. Activities that might, in the opinion of the authorized biologist, disturb nesting activities shall be prohibited within the buffer zone until such a determination is made;
- g. The authorized biologist shall monitor all new vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance in previously undisturbed areas throughout the breeding season each year, throughout the excavation and reclamation phases of the Project; and
- h. Throughout the excavation and reclamation phases of the Project, nest locations, Project activities in the vicinity of nests, and any adjustments to buffer areas shall be described and reported in monthly monitoring reports to the County.

If any work would occur during the breeding season that would result in noise levels exceeding 60 dBA within 500 feet of riparian habitat, including along the Salinas River, USFWS protocol surveys for least Bell's vireo will be conducted. Work shall not be allowed that exceeds the noise threshold until protocol surveys are complete for that year. If breeding least Bell's vireos are identified, a 500-foot buffer will be established around each territory. This buffer may be adjusted in coordination with USFWS, CDFW, and the County, provided that the 60 dBA threshold will not be exceeded within the active territory.

BIO-3.8 Bald and golden eagle surveys and impact avoidance during all Project phases. The Project Applicant shall implement the following measures to document eagle occurrence in the Proposed RPA area and surrounding mountains. Survey schedule and requirements will be as identified below unless otherwise authorized by the County in consultation with the USFWS and CDFW.

- a. **Annual Nesting Season Surveys during all Project Phases.** The Project Applicant shall contract with a qualified ornithologist to conduct nesting season (February through July for bald eagle and February 1 to August 31 for golden eagle) eagle surveys in the Proposed RPA area and surrounding mountains within a one-mile radius

of the Proposed RPA area. Survey methods for the golden eagle inventory shall be either ground-based or helicopter-based, as described in the *Golden Eagle Technical Guidance* (Pagel et al., 2010) or more current guidance from the USFWS. Survey methods for bald eagle will be developed in coordination with CDFW and will follow the CDFW's *Bald Eagle Breeding Survey Instructions* (available online at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey_monitor.html).

- b. **Nest Buffers.** If an occupied nest (as defined by the guidance cited under "Annual Nesting Season Surveys" above) is detected within one mile of the Proposed RPA area, a 0.5-mile disturbance-free buffer will be established, and no Project excavation or reclamation activities will occur within the buffer. This buffer may be reduced if the nest is shielded from view of the site by intervening terrain, in coordination with San Luis Obispo County, CDFW, and USFWS. This buffer will remain in effect until the young have fledged or the nesting attempt fails, as determined by the qualified ornithologist.
- c. **Reporting.** Bald and golden eagle survey data and, if applicable, nest buffers implemented will be provided to San Luis Obispo County, CDFW, and USFWS in monthly monitoring reports, as seasonal data becomes available and if specific nest buffers are established, and summarized in annual Project monitoring reports during all Project phases.

BIO-3.9 Conduct maternity colony or hibernaculum surveys for sensitive bats and avoid impacts during all Project phases. The removal of potential bat roost habitat (i.e., large trees, snags, vertical rock faces or rockpiles with interstitial crevices that are outside of current quarry operations areas) will take place from September 1 to October 31 when possible to avoid potential impacts to bat maternity or hibernation roosts. If the September 1 to October 31 work window is not feasible, pre-disturbance bat roost surveys will be conducted. No more than 15 days prior to vegetation removal or initial site disturbance in previously undisturbed areas, the Applicant shall retain a County qualified biologist to conduct surveys for sensitive bats within 300 feet of proposed disturbance areas. If hibernacula (hibernation roosts) or maternity roosts are found, no work will occur within 100 feet (blasting 300 feet) during the hibernation period (November 1 to March 31) or breeding season (March 1 to July 31), as applicable. Should blasting within the expansion area be required during these periods, prior to any such activity the Applicant shall consult with the County to develop and implement a strategy for the protection of hibernacula and/or maternity roosts.

If non-breeding bat roosts are found in cliffs, rock piles, trees or other substrate scheduled to be removed, the individuals shall be safely evicted, under the direction of a qualified biologist, by opening the roosting area to allow airflow through the cavity or other means determined appropriate by the bat biologist (e.g., installation of one-way doors). In situations requiring one-way doors, a minimum of one week shall pass after doors are installed and temperatures should be sufficiently warm for bats to exit the roost because bats do not typically leave their roost daily during winter months in southern coastal California. This action should allow all bats to leave during the course of one week. Roosts that need to be removed in situations where the use of one-way doors is not necessary in the judgment of the qualified biologist shall first be disturbed by various means at the direction of the bat biologist at dusk to allow bats to escape during the darker hours, and the roost tree shall be removed or the grading shall occur the next day (i.e., there shall be no less or more than one night between initial disturbance and the grading or tree removal).

BIO-3.10 Conduct focused surveys for ringtail cat and avoid active maternity dens during all Project phases. If vegetation clearing will occur during the breeding season for ringtail cat (March 1 through June 30), a qualified biologist will conduct focused surveys for potential dens within all previously undisturbed areas proposed for vegetation clearing and grading and the surrounding areas within 200 feet. Any active dens will be avoided, and a 200-foot disturbance-free buffer will be established. This buffer may be adjusted in coordination with the CDFW and the County, depending on the specific location and current activity occurring in the area. Once the young have left the den or the breeding attempt has failed, normal vegetation clearing and earth-moving activities can resume. All activities that involve the ringtail shall be documented and reported to the CDFW and the County within 30 days of the activity.

BIO-3.11 Complete focused surveys for American badger and implement avoidance measures during all Project phases. No more than 30 days prior to the commencement of vegetation clearing or earth moving in previously undisturbed areas, the Project Applicant shall retain a County-qualified biologist to conduct surveys for American badger within native vegetation and annual grasslands in the proposed disturbance area. If present, occupied badger dens shall be flagged and ground-disturbing activities avoided within 50 feet of the occupied den. Maternity dens shall be avoided during pup-rearing season (15 February through 1 July) and a minimum 200-foot disturbance-free buffer established. The extent of buffers shall be flagged in the field utilizing a method highly visible by crews. Buffers may be modified in coordination with the CDFW. A biological monitor shall monitor for adequate protection of all identified dens and to ensure that all flagging is kept in place during new vegetation removal and initial ground-disturbing activities during the excavation and reclamation phases.

If avoidance of an occupied, non-maternity den is not feasible, badgers shall be passively relocated in coordination with the CDFW and the biological monitor.

A written report documenting all badger-related activities (e.g. den flagging, monitoring, badger removal, etc.) shall be provided to the County of San Luis Obispo within 30 days of completion of the activities. A copy of the report will also be provided to the CDFW.

HYD-1 Prepare and Implement Site-Specific SWPPP.

Impact BIO-4: Impact wildlife movement, migration, and nursery sites

As described in EIR Section 4.6.1.5, the Proposed RPA area is located in the Lower North Salinas River landscape linkage, which is considered an important connection between the Santa Lucia and Diablo Ranges (Penrod et al., 2001). Riparian and oak communities in the Proposed RPA area also provides important stopover habitat for migratory birds and the river supports connectivity for steelhead. The Santa Margarita Valley is considered an Important Bird Area by Audubon California (Audubon California, 2008).

Ridgelines, canyon bottoms, and drainages within the region likely serve as movement corridors for a variety of terrestrial wildlife, including large animals such as deer, bear, mountain lion, and bobcat. However, wildlife are not expected to limit their movement to specific drainages. For many species including mule deer and small carnivores, movement patterns are often more dispersed and include large swaths of open areas and vegetated trails.

Excavation

Wildlife Movement and Migration. Ground-disturbing and mining activity in the expansion area could interfere with terrestrial wildlife movement during excavation. Excavation activities would affect wildlife in adjacent habitats by interfering with movement patterns or causing animals to temporarily avoid areas adjacent to the work. In general, nocturnal (active at night) wildlife would be affected less by disturbance from noise, vibration, and human activity than diurnal (active during the day) species since Project activities would occur primarily during daylight hours. More mobile species like birds and larger mammals are expected to disperse into adjacent habitat areas during land clearing and grading.

Overall interference with terrestrial wildlife movement and bird migration would be less than significant because the Project activities would be in areas immediately adjacent to the current actively mined quarry, and activities would be consistent with ongoing types of disturbances. Mammals and birds moving through the region are exposed to these disturbances from the existing quarry, and the intensity of activities would not increase under the Proposed Project. Further, expansion into the 33 additional acres would be phased over many years. Migrating terrestrial animals and birds are not expected to be as sensitive to Proposed Project disturbances as resident or breeding species, because of the wide variety of habitats and open space available in the region. Mobile wildlife would be able to respond to excavation activities by moving to adjacent habitats, and as many large species move during the evening or early morning when Project activities would be limited, excavation would not substantially interfere with their movement. However, if the Proposed Project degrades water quality or constricts flow or passage in the Salinas River, significant impacts to steelhead connectivity could occur.

Mitigation Measures BIO-2.1 and HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply) would require the Applicant to implement BMPs to minimize impacts to jurisdictional waters, including the Salinas River. These BMPs include restrictions on use of hazardous materials near wetland areas, a setback from the Salinas River for all quarry extension grading, and other measures to prevent erosion and sedimentation impacts or the introduction of other materials into the Salinas River. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to movement and migration to a less than significant level (Class II).

Nursery Sites. Native vegetation in the Proposed RPA area is expected to support nesting birds and other species. However bats using rock outcrops or the large oak trees are the most likely nursery colony within the Proposed Project site. A bat nursery colony site is where pregnant female bats assemble (or one bat if it's of a solitary species) to give birth and raise their pups. On the project site bat nursery colonies would be adversely impacted by the Proposed Project if humans approach an active nursery colony, if entrances to nursery colony sites become blocked, if blasting or drilling causes substantial vibration of the earth/rock surrounding an active nursery colony, or if a structure or large tree is disturbed by Project activities. These colonies could be located in rock crevices, caves, or culverts; in man-made structures; and in trees (typically snags or large trees with cavities or exfoliating bark). No bat nursery colonies were detected during surveys, but focused roost surveys were not conducted and suitable habitat occurs in the Proposed RPA area. Mitigation Measure BIO-3.9 requires surveys for and avoidance of any nursery colonies found in or near the Project disturbance areas. Implementation of this measure would reduce disturbance to bat nursery colonies to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Reclamation

Impacts to wildlife movement and bat maternity roosts would generally be the same during reclamation activities as described for excavation. Reclamation activities include earth moving, grading, and other activities that will cause noise and vibration disturbances. Impacts would be less in magnitude because reclamation activities would not include drilling, blasting or vegetation removal. Implementation of ero-

sion and sediment control measures HYD-1.1 (see EIR Section 4.15, Water Quality and Supply), BIO-2.1 and avoidance of water quality degradation would reduce impacts to steelhead movement in the Salinas River. Mitigation Measures BIO-3.9 would require surveys and avoidance of maternity bat roosts. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to wildlife nursery sites to a level of less than significant (Class II).

Reclamation is ultimately expected to benefit wildlife in most of the Proposed RPA area. After mining activities cease and vegetation becomes established, wildlife will be able to use the site for movement and or migration. Additional bat maternity roost sites may become available as well, as disturbance from noise and vibration ceases and habitat develops more structural complexity. However, this benefit would not begin until after the Project is completed and reclaimed areas have time to develop. As proposed the excavation and reclamation would range for a period of 65 to 70 years. Therefore, while acknowledging ultimate benefits to wildlife, this analysis has considered the substantial temporal loss of habitat values in the Proposed RPA area.

Mitigation for Impacts to Wildlife Movement and Nursery Sites

BIO-2.1 Implement Best Management Practices to minimize impacts to jurisdictional areas during all Project phases.

BIO-3.9 Conduct maternity colony or hibernaculum surveys for sensitive bats and avoid impacts during all Project phases.

HYD-1 Prepare and Implement Site-Specific SWPPP.

Impact BIO-5: Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinances

Applicable sections and Elements of the County's General Plan were reviewed for consistency with the Proposed Project. Generally, the General Plan supports the preservation, enhancement, and restoration of natural habitats. The General Plan also describes preservation and enhancement of oak woodlands, and requires mitigation for impacts to biological resources including oak woodlands. Mitigation Measure BIO-1.1 requires compensatory mitigation for impacts to oak woodlands at a 3:1 ratio (acres conserved to acres impacted). Mitigation Measures BIO-1.1 through BIO-3.11 would reduce impacts to biological resources and ensure the Proposed Project complies with local policies and ordinances. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to a less than significant level (Class III).