

1. Introduction

1.1 Summary of the Proposed Project

This Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) has been prepared to evaluate and document the environmental impacts of the proposed Santa Margarita Quarry Expansion Project (Project, or Proposed Project). The Proposed Project includes expansion of the existing Santa Margarita Quarry (quarry) by approximately 33 acres, which would yield an estimated 21.5 million tons of aggregate reserves. These reserves, in combination with existing entitled reserves, would result in the quarry producing 33.2 million tons of aggregate products over a 59-year period. Proposed expansion of the quarry would require issuance of a Notice to Proceed (NTP) from the County of San Luis Obispo (County) Department of Planning and Building. Implementation of the Project would also require reclamation of the entire quarry site, as expanded, and a Reclamation Plan Amendment (RPA) has also been submitted to the County Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Collectively, these actions make up Case Number DRC2011-00098/DRC2011-00099, ED12-008.

The Project site is located at 16815 El Camino Real, approximately three miles northeast of the community of Santa Margarita. Under the Proposed Project, the existing quarry's Excavation Area would be expanded and mined according to four overlapping phases. Each phase would include: vegetation removal; topsoil salvaging and overburden stripping; blasting; shot rock extraction and transport; and, material processing. Concurrent reclamation would occur with mining where practicable on those benches that have achieved their final contours. Final reclamation of the proposed RPA area would be completed after mining Phase IV. It is anticipated that all four mining phases and final reclamation would all be completed in approximately 64 years (59 years of mining plus five years of final reclamation). No increase in annual production volumes or intensity is proposed beyond the quarry's currently permitted levels.

The Applicant's stated objectives for the Proposed Project are to:

1. Maintain a local, reliable and economic source of high-quality construction aggregates to serve market demands in San Luis Obispo County and the Central Coast region. Associated goals include:
 - a. Ensure that a sufficient short-term supply of local construction aggregates exists to serve public and private construction projects within the region as they arise.
 - b. Ensure a long-term regional supply of construction aggregates by adding 21,500,000 tons of aggregate reserves and continuing an existing aggregate source until approximately 2070.
2. Reduce the impacts of an existing mining operation to visual resources, air quality and other sensitive natural resources through site design, efficient mine planning and investment in improved quarry infrastructure.
3. Reclaim an existing mining operation to seasonal water storage, open-space and grazing uses in a manner that is consistent with Surface Mining and Reclamation Act's (SMARA's) requirements and standards.
4. Continue to provide high paying jobs for quarry employees through the extension of the quarry.
5. Allow for potential capital investment in infrastructure to increase efficiency and reduce operational impacts.

The County has determined that the basic objectives of the Proposed Project are as follows:

Concrete grade aggregate, consisting of crushed granitic rock used in Portland Cement Concrete-grade and Asphaltic Concrete pavement, is particularly important for road building and maintenance and other construction. Both the State of California and the County, through its Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE), recognize the important role of aggregate minerals in supporting construction and economic growth within the region. The basic purpose of the proposed quarry expansion is to contribute towards fulfillment of that role.

Goals identified by County relative to the extraction and use of mineral resources are found in the COSE and include: MN 1 (Conservation and development of significant mineral deposits will be a high priority, but will be balanced with other County general plan goals and policies); MN 2 (Significant mineral resources will be protected from land uses that threaten their availability for future mining); and, MN 3 (Balance mining of mineral resources with sensitive natural resources and existing adjacent uses). The following objectives of the Proposed Project embody these goals from the COSE:

- Develop significant mineral deposits in a manner that protects sensitive natural resources and existing adjacent uses, and is consistent with other County general plan goals and policies.
- Protect significant mineral resources from land uses that threaten their availability for future mining.

Draft EIR Chapter 2 (Project Description) provides a detailed narrative of the Proposed Project's attributes, including an overview of aggregate demand, and descriptions of the existing quarry's history and entitlements, the quarry's exiting operations, the Proposed Project's expansion area, mining phases, and operational activities, and a summary of the proposed RPA, including its goals and activities.

1.2 Summary of the Proposed Project's Environmental Review Process

Hanson Aggregates Mid-Pacific (the Project Applicant) originally applied for a modification to its existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the Santa Margarita Quarry and approval of the proposed RPA on May 25, 2012. Following review and preliminary assessment of these applications and acting as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County Department of Planning and Building prepared and transmitted a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this EIR on June 20, 2013. Comments on the NOP were requested by no later than July 22, 2013, and a public workshop on the scope of the EIR was held on June 27, 2013 at the Santa Margarita Elementary School, located at 22070 H Street in the community of Santa Margarita. A summary of the scoping process and comments received on the NOP is contained in Section ES.2 of the Draft EIR.

The Draft EIR and its corresponding Notice of Availability were released for public and agency review on November 21, 2014. The public and agency review and comment period on the Draft EIR was 53 days in length and ended at the close of the business day on Monday, January 12 2015. During this period, a public meeting on the contents and conclusions of the Draft EIR was held on Thursday, December 4, 2014, also at the Santa Margarita Elementary School. Approximately eight persons attended the Draft EIR meeting, including Applicant representatives. No areas of controversy or issues in need of resolution were identified by any member of the public at that meeting.

This Final EIR has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 1500 et seq.). The

County Department of Planning and Building has designed this Final EIR to be used in conjunction with the content of the Project's Draft EIR, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15132 and 15088(d). It contains all written comments received on the Draft EIR, responses to the comments received on the Draft EIR, all revisions to the text of the Draft EIR that were undertaken as a result of consideration of the comments received on the Draft EIR, and a Mitigation Monitoring Plan (MMP), consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15097. As of the time of this Final EIR's publication, the Proposed Project and its related environmental review documentation are scheduled to be considered by the County of San Luis Obispo Planning Commission on April 30, 2015.

1.3 Availability, Organization and Content of the Draft Environmental Impact Report

As noted in Section 1.2 (Summary of the Proposed Project's Environmental Review Process), this Final EIR is designed to be used in conjunction with its corresponding Draft EIR. The contents of the Draft EIR is incorporated by reference in this Final EIR and is not duplicated herein; only the Draft EIR text that has been revised as part of the finalization process is provided in this document, as further described in Final EIR Chapter 3. A printed, bound copy of the Draft EIR is available for review at:

County of San Luis Obispo
Department of Planning and Building
976 Osos Street
San Luis Obispo, California 93408
Contact: Mr. Airlin Singewald (805) 781-5198

The Draft EIR can also be accessed electronically at:

http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/environmental/EnvironmentalNotices/Hanson__Santa_Margarita_Quarry_Expansion_Project_Draft_Environmental_Impact_Report__DEIR_.htm

The Draft EIR was organized into an Executive Summary, nine chapters, and six technical appendices, as follows:

- **Executive Summary.** Provides a description of the Proposed Project's environmental review process, a summary of the Proposed Project attributes and its impacts, a brief description of the Proposed Project's alternatives and identification of the environmentally superior alternative, and a summary of the Proposed Project's areas of known controversy and issues in need of resolution.
- **Chapter 1 (Introduction).** Provides a discussion of the EIR's intended purpose, a summary of the Proposed Project's regulatory permitting requirements, and a description of the EIR's content.
- **Chapter 2 (Project Description).** Provides a detailed description of the Proposed Project.
- **Chapter 3 (Environmental Setting).** Provides a brief discussion of the existing quarry's history and operation, as well as a description of its overall environmental setting.
- **Chapter 4 (Environmental Analysis).** Provides a comprehensive analysis and assessment of the Proposed Project's direct and indirect environmental effects. This chapter is divided into 14 sections for each of 14 environmental issue areas addressed in the EIR. Each section contains detail regarding: (1) existing, or "baseline" conditions; (2) applicable County plans, policies and ordinances; (3) regulatory setting; (4) impact assessment methodology; and, (5) criterion-specific impacts and mitigation measures.

- **Chapter 5 (Cumulative Effects).** Provides a discussion of the cumulative scenario for the Proposed Project and its incremental contribution to cumulative impacts.
- **Chapter 6 (Comparison of Alternatives).** Provides a description of the alternatives evaluation process, as well as a description of alternatives considered but eliminated from further analysis and the rationale thereof. This section also includes an analysis and assessment of impacts for the alternatives retained for analysis, including the No Project Alternative.
- **Chapter 7 (Other CEQA Considerations).** Provides a discussion of the Proposed Project's growth-inducing effects, energy consumption, significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided, and irreversible changes.
- **Chapter 8 (References).** Provides a listing of the documents and data used during preparation of the Draft EIR.
- **Chapter 9 (Preparers and Reviewers).** Provides a listing of the individuals who prepared this EIR, and a listing of those individuals that reviewed it.
- **Appendices.**
 - Appendix A: Notice of Preparation, Written Comment Letters
 - Appendix B: RPA Goals and Activities, Existing County Permit Conditions
 - Appendix C: Applicable Regulations for Biological Resources
 - Appendix D: Native American Consultation
 - Appendix E: Policy Consistency Analysis
 - Appendix F: Traffic Impact Analysis

1.4 Availability, Organization and Content of the Final Environmental Impact Report

Printed and electronic versions of this Final EIR can be accessed at the same locations as indicated for the Draft EIR in Section 1.3 (Availability, Organization and Content of the Draft EIR). The organization and content of this Final EIR is as follows:

- **Executive Summary.** Provides a summary of the purpose and the content of the Final EIR.
- **Chapter 1 (Introduction).** Provides summary of the Proposed Project and its environmental documentation and review process.
- **Chapter 2 (Draft Environmental Impact Report Comments and Responses to Comments).** Provides the written comments received on the Draft EIR and the County's responses to these comments.
- **Chapter 3 (Revisions to the Draft Environmental Impact Report).** Provides the revisions that have been made to the language of the Draft EIR for its finalization.
- **Chapter 4 (References).** Provides new references that have been added to the Draft EIR as part of the document's finalization.
- **Appendices.**
 - Appendix A (Mitigation Monitoring Plan). Provides the County's plan for implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in the Final EIR.

- Appendix B (Reclamation Plan Amendment for the Santa Margarita Quarry). Presents the Applicant's proposed Reclamation Plan Amendment for the existing quarry and its proposed expansion.