

7.0 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

The environmental effects of the proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision and Future Development Program are discussed in Section 4.0 of this EIR and are summarized in the executive summary. Section 15126.2(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of “significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented. Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as a highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.”

7.1 AGRICULTURAL RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER SUBDIVISION SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

Construction and use of the residences in the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would irreversibly commit construction materials and non-renewable energy resources. These energy resource demands would be used for construction, heating and cooling of buildings, transportation of people and goods, as well as lighting and other associated energy needs. Non-renewable and slowly renewable resources used by Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision residences and improvements would include, but are not limited to, lumber and other forest products; sand and gravel; asphalt; petrochemical construction materials; steel; copper; lead and other metals, water; etc. A marginal increase in the commitment of facility maintenance services would also be required. Primary Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision impacts related to consumption of non-renewable and slowly renewable resources are considered to be less than significant because Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision implementation would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials.

The Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision could induce development as a result of removal of obstacles to growth. This could result in secondary environmental impacts (e.g., additional noise and traffic), and may increase the use of nonrenewable resources and energy to serve new development. However, as described in Section 5.0, *Growth Inducing Impacts*, Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measure GI-1(a) (Infrastructure Capacity Limitations) would reduce the potential to induce further growth and ensure less than significant impacts. In addition, the environmental impacts of any additional growth would depend upon the type, location, and magnitude of new development.

The proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would permanently compromise the sustainability of a 676.7-acre grazing unit and would permanently convert 5 acres containing prime soils to non-agricultural uses. Because no feasible measures are available that would mitigate impacts to the grazing unit and prime soils located on the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision site without substantial redesign of the proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision, impacts related to agricultural conversion would be Class I, *significant and unavoidable*. In addition, given the non-contiguous design of proposed lots and the intensity of existing agricultural activities on the site (vineyards), impacts related to conflicts between



proposed urban uses and existing and future agricultural uses would also be Class I, *significant and unavoidable*.

The proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision will result in operational air pollutant emissions, primarily from vehicular traffic. This would result in an exceedance of the APCD thresholds, and would be a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact. In addition, due to the distance of the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision site from services, Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision implementation would result in a substantial increase in vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision is inconsistent with the 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP). Since no mitigation measures are feasible to sufficiently reduce vehicle miles traveled, impacts related to consistency with the CAP would be Class I, *significant and unavoidable*.

The proposed Agriculture Residential Cluster Subdivision would result in the removal of an estimated 200 to 400 blue oak, coast live oak, and valley oak trees within the Blue Oak Woodland, Coast live Oak Woodland, Valley Oak Woodland, Valley Needlegrass Grassland, and California Annual Grassland habitats on the site. In the short term, oak trees that are removed can be replaced, but the quality of their habitat values will not be the same until the new trees mature, the timeframe of which cannot be accurately determined. Thus impacts to oak woodlands are considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact.

The Santa Margarita Ranch is a rural historic district eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR). The proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision is located in one of the character-defining areas of the ranch. Development of the proposed residential cluster in this area would substantially diminish the integrity of the design, setting, materials, feeling, and association of this important character-defining area. In addition, implementation of the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would adversely impact traditional Native American values. This is considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact. In addition, thirty-two prehistoric and historical archaeological sites and six isolates are located within or immediately adjacent to the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision site. Damage to or destruction of the important associations of these sites, and disruption of their setting and feeling, is a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact. Although impacts would be reduced through implementation of Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measures CR-2(a) (Avoidance) and CR-2(b) (Mitigative Data Recovery Excavation), no mitigation is available to avoid significantly impacting identified cultural resources. Impacts would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

Development of the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would result in the addition of 1,154 average daily trips (88 AM peak hour and 119 PM peak hour trips) to study-area roadways and intersections. Although this would not result in exceedances of roadway or intersection LOS standards, the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision will add traffic to locations with existing hazards and operational problems. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures would improve hazards and operational problems. However, due to uncertainty regarding Caltrans approval of facilities within State jurisdiction, Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impacts would result.

In addition, long-term traffic generated by the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would incrementally increase noise levels at existing receptors located adjacent to roadways in



the Santa Margarita Ranch vicinity. The implementation of structural measures (e.g., sound walls, solid core doors, and/or double paned windows) would be infeasible due to physical, economic, or other constraints, and would rely upon the cooperation of off-site property owners, which cannot be assured. Therefore, no feasible measures are available that would mitigate impacts to existing sensitive receptors. The effect of this noise on off-site sensitive receptors in the area is a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact.

The Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision proposes to cluster the residential units in a generally north-south orientation in the central portion of the site, which would reduce visual impacts from viewpoints east and west of the site. Regardless, the proposed Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision has the potential to alter the aesthetic character of the site vicinity by changing the scenic views from public viewing locations, introducing community design elements that may be aesthetically inconsistent with the surrounding area and introducing new light and glare generators into the area. Implementation of Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measures AES-1(a) (Prohibition of Structural Silhouetting), AES-1(b) (Architectural and Landscape Guidelines), AES-1(c) (Oak Tree Removal), AES-1(d) (Bury Water Tanks), AES-1(e) (Lighting), AES-1(f) (Street Light Limitations), AES-1(g) (Clear Excess Debris), AES-1(h) (Grading), and AES-1(i) (Accessory Structures/Infrastructure) would reduce impacts. However, no mitigation is available to avoid changing the site from its rural condition to a more suburban condition. This is Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact to the aesthetic character of the area.

The Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision would increase the use of water from area aquifer units, including the Paso Robles and Santa Margarita Formations, by 96 acre-feet per year (afy). This net consumptive use may contribute to overdraft of the aquifer system. Implementation of Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measures W-1(a) (Groundwater and Surface Water Monitoring Programs) and W-1(b) (Water Conservation Measures) would reduce the overall water system demand for the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision by approximately 13 percent. However, additional water supply would still be required. Additional water may be available for the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision through the State Water Project and/or the Nacimiento Water Project, as outlined in Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measure W-1(c) (Imported Water Supply). However, due to uncertainty regarding timing and availability of these sources, additional water supply cannot be assured at this time. Groundwater use associated with the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision is therefore a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact.

7.2 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

Construction and land uses contemplated in the Future Development Program would irreversibly commit construction materials and non-renewable energy resources. These energy resource demands would be used for construction, heating and cooling of buildings, transportation of people and goods, as well as lighting and other associated energy needs. Non-renewable and slowly renewable resources used by the Future Development Program land uses and improvements would include, but are not limited to, lumber and other forest products; sand and gravel; asphalt; petrochemical construction materials; steel; copper; lead and other metals, water; etc. A marginal increase in the commitment of facility maintenance services would also be required. Primary Future Development Program impacts related to consumption



of non-renewable and slowly renewable resources are considered to be less than significant because Future Development Program buildout would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials.

The Future Development Program could induce development as a result of removal of obstacles to growth. This could result in secondary environmental impacts (e.g., additional noise and traffic), and may increase the use of nonrenewable resources and energy to serve new development. However, as described in Section 5.0, *Growth Inducing Impacts*, Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measure GI-1(a) (Infrastructure Capacity Limitations) would apply to all Future Development Program land uses. In addition, infrastructure planning and coordination for Future Development Program land uses would be accomplished with a Specific Plan and through the individual development project review process. The environmental impacts of any additional growth would also depend upon the type, location, and magnitude of new development.

Development in accordance with the Future Development Program could permanently convert existing grazing lands and 573 acres containing prime soils to non-agricultural uses. Impacts related to agricultural conversion would be Class I, *significant and unavoidable*. In addition, the Future Development Program would create conflicts between proposed urban uses and existing and future agricultural uses. Potential land use conflicts are also a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact.

Many of the Future Development Program conceptual land uses are inconsistent with the land use designations and population assumptions of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan. In addition, Future Development Program implementation would result in a substantial increase in vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, the Future Development Program is inconsistent with the 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP). This is a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact.

Implementation of the Future Development Program would result in the removal of oak woodland habitat and an unknown number of native coast live oak, blue oak, and valley oak trees within the Coast live Oak Woodland, Blue Oak Woodland, Valley Oak Woodland and California annual grassland habitat types. In the short term, oak trees that are removed can be replaced, but the quality of their habitat values will not be the same until the new trees mature, the timeframe of which cannot be accurately determined. Thus impacts to oak woodlands are considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact.

Future development in accordance with the Future Development Program could adversely impact the Santa Margarita Ranch Rural Historic District and could adversely impact traditional Native American values. This is considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact. In addition, the Future Development Program would adversely impact identified and previously unidentified archeological deposits. These resources contribute to the significance of the Santa Margarita Ranch Rural Historic District and are eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR) under multiple significance criteria. Recovery of the important information in these sites through excavation would lessen the impacts. However, damage to or destruction of the important associations of these sites, and disruption of their setting and feeling, is a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact.



The Future Development Program would result in the addition of 8,137 average daily weekday trips (655 AM peak-hour and 818 PM peak-hour trips) to the study-area roadways and intersections. This would cause two local roadway segments, four U.S. 101 mainline segments, all four U.S. 101/SR 58 interchange ramps, and four intersections to operate at unacceptable levels of service during peak hours. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures would partially reduce impacts. However, due to uncertainty regarding Caltrans approval of facilities within State jurisdiction, impacts would be Class I, *significant and unavoidable*. The Future Development Program may also result in inadequate site access and/or internal circulation conflicts. This would also generate a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact.

In addition, long-term traffic generated by the Future Development Program would incrementally increase noise levels at existing receptors located adjacent to roadways in the Santa Margarita Ranch vicinity. The effect of this noise on off-site sensitive receptors in the area is a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact. Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measure N-2(a) (Off-site Residence Noise Attenuation) would apply to all Future Development Program applicants subsequent to the Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision. However, the implementation of this mitigation measure may not be feasible due to physical, economic, or other constraints, and would rely upon the cooperation of off-site property owners, which cannot be assured. Therefore, impacts would remain Class I, *significant and unavoidable*.

The current visual character of the Santa Margarita Ranch property and surrounding area is highly scenic and rural. The Future Development Program envisions potential future development throughout the Ranch, which would permanently alter the rural character of the area and introduce new development along viewing corridors. The introduction of light and glare would also contribute to a change in visual character. Buildout of the Future Development Program would significantly alter the existing rural visual character of the Santa Margarita Ranch. Impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*. Implementation of mitigation measures outlined in Section 4.13, *Visual Resources*, would reduce impacts. However, due to the extent of the Future Development Program and the amount of visual conversion of the existing rural nature of the Santa Margarita Ranch, impacts would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

The Future Development Program would increase the use of water from area aquifer units, including the Paso Robles and Santa Margarita Formations, by 926 acre-feet per year (afy). This net consumptive use may contribute to overdraft of the aquifer system. Water supply would need to be acquired prior to issuance of grading permits for individual Future Development Program land use components, and would be coordinated through the required Specific Plan. The Specific Plan will also be required to include a comprehensive water supply analysis pursuant to California Senate Bill (SB) 610 [Water Code §10910(g)(3), Water Supply Assessments] and California Senate Bill (SB) 221 [Government Code §66473.7(b)(2), Written Verifications of Water Supply]. However, additional water supply would still be required. Additional water may be available for the Future Development Program land uses through the State Water Project and/or the Nacimiento Water Project, as outlined in Agricultural Residential Cluster Subdivision measure W-1(c) (Imported Water Supply). However, due to uncertainty regarding timing and availability of these sources, additional water supply cannot be assured at this time. Groundwater use associated with the Future Development Program is therefore a Class I, *significant and unavoidable*, impact.

