
5.10 - Mineral Resources

5.10.1 - Introduction

This section of the EIR presents information on existing mineral resource conditions and evaluates potential mineral resources impacts of the proposed North Fork Village-1 (NFV-1) project. The analysis contained in this section is based on information obtained from the Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Rio Mesa Area Plan (RMAP) on mines and mineral resources prepared by the Department of Conservation - Division of Mines and Geology. In addition, the Madera County General Plan was utilized in assessing potential impacts. Supporting technical studies that were used in this analysis are a Preliminary Geotechnical Feasibility Investigation for the NFV-1 project, prepared by Technicon Engineering Services, Inc. (March 2005), and a Hydrogeologic Analysis for the Proposed NFV-1 project, prepared by Melvin C. Simons and Associates (March 2005). These are contained in Appendices E, Geology/Hazards and Appendix F, Hydrology/Water Quality, respectively.

Rio Mesa Area Plan and EIR

The Rio Mesa Area Plan EIR identified certain areas within the plan area as having significant sand and gravel deposits per the classifications of the California Division of Mines and Geology. No significant deposits were shown within the NFV-1 project site.

5.10.2 - Existing Conditions

The elevation of the property varies from approximately 350 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) along Cottonwood Creek to approximately 1,400 feet AMSL on the top of the hills just north of Millerton Lake State Recreation Area (SRA). The majority of the property site is utilized for cattle ranching, with a small portion consisting of facilities for commercial production of chickens.

Several mining shafts are evident on the property and are the remains of a pumice/pozzolan quarry operation. Pozzolan refers to any of variety of fly ash, silica, and shells that is fine grained and water absorbent that can be used in the making of concrete or used to hold water in landscaped areas. Pozzolan is abundant with one mine in Nevada holding over a billion tons.

Regulatory Framework

State

Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources

The DOGGR within the State Department of Conservation supervises the drilling, operation, maintenance, and abandonment of oil, gas, and geothermal wells to protect the environment, public health, and safety, and encourage good conservation practices. The DOGGR collects data on the location of groundwater, oil, gas, and geothermal resources, and records the location of all drilled and abandoned wells.

California Division of Mines and Geology

The California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) within the State Department of Conservation has responsibility to identify and assist in the utilization of mineral deposits, and to identify geological hazards, including fault locations.

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California Surface Mining and Reclamation Policies and Procedures have been prepared by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) in cooperation with the Office of Mine Reclamation and the California Geological Survey.

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA), Chapter 9, Division 2 of the Public Resources Code, requires the State Mining and Geology Board to adopt State policy for the reclamation of mined lands and the conservation of mineral resources. These policies are prepared in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, (Government Code) and are found in California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 2, Chapter 8, Subchapter 1.

Federal

Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within the United States Department of the Interior, administers 261 million surface acres of America's public lands, located primarily in 12 Western States. The BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The public lands provide myriad opportunities for commercial activities. Commercially valuable natural resources include energy and mineral commodities, forest products, grazing forage, and special uses such as rights-of-way for pipelines and transmission lines.

The BLM is responsible for managing commercial energy and mineral production from the public lands in an environmentally sound and responsible manner. The BLM is responsible for the leasing of federal oil and gas and geothermal minerals. The BLM is also responsible for supervising the exploration, development, and production operations of these resources on both Federal and Indian lands. The BLM is responsible for maintaining viable national policies and processes for solid minerals resources under Federal jurisdiction. Solid minerals include coal and non-energy leasable minerals, hard rock minerals on acquired lands, locatable minerals, and salable minerals.

The BLM released a National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands on January 19, 2001. This Strategy is aimed at recognizing the interests of motorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) users while protecting environmentally sensitive areas on the public lands. It also seeks to focus the agency's scarce funding and staffing resources on motorized OHV management on-the-ground at the local field office level.

The SMARA was adopted to address the loss of mineral deposits in the State. In addition to requiring mine operators to prepare operational and reclamation plans, it required the Mineral Lands Inventory be prepared by the State Geologist, California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG). In 1988, the CDMG estimated that a total of 2.1 billion tons of sand and gravel resources could be made available to supply the estimated 50-year demand of 268-million tons for the Fresno/Madera area.

5.10.3 - Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that a project would result in a significant impact on mineral resources if it would:

- a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; and/or
- b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan; and/or
- c) Result in hazardous site conditions in regards to abandoned oil wells.

5.10.4 - Project Impacts

Impact 5.10-1: **Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state. (Threshold a.)**

The NFV-1 Specific Plan Area is located in an area predominantly within the CDMG designation of MRZ-3. *This zone is not considered a significant mineral resource area by CDMG, and the loss of this area to mining would not be considered a significant impact.*

Impact 5.10-2: **Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan. (Threshold b.)**

The project site does not include a locally-important mineral resource recovery site. *There are no impacts.*

Impact 5.10-3: **Result in hazardous site conditions in regard to abandoned oil wells. (Threshold c.)**

There are no oil wells on the site. *There are no impacts.*

5.10.5 - Cumulative Impacts

The proposed project has no impacts on mineral resources. There are no cumulative impacts.

5.10.6 - Mitigation Measures

Rio Mesa Area Plan and EIR

No mitigation measures are required.

Additional Project Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.10.7 - Level of Significance After Mitigation

The NFV-1 Project will not result in any impact on mineral resources.