

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Smith Road Tank

Prepared for

Calleguas Municipal Water District

Submitted by



June 2026

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Introduction

The proposed Smith Road Tank (Proposed Project) includes the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall by approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank to provide a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 million gallons (MG). The Proposed Project requires discretionary approval and is subject to the environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared in compliance with CEQA to analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Project. This Executive Summary summarizes the description of the Proposed Project, alternatives to the Proposed Project, and the environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Proposed Project.

The Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) is the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project. Calleguas's 2017 Potable Water Master Plan identified the need for the Proposed Project to improve water reliability in the eastern Simi Valley/Santa Susana area. The Proposed Project's objectives are to:

- Meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region during short-term imported water supply outage conditions.
- Provide operational benefits and flexibility during normal and high demand conditions.
- Provide a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.
- Help maintain consistent water pressure throughout the distribution system.
- In case of emergencies, such as fires, provide an immediate source of water for firefighting and other critical needs.

The Proposed Project would improve the reliability of the existing water supply but would not increase the overall supply of water delivered by Calleguas.

1.2. Lead Agency

Pursuant to Section 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines, Calleguas is the Lead Agency responsible for preparing this EIR because Calleguas holds principal responsibility for approving the Proposed Project. Noted below is Calleguas's CEQA contact.

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1.3. Project Description

The following is a summary of the full project description, which can be found in Chapter 3, *Project Description*.

Project Location

The proposed water tank would be constructed on an approximately 4-acre property that is currently an undeveloped, unoccupied parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 657-0-020-230), located at the

northeast corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road in eastern Simi Valley. Local access to the site is provided by Smith Road, adjacent to the south, and Kuehner Drive, adjacent to the west of the site. California State Route 118 provides regional access to the project site and is approximately 0.6 mile to the northeast. Santa Susana Pass Road and the Union Pacific Railroad are approximately 0.15 mile to the south.

Project Elements

The Proposed Project includes the 43-foot-tall above-ground steel tank, inlet and outlet pipelines, pipeline connections, overflow and drain pipes, above ground isolation valves, a paved access road with a driveway off Smith Road, retaining walls, and landscaping. The tank would be constructed on top of an elevated pad, which would be created with imported fill material to reach a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet above mean sea level (AMSL), or approximately 35 feet above the existing ground surface; this elevation of the water level is the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity without pumping. The total height of the pad plus the tank would be approximately 78 feet from ground level. Based on field observation, an electrical power supply appears to be available from the existing above-ground power lines along the north side of Smith Road. An approximately 700-foot-long Southern California Edison (SCE) service line would be required from the SCE connection location to the tank.

Project Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project is anticipated to be completed over approximately 30 to 36 months. The majority of construction would occur Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Nighttime work would be needed for the connections to existing Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) and Calleguas Conduit North Branch (CCNB) pipelines, as the construction of these connections would require the shutdown of CCNB and CCSB and work would need to be performed continuously, because the process of stopping and starting operation of these pipelines would require dewatering, extending the construction timeline. An alternate water source would be provided during the shutdown, ensuring there is no interruption of service. Additionally, the shutdown would be scheduled to occur during the winter months due to reduced water demand, and work would be performed continuously, 24 hours a day, over a two-week period.

The majority of construction would occur on weekdays, but some construction could occur on weekends due to the need to minimize the impact of traffic control on motorists or work continuously to limit the duration of shutdowns of existing water facilities. Weekend and nighttime work would be required during the 2-week shutdown period for CCNB and CCSB connections. Work hours in the public right-of-way would be finalized with the City of Simi Valley through the roadway encroachment permitting process.

Due to uncertainties about the anticipated timing of land acquisition, duration of permitting and design, and other considerations, a planned start date has not been identified for the Proposed Project. For the purposes of this analysis, the construction start date was conservatively assumed to begin in early-2027 and conclude in early- to mid-2029. Depending on the anticipated construction start date, construction could extend to late-2029.

Project Operation and Maintenance

Existing Calleguas staff would perform routine operation and maintenance activities. Specialized work requiring a contractor would be rare (less than annually). Operational activities at the project site would primarily be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Interior inspections that would be conducted every

five years would require the tank to be drained or would be performed by a qualified diving inspector while the tank is full. If the tank is drained, water would be dechlorinated and discharged from the onsite storm drain to the existing Ventura County Watershed Protection District (VCWPD) concrete-lined drainage channel (Arroyo Simi channel) adjacent to and north of the site. Landscaping would be irrigated as needed and maintained regularly.

1.4. Alternatives

As required by CEQA, this EIR examines alternatives to the Proposed Project. Studied alternatives include the five alternatives below, which are summarized in the following sections:

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative
- Alternative 3: Distant Hill Alternative
- Alternative 4: Site 1 Alternative
- Alternative 5: Site 5 Alternative

During a site selection process, Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site, referred to as Sites 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. A variety of factors were evaluated, including, but not limited to, proximity to the existing CCNB and CCSB pipelines, existing easements, general site features and topography, geophysical and geotechnical features, surrounding land uses, existing electrical power supply, environmental impact on the surrounding community, construction costs, site accessibility, and environmental sensitivity. The site topography was an important factor since the tank must be constructed so that the water level is at the correct elevation to allow the tank to deliver water by gravity without pumping. As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR. Sites 1 and 5 are analyzed as project alternatives (Alternatives 4 and 5, respectively). Sites 2 and 4 were rejected from further consideration as discussed below under “Alternatives Considered but Rejected.”

The Proposed Project’s impacts are summarized in Section 1.6, *Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. As discussed in that section, the Proposed Project’s impacts would either be less than significant or reduced to less than significant with mitigation, except for significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts. These significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts would result from the construction of the 35-foot-high elevated pad, with the 43-foot-high tank constructed on top of the elevated pad totaling 78 feet in height, resulting in substantial changes in the visual landscape that would have substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas and would substantially degrade the visual character and quality of the project site and its surroundings.

For each alternative discussed below, potential impacts are briefly summarized and compared to the Proposed Project’s impacts, including the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project. A complete alternatives analysis is provided in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*.

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

Description. Under the No Project Alternative, a new water storage tank would not be constructed or operated on the project site or at any other location. Calleguas would not acquire the project site for the development of water storage infrastructure, which would allow the primarily vacant site to remain available for other development activities in accordance with the City of Simi Valley’s zoning designation of Commercial Recreation (City of Simi Valley, 2022).

Impact Summary. Under this alternative, no project-related construction activities would take place, which would avoid temporary impacts associated with building a new water storage tank. No permanent impacts on the aesthetics of the site from the development of a new water storage tank would result from

this alternative. Without the proposed water storage tank, none of the project objectives would be met, and this alternative would not result in the Proposed Project's beneficial impacts of improving the reliability of the existing water supply.

Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative

Description. Under this alternative, a new underground water storage tank would be constructed and operated at the project site, but construction would require substantially more excavation to at least 43 feet below ground. Although the tank would not be visible from surrounding roadways and recreational areas, the movement of water from the tank into CCNB and CCSB connections would not be feasible by gravity because of the lower elevation of the tank. A pump station within a building would be required on the project site, which would require the use of electricity for operation.

For operational reliability during a power outage, a standby generator would also be required. Because the project site is located in a very high fire hazard area, the need for the standby generator may be required relatively frequently, since the power is typically shut off CE during weather conditions that can create a high risk of wildfires. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). Without compliance with AWWA design recommendations, an underground tank may not fully meet the project objective of providing a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.

Impact Summary. While this alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts that would result from the Proposed Project, it would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation required to install an underground tank. In addition, the underground tank would require a pump station, which would generate operational noise when the water is being pumped out of the tank. The standby generator would also produce operational air quality emissions and noise.

Alternative 3: Distant Hill Alternative

Description. Under this alternative, the proposed water storage tank would be constructed on a distant hill, which would allow the tank to be located further away from residential areas compared to the Proposed Project. Hillsides that are primarily undeveloped are located within 0.5 mile of the project area and could serve as potential locations for the water storage tank. In several locations, the areas located immediately below the hillsides where the topography flattens out are developed with residential areas, which the pipelines would need to cross under to reach existing CCNB and CCSB pipelines along Smith Road or along the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks located further away from the hillsides.

Because the tank would be located away from the existing pipelines and needs to be connected to CCNB and CCSB, the project footprint would increase substantially by requiring the construction of a pipeline that would need to cross a much longer distance beneath natural open space areas, narrow roadways within residential areas, and possibly beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Substantial disturbance of these open space areas and disruption of vehicle traffic along roadways would be required during construction activities for the pipeline connections. An access road to the tank would also need to be constructed within open space areas. To achieve the required water pressure and functioning of the system hydraulics, the high-water level of the tank would need to be at an elevation of 1,136 feet AMSL, and the bottom of the tank would need to be at an elevation of 1,096 to 1,112 feet AMSL. Based on the topography of the hillsides within the project area, a substantial amount of blasting and earth removal would be required to achieve the necessary elevation. A foundation pad would also need to be constructed, requiring engineered slopes below the tank foundation.

Impact Summary. This alternative would not eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts that would result from the Proposed Project, since the water storage tank would be placed on a hillside and would likely be noticeable from surrounding areas. If the tank is sited further away and hidden from view of surrounding areas, an even longer distance would be required to construct a pipeline connection from the tank to CCNB and CCSB and a longer access road would be required, which would result in greater aesthetic impacts during construction and operation compared to the Proposed Project. This alternative would also increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, transportation, tribal cultural resources, and wildfire. These higher-level impacts would be due to the greater degree of ground disturbance in natural open space and residential areas compared to the Proposed Project, as well as potential interruptions in vehicle access (disrupting emergency access and evacuation in a very high fire hazard area) that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath roadways.

Alternative 4: Site 1 Alternative

Description. Site 1 is located southeast of the City of Simi Valley limits in an unincorporated area of Ventura County between Santa Susana Pass Road, located to the south of the site, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, located to the north of the site. The proposed tank would be surrounded by cut slopes on all sides, except the north side; these cut slopes would partially hide the tank from surrounding areas, except from the north. The views of the north side of the tank would include a 20-foot-high cut slope and a 20-foot-high fill slope. The new fill slope required for the tank would encroach into a portion of a natural drainage course on the east side of the property. The drainage course would need to be diverted around the new fill slope, requiring widening and slope protection. The site is also covered with vegetation, including grass, bushes, and many mature trees, specifically along the existing natural drainage course on the east side, several of which would need to be removed.

The closest segment of CCNB and CCSB runs along Smith Road in this area, which is located north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a private property developed with an existing movie ranch. The existing movie ranch, Allied Studios, is a 1,000-acre movie production facility with indoor and outdoor filming spaces. The pipeline connections would need to cross under the tracks and through the existing movie ranch. The pipeline connections would be installed using trenchless technology beneath the railroad tracks to minimize interruptions in rail operations. Easements within the movie ranch would be required.

Impact Summary. This alternative would be located closer to nearby open space areas and hillsides compared to the Proposed Project, which makes the visual quality of the site high and has an adverse aesthetic impact. However, the proposed tank would be surrounded by cut slopes on all sides, except on the north side, which would partially hide the tank from surrounding areas with the tank only visible from the north. The views of the north side of the tank would include a 20-foot-high cut slope and a 20-foot-high fill slope. These slopes would likely only affect views from the movie ranch to the north of this site. No public views from nearby roadways, such as Santa Susana Pass Road, would be adversely affected, as the tank would be minimally visible from this roadway due to the cut slopes. As a result, this alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project. This alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and the movie ranch to the north of this site. Construction at this site would also require the removal of additional trees compared to the Proposed Project, as well as the diversion of a natural drainage course, which would increase construction impacts on biological resources compared to the Proposed Project.

Alternative 5: Site 5 Alternative

Description. Site 5 is located to the west of Katherine Road and south of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Residential neighborhoods are located to the north (beyond the railroad tracks), south, and west of the site, with commercial and recreational uses to the east. Under this alternative, the tank would be surrounded on all sides by cut slopes, except the north and northwest sides, causing both the tank and 100-foot-high cut slopes to be visible from the north side of the site where residential neighborhoods are located. The site would require the construction of a 2,000-foot-long access road to reach the water storage tank, which would be difficult to construct due to the site's steep topography. An approximately 85-foot-long retaining wall would be required on the site to stabilize the cut slopes. The closest segment of CCNB and CCSB runs along the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, so the pipeline connections would need to cross under the tracks. The pipeline connections would be installed using trenchless technology beneath the railroad tracks to minimize interruptions in rail operations.

Impact Summary. Because the tank would be highly visible from residential neighborhoods to the north, this alternative would not eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project. In addition, this alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

The No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, but this alternative would not meet the project objectives. None of the action alternatives would be environmentally superior to the Proposed Project because they would require substantially more ground disturbance during construction and/or would result in operational air quality and noise impacts. For these reasons, the Proposed Project is the environmentally superior alternative. However, there are different tradeoffs for each alternative (e.g. local versus regional/global impacts), which are dependent upon the specific resource areas (e.g. aesthetics versus noise, air quality and GHG). Individuals and decision-makers may weigh these resource areas differently.

Alternatives Considered but Rejected

As stated above, Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site, referred to as Sites 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR. Sites 1 and 5 are analyzed as project alternatives as discussed above. Two sites, Sites 2 and 4, were considered but rejected from further consideration for the following reasons:

- **Site 2.** This site is located approximately 1,000 feet east of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road. Construction of the water storage tank at this site would require a large amount of earthwork, as the entire storage tank would be constructed on fill slope with a large amount of imported material and/or soil-cement to provide the minimum required elevation. Because this alternative site is located to the southeast of the project site (Site 7) across Smith Road, the construction and operation of the proposed water storage tank on Site 2 would not reduce any of the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts of the Proposed Project. For these reasons, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.
- **Site 4.** This site, located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road, was not selected due to the presence of sensitive resources. In addition, because this alternative site is located to the south of the project site (Site 7) across Smith Road, the construction and operation of

the proposed water storage tank on Site 4 would not reduce any of the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts of the Proposed Project. For these reasons, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.

1.5. Areas of Known Controversy and Issues to be Resolved

Section 15123 of the CEQA Guidelines requires a Draft EIR to identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by other agencies and the public, and issues to be resolved.

Comments were received from public agencies and interested parties in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see Table 4-1 in Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*). Calleguas distributed the NOP of the EIR for a 30-day agency and public review period starting on Wednesday, April 30, 2025 and ending on Friday, May 30, 2025. In addition, Calleguas held an in-person public scoping meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, and a virtual public scoping meeting on Thursday, May 8, 2025. The NOP for the Proposed Project is presented in Appendix A of this EIR; scoping comment letters received are presented in Appendix B.

The following environmental topics of potential controversy were identified by agencies and the public during the scoping meetings and/or NOP process:

- The protection of unknown buried cultural resources during project construction.
- Potential damage to scenic vistas and degradation of the visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Noise from nighttime construction that could exceed applicable noise standards.

The major issues to be resolved by Calleguas, as the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project, include the following:

- The adoption or modification of recommended mitigation measures;
- The consideration of additional mitigation measures that could be applied to the Proposed Project;
- The approval of the Proposed Project or an alternative.

1.6. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Issues Analyzed in Brief

Table 4-2 in Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*, summarizes issues from the environmental checklist addressed in the Initial Study (Appendix A). As indicated in the Initial Study, there is no substantial evidence showing significant impacts would result from the Proposed Project for the following issue areas: Agricultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

Issues Analyzed in Detail

As indicated in the Initial Study (Appendix A), impacts on Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Noise, and Tribal Cultural Resources were found to be potentially significant and these issues are analyzed in detail in this EIR. Table 1-1 summarizes the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project, proposed mitigation

measures, and residual impacts (the impact after application of mitigation, if required). Impacts are categorized as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the Proposed Project is approved, per Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less Than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse, but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. Mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The Proposed Project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Table 1-1. Summary of Environmental Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts

Impact	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
Aesthetics		
Impact AES-1: The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact on a scenic vista without mitigation. Impacts on scenic vistas would be reduced with the implementation of mitigation. Even with the implementation of mitigation, the Proposed Project would still have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable after mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AES-1: Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan 	Significant and Unavoidable
Impact AES-2: The Proposed Project would degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views and its surroundings, resulting in a significant impact without mitigation. Even with the implementation of mitigation, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AES-1: Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan 	Significant and Unavoidable
Impact AES-3: Light and glare would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area with the implementation of standard best management practices. Impacts would be less than significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	Less Than Significant
Air Quality		
Impact AQ-1: The Proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan and impacts would be less than significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	Less Than Significant
Impact AQ-2: The Proposed Project would not exceed applicable thresholds for criteria pollutants for which the project region is nonattainment and impacts would be less than significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	Less Than Significant
Impact AQ-3: The Proposed Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations and impacts would be less than significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	Less Than Significant
Impact AQ-4: The Proposed Project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people and impacts would be less than significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	Less Than Significant
Biological Resources		
Impact BIO-1: The Proposed Project’s impacts on special-status plants and wildlife that were determined to occur within the project site would be significant without mitigation but can be reduced so as not to cause substantial adverse effects on these species. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BIO-1: Biological and Environmental Awareness Training (BEAT) Program ▪ BIO-2: Preconstruction Surveys for Special-Status Plants and Wildlife ▪ BIO-3: Wildlife Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures 	Less Than Significant With Mitigation
Impact BIO-2: The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact to wildlife movement without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not restrict wildlife movement between larger, contiguous natural areas and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BIO-3: Wildlife Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures ▪ BIO-4: Nesting Bird Avoidance 	Less Than Significant With Mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<p>Impact BIO-3: The Proposed Project would require the removal of mature coast live oak trees located in the northern portion of the project site that would result in a significant impact without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, project activities would comply with the City of Simi Valley’s Mature Tree Preservation Ordinance and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BIO-5: Oak Tree Protection 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment</p>		
<p>Impact CUL-1: The proposed Project would result in a significant impact to the significance of a historical resource without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUL-1: Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program ▪ CUL-2: Unanticipated Discovery of Cultural Resources 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Impact CUL-2: The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact to the significance of an archaeological resource. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUL-1: Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program ▪ CUL-2: Unanticipated Discovery of Cultural Resources 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Impact CUL-3: With adherence to existing regulations, the Proposed Project would not disturb any human remains. Impacts would be less than significant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	<p>Less Than Significant</p>
<p>Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources</p>		
<p>Impact TCR-1: With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TCR-1: Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan ▪ TCR-2: Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Impact TCR-2: With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource that was determined to be significant by the Lead Agency. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TCR-1: Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan ▪ TCR-2: Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</p>		
<p>Impact GHG-1: The Proposed Project would not generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in excess of applicable thresholds and impacts would be less than significant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	<p>Less Than Significant</p>
<p>Impact GHG-2: The Proposed Project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs and impacts would be less than significant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	<p>Less Than Significant</p>
<p>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</p>		
<p>Impact HAZ-1: With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAZ-1: Soil Management Procedures 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>

Impact	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
Noise		
<p>Impact NOI-1: Onsite construction noise associated with the Proposed Project would result in a significant impact without mitigation, but would be reduced to less than significant with MM NOI-1. Offsite traffic noise and operational activities would not exceed applicable thresholds and impacts would be less than significant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NOI-1: Nighttime Construction Noise Reductions 	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation</p>
<p>Impact NOI-2: The Proposed Project would not result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Impacts from construction and operation would be less than significant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No mitigation measures are required. 	<p>Less Than Significant</p>

1.7. Native American Consultation

Requests to consult under AB 52 were received from the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI) and the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California (GTIOC). Following the site selection process, the Tribes were informed of the final site selection (Site 7) that would be moved forward into environmental review. The GTIOC provided Cultural Resource Monitoring Recommendations, Recovery and Reburial Procedures, and Procedures for the Treatment and Disposition of Human Remains and Associated Grave Goods at Gabrieliño Tongva Ancestral Sites.

Consistent with the GTIOC's recommendations and procedures, Calleguas prepared and submitted draft mitigation measures for both Tribes' review in July 2025 during preparation of the Draft EIR, stating that consultation would formally conclude if a response was not received by August 15, 2025. The FTBMI responded with revisions to the mitigation measures, which Calleguas incorporated. On August 4, 2025, consultation with the FTBMI formally concluded with mutual agreement on the mitigation measures. No further response was received from the GTIOC on the draft mitigation measures, and consultation with the GTIOC formally concluded on August 15, 2025.

2. INTRODUCTION

This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed Smith Road Tank (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project includes the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall by approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank to provide a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 million gallons (MG). The Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) is the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project.

2.1. Purpose and Legal Authority

The Proposed Project requires discretionary approval and is subject to the environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In accordance with Section 15121(a) of the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14), the purpose of this EIR is to serve as an informational document that:

“...will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.”

This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for the public and Calleguas decision makers. The process would include public hearings to consider certification of a Final EIR and approval of the Proposed Project.

2.2. Lead Agency

Pursuant to Section 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines, Calleguas is the Lead Agency responsible for preparing this EIR because Calleguas holds principal responsibility for approving the Proposed Project. As the Lead Agency, Calleguas determined that an EIR is the appropriate level of CEQA documentation for the Proposed Project due to the potential for significant environmental impacts to result from the Proposed Project. This EIR assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Project and identifies mitigation measures, as feasible, to reduce or minimize potential impacts. Noted below is Calleguas’s CEQA contact.

Jennifer Lancaster, Manager of Water Resources
Calleguas Municipal Water District
2100 Olsen Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91360
(805) 579-7194
JLancaster@Calleguas.com

2.3. Responsible and Trustee Agencies

No responsible or trustee agencies have discretionary approval power over the Proposed Project, or have jurisdiction over natural resources affected by the Proposed Project, respectively. Several permits and approvals would be required from local, regional, and State agencies, as listed in Table 3-3 in Section 3.6, *Anticipated Permits and Approvals*.

2.4. Project Objectives

Calleguas's 2017 Potable Water Master Plan identified the need for the Proposed Project to improve water reliability in the eastern Simi Valley area. The Proposed Project's objectives are to:

- Meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region during short-term imported water supply outage conditions.
- Provide operational benefits and flexibility during normal and high demand conditions.
- Provide a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.
- Help maintain consistent water pressure throughout the distribution system.
- In case of emergencies, such as fires, provide an immediate source of water for firefighting and other critical needs.

2.5. Project Background

2.5.1. Site Selection Process

Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and then elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site. A variety of factors were evaluated, including, but not limited to, proximity to the existing Calleguas Conduit North Branch (CCNB) and Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) pipelines, existing easements, general site features and topography, geophysical and geotechnical features, surrounding land uses, existing electrical power supply, environmental impact on the surrounding community, construction costs, site accessibility, and environmental sensitivity. Site topography was an especially important factor since the tank must be constructed at an elevation so that the water level is at the right level to allow the tank to deliver water by gravity without pumping. Calleguas concluded that Site 7, on the northeast corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road, was the most suitable project location due to its close proximity to CCNB and CCSB pipelines, relatively shorter construction period as compared to the other sites under consideration, and absence of known environmental sensitivities. As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR.

2.5.2. Site Layout Development

During the project design process, Calleguas initially explored a site layout that would include two water storage tanks. The two water storage tanks would occupy a large portion of the project site. Based on community input to reduce potential visual impacts, Calleguas conducted additional modeling to determine whether it was viable to downsize the storage volume while still meeting the Proposed Project's objectives (see Section 2.4, *Project Objectives*). Based on the results of the modeling, Calleguas confirmed that a single tank could achieve the necessary water storage capacity. The Proposed Project design includes a single water storage tank.

2.6. Native American Consultation

Assembly Bill (AB) 52 requires public agencies to consult with tribes during the CEQA process. In accordance with AB 52, the following tribes that are potentially traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area were contacted regarding the Proposed Project:

- Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians
- Chumash Council of Bakersfield
- Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation
- Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation
- Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieliño /Tongva Nation
- Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council
- Gabrieliño-Tongva Tribe
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- San Fernando Band of Mission Indians
- San Luis Obispo County Chumash Council
- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1. Project Overview

Calleguas is a wholesale agency that provides imported water to retail purveyors serving the Cities of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme, and adjacent unincorporated areas of Ventura County, California. Calleguas's 2017 Potable Water Master Plan identified the need for additional water storage capacity to meet peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley Region during imported water supply outage conditions and to provide operational benefits during normal and high demand conditions. To address this need, Calleguas proposes to implement the Smith Road Tank (Proposed Project), which includes the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall by approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank. The tank would provide a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 million gallons (MG). The Proposed Project would improve the safety and reliability of the existing water supply but would not increase the current supply.

The water storage tank would be constructed on an approximately 4-acre property that is currently an undeveloped, unoccupied parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 657-0-020-230), located at the north-east corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road in eastern Simi Valley. The tank would connect to existing Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) and Calleguas Conduit North Branch (CCNB) pipelines located beneath Smith Road, directly south of the project site (see Figure 3-1).

The tank would be constructed on top of an elevated pad, which would be created with imported fill material to reach a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet above mean sea level (AMSL), or approximately 35 feet above the existing ground surface. The tank has been designed so that the water level within the tank would be at the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump. If the tank is not constructed at this elevation, a pump station and building would be required at the project site, which would require the use of electricity, and a standby generator would also be needed for operational reliability during a power outage. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). The elevated pad would be required to meet the elevation requirements to optimize the operational reliability of the system.

The Proposed Project would also include the construction and maintenance of inlet and outlet pipelines, pipeline connections, overflow and drain pipes, above-ground isolation valves, a paved access road with a driveway off Smith Road, retaining walls, and cabinet(s) housing instrumentation and control components (see Figure 3-2). Based on field observation, an electrical power supply appears to be available from the existing above-ground power lines along the north side of Smith Road. An approximately 700-foot-long Southern California Edison (SCE) service line would be required from the SCE connection location to the tank.

3.2. Purpose and Project Objectives

Calleguas's 2017 Potable Water Master Plan identified the need for the Proposed Project to improve water reliability in the eastern Simi Valley area. The Proposed Project's objectives are to:

- Meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region during short-term imported water supply outage conditions.
- Provide operational benefits and flexibility during normal and high demand conditions.
- Provide a reliable reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.

- Help maintain consistent water pressure throughout the distribution system, while minimizing long term electricity demands and maintenance.
- In case of emergencies, such as fires, provide an immediate source of water for firefighting and other critical needs.

3.3. Project Location and Setting

This section includes information about the project location, existing conditions at the project site, site access, land use and zoning, and surrounding land uses.

Location. The project site is located on an approximately 4-acre property at the northeast corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road in the eastern portion of the City of Simi Valley (see Figure 3-1).

Existing Conditions. The site is undeveloped and unoccupied, with ruderal vegetation and several mature trees in the northern and northeastern portions of the site. The project site is highly disturbed and is crisscrossed with dirt access roads and bike jumps. During a site visit in September 2024, a small outdoor storage yard (approximately 100 feet by 70 feet) surrounded by a chain link fence was observed in the northeastern portion of the project site. The majority of the project site is vacant.

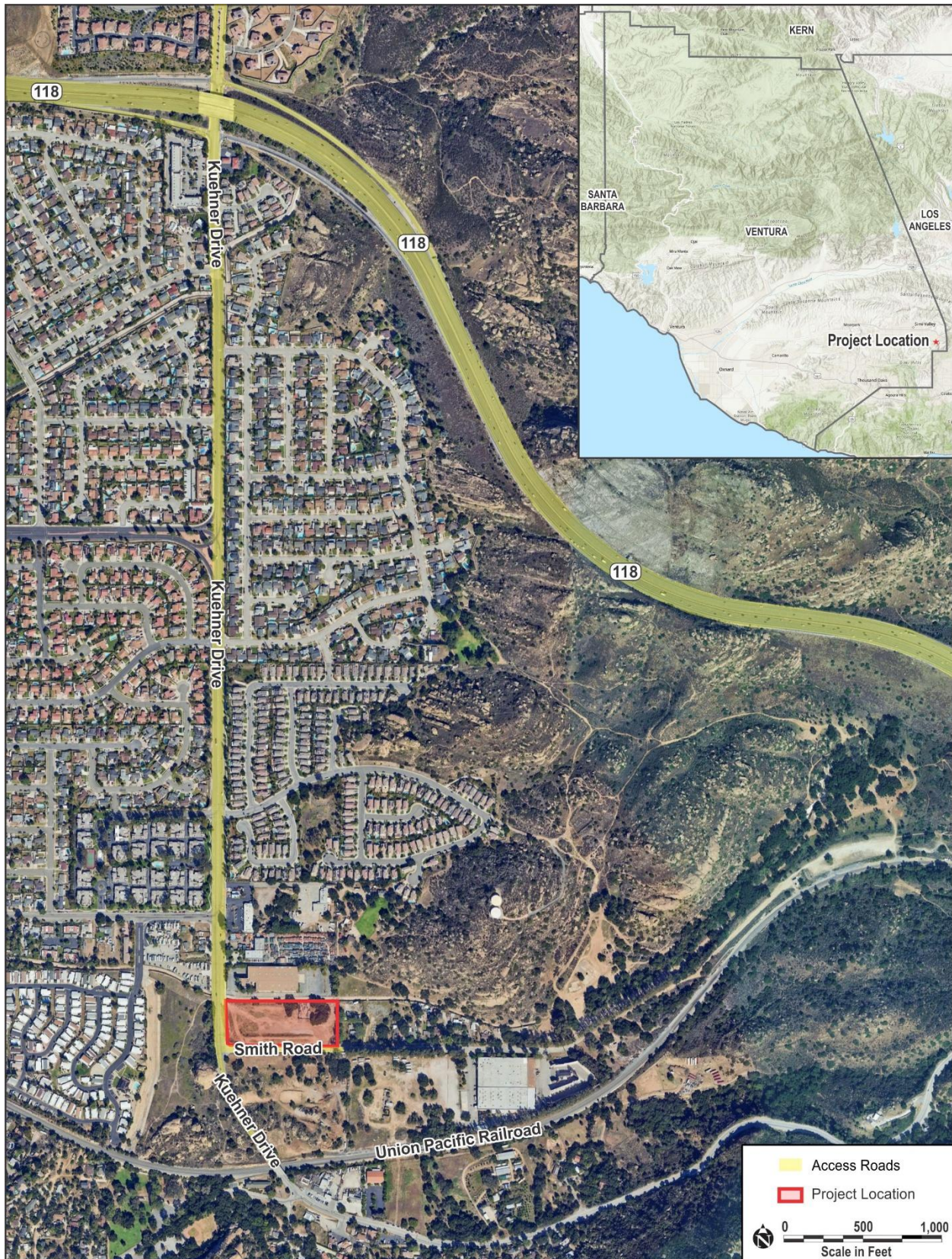
The topography of the project site is uneven and includes a 6- to 7-foot-high by 60-foot-wide earthen berm made of non-engineered fill in the southern and western portions of the site. The project site is just north of the 78-inch-diameter CCNB and 51-inch-diameter CCSB pipelines, which are located within the public right-of-way beneath Smith Road. The site includes existing storm drains that connect to a concrete-lined drainage channel, the Arroyo Simi channel, owned by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (VCWPD) and located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site.

Site Access. Local access to the site is provided by Smith Road, adjacent to the south, and Kuehner Drive, adjacent to the west of the site. California State Route 118 provides regional access to the project site and is approximately 0.6 miles to the northeast (see Figure 3-1).

Land Use and Zoning. According to the City of Simi Valley General Plan and Zoning Map, the project site has a land use designation of Recreation Commercial (.10 Floor Area Ratio [FAR]) (City of Simi Valley, 2021) and is zoned Commercial Recreation (City of Simi Valley, 2022).

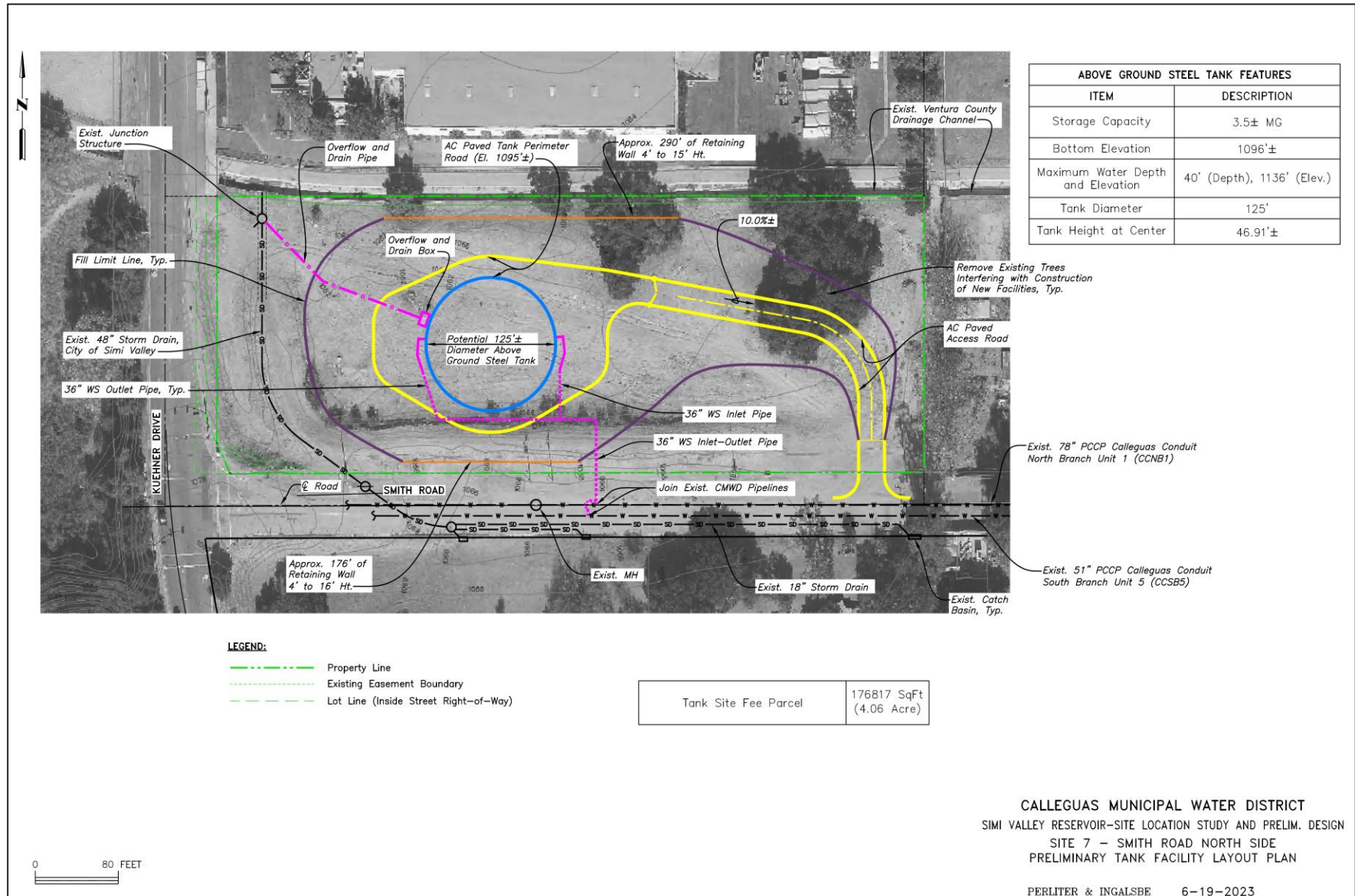
Surrounding Land Uses. Surrounding land uses include the concrete-lined VCWPD Arroyo Simi channel, commercial office and warehouse buildings, a small strip mall, and single-family residential areas to the north; a recreational vehicle park (Rocky Trailer Village) and multi-family residential areas to the north-west; single-family residential areas to the east; a movie ranch to the northeast, south, and southeast; and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and a mobile home development to the west and southwest (see Figure 3-1). A water pump station is southeast of the project site, across Smith Road, and is operated by the City of Simi Valley (Ventura County Waterworks District No. 8). Two existing water storage tanks are located approximately 0.2 mile to the northeast on a property owned by Golden State Water Company. Santa Susana Pass Road and the Union Pacific Railroad are approximately 0.15 mile to the south (see Figure 3-1). Low-density residential development and open space are located further south beyond Santa Susana Pass Road and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Figure 3-1. Project Location



Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Figure 3-2. Site Layout



Source: Calleguas Municipal Water District, 2023

3.4. Project Elements

The Proposed Project includes the above-ground steel tank, inlet and outlet pipelines, pipeline connections, overflow and drain pipes, above-ground isolation valves, a paved access road with a driveway off Smith Road, retaining walls, and landscaping, fencing, and nighttime lighting. Each of these project elements is discussed further below and shown in Figure 3-2.

Above-ground Steel Tank. The Proposed Project would include the construction of a 43-foot-tall, approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel tank on reinforced concrete ring foundation. The tank would be constructed on top of an elevated pad, which would be created with imported fill material to reach a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet AMSL, or approximately 35 feet above the existing ground surface. The total height of the pad plus the tank would be approximately 78 feet from ground level. The tank would have a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 MG. Tank appurtenances would be installed, including exterior stairways with landing, manholes, cleanouts, vents, access hatches at the interior ladder and overflow trough, and tank shell outlets (i.e., connection points on the tank shell for water to flow through). Instrumentation and control components would also be constructed, including cabinet(s) for housing instrumentation and equipment for monitoring and transmitting information, such as tank volumes, intrusion monitoring, and flow direction. The tank would be painted a neutral color, bayberry (i.e., beige), in accordance with the City of Simi Valley's standards for paint colors.

Inlet and Outlet Pipelines. The tank would be fitted with 36-inch diameter inlet and outlet pipelines to fill and deliver water from the tank. The inlet and outlet pipelines would combine into a single pipeline to form a common inlet/outlet pipeline before connecting to Calleguas's potable water system.

Pipeline Connections. Pipeline connections would be constructed to connect to Calleguas's 78-inch diameter CCNB and 51-inch diameter CCSB beneath Smith Road.

Overflow and Drain Pipes. The tank would be designed with a dedicated 24-inch diameter overflow and drain pipe to drain the tank for routine maintenance and repairs, as well as to prevent the tank from overflowing. The overflow and drain pipe would connect to an existing storm drain located on the project site. Water would be discharged from the storm drain to the existing VCWPD concrete-lined drainage channel (Arroyo Simi channel) adjacent to and north of the site.

Paved Access Road. The tank would be accessed from Smith Road via a new 350-foot-long by 25-foot-wide, asphalt concrete paved access road that would extend from the property line on Smith Road, to the elevated pad where the tank would be located, and around the perimeter of the tank.

Retaining Walls. An existing earthen berm at the site would be investigated for suitability for onsite production of soil-cement for placement below and around the tank footprint. Material that is more than 2 percent organic material would need to be disposed of offsite. The removal or reuse of the earthen berm would be required to create a pad with a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet AMSL for the proposed tank (approximately 35 feet above the ground surface). Retaining walls composed of concrete and fill slopes would be constructed as part of the pad construction. The retaining walls would be approximately 4 feet to 16 feet tall and placed along the northern and southern boundaries of the site. The color and finish treatment of the retaining wall would be selected to complement the environment.

Landscaping, Fencing, and Nighttime Lighting. Landscaping would help to screen views of the tank from the surrounding area. Landscaping would only include plants on the Ventura County Fire Department Plant Reference Guide (VCFD, 2024), which includes but is not limited to Brisbane box (*Tristania conferta*), sagebrush – prostrate forms (*Artemisia californica* 'cultivars'), dwarf coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis* 'Pigeon Point'), Catalina perfume (*Ribes viburnifolium*), creeping sage (*Salvia sonomensis*), and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*). Permanent fencing would be installed around the site perimeter, and nighttime shielded lighting would be provided for security purposes.

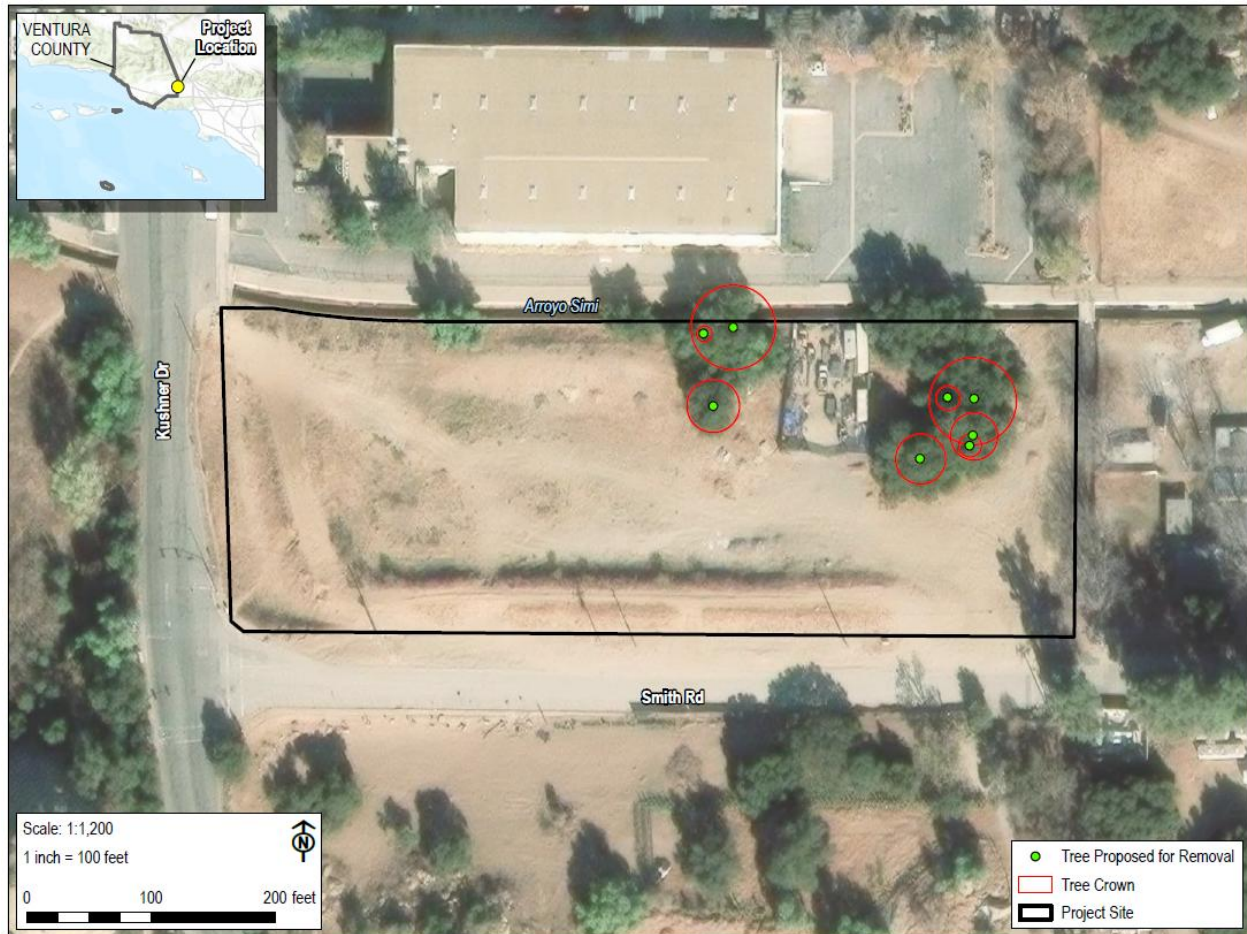
3.5. Project Construction

This section includes a description of construction activities, provides the anticipated construction schedule for the Proposed Project, and includes information about water and electricity needs during construction, construction access and staging, estimated truck trips, the number of construction workers required, types of construction equipment, and construction best management practices.

Construction Activities. Project construction would be primarily limited to activities within the property and would include the following:

- **Earthwork, Pad and Retaining Wall Construction, and Vegetation Removal.** Construction activities would include existing ground and sub-grade improvement, and the impact analyses conservatively assumes removal of the existing earthen berm located onsite, adjacent and parallel to the southern boundary of the property along Smith Road. The anticipated amount of this material is conservatively estimated to be approximately 4,000 to 6,500 cubic yards (CY). Material would also need to be imported to create an elevated pad with a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet AMSL (approximately 35 feet above the ground surface). To pre-load and consolidate the sub-grade, the elevated pad would need to be surcharged using an approximately 12-foot-high temporary earthen embankment of imported soil. This surcharge would be removed after three to six months. Both retaining walls and fill slopes around the property would be constructed to transition the elevated pad to lower elevations. Most of the trees, which include coast live oaks, located in the northern and northeastern portions of the site would need to be removed as they would interfere with construction and new facilities; the remaining trees would be protected in place. Figure 3-3 identifies the trees that would need to be removed.
- **Installation of the Rammed Aggregate Pier System.** A rammed aggregate pier system is a ground improvement technique used in construction projects, particularly when the existing soil at the site requires stabilization. The purpose of the piers is to enhance the load-bearing capacity of the soil and reduce the potential for settlement (the downward movement or sinking of the ground surface). For the Proposed Project, a hole or cavity, typically 20 to 36 inches in diameter, would be drilled to the design depth of 35 feet. Lifts, or layers, of graded crushed stone, gravel, or recycled concrete (i.e., aggregate) would be added to the cavity. Each lift would then be compacted, or rammed, using a heavy rammer, often attached to a hydraulic excavator. This repeated process of placing and ramming aggregate creates a stiff, dense aggregate column within the ground.
- **Foundation.** A reinforced concrete ring foundation would be constructed for the tank.
- **Tank Construction.** Construction activities would include the erection and installation of the steel tank, including:
 - Welding of the tank floor shell and roof panels
 - Installation of interior columns
 - Anchoring the tank to the foundation
- **Tank Appurtenances.** Construction activities would include the installation of tank appurtenances, including:
 - Exterior stairway with landing
 - Vents
 - Manholes
 - Access hatches at the interior ladder and overflow trough
 - Cleanouts
 - Tank shell outlets
- **Coating/Painting of the Steel Tank.** The tank would be painted with a neutral color, bayberry (i.e., beige), which would blend in with the surrounding landscape during the majority of the year as the vegetation changes color from green to brown.

Figure 3-3. Proposed Tree Removals



Sources: Aspen, 2026; Calleguas Municipal Water District, 2025; Esri, 2026.

- **Pipeline and Utility Connections.** Trenching and excavation would be required to connect the inlet and outlet pipelines via a single pipeline to CCNB and CCSB in Smith Road, as well as to connect the overflow and drain pipe via a single pipeline to the existing storm drain onsite. In addition, new electrical service for operation would be provided from nearby power poles on Smith Road. Construction activities for this electrical connection would include the installation of a new underground conduit between the power pole and the site consisting of shallow trenching, conduit installation, backfill, and pulling the conductors (wire) through the conduit. Potable water for the drip irrigation of landscaping during project operation would be provided by Calleguas; neither non-potable nor recycled water supplies are available in the vicinity.
- **Access Road Construction.** The access road would require fine grading and paving from Smith Road to the concrete pad and around the perimeter of the tank.
- **Site Restoration and Landscaping.** Following construction, disturbed areas on the project site would be restored. The area immediately surrounding the tank would be paved, and the remaining disturbed areas would be revegetated. Landscaping would be installed around the site perimeter.

Construction Schedule. Construction of the Proposed Project is anticipated to be completed over approximately 30 to 36 months. Due to uncertainties about the anticipated timing of land acquisition, duration of permitting and design, and other considerations, a precise start date has not been identified for the Proposed Project. For the purposes of this analysis, the construction start date was conservatively

assumed to begin in early-2027 and conclude in early- to mid-2029. Depending on the anticipated construction start date, construction could extend to late-2029.

The majority of construction would occur Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Short duration nighttime work would be needed for the connections to Calleguas’s CCNB and CCSB, as the construction of these connections would require the shutdown of CCNB and CCSB and work would need to be performed continuously. Nighttime work would be completed over a period of approximately two weeks. The majority of construction is not expected on weekends, but some construction could occur on weekends due to the need to minimize traffic congestion and to limit the duration of shutdowns of existing water facilities. Weekend work would be required during the 2-week shutdown period for CCNB and CCSB connections. Work hours in the public right-of-way would be finalized with the City of Simi Valley through the roadway encroachment permitting process. As part of that process, Standard Specification 7 requires compliance with Caltrans MUTCD Manual, which includes preparation of a traffic control plan (City of Simi Valley, 2023).

The anticipated duration for the Proposed Project’s construction activities is shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Construction Schedule

Construction Activities	Duration
Existing Ground and Sub-grade Improvements	14 weeks
Earthwork, Pad and Retaining Wall Construction, and Vegetation Removal	2 weeks for Clearing and Grubbing 5 weeks for Earthwork (Excavation and Overexcavation) 14 weeks for Ground and Subbase Improvement 30 weeks for Soil-Cement Embankment 14 weeks for Retaining Walls 28 weeks for Regular Embankment (Fill) 30 weeks for Temporary Surcharge and Removal
Foundation	6 weeks
Tank Construction	16 weeks
Tank Appurtenances	8 weeks for Interior Appurtenances 8 weeks for Exterior Appurtenances
Coating/Painting of the Steel Tank	8 weeks for Interior Coating and 8 weeks for Exterior Coating
Pipeline and Utility Connections	10 weeks for Inlet and Outlet Pipelines 6 weeks for Overflow and Drain Structures 8 weeks for Electrical and Instruments
Access Road Construction	8 weeks
Site Restoration and Landscaping	8 weeks

Note: Some construction activities would overlap.

Water and Electricity. During construction, water would be required for dust suppression and concrete production (if needed) and would be obtained from the City of Simi Valley (Ventura County Waterworks District No. 8). In addition, generators to provide electricity would be required for various construction activities. Nighttime lighting would only be required during construction for the connection to Calleguas’s CCNB and CCSB, which must be completed continuously over a period of approximately two weeks. Throughout the construction period, standard nighttime security lighting would also be required onsite. Electricity needed during construction for nighttime lighting would be provided onsite using a generator.

Construction Access and Staging. Access to the project site would be provided by Smith Road. Flagger-controlled traffic controls would be utilized for approximately four weeks on Smith Road during preparatory work and construction to provide connections to CCNB and CCSB, and consistent with Caltrans’ MUTCD Manual. A minimum of one lane of traffic in each direction would be available during the

construction period. Construction fencing would be installed around the site perimeter for security purposes. The staging area for the storage of construction equipment and the stockpiling of excavated material would be located onsite or at a location to be determined and acquired by the contractor.

Construction Trips. As shown in Table 3-2, construction would require a total of approximately 6,100 CY from the existing earthen berm to either be re-used onsite (Scenario A) or exported offsite for disposal (Scenario B). If exported offsite, the material from the earthen berm would be disposed of at a location to be determined by the contractor, which has been assumed for the purposes of the analysis to be the Simi Valley Landfill and Recycling Center (SVLRC). Material that is more than 2 percent organic material would need to be disposed of offsite, also at the SVLRC; for the purposes of the environmental analysis it is conservatively assumed to be 6,500 CY. In addition, approximately 71,000 CY of imported fill, including approximately 38,000 CY of regular granular fill and 33,000 CY of soil-cement, would be required. Large dump trucks can typically carry between 10 to 16 CY of material, depending on the weight of the material. Using a conservative capacity of 12 CY per truck, the table below presents the approximate truck trips, shown as the total number of round trips, based on the reuse or disposal of the existing earthen berm. Additional truck trips would also be needed for delivery of the tank components and various pipes and other components. The Proposed Project would require 45 peak day haul truck roundtrips during construction; this number was calculated based on the cubic yards of material that can fit into one truck along with the total amount of material that must be transported during the “Earthwork, Pad and Retaining Wall Construction, and Vegetation Removal” activities shown above in Table 3-1, with no other major tasks anticipated during this phase.

Table 3-2. Approximate Truck Trips During Construction

Activity	Approximate Truck Trips	
	Scenario A: Reuse Berm for Fill	Scenario B: Dispose of Berm Offsite
Import of regular granular soil fill	2,650	3,200
Import of soil-cement fill	2,750	2,750
Offsite disposal of material that is more than 2 percent organic	540	540
Earth berm material	0	500
Delivery of tank shell, roof, columns, and miscellaneous components	50	50
Total	5,990	7,040

Note: Truck trip calculations assume a capacity of 12 cubic yards per truck and are provided as the total number of round trips.

Construction Workforce. An estimated maximum of 21 staff would be onsite during construction for a limited time, with a range of five to 21 staff, depending on the work being conducted.

Construction Equipment. Construction equipment could include a backhoe, dozer, loader, skip loader, generator, chainsaw, pump truck, concrete pump, crane, welding machine, scissor lift, sand blasting unit, compressor, dehumidifier unit with compressor, roller compactor, paving machine, concrete curbing machine, dump truck, utility truck, delivery truck (for concrete, rebar, formwork, and other materials), excavator, grader, and water truck.

Best Management Practices. During construction of the Proposed Project, Calleguas’s construction contractor would implement standard best management practices (BMPs) in accordance with construction permit requirements (see Table 3-3). BMPs for the Proposed Project will include measures for the protection of aesthetics, air quality, and noise control, as listed below:

- **Protection of Air Quality.** Dust control would be conducted during ground-disturbing activities using an approved method such as water application. No substantial ground-disturbing activities would be conducted during periods of high winds. On-site construction vehicles would not travel at speeds

greater than 15 miles per hour in unpaved areas, and trucks transporting earth material to or from the project site would be covered and would maintain a minimum two-foot freeboard.

- **Noise Control.** Noise abatement measures would be implemented, including acoustical mufflers and engine shielding on construction equipment, limiting the number and duration of equipment idling, directing noise away from residences, and maintaining equipment in good condition without rattling or banging of parts.
- **Nighttime Construction Lighting.** In the event nighttime construction lighting is needed, the lighting would be directed downwards towards construction activities and would be shielded so as to minimize visibility from adjacent land uses.
- **Light and Glare Control.** The proposed tank would be coated with non-reflective paint and the exterior lighting would be designed such that it is shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined, is directed downward and away from adjoining properties and public rights-of-way, does not blink or flash, and does not cause illumination in adjacent residential communities to exceed 0.5 foot-candle.

In addition, project construction would comply with the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that would be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit. Implementation of the SWPPP would minimize the amount of sediment and other pollutants associated with the construction site discharged in stormwater runoff through BMPs to control erosion and sedimentation. Measures for erosion and sediment control could include the following:

- Use of stabilized construction entrances and exits;
- Construction vehicle maintenance in staging areas to avoid leaks; and
- Installation of silt fences and erosion control blankets.

The SWPPP would be incorporated into the Proposed Project and the contractor would be required to comply with the associated BMP requirements.

3.6. Project Operation and Maintenance

During operation, the Proposed Project would not require any in-person staff to remain on the project site, as Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) controls would be used to remotely operate the tank, reducing vehicle trips required for routine maintenance and inspections. The Proposed Project would not require any new permanent full- or part-time staff after construction is complete and existing Calleguas staff would perform operation and maintenance activities. Operational activities at the project site would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Interior inspections that would be conducted every five years would require the tank to be drained or would be performed by a qualified diving inspector while the tank is full. If the tank is drained, water would be dechlorinated and discharged from the onsite storm drain to the existing VCWPD concrete-lined drainage channel (Arroyo Simi channel) adjacent to and north of the site. Landscaping would be irrigated as needed and maintained regularly.

Operational vehicle trips for routine inspection and maintenance are estimated to include the following:

- One vehicle trip for weekly inspections
- 14 vehicle trips for yearly maintenance
- Seven vehicle trips for detailed inspections every five years

Permanent fencing would be installed around the site perimeter and nighttime lighting would be provided for security purposes. Operation and maintenance vehicles would access the site using the driveway from Smith Road, which would be gated and locked. The tank would be inaccessible to the public due to security fencing, and any trespassing activities would trigger security alarms that would immediately alert Calleguas.

3.7. Anticipated Permits and Approvals

As listed in Table 3-3, the Proposed Project would require permits from the City of Simi Valley, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Department of Transportation.

Table 3-3. Anticipated Permits Required for the Proposed Project

Agency	Permits/Approvals
Local/Regional Agencies	
City of Simi Valley	Roadway encroachment permit and connection to on-site storm drain
Calleguas Municipal Water District	Property Acquisition
State Agencies	
State Water Resources Control Board, National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program	Coverage under the NPDES Construction General Permit
State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water	Domestic Water Supply Permit Amendment
California Department of Transportation	Transportation Permit for movement of vehicles that may qualify as an oversized or excessive load (if required)

The Proposed Project is not subject to City zoning and building codes, pursuant to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, because it involves water storage and conveyance facilities. In addition, pursuant to California Public Utilities Code Section 10001 and the sections that follow, as well as case law including Southern California Gas Company versus v. City of Vernon (1995) and City of Lafayette v. East Bay Municipal Utility District (1993), essential service providers such as water districts are exempt from local building codes and zoning and land use ordinances where adherence would materially interfere with the agency’s ability to perform its core public service obligations.

4. EIR SCOPE AND CONTENT

4.1. EIR Process

The EIR process, as required under CEQA, is summarized below. The steps are presented in sequential order.

1. **Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study.** After deciding an EIR is required, the Lead Agency (Calleguas) must file an NOP soliciting input on the EIR scope to the State Clearinghouse, other concerned agencies, and parties previously requesting notice in writing (CEQA Guidelines, § 15082; Public Resources Code [PRC] § 21092.2). The NOP must be posted in the County Clerk’s office for 30 days. The NOP may be accompanied by an Initial Study that identifies the issue areas for which a project could create significant environmental impacts. The NOP for the Proposed Project is presented in Appendix A, along with the Initial Study.
2. **Scoping Meeting.** CEQA requires a scoping meeting for projects of statewide, regional, or areawide significance. Although the Proposed Project is not of statewide, regional, or areawide significance, Calleguas held an in-person public scoping meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, and a virtual public scoping meeting on Thursday, May 8, 2025. See Table 4-1 for a list of comments received during the scoping period. Scoping comment letters received are presented in Appendix B.
3. **Draft EIR.** The Draft EIR must contain: a) table of contents or index; b) summary; c) project description; d) environmental setting; e) discussion of significant impacts (direct, indirect, cumulative, growth-inducing, and significant and unavoidable impacts); f) a discussion of alternatives; g) mitigation measures; h) a discussion of irreversible changes; and i) effects found not to be significant. This Draft EIR also contains Appendix A (Initial Study and NOP), Appendix B (Scoping Comment Letters), Appendix C (Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations), Appendix D (Biological Resources Database Search Results), and Appendix E (Noise Calculations).
4. **Notice of Completion (NOC) and Notice of Availability (NOA).** The Lead Agency must file a NOC with the State Clearinghouse when it completes a Draft EIR and prepares a NOA for a Draft EIR.
 - a. The **NOC** will include the address where hard copies of the Draft EIR are available for review and the review period during which comments will be received on the Draft EIR (CEQA Guidelines, § 15085). When a Draft EIR is sent to the State Clearinghouse for review, the public review period must be 45 days unless the State Clearinghouse approves a shorter period (PRC 21091[a]).
 - b. The **NOA** will include information regarding where hard copies of the Draft EIR are available for review as well as information on how to submit comments on the Draft EIR to the Lead Agency (Calleguas). The Lead Agency will provide the NOA of the Draft EIR at the same time as it sends the NOC to the State Clearinghouse. Notice must also be given to all organizations and individuals who have previously requested such notice. The Lead Agency will file the NOA with the County Clerk’s office (CEQA Guidelines, § 15087[d]) and send a copy of the NOA to the State Clearinghouse (Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation). The Lead Agency must solicit input from other agencies and the public and respond in writing to all comments received during the public review period (PRC §21091[d][2]). Notice will also be given by at least one of the following procedures:
 - i. Publication at least one time by the public agency in a newspaper of general circulation in the area affected by the project.
 - ii. Posting of notices by the public agency on and off the site in the area where the project is to be located.

- iii. Direct mailing to the owners and occupants of property contiguous to the parcel or parcels on which the project is located.
5. **Final EIR.** A Final EIR must include: a) the Draft EIR (including minor revisions/errata to the Draft EIR); b) copies of comments received during public review; c) a list of persons and entities commenting; d) responses to comments; and d) any other information added by the Lead Agency. A Final EIR for the Proposed Project will be prepared following completion of the review period for the Draft EIR. Per CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088(b), Calleguas's responses to written comments received on the Draft EIR will be provided to State/public agencies a minimum of 10 days prior to consideration of certification of the EIR at a Calleguas Board of Directors meeting.
6. **Certification of Final EIR.** Prior to deciding on a proposed project, the Lead Agency must certify: a) the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; b) the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body and it reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final EIR prior to approving the project; and c) the Final EIR reflects the Lead Agency's independent judgement and analysis (CEQA Guidelines, § 15090).
7. **Lead Agency Project Decision.** The Lead Agency may a) disapprove the project because of its significant environmental effects; b) approve the project despite its significant environmental impacts, if there is no feasible way to lessen or avoid the significant impact; or c) approve the project despite its significant environmental impacts, if specifically identified expected benefits from the project outweigh the policy of reducing or avoiding significant environmental impacts (CEQA Guidelines, § 15042 and 15043).
8. **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the Lead Agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either: a) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; b) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible (CEQA Guidelines, § 15091). If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, the agency must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision.
9. **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.** When the Lead Agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, the Lead Agency must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects.
10. **Notice of Determination (NOD).** The Lead Agency must file a NOD within five working days after deciding to approve a project for which an EIR is prepared (CEQA Guidelines, § 15094). A local agency must file the NOD with the County Clerk. The NOD must be posted for 30 days and sent to anyone previously requesting notice. Posting of the NOD starts a 30-day statute of limitations on CEQA legal challenges (PRC § 21167[c]).

4.2. Public Scoping

The NOP of the EIR, which included scoping meeting information, was distributed for a 30-day agency and public review period starting on Wednesday, April 30, 2025 and ending on Friday, May 30, 2025. Calleguas filed the Initial Study and NOP with the State Clearinghouse for State agency review. In addition, the NOP was sent directly to additional agencies, Native American tribes, and property owners within 1,000 feet of the project site by mail or email. A newspaper advertisement version of the NOP was published in the Ventura County Star on April 30, 2025.

After distribution of the NOP, Calleguas held an in-person public scoping meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, and a virtual public scoping meeting on Thursday, May 8, 2025. The meetings, held from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., were aimed at providing information about the Proposed Project to members of public agencies, interested stakeholders, and residents/community members. The in-person meeting was held at the Rancho Simi Activity Center, 4201 Guardian Street, Activity Center Room 3, Simi Valley, CA 93063.

Oral comments received at the scoping meetings were primarily regarding aesthetics impacts, specifically the height of the proposed tank and the elevated pad in comparison to adjacent buildings. In addition, Calleguas received letters from four agencies in response to the NOP during the public review period. The NOP is presented in Appendix A of this EIR, along with the Initial Study that was prepared for the Proposed Project. Scoping comment letters received are presented in Appendix B. Table 4-1 summarizes the oral comments received at the scoping meetings, as well as the content of the letters, and where the issues raised are addressed in the EIR.

Table 4-1. NOP Comments and EIR Responses

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where the Comment Is Addressed
Oral Comments During Scoping Meetings	A commenter requested additional information about the height of the proposed tank and the elevated pad in comparison to adjacent buildings.	A visual simulation showing the height of proposed water storage tank on top of the elevated pad, in comparison to an existing adjacent commercial warehouse building, is included in Section 5.1, <i>Aesthetics</i> . The height of the proposed tank (43 feet) plus the height of the elevated pad (35 feet) would total approximately 78 feet from ground level.
Native American Heritage Commission (Matthew Lin, Cultural Resources Analyst)	The commenter states that the Proposed Project is subject to the requirements and provisions under Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and recommends consultation with California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area, as well as measures to avoid damage to inadvertently discovered cultural resources.	Compliance with AB 52 provisions, including consultation with California Native American tribes, as well as measures to avoid damage to inadvertently discovered cultural resources, are discussed in Section 5.4, <i>Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment</i> , and Section 5.5, <i>Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources</i> .
State Water Resources Control Board (Lori Schmitz, Environmental Scientist, Division of Financial Assistance)	The commenter states that Calleguas must apply for a domestic water supply permit amendment for the addition of a new reservoir, 100,000-gallon capacity or greater, to the distribution system (California Code of Regulations, § 64556).	A Domestic Water Supply Permit Amendment is included in Table 3-3 in Section 3.6, <i>Anticipated Permits and Approvals</i> .
Ventura County Public Works Agency, Watershed Protection (Yunsheng Su, PWA-WP Case Reviewer)	The commenter states that the project site is about 50 feet from the Arroyo Simi, which is a VCWPD jurisdictional redline channel. The Proposed Project does not include any new or modified direct stormwater drainage connections to this channel, or activities within or near the channel. Runoff from the project site must be released at no greater than the existing flow rate so as not to cause adverse downstream impacts. VCWPD concludes that impacts would be less than significant.	Impacts on hydrology and water quality, including the Arroyo Simi, are addressed in the Initial Study prepared for the Proposed Project, which is included in Appendix A to this EIR (see Section 3.3.10, <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i>).

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where the Comment Is Addressed
City of Simi Valley, Department of Environmental Services, Planning Division (Sean Gibson, Deputy Environmental Services Director/City Planner)	The commenter expresses concern about visual impacts and impacts from construction and operational noise.	Section 5.1, <i>Aesthetics</i> , and Section 5.8, <i>Noise</i> , include an analysis of visual impacts and impacts from construction and operational noise.

4.3. Issues Analyzed in Brief

Table 4-2 summarizes issues from the environmental checklist addressed in the Initial Study (Appendix A). As indicated in the Initial Study, there is no substantial evidence showing significant impacts would result from the Proposed Project in any of these issue areas.

Table 4-2. CEQA Issues Analyzed in the Initial Study

Issue Areas	Initial Study Findings
Agriculture and Forestry Resources	No farmland or forest land is located on the project site, and the site is not enrolled in a Williamson Act contract or zoned for forest land or agricultural uses. The Proposed Project would have no impact on agriculture or forestry resources.
Energy	The Proposed Project would comply with current energy efficiency requirements and the use of energy would be necessary to provide the public benefit of meeting water supply needs. Impacts would be less than significant.
Geology and Soils	<p>The closest Alquist Priolo Fault Zone to the project site is the Simi-Santa Rosa Fault Zone, which is located approximately 3.4 miles northwest of the project site. The proposed above-ground steel water storage tank and associated components would be built in accordance with relevant standards and codes related to seismic resistance and structural integrity. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>During construction, the Proposed Project would include implementation of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) best management practices (BMPs) in compliance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit to limit erosion from construction activities. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The project site is not located on geologic units or soil that is unstable or that would become unstable as a result of the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The project site is not located on expansive soil and the Proposed Project would have no impact.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would not include the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems and would have no impact.</p> <p>The project site is underlain by deposits with low paleontological sensitivity, which means that they are unlikely to contain important fossils because of their age or depositional history. The Proposed Project would have no impact on paleontological resources.</p>
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	<p>Hazardous materials used during construction would be contained within vessels specifically engineered for safe storage and would not be transported, stored, or used in quantities that would pose a significant hazard to the public or construction workers. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>No schools are located within one-quarter mile of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to hazardous emissions near schools.</p> <p>According to relevant databases, no active hazardous material sites are mapped within or in the vicinity of the project site and impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The closest airport to the project site is Van Nuys Airport, located approximately 18 miles southeast of the site. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to airport hazards.</p>

Issue Areas	Initial Study Findings
Hazards and Hazardous Materials (continued)	During construction, notification would be provided to emergency service providers to ensure that emergency response and evacuation plans are not substantially impaired. Impacts would be less than significant.
Hydrology and Water Quality	<p>Impacts on surface water and groundwater quality during construction would be minimized through implementation of construction erosion control measures (e.g., silt fence, sediment traps, fiber rolls, and storm drain inlet protection measures) per the construction SWPPP. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would not require the use of groundwater supplies or the withdrawal of groundwater, or include activities that would interfere with groundwater recharge. The Proposed Project would have no impact on groundwater.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would not alter the course of a stream or river. SWPPP construction BMPs would include erosion and sedimentation control measures, which would also reduce potential runoff during construction. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The project site is not located in a flood hazard area, and no large bodies of water, such as lakes or oceans, are near the project site that could cause a seiche or tsunami. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to flood hazards.</p>
Land Use and Planning	<p>No residential communities exist within the project boundaries and the Proposed Project would have no impact related to dividing established communities.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would include the construction of an above-ground water storage tank and is exempt from local building and zoning ordinances. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to conflicts with land use plans, policies, or regulations.</p>
Mineral Resources	The EIR prepared for the City of Simi Valley General Plan indicates that the project site is within Mineral Resource Zone 1, defined as an area where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present. In addition, the project site is not located near or within a mineral resource recovery site. The Proposed Project would have no impact on mineral resources.
Population and Housing	<p>The Proposed Project is intended to meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region but would not require an increase in the overall supply of water needed and would not induce unplanned population growth. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to unplanned population growth.</p> <p>The project site is an undeveloped property and does not include housing. The Proposed Project would have no impact on housing.</p>
Public Services	The Proposed Project would not affect the ability for governmental facilities to meet performance objectives, and no new or physically altered facilities would be required. The Proposed Project would have no impact on public services.
Recreation	The Proposed Project would not increase the use of recreational facilities and does not include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. The Proposed Project would have no impact on recreational facilities.
Transportation	<p>The Proposed Project would not require the alteration or construction of new roadways or other features that would conflict with the City's circulation system. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would not generate or attract 110 or more daily vehicle trips during construction or operation, and would be consistent with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.3, subdivision (b). Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>Construction vehicles and equipment would access the site, but this access would be temporary during the 30- to 36-month construction period and would not disrupt existing traffic patterns in a way that could pose a hazard to vehicles traveling along Kuehner Drive, Smith Road, California State Route 118, and other roadways. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>During construction, notification would be provided to emergency service providers to ensure that emergency access would remain adequate at all times. Impacts would be less than significant.</p>

Issue Areas	Initial Study Findings
Utilities and Service Systems	<p>An approximately 700-foot-long Southern California Edison (SCE) service line would be required to connect to the project site, but the construction of this connection would not cause significant environmental effects because the work would be limited to an area that is already developed with an existing roadway. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>Sufficient water supplies would be available to serve the Proposed Project, which would be sourced from Calleguas. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>Neither project construction nor operation would involve any activities that would generate wastewater. The Proposed Project would have no impact on wastewater facilities.</p> <p>Approximately 6,100 cubic yards (CY) from the earthen berm could be hauled offsite to the Simi Valley Landfill and Recycling Center (SVLRC). In addition, material that is more than 2 percent organic material would need to be disposed of offsite, also at the SVLRC; the anticipated amount of this material is conservatively estimated to be approximately 4,000 to 6,500 CY. The SVLRC has a remaining permitted capacity of 80 million CY. During project operation, no solid waste would be generated by the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>The Proposed Project would comply with federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to solid waste reduction.</p>
Wildfire	<p>The project site is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The nearest fire station, Ventura County Fire Department Station #43, is approximately 1 mile northwest of the project site (5874 E. Los Angeles Avenue). During construction, notification would be provided to emergency service providers to ensure that emergency response and evacuation plans are not substantially impaired. Impacts would be less than significant.</p> <p>Construction activities would not pose a risk of wildfire, as the Proposed Project would comply with federal and State regulations for construction fire safety. The Proposed Project would not introduce a new fire hazard, as open flames and other flammable materials would not be present onsite during operation. No structures or activities that would exacerbate wildfire risk or post-fire hazards would result from the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would have no impact related to wildfire hazards.</p>

Note: See the Initial Study in Appendix A of this EIR for additional information.

4.4. Issues Analyzed in Detail

This EIR addresses impacts identified by the Initial Study to be potentially significant. The following issues were found to include potentially significant impacts and have been studied in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Noise
- Tribal Cultural Resources

In preparing the EIR, pertinent policies and guidelines from various local, regional, and State agencies, adopted CEQA documents, and other background documents were incorporated. A full reference list is contained in Chapter 8, *References*.

The alternatives section of the EIR (Chapter 6) was prepared in accordance with Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines and focuses on alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing significant adverse effects associated with the Proposed Project while feasibly attaining most of the basic project objectives. In addition, the alternatives section identifies the “environmentally superior” alternative among the alternatives assessed. The alternatives evaluated include the CEQA-required “No Project” alternative and four alternatives: one alternative with an underground tank at the project site and three alternative project sites.

The level of detail utilized throughout this EIR is consistent with the requirements of CEQA and applicable court decisions. Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines provides the standard of adequacy on which this document is based. The Guidelines state:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of the proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection, but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

4.5. Cumulative Development

In addition to the specific impacts of individual projects, CEQA requires EIRs to consider potential cumulative impacts of the Proposed Project. CEQA defines “cumulative impacts” as two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are substantial or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the combined changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the Proposed Project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be less than significant when analyzed separately, but could be a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows the EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

CEQA requires cumulative impact analysis in EIRs to consider either a list of planned and pending projects that may contribute to cumulative effects or a forecast of future development potential. Currently planned and pending projects in the project area are listed in Table 4-3 and shown in the map on Figure 4-1. Table 4-3 also includes a list of plans that are intended to guide the future development of land uses and public infrastructure within and surrounding the project site. These projects and plans are considered in the cumulative analyses in Chapter 5, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

In particular, the proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3) would be located to and south of the project site across Smith Road. The proposed Movie Studio would be included as part of a Specific Plan that would guide long-term development and is expected to require a separate environmental review process similar to this one. Given the scope and planning status of the Movie Studio Project, a reasonable assumption is that the Movie Studio Project’s approval and implementation could extend over several years. As a conservative approach, the cumulative analysis in this EIR incorporates the assumption that the Proposed Project would be constructed at the same time as the Smith Road Movie Studio Project.

The Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan, also listed in Table 4-3 under “Relevant Plans,” is also particularly relevant to the cumulative analysis since this plan is for recreational improvements extending along the concrete-lined Arroyo Simi channel, which is located adjacent to the project site along its northern border.

Figure 4-1. Cumulative Projects Map

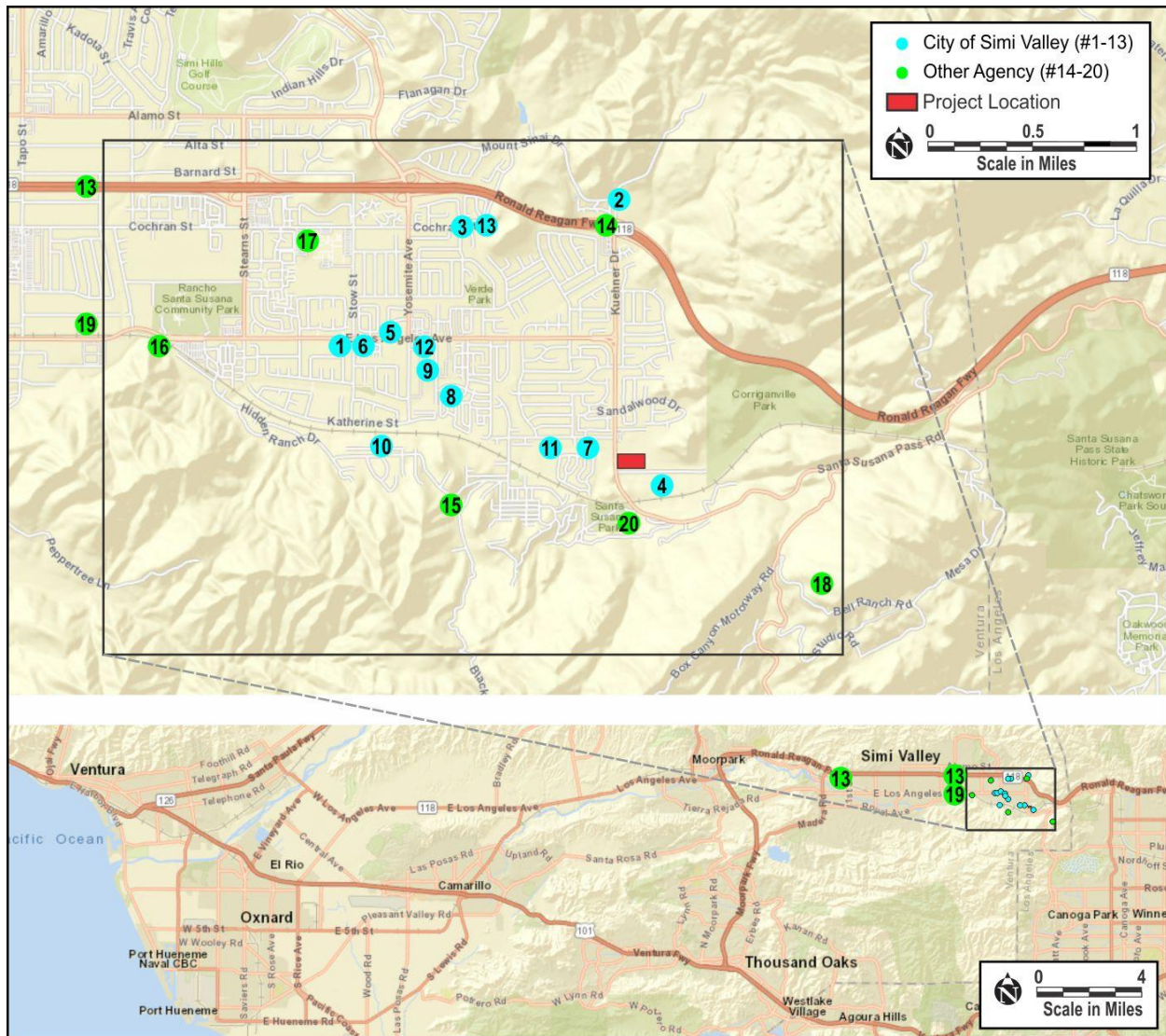


Table 4-3. Cumulative Projects and Plans List

ID#	Project or Plan Name	Location	Description	Status
Relevant Projects				
City of Simi Valley Projects				
1	Stow Villas (TT5585, PD-S-0964, TT5585-TE#02)	5496 East Los Angeles Ave (approximately 1.4 miles from the project site)	Construction of 16 townhomes with three moderate income residences with an Affordable Housing Agreement	Under Construction
2	Pinehurst (PD-S-1030, PD-S-1030-TE#1)	Canyon Oaks Drive at Northeast Corner of Kuehner Drive and 118 Freeway (approximately 1.1 miles from the project site)	Construction of 24 single- family residences	Under Construction

ID#	Project or Plan Name	Location	Description	Status
3	Melrose West Assisted Living (CUP-S-0812)	Southeast Side of East Cochran Street, 150 feet East of Welcome Court (approximately 1.2 miles from the project site)	Construction of a 110-unit assisted senior living facility with memory care	Approved/Unbuilt
4	Smith Road Movie Studio (PD-S-1039, PD-S-1039-TE#01, PD-S-2022-0007, PR-2023-0007, GPPS-2024-0001)	Vacant Lot West of 6700 Smith Road and three residential zoned parcels north of Smith Road and east of Kuehner Drive (adjacent to the project site)	Development of a Specific Plan for a 12-acre movie studio campus and a parking lot, including eight new 20,000-square-foot sound stages, supported by an 80,000-square-foot, four-story building for a mill shop, storage areas, and general production offices	Approved/Unbuilt (an EIR is expected to be prepared for the Specific Plan according to the City of Simi Valley [Z. Chaparyan, personal communication, July 10, 2025])
5	Verizon – 5775 Los Angeles Avenue (WTP-0086)	5775 East Los Angeles Ave (approximately 1.2 miles from the project site)	Construction of a new wireless telecommunication facility consisting of a 60-foot-tall mono-pipe	Approved/Unbuilt
6	Nehoray Townhomes (TT5982, PD-S-1052)	Southeast of Los Angeles and Stow Street (approximately 1.3 miles from the project site)	Subdivision of a 0.51-acre parcel for the construction of eight townhomes	Under Construction
7	Katherine/Rockingham Development (PR-2021-0001)	Empty lot near the intersection of Katherine Road and Rockingham Drive (approximately 1.2 miles from the project site)	Preliminary review for proposed two-story, four-unit residential apartment complex consisting of two buildings	Preliminary Review Completed
8	Simi Country Mobile Home Park Solar Canopy (PD-S-2021-0007)	1550 Rory Lane (approximately 0.7 mile from the project site)	Planned development permit for installation of new solar panel canopy structures	Under Construction
9	1801-1807 Oak Rd. Development (GPPS-2022-0003)	1801-1807 Oak Road (approximately 0.9 mile from the project site)	Request to change the General Plan designation from Medium Density Residential to Moderate Density Residential for a 1.5-acre portion of a 5.72-acre site	Change in General Plan Designation Completed
10	Animal Keeping (CUP-S-2023-0007)	5643 Crinklaw Lane (approximately 1.1 miles from the project site)	Conditional Use Permit to allow for boarding of a variety of animals in a non-Animal Overlay Residential zone on an existing 3.23-acre lot	Approved/Unbuilt
11	SB330 Preliminary Review (PR-2024-0006)	6354 Katherine Road (approximately 0.3 mile from the project site)	Senate Bill 330 Preliminary Review for a 10-unit multi-family development with affordable housing	Preliminary Review Completed
12	1845 Oak Road 70 Unit Multi-family Residential Condominium (City Ventures) (GPPS-2022-0001, GPA-2022-0001, Z-S-2022-0003, PD-S-2022-0012, VTT-2024-0001)	1845 Oak Road (approximately 1.0 mile from the project site)	Demolition of six existing, non-operational, vacant preschool buildings and construction of a three-story, 70-unit condominium townhouse complex on a 3.61-acre property located east of Yosemite Avenue and Los Angeles Avenue	Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) Received 7/30/2024 and Notice of Determination (NOD) Posted 10/9/2024

ID#	Project or Plan Name	Location	Description	Status
13	SB330 Preliminary Review (PR-2025-0001)	6024 East Cochran Street (approximately 1.0 mile from the project site)	Senate Bill 330 Preliminary Review for a 57-lot subdivision for new single-family residences	Preliminary Review Completed
Other Agency Projects				
14	Clean California 38510, California Department of Transportation, District 7	On State Route 118 from 0.3 miles west of First Street Overcrossing to 0.1 miles east of Kuehner Drive Undercrossing (approximately 1.0 mile from the project site)	Installation of rock blanket and stamped concrete paving at various locations, hydro-seeding, hydro mulch, and composite median in areas adjacent to ramps, placement of decorative plants along the ramps, and modification to existing irrigation systems	Notice of Exemption (NOE) Posted 10/13/22
15	TD191174 Big Rock Deteriorated Pole Replacement Project, State Water Resources Control Board	1179 Black Canyon Road (approximately 0.7 mile from the project site)	Removal and replacement of an existing wood pole and anchor along the Big Rock 16 kilovolt line	NOE Posted 1/17/2023
16	Metrolink Locomotive Modernization Study, Pilot and Implementation, Southern California Regional Rail Authority	5050 East Los Angeles Avenue (approximately 2.0 miles from the project site)	Deployment of one or more fuel efficiency strategies to significantly reduce locomotive fuel consumption and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) and criteria pollutant emissions	NOE Posted 6/19/2023
17	Simi Valley High School Modernization, Simi Valley Unified School District	5400 Cochran Street (approximately 1.7 miles from the project site)	Removal of the existing Multi-Purpose Building and replacement with a new Multi-Purpose Room and Science Classroom Building, conversion of an existing classroom building into a Kitchen, and improvements to the quad landscaping area, including two new shade structures and a food kiosk	NOE Posted 2/5/2024
18	Simi Divide - Box Canyon Connector, California Wildlife Conservation Board	Parcel 649-0-010-415 (approximately 1.0 mile from the project site)	Consideration of the allocation for a grant to Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority for a cooperative project with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to acquire 166± acres of land for the protection of chaparral habitat that supports a wildlife movement corridor for special-status species, including mountain lion and Santa Susana tarplant, and provide future wildlife-oriented public use opportunities	NOE Posted 5/29/2024

ID#	Project or Plan Name	Location	Description	Status
19	Simi Valley Double Track Project, Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA)	A 2.2-mile segment of the SCRRA's (SCRRA or Metro-link) existing Ventura Subdivision from Sequoia Avenue in the west to south of Stearns Street in the east (approximately 1.7 miles from the project site)	Construction of a new, second platform and pedestrian undercrossing at the existing Simi Valley Station, construction of a second siding track and the establishment of two new control points, and supplemental safety measures at existing at-grade crossings	Draft EIR Completed 3/21/2021 and NOD Posted 7/23/2021; Currently Under Construction
20	PL24-0111	Santa Susana Community	County-initiated ordinance amending Articles 2, 4, 5, and 9 of the Non-Costal Zoning Ordinance to facilitate affordable housing development within the Santa Susana Community	Public Hearing Held September 15, 2025

Relevant Plans

City of Simi Valley General Plan	City of Simi Valley	Provides a guide for the future growth and development of Simi Valley over the next 20 years and a framework for the City's physical, economic, and social development that sustains environmental resources	Update Adopted June 2012 (with some chapters updated again in 2021, including Chapter 3, Community Development, and Chapter 8, Safety and Noise)
Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan	City of Simi Valley and Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District	Provides a plan for recreational improvements extending along the Arroyo Simi and adjacent Ventura County Watershed Protection District's right-of-way from the City Limits at the west end to Corriganville Park at the east end	NOD Posted 11/7/2024 for Funds for the Fifth Phase of the Class I Multi-Use Trail
Ventura County General Plan	Ventura County	Sets forth the goals, policies, and programs the County will implement to manage future growth and land use	Adopted 9/15/2020
Calleguas Urban Water Management Plan	366 square miles in Ventura County	Assesses Calleguas water service reliability, describes and evaluates sources of water supply, efficient uses of water, demand management measures, implementation strategy and schedule, and other information and programs	Adopted June 2021
2019 Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan	Ventura County	Addresses region-wide water management issues and provides for integration of project and program implementation strategies to address the needs and objectives of the region	Adopted 12/12/2019

Source: City of Simi Valley, 2025; County of Ventura, 2025; State Clearinghouse, 2025

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section discusses the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project for the specific issue areas identified through the scoping process as having the potential to experience significant effects. A “significant effect” is defined by the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15382 as:

... a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

The assessment of each issue area begins with a discussion of the environmental setting related to the issue, which is followed by the impact analysis. In the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the “significance thresholds,” which are those criteria adopted by Calleguas and other agencies, universally recognized, or developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsections describe each impact of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation (i.e., residual impacts). Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text with the discussion of the effect and its significance. Each discussion also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the Proposed Project is approved per Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less Than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. Mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The Proposed Project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of mitigation measures (if required) and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after implementation of the measure(s). In cases where the mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed and evaluated as a secondary impact. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the Proposed Project in conjunction with other planned and pending developments in the area listed in Section 4.5, *Cumulative Development*.

The Executive Summary (Chapter 1) summarizes all project impacts and mitigation measures.

5.1. Aesthetics

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), “aesthetics” refers to the visual impacts of a project on the surrounding environment, including whether a project would substantially affect or block views of important scenic vistas (e.g., mountains, ocean, iconic structures); the degree to which a project would alter the visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings, considering how project elements such as the height or massing of new structures, setback and landscaping, and architectural styles and design would harmonize or clash with the existing visual landscape; and the potential for increased artificial light or reflective surfaces to negatively affect day or nighttime views.

This section includes a discussion of surrounding land uses, the existing visual landscape for the project area, important visual resources that could be affected by the Proposed Project, key viewpoints of the project site, and viewer sensitivity. This section also identifies federal, State, regional, and local regulations and policies relevant to visual resources, provides the methodology and significance criteria, and includes an analysis of impacts from project activities.

The project site is located in the City of Simi Valley. During the project scoping period, the City of Simi Valley Planning Division submitted comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) expressing concern asked about consistency of the Proposed Project with applicable General Plan policies (see Section 5.1.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*), as well as the surrounding hillsides, which are considered scenic vistas. The City requested daytime and nighttime visual simulations and an analysis of viewpoints and the viewshed from major roads and recreational resources. The City also requested that the Proposed Project be scaled down with limited grading and redesigned to complement the surrounding natural landscape through the use of natural earth tones.

The tank has been designed so that the water level within the tank would be at the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump. If the tank is not constructed at this elevation, a pump station and building would be required at the project site, which would require the use of electricity, and a standby generator would also be needed for operational reliability during a power outage. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). The elevated pad would be required to meet the elevation requirements to optimize the operational reliability of the system (see discussion in Chapter 5, Alternatives Analysis, for more information on a lower-elevation alternative [Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative]). It is also sized to accommodate the operational requirements of the system and has already been scaled down from the original proposal.

5.1.1. Environmental Setting

This section describes surrounding land uses, the existing visual landscape within and surrounding the project area, important visual resources that could be affected by the Proposed Project, key viewpoints of the project site, and viewer sensitivity.

Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is bounded by a Ventura County Watershed Protection District concrete-lined drainage channel to the north (Arroyo Simi channel), with commercial offices and warehouses, a small strip mall, and residential uses beyond; single-family residential parcels to the east; and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and residential neighborhoods to the west and southwest across Kuehner Drive. A movie studio occupies the properties to the south and southeast across Smith Road, with the Union Pacific Railroad corridor located south of the studio (see Figure 3-1 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*).

Existing Visual Landscape

Figures 5.1-1 through 5.1-6 show locations of key viewpoints (also referred to as key observation points, or KOPs, which are locations considered to be primary viewpoints from which the Proposed Project might be visible), as well as existing views of the project site and surrounding visual landscape. The project site is currently an undeveloped parcel that is primarily vacant with the exception of a small outdoor storage yard (approximately 100 feet by 70 feet) surrounded by a chain link fence in the northeastern portion of the site (see Figure 5.1-7). The topography is uneven and includes a 6- to 7-foot-high by 60-foot-wide earthen berm made of non-engineered fill in the southern and western portions of the site. The site includes ruderal vegetation (grasses), along with several mature trees located in the northern and northeastern portions of the site. The project site is highly disturbed and is crisscrossed with dirt access roads and bike jumps.

The project site is surrounded by views of trees, commercial office/warehouse buildings, and a recreational vehicle park (Rocky Trailer Village) to the north; and vegetation and trees to the east, south, and west. Figures 5.1-8 and 5.1-9 show the recreational vehicle park to the north of the project site. Although the project vicinity is surrounded by some residential and commercial development, the immediate vicinity provides relatively uninterrupted views of surrounding scenic vistas, which consist of rock outcroppings, oak trees, and hillsides within open space areas to the east, west, and south, and distant views of hills and ridgelines within the Santa Susana Mountains to the north.

Figure 5.1-1. Key Viewpoint Locations



KOP = key observation point, which is a location considered to be a primary viewpoint from which the Proposed Project might be visible

Important Visual Resources

The Natural Resources Element of the City of Simi Valley General Plan identifies tree-studded hillsides, ridgelines, canyons, bluffs, significant rock outcroppings, and open space areas surrounding the City as visual resources, which are present within the vicinity of the project site (City of Simi Valley, 2012b and 2012c). The project site is approximately 1 mile south of California State Route 118 (SR-118), which is an eligible State scenic highway (Caltrans, 2018).

Key Viewpoints

Key viewpoints or KOPs of the project site (see Figure 5.1-1 for KOP locations) include views from adjacent and nearby roadways, such as Kuehner Drive (KOP1 and KOP2, see Figures 5.1-2 and 5.1-3), Smith Road (KOP3, see Figure 5.1-4), and SR-118 (KOP4, see Figure 5.1-5), as well as a viewpoint from Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5, see Figure 5.1-6). The viewpoint at SR-118 (KOP4) is located on the highway overpass above Kuehner Drive (see Figure 5.1-1). The viewpoint at Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5) is from the location of the entrance to the park (see Figure 5.1-9 for a view of the park entrance from the project site). These viewpoints are considered representative of other locations in proximity thereto. Given the highly variable terrain and tall vegetation in surrounding areas, minimal views of the project site would be available from Santa Susana Pass Road, SR-118, and open space areas to the west (Corriganville Park) and south (Simi Hills).

Viewer Sensitivity

Viewers along Kuehner Drive and Smith Road would be in vehicles traveling along these roadways and pedestrians walking to and from surrounding residential, commercial, and recreational areas. Viewers from Rocky Pointe Natural Park would likely be engaging in outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking. Viewer sensitivity for these viewpoints would be considered high given that viewers would likely be in the area to enjoy its aesthetic qualities, the short distance of viewers to the project site, and the relatively long duration of views.

Viewers along SR-118 would be limited to vehicles traveling along the highway and would have low sensitivity, given that vehicles would likely be traveling relatively fast (more than 60 miles per hour) providing minimal exposure to views of the project site. In addition, based on the visual simulation shown in Figure 5.1-5, the tank would hardly be visible among the topography and vegetation between SR-118 and the project site.

Figure 5.1-2. Visual Simulation from Kuehner Drive (KOP1: Southwest Corner of the Project Site)
Existing View



Proposed View



Source: Perliter & Ingalsbe, 2024; Aspen Environmental Group, 2025

Figure 5.1-3. Visual Simulation From Kuehner Drive (KOP2: Northwest Corner of the Project Site)
Existing View



Proposed View



Source: Perliter & Ingalsbe, 2024; Aspen Environmental Group, 2025

Figure 5.1-4. Visual Simulation From Smith Road (KOP3: Southeast Corner of the Project Site)

Existing View



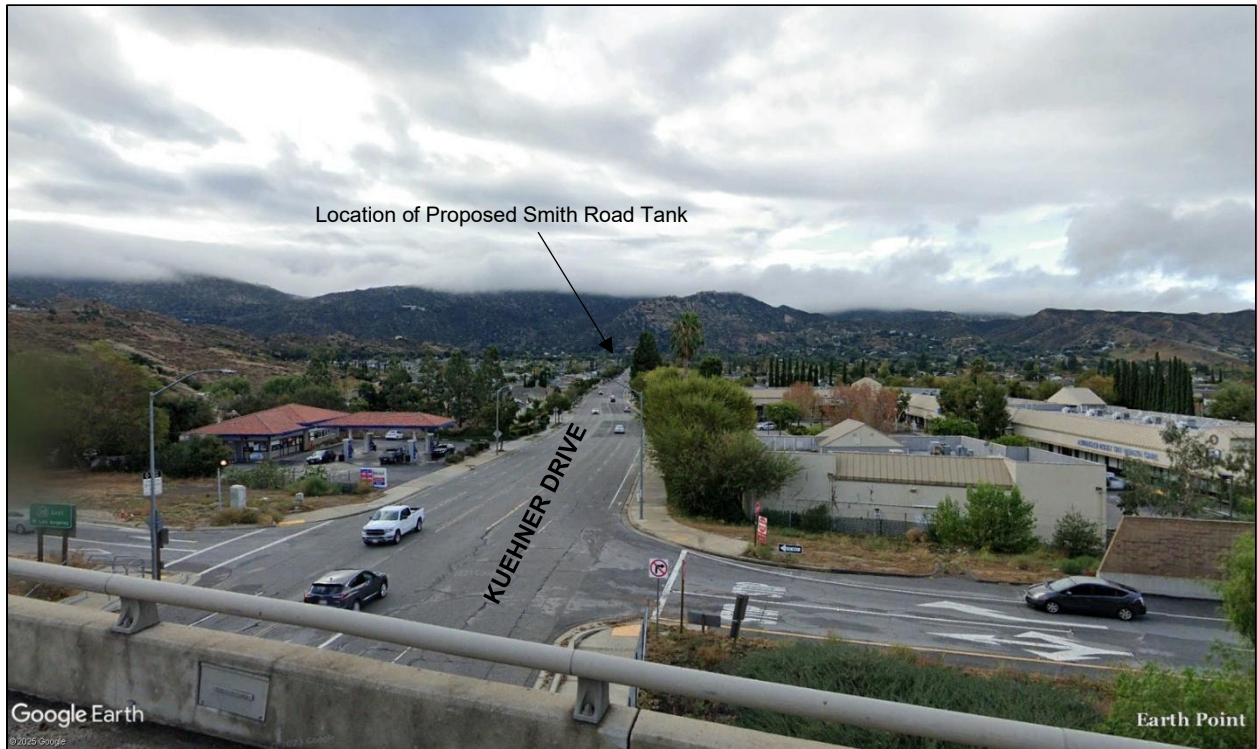
Proposed View



Source: Perliter & Ingalsbe, 2024; Aspen Environmental Group, 2025

Figure 5.1-5. Visual Simulation From State Route 118 Overpass (KOP4)

Existing View



Proposed View



Source: Perliter & Ingalsbe, 2024; Aspen Environmental Group, 2025

Figure 5.1-6. Visual Simulation From Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5)

Existing View



Proposed View



Source: Perliter & Ingalsbe, 2024; Aspen Environmental Group, 2025

Figure 5.1-7. Existing View of the Outdoor Storage Yard on the Project Site



Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Figure 5.1-8. Existing View of the Recreational Vehicle Park to the North of the Project Site



Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Figure 5.1-9. Existing View of the Entrance to Rocky Pointe Natural Park



5.1.2. Regulatory Setting

5.1.2.1. Federal Regulations

No federal regulations related to visual resources are applicable to the Proposed Project.

5.1.2.2. State Regulations

California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program preserves and protects scenic State highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. State highways can either be officially designated as scenic highways or be determined to be eligible for designation. The status of a State scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) approves the designation. Designated highways are protected with measures in the form of ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies by the local governing body with jurisdiction over the area of land within the scenic corridor.

The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the California Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. Section 263.6 of the California Streets and Highways Code designates SR-118 as an eligible State scenic highway from State Route 23 to De Soto Avenue near Browns Canyon (in the San Fernando Valley). Tapo Canyon Road north of SR-118 has been identified as an eligible County scenic highway.

California Code of Regulations

The California Code of Regulations includes light intensities for the safety and security of pedestrian pathways, circulation ways, and paths of egress. Refer to the California Building Code Title 24, Part 1, and California Electrical Code Title 24, Part 3.

5.1.2.3. Regional and Local Regulations

The Proposed Project is not subject to City zoning and building codes, pursuant to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, because it involves water storage and conveyance facilities. In addition, pursuant to California Public Utilities Code Section 10001 and the sections that follow, as well as case law including Southern California Gas Company versus v. City of Vernon (1995) and City of Lafayette v. East Bay Municipal Utility District (1993), essential service providers such as water districts are exempt from local building codes and zoning and land use ordinances where adherence would materially interfere with the agency's ability to perform its core public service obligations.

County of Ventura General Plan

Ventura County regulates scenic open space primarily through its General Plan and Area Plans. Open space lands may be subject to additional controls through special management areas such as National Recreation and Forest areas, mineral resource areas, hazard areas, and areas subject to cultural heritage protection. The Ventura County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element, contains goals in Section 6.3 (*Scenic Resources*) pertaining to visual and scenic resources Countywide (County of Ventura, 2020). These are aimed at preserving and protecting the significant open views and visual resources of the County, protecting the visual resources within the viewshed of designated scenic highways, lakes, and other scenic areas, and enhancing and maintaining the visual appearance of building and developments. Relevant policies under these goals include the following (County of Ventura, 2020):

- **COS-3.1 Scenic Roadways.** The County shall protect the visual character of scenic resources visible from state or County designated scenic roadways.
- **COS-3.4 Visual Impacts from Reservoirs.** The County shall ensure that reservoirs are not sited on prominent ridgelines and that new reservoirs are well-screened with native vegetation and berms and, if possible, are undergrounded.
- **COS-3.5 Ridgeline and Hilltop Preservation.** The County shall ensure that ridgelines and major hilltops remain undeveloped and that discretionary development is sited and designed to remain below significant ridgelines, except as required for communication or similar facilities.

City of Simi Valley General Plan

The Community Development, Mobility and Infrastructure, and Natural Resources Elements of the City of Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update) contain several goals and policies for visual resource protection that address the maintenance of natural topography; provision of trails, recreation areas, and viewing areas near significant visual resources; location and design of developments within visually sensitive areas; collaboration with local, State, and federal Agencies; and development on hillsides. These goals and policies include the following (City of Simi Valley, 2021, 2012a, and 2012b):

- **Policy IU 1.9 Facility Design.** Ensure that water utility facilities are designed to be safe, aesthetically pleasing, and compatible with adjacent uses.
- **Goal LU-4 Development Shaped by Environmental Setting.** Development is located to respect, work with, and complement the natural features of the land.
 - **Policy LU-4.1 Preservation of Natural Features.** Maintain significant natural landmarks, such as prominent ridgelines visible from the valley floor, and other natural scenic features in their natural state, to the extent feasible.
 - **Policy LU-4.2 Incorporation of Natural Features.** Integrate natural scenic features, such as mature trees, rock outcroppings, watercourses, and views into project design, except where infeasible for public safety.

- **Policy LU-4.3 Open Space Character.** Locate and design structures and open space areas to assure that open space qualities of a development are generally apparent from adjoining areas.
- **Policy LU-4.4 Hillside Development.** Locate and design development to maintain the existing visual character of the hillsides as a natural backdrop.
- **Policy LU-4.5 Hillside Grading.** Minimize terrain disruption and design grading using generally accepted principles of civil engineering with the objective to blend the project into the natural topography.
- **Policy LU-4.6 Hillside Development Density.** Maintain land outside the valley floor having a slope of over 20 percent as permanent open space. Commercial and industrial development shall be limited to slopes of 10 percent or less, unless otherwise allowed under the Hillside Performance Standards of the Simi Valley Municipal Code, or approved by a specific plan that justifies and provides appropriate design measures for the development of these areas, in which case development shall be limited to slopes of 20 percent or less.
- **Policy LU-4.7 Development Compatibility with Hillside Character.** Ensure the compatibility of proposed structures with the surrounding terrain in hillside areas by using varying setbacks, building heights, building forms, and other applicable features.
- **Policy LU-4.8 Architecture and Building Design.** Design buildings to be architecturally integrated into the terrain and blend with the natural environment.
- **Policy LU-4.9 Building Colors in Hillsides.** Use earth tones or subdued colors for development in hillside areas with brighter hues used only as accents to complement the natural setting.
- **Policy LU-4.10 Specific Plan Approval.** Require the approval of a specific plan for commercial and industrial development in hillside areas.
- **Policy LU-5.9 Lighting Impacts.** Design, locate, and direct lighting and signs so that they do not result in excessive spillover, illumination, and glare for adjacent uses.
- **Goal LU-7 Viewsheds.** Vistas of the hillsides, valley floor, city entrance areas, recreation areas, major open space areas, and viewsheds from the hills are maintained for the public.
- **Policy LU-7.1 City Entries.** Protect open vistas at freeway entrances to the community and along Madera Road and Tierra Rejada Road, by such means as enriched parkways, open space, height limits, and view corridor preservation. The appearance of development along these throughways should be attractive, complement the vista, and not compete for attention.
- **Policy LU-7.2 Development in View Corridors.** Design structures and site improvements constructed in highly visible locations to minimize their impacts on natural vistas.
- **Policy LU-21.13 Water Storage Tanks.** Require that the visual impacts of water storage tanks be minimized by berming, landscaping, or other means, pursuant to the requirements of Ventura County Waterworks District #8.
- **Goal NR-3 Visual Resource Protection.** Significant visual resources are preserved as important quality-of-life amenities for residents and as assets for recreation and tourism.
 - **Policy NR-3.1 Maintenance of Natural Topography.** Preserve hills, ridgelines, canyons, bluffs, significant rock outcroppings, and open space areas surrounding the City as a visual resource, and locate buildings and utility infrastructure to minimize alteration of natural topography.
 - **Policy NR-3.2 Trails, Recreation Areas, and Viewing Areas.** Provide public trails, recreation areas, and viewing areas near significant visual resources where appropriate.

- **Policy NR-3.3 Location and Design of Developments.** Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize impacts to scenic resources and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in hillside areas, through the following:
 - Creative site planning
 - Integration of natural features into the project
 - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
 - Clustering of development so as to preserve open space vistas and natural features
 - Minimal disturbance of topography
 - Creation of contiguous open space networks
- **NR-3.4 Collaboration with Local, State, and Federal Agencies.** Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and state and federal agencies to protect designated scenic resources and corridors that, although beyond the City’s land use authority, are important to the welfare of City residents.
- **NR-3.5 Development Location on Hillsides.** Require development to preserve and enhance physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines.

Simi Valley Urban Restriction Boundary

On November 3, 1998, the voters of Simi Valley adopted a City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) as part of Measure B, also known as the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) program. As it relates to aesthetics, the CURB is intended to provide for the protection of existing agricultural, open-space, viewshed, and watershed lands surrounding the City, as well as the preservation of the unique character of the City and quality of life of City residents as it relates to the protection of a substantial amount of open-space, rural, and agricultural lands particularly outside of the City limits. The protection of such lands not only ensures the continued viability of agriculture but also protects visual resources and the existing character of the area. Generally, the CURB line prevents urban-density development outside of its boundary line. Changes to the location of the CURB line require City voter approval (SOAR, 2018). The project site is not located in an area outside the CURB line and is not protected from urban-density development (the CURB line is located approximately 0.15 mile to the south of the project site).

5.1.3. Impact Analysis

5.1.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from the development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, as well as a site visit conducted by Aspen Environmental Group in September 2024 and a visit to the general project vicinity in July 2025. Visual simulations created using photographs of the project site and proposed design components were also used to assess aesthetics impacts. Based on the visual simulations, the existing views of the project site are compared to the views of the project site following project implementation, along with consideration of viewer sensitivity, to determine impacts on scenic vistas, and visual character and quality. An understanding of the degree of viewer sensitivity helps to evaluate how viewers might perceive or react to visual changes.

Significance Thresholds

An impact related to aesthetics or visual resources would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.

3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.)
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving Threshold 2 would be less than significant, and have been included in an attached copy of the Initial Study, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15063(c)(3)(A) and 15128 (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.1, *Aesthetics* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis). The following analysis solely focuses on the remaining threshold questions.

5.1.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Impact AES-1: The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact on a scenic vista without mitigation. Impacts on scenic vistas would be reduced with the implementation of mitigation. Even with the implementation of mitigation, the Proposed Project would still have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable after mitigation.

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE. The following sections discuss the existing visual setting at the project site, the aesthetic components of the Proposed Project, and visual impacts that would result from project implementation.

Existing Visual Setting

Scenic vistas are viewpoints that provide expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the public benefit. The Natural Resources Element of the City of Simi Valley's General Plan identifies tree-studded hillsides, ridgelines, canyons, bluffs, significant rock outcroppings, and open space areas surrounding the City as visual resources, which are present within the vicinity of the project site (City of Simi Valley, 2012b and 2012c). In addition, the project site is also approximately 1 mile south of SR-118, which is an eligible State scenic highway (Caltrans, 2018).

As discussed under Section 5.1.1, the project site is highly disturbed and mostly undeveloped, featuring a small outdoor storage yard in the northeast, uneven terrain with a 6- to 7-foot-high earthen berm in the south and west, ruderal vegetation, several mature trees in the north and northeast, and various dirt access roads and bike jumps throughout. The area is highly disturbed overall.

The project site is surrounded by trees, commercial buildings, and a recreational vehicle park to the north, with vegetation and trees on the other sides. While there is nearby residential and commercial development, immediate surroundings provide relatively uninterrupted views of surrounding scenic vistas features like rock outcroppings, oak trees, hillsides, and distant views of the Santa Susana Mountains.

Key viewpoints or KOPs of the project site include views from adjacent and nearby roadways, such as Kuehner Drive (KOP1 and KOP2, see Figures 5.1-2 and 5.1-3), Smith Road (KOP3, see Figure 5.1-4), and SR-118 (KOP4, see Figure 5.1-5), as well as viewpoints from Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5, see Figure 5.1-6). These viewpoints are considered representative of other locations in proximity thereto. The viewpoint at SR-118 (KOP4) is located on the highway overpass above Kuehner Drive. The viewpoint at Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5) is from the location of the entrance to the park. Given the highly variable terrain and tall vegetation in surrounding areas, minimal views of the project site would be available from Santa Susana Pass Road, SR-118, and open space areas to the west (Corriganville Park) and south (Simi Hills).

Aesthetic Components of the Proposed Project

During construction activities, the staging and operation of construction equipment at the project site would be visible from adjacent roadways and the surrounding area. Construction fencing would be installed around the site perimeter for security purposes. The staging area for the storage of construction equipment and the stockpiling of excavated material would be located onsite.

Eight mature trees, including coast live oak trees in the northern and northeastern portions of the site, would need to be removed to construct the proposed water storage tank. Existing coast live oak trees that can remain on the project site would be protected in place. The 43-foot-high tank would be constructed on top of a 35-foot-high elevated pad, which would be created with imported fill material to reach a ground elevation of approximately 1,096 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) (see Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-6); this elevation of the water level is the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump.

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the tank would be painted a neutral color, bayberry (i.e., beige), which would allow the tank to generally blend in with the surrounding hillsides. Permanent fencing would be installed around the site perimeter, and shielded nighttime lighting would be provided for security purposes. Operation and maintenance vehicles would access the site using the driveway from Smith Road, which would be gated and locked. During project operation and maintenance, the tank would be inaccessible to the public due to security fencing and any trespassing activities would set off security alarms that would immediately alert Calleguas; because of this security system, Calleguas would be able to address any graffiti on the storage tank in a timely fashion.

The visual simulations shown in Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-6 have been prepared based on the current level of project design. A landscaping plan and details regarding fencing have not been finalized for the Proposed Project and would continue to be developed as the project design progresses. The landscaping shown in the visual simulations incorporates plants on the Ventura County Fire Department Plant Reference Guide (VCFD, 2024), which is intended to provide recommendations for commonly used native and ornamental plants that are fire-resistant in order to help prevent the spread of a wildfire. The plants that have been placed into the visual simulations are subject to change and include the following:

- Brisbane box (*Tristania conferta*)
- Sagebrush – prostrate forms (*Artemisia californica* ‘cultivars’)
- Dwarf coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis* ‘Pigeon Point’)
- Catalina perfume (*Ribes viburnifolium*)
- Creeping sage (*Salvia sonomensis*)
- Purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*)

Project Impacts

Construction. During construction activities, the staging and operation of construction equipment at the project site would block views of scenic vistas for vehicles and pedestrians traveling on Kuehner Drive and Smith Road, as well as for recreational users of Rocky Pointe Natural Park. Views of construction activities, materials, equipment (as listed in Section 3.5 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*), and vehicles would be present throughout the 30- to 36-month construction period.

Operation and Maintenance. The following discussion addresses the Proposed Project’s visual impacts from key viewpoints or KOPs, which include adjacent and nearby roadways, such as Kuehner Drive (KOP1 and KOP2, see Figures 5.1-2 and 5.1-3), Smith Road (KOP3, see Figure 5.1-4), and SR-118 (KOP4, see Figure 5.1-5), as well as viewpoints from Rocky Pointe Natural Park (KOP5, see Figure 5.1-6).

As shown in Figure 5.1-5, the proposed water storage tank would be barely visible from SR-118 given the 1-mile distance to the project site from this location and the intervening topography, vegetation, and

development. The tank color blends in with the surrounding hillsides. Viewers along SR-118 would be limited to vehicles traveling along the highway and would have low sensitivity, given that vehicles would likely be traveling relatively fast (more than 60 miles per hour) providing minimal exposure to views of the project site. Because viewer sensitivity for this viewpoint would be low, and the proposed water storage tank would be minimally visible, the Proposed Project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista from SR-118.

As shown in Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-4 and 5.1-6, for viewpoints closer to the project site, including along Kuehner Drive and Smith Road and from Rocky Pointe Natural Park, the proposed water storage tank and elevated pad would result in a high degree of contrast in the visual landscape from existing conditions and would be highly noticeable from these viewpoints given the height of the project components (35-foot-high berm plus a 43-foot-high tank, totaling 78 feet in height). Figure 5.1-6, which shows a view of the project site from the entrance to Rocky Pointe Natural Park, provides a comparison between the height of an existing commercial warehouse building to the north of the project site, and the proposed elevated pad and water storage tank. These project components would partially block views of scenic vistas consisting of distant hills and ridgelines. Viewer sensitivity for these areas would be high given that viewers would likely be in the area to enjoy its aesthetic qualities, the short distance of viewers to the project site, and the relatively long duration of views (see subsection *Viewer Sensitivity* under Section 5.1.1 for additional details). The Proposed Project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, which would be a significant impact.

Mitigation Measure AES-1 would require development and implementation of a Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan, which would include climate-appropriate landscaping similar in form and structure to vegetation on nearby hillsides to help blend the pad with surrounding scenic views. Due to the size and height of the elevated pad and tank, the Proposed Project would still have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista even with the implementation of mitigation. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable after mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

AES-1 **Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan.** Calleguas shall prepare a Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan. A draft of the Plan shall be provided to the City of Simi Valley Planning Division for a courtesy review prior to finalizing.

The Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan shall be prepared by a licensed landscape architect or qualified landscape professional and shall include, but not be limited to, the following components:

- (a) **Planting Design:** The Plan shall specify drought-tolerant trees, shrubs, and ground-cover species native or adapted to the local climate that will screen or soften views of the Smith Road Tank from public viewing areas, including streets, parks, trails, and other publicly accessible locations. Plant species shall be selected by the landscape architect/qualified landscape professional to achieve a mature height and density sufficient to substantially screen or soften views of the tank from public roadways (i.e. Kuehner Drive and Smith Road) and Rocky Pointe Natural Park within five years of planting (as feasible with site topography). The plant palette shall not include any species identified on the Ventura County Fire Department Guideline 410 – Prohibited Plant List.
- (b) **Planting Specifications:** The plan shall include planting schedules, plant palette with botanical and common names, container sizes (minimum 15-gallon for trees, 5-gallon for shrubs), spacing, and quantities. Trees shall be planted at a minimum height of 6 feet and shrubs at a minimum height of 3 feet at installation.

- (c) **Site Fencing:** The Plan shall include specifications for fencing surrounding the site and the security gate at the access driveway. Fencing materials shall be limited to decorative metal (such as wrought iron or tubular steel) or masonry wall. No flammable materials (e.g., wood, vinyl) shall be used for site fencing. In accordance with pre-project consultation with the Simi Valley City Planning Division, chain link fencing is expressly prohibited. Fence height should be sufficient to provide site security.
- (d) **Fence Landscaping Integration:** Landscaping shall be designed to integrate with and soften the appearance of required site fencing. Climbing vines or shrubs shall be planted along fence lines to provide additional visual screening and soften the fence appearance.
- (e) **Irrigation System:** The Plan shall include a temporary irrigation system to ensure plant establishment and survival during the first three years following installation.

Maintenance Program: Calleguas will develop a maintenance program for the landscaping and fencing. The maintenance program shall specify watering schedules (during plant establishment and once the landscape is established), pruning, fence maintenance (including painting and structural repairs), and replacement of dead or diseased plants to ensure performance standards are met.

Performance Standards: Within five years of installation, the site landscaping shall demonstrate 90% survival and site fencing shall be maintained in as-new condition. Calleguas will make any necessary repairs to ensure the performance standards are met.

Timing: The Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan shall be implemented as part of construction. The maintenance program will be prepared before construction is completed. Performance standards shall be monitored by Calleguas for five years from completion of construction.

Monitoring: Calleguas shall prepare annual monitoring reports for five years after installation, documenting plant survival rates, screening effectiveness, and fence condition. If performance standards are not met, supplemental plantings or fence repairs shall be required.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1, the Proposed Project's impacts on scenic vistas would be reduced through implementation of the Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan. Even with the implementation of this mitigation measure, the elevated pad at the project site would be 35 feet higher than the existing elevation, and a 43-foot-high tank would be constructed on top of this elevated pad, totaling 78 feet in height, which would partially block and interrupt public views of the surrounding hillsides and result in a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas. Impacts on scenic vistas would remain significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 3: Would the Proposed Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.)

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15063(c)(3)(A) and 15128, Threshold 2 was addressed in the Initial Study and associated impacts were determined to be less than significant. As such, Impact AES-2 analyzes impacts associated with Threshold 3.

Impact AES-2: The Proposed Project would degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views and its surroundings, resulting in a significant impact without mitigation. Even with the implementation of mitigation, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE. The areas surrounding the project site include both non-urbanized and urbanized areas, with commercial and residential development to the north and open space to the south. The Proposed Project includes the construction of an above-ground steel water storage tank on an undeveloped site. Although the tank would be a neutral color, and landscaping would only include plants on the Ventura County Fire Department Plant Reference Guide (VCFD, 2024), which would complement the surrounding landscape, the existing visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings would be affected due to the size of the tank, as shown in the visual simulations prepared for the Proposed Project (see Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-6).

As shown in Figure 5.1-5, the proposed water storage tank would be barely visible from SR-118 given the 1-mile distance to the project site from this location. Viewers along SR-118 would be limited to vehicles traveling along the highway and would have low sensitivity, given that vehicles would likely be traveling relatively fast (more than 60 miles per hour) providing minimal exposure to views of the project site. Because viewer sensitivity for this viewpoint would be low, and the proposed water storage tank would be minimally visible, the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views for this viewpoint.

As shown in Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-4 and 5.1-6, for viewpoints closer to the project site, including along Kuehner Drive and Smith Road and from Rocky Pointe Natural Park, the proposed water storage tank and elevated pad would result in a high degree of contrast in the visual landscape from existing conditions and would be highly noticeable from these viewpoints given the height of the project components (35-foot-high berm plus a 43-foot-high tank, totaling 78 feet in height). Figure 5.1-6, which shows a public view of the project site from the entrance to Rocky Pointe Natural Park, provides a comparison between the height of an existing commercial warehouse building to the north of the project site, and the proposed elevated pad and water storage tank. These project components would be substantially taller than the existing warehouse building.

Viewer sensitivity for these areas would be high given that viewers would likely be in the area to enjoy its aesthetic qualities, the short distance of viewers to the project site, and the relatively long duration of views. The Proposed Project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views for this viewpoint, which would be a significant impact without implementation of mitigation.

Mitigation Measure AES-1 would be implemented to reduce impacts on the visual character or quality of public views and its surroundings on the aesthetic components of the Proposed Project, including landscaping, paint treatments, and fencing. Due to the size and height of the elevated pad and tank, the Proposed Project would still substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings, even with the implementation of mitigation. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

AES-1 Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan. See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact AES-1.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1, the Proposed Project's impacts on the visual character and quality of public views and conflicts with regulations governing scenic quality would be reduced to the extent feasible through implementation of the Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan. Even

with the implementation of this mitigation measure, the elevated pad at the project site would be 35 feet higher than the existing elevation, and a 43-foot-high tank would be constructed on top of this elevated pad, totaling 78 feet in height, which would partially block and interrupt public views of the surrounding hillsides, and substantially degrade visual character and quality. Impacts on visual character and quality would remain significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 4: Would the Proposed Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Impact AES-3: Light and glare would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area with the implementation of standard best management practices. Impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. For approximately two weeks of the construction period, nighttime lighting would be required during construction of the connection to existing Calleguas Conduit North Branch (CCNB) and Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) pipelines because this work would require the shutdown of CCNB and CCSB and would need to be performed continuously. Permanent nighttime lighting would be installed at the project site for security purposes during project operation and consistent with standard conditions would be shielded to illuminate only the project site.

Consistent with standard conditions, the proposed tank would be coated with non-reflective paint and the exterior lighting would be designed such that it:

- Is shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined within the boundaries of the site,
- Is directed downward and away from adjoining properties and public rights-of-way,
- Does not blink or flash, and
- Does not cause illumination in adjacent residential communities to exceed 0.5 foot-candle.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, nighttime construction lighting be shielded so as to minimize visibility from adjacent land uses (see Section 3.5, *Project Construction*). The Proposed Project would not create a new source of light or glare that could adversely affect nighttime views of the area. Impacts would be less than significant.

5.1.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic extent of this analysis includes areas that are immediately adjacent to the project site, which include properties sharing boundaries to the north and east, as well as those separated from the project site by roadways (Smith Road and Kuehner Drive) to the south and west. This geographic scope is appropriate because the project site is expected to be less visible beyond the immediate area due to the highly variable terrain and tall vegetation in surrounding areas, as well as the limited cumulative development that is reasonably foreseeable in this surrounding area.

As shown in Figure 5.1-5, which shows the existing and proposed views from the SR-118 overpass at Kuehner Drive, approximately 1 mile north of the project site, the proposed water storage tank would be minimally visible due to several tall trees that line Kuehner Drive, as well as tall trees within several properties to the north of the project site. The top of the proposed water storage tank would likely start to become visible along Kuehner Drive at the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Sandalwood Drive, approximately 1,100 feet north of the project site. This area to the north of the project site is fully built-out with residential neighborhoods and a substantial level of cumulative development in these areas would be unlikely.

To the south of the project site, the proposed water storage tank would likely be visible along Kuehner Drive near Santa Susana Pass Road. Once Kuehner Drive curves eastward and turns into Santa Susana Pass Road, views of the proposed water storage tank would be substantially interrupted by intervening trees and rock outcroppings. Open space areas further south of Santa Susana Road, such as along Clear Springs Road, are densely vegetated with steep topography, providing minimal to no views of the proposed water storage tank. In addition, because the areas that are not immediately adjacent but are further east, west, and south of the project site are open space areas, substantial cumulative development in these areas would also be unlikely due to regional and local regulations that protect open space (see Section 5.1.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*).

In summary, based on the visibility of the project site within the surrounding viewshed, as well as the expected level of cumulative development that would be likely to affect the viewshed, the geographic extent of this analysis has been determined to be the immediately surrounding properties to the north, south, and east of the project site.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Threshold 3: Would the Proposed Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.)

Impact C-AES-1: Even with the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on scenic vistas, and visual character and quality.

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE. A cumulative impact is significant and unavoidable where the Proposed Project's incremental contribution to a cumulatively significant impact would be cumulatively considerable, even with implementation of mitigation measures.

Cumulative Projects. Based on review of the cumulative projects in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), one project, the proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3), would be located to the south of the project site across Smith Road.

Based on a discussion with the City of Simi Valley Department of Environmental Services (Z. Chaparyan, personal communication, July 10, 2025), the Smith Road Movie Studio Project is currently under planning review and has not yet received discretionary approval. The proposed Movie Studio would be included as part of a Specific Plan that would guide long-term development and is expected to require a separate environmental review process similar to this one. Given the scope and planning status of the Movie Studio Project, a reasonable assumption is that the Movie Studio Project's approval and implementation could extend over several years. As a conservative approach, this project is included in the cumulative analysis because of the permanent visual changes that would result from the proposed Movie Studio development.

The proposed Movie Studio Project would consist of a 12-acre movie studio campus, including eight new 20,000-square-foot sound stages, supported by an 80,000-square-foot, four-story building for a millshop, storage areas, and general production offices (City of Simi Valley, 2024). Three residential parcels immediately east of the Smith Road Tank project site would also be converted into a parking lot under the Movie Studio Project (City of Simi Valley, 2024). In April 2024, the applicant for the Movie Studio Project requested a zone change of those three parcels from Residential Low Density to Light Industrial.

Based on a site plan for the Movie Studio Project (City of Simi Valley, 2024), the four-story building would be 66 feet in height and would be located approximately 650 feet east of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road. In addition, four approximately 54-foot-high buildings would be located directly east of

the four-story building. Similar to the Proposed Project, the proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project would be expected to contribute to adverse aesthetics impacts as a result of the construction of multiple buildings that would block views of surrounding scenic vistas and adversely affect the visual character and quality of the site and surrounding area.

The Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan, also listed in Table 4-3 under “Relevant Plans,” is also relevant to the cumulative analysis for aesthetics impacts since this plan is for recreational improvements extending along the concrete-lined Arroyo Simi channel, which is located adjacent to the project site along its northern border (see Figure 5.1-10 for an existing view of the channel adjacent to the project site). The recreational improvements under the Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan would contribute positively to scenic vistas, and visual character and quality, by including additional landscaping and recreational amenities along the channel. The benefits of the Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan on aesthetics would be outweighed by the potential adverse impacts on aesthetic resources that may be caused by the Smith Road Movie Studio Project, resulting in cumulatively significant aesthetics impacts.

Figure 5.1-10. Existing View of the Arroyo Simi Valley Channel from the Project Site



Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Proposed Project’s Contribution. The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact on a scenic vista and would degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views and its surroundings, resulting in significant impacts without mitigation. The Proposed Project’s incremental contribution would result in cumulatively significant aesthetics impacts prior to mitigation. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1, requiring development of a Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan, would reduce the Proposed Project’s contribution to cumulatively significant aesthetics impacts to the extent feasible. The size and height of the elevated pad and tank would still contribute considerably to cumulatively significant impacts on scenic vistas, and visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

AES-1 Coordination with the City of Simi Valley Planning Division. See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact AES-1.

Significance After Mitigation

Even with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on scenic vistas, and visual character and quality, would be cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 4: Would the Proposed Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Impact C-AES-2: The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts related to light and glare would not be cumulatively considerable with the implementation of standard best management practices.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. The proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project and Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan would introduce additional sources of light or glare, which could be cumulatively significant. With the design features discussed under Impact AES-3, the Proposed Project's contribution to light or glare impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable. Specifically, the proposed tank would be coated with non-reflective paint and the exterior lighting would be designed such that it is shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined, is directed downward and away from adjoining properties and public rights-of-way, does not blink or flash, and does not cause illumination in adjacent residential communities to exceed 0.5 foot-candle. The Proposed Project, in combination with cumulative projects, would not result in a significant cumulative impact related to light or glare.

5.2. Air Quality

This section describes existing criteria air pollutant standards, sensitive receptors near the project site, applicable regulations associated with air quality, thresholds for significant air quality impacts, and the air pollutant emissions that may result in short-term construction-related impacts and long-term operational impacts.

5.2.1. Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project would be located on a 4-acre site in the City of Simi Valley in the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB), which covers San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD) monitors and regulates the local air quality in Ventura County and develops the corresponding Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), described in Section 5.2.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*.

Health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) have been established pursuant to the Clean Air Act by the United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); and California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) have been established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), as shown in Table 5.2-1. The USEPA, CARB, and local air districts classify an area as attainment, unclassified, or nonattainment depending on whether the monitored ambient air quality data shows compliance, insufficient data available, or non-compliance with the ambient air quality standards, respectively. The NAAQS and CAAQS attainment status for Ventura County is shown in Table 5.2-1.

Table 5.2-1. Ambient Air Quality Standards and Attainment Status for Ventura County

Criteria Pollutants	Averaging Time	CAAQS	State Designation	NAAQS	Federal Designation
Ozone (O ₃)	1-hour	0.090 ppm (180 µg/m ³)	Nonattainment	—	—
	8-hour	0.070 ppm (137 µg/m ³)	Nonattainment	0.070 ppm (137 µg/m ³)	Serious nonattainment
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	1-hour	0.18 ppm (339 µg/m ³)	Attainment	100 ppb (188 µg/m ³)	Unclassified/attainment
	Annual	0.030 ppm (57 µg/m ³)	Attainment	0.53 ppm (100 µg/m ³)	Unclassified/attainment
Sulfur dioxide (SO ₂)	1-hour	0.25 ppm (655 µg/m ³)	Attainment	75 ppb (196 µg/m ³)	Unclassified/attainment
	24-hour	0.04 ppm (105 µg/m ³)	Attainment	—	—
Carbon monoxide (CO)	1-hour	20 ppm (23 mg/m ³)	Attainment	35 ppm (40 mg/m ³)	Unclassified/attainment
	8-hour	9.0 ppm (10 mg/m ³)	Attainment	9 ppm (10 mg/m ³)	Unclassified/attainment
Respirable particulate matter (PM ₁₀)	24-hour	50 µg/m ³	Nonattainment	150 µg/m ³	Unclassified
	Annual	20 µg/m ³	Nonattainment	—	—
Fine particulate matter (PM _{2.5})	24-hour	—	—	35 µg/m ³	Unclassified/attainment
	Annual	12 µg/m ³	Attainment	12.0 µg/m ³	
Lead	30-day	1.5 µg/m ³	Attainment	—	Unclassified/attainment
	3-month average	—	—	0.15 µg/m ³	

Criteria Pollutants	Averaging Time	CAAQS	State Designation	NAAQS	Federal Designation
Sulfate	24-hour	25 µg/m ³	Attainment	No national standards	No national standards
Hydrogen sulfide (H ₂ S)	1-hour	0.03 ppm (42 µg/m ³)	Unclassified		
Vinyl chloride	24-hour	0.01 ppm (26 µg/m ³)	Attainment		

CAAQS = California Ambient Air Quality Standards; NAAQS = National Ambient Air Quality Standards; ppm = parts per million; µg/m³ = micrograms per cubic meter; ppb = parts per billion; mg/m³ = milligrams per cubic meter
 Sources: CARB, 2023 and 2024; USEPA, 2024

Health Effects of Criteria Air Pollutants

As shown in Table 5.2-1, the nonattainment designations for ozone (O₃) and respirable particulate matter (PM₁₀) indicate that the project area experiences the adverse human health effects of exposure to criteria air pollutants. Because the CAAQS are set at levels to adequately protect the health of the public, and air quality management agencies have determined that concentrations of O₃ and PM₁₀ for the project area are at nonattainment levels for the CAAQS, adverse health effects associated with exposure to O₃ and PM₁₀ are part of the baseline and existing ambient air quality conditions. The following information summarizes the adverse health effects of the criteria air pollutants (CARB, 2025):

- **Ozone.** O₃ is not directly emitted from stationary or mobile sources but is formed as the result of chemical reactions in the atmosphere between directly emitted volatile organic compounds (VOC) including reactive organic gases (ROG), with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) in the presence of sunlight. High O₃ concentrations can aggravate respiratory and cardio-vascular diseases, irritate eyes, impair cardiopulmonary function, and cause damage to vegetation.
- **Respirable Particulate Matter and Fine Particulate Matter.** PM₁₀ can be emitted directly or can be formed many miles downwind from emission sources when various precursor pollutants interact in the atmosphere. Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is mainly derived from either the combustion of materials, or from precursor gases (sulfur oxides [SO_x], ROG, and NO_x) through complex reactions in the atmosphere. PM_{2.5} consists mostly of sulfates, nitrates, ammonium, elemental carbon, and a small portion of organic and inorganic compounds. PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} can aggravate respiratory diseases, result in reduced lung function, increase and cause chest discomfort, and reduce visibility.
- **Carbon Monoxide.** The highest concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO) result when low wind speeds and a stable atmosphere trap the pollution emitted at or near ground level. These conditions are frequently in the wintertime late in the afternoon, persist during the night and may extend one or two hours after sunrise. In the project area, CO concentrations are well below the State and federal ambient air quality standards. CO can reduce tolerance from exercise, cause impairment of mental function, harm fetal development, aggravate some heart diseases (angina), and cause death at high levels of exposure.
- **Nitrogen Dioxide.** Approximately 90 percent of the NO_x emitted from combustion sources is nitric oxide (NO), while the balance is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). NO is oxidized in the atmosphere to NO₂, but some level of photochemical activity is needed for this conversion. The highest concentrations of NO₂ are typically in the fall and winter. The winter atmospheric conditions can trap emissions near the ground level, but lacking substantial photochemical activity (sunlight), NO₂ levels are relatively low. In the summer, the conversion rates of NO to NO₂ are high, but the relatively high temperatures and windy conditions disperse pollutants, preventing the accumulation of NO₂. NO₂ concentrations in the project area are well below the State and federal ambient air quality standards. NO₂ can aggravate respiratory diseases, reduce visibility, reduce plant growth, and form acid rain.

- **Sulfur Dioxide.** SO₂ is typically emitted as a result of the combustion of a fuel containing sulfur. Overall SO₂ emissions are limited due to the reduced number of major stationary sources and the regulatory limits on motor vehicle fuel sulfur content. The SO₂ concentrations in the project area are well below the State and federal ambient air quality standards. SO₂ can irritate the upper respiratory tract and be injurious to lung tissue causing reduced lung function, including asthma and emphysema. SO₂ can cause plant leaves to yellow and be destructive to metals, textiles, leather, finishes, and coatings. SO₂ can also limit visibility.

Sensitive Receptors

The impact of air pollutant emissions on sensitive members of the population is a special concern. Sensitive receptor groups include children and infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and the acutely and chronically ill. According to VCAPCD California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidance in the most current *Ventura County Air Quality Assessment Guidelines* (VCAPCD, 2003, p. A-7), sensitive receptor locations include schools, hospitals, and daycare centers. No schools, hospitals, or daycare centers are known to occur within 1 mile of the project site. For the purposes of this analysis, the nearest sensitive receptors to the project site are considered to be nearby residential and recreational uses, which include single-family residential areas to the north (approximately 890 feet from the site center); a recreational vehicle (RV) park (Rocky Trailer Village) and multi-family residential areas to the northwest (approximately 860 feet from the site center); single-family residential areas to the east (approximately 680 feet from the site center); and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and a mobile home development to the west and southwest (approximately 850 feet from the site center). Rocky Pointe Natural Park is located approximately 410 feet from the site center and the RV park is located approximately 475 feet from the site center.

The single-family residence immediately east of the project site is within an area zoned “Residential Low Density” (RL) under the City of Simi Valley General Plan (City of Simi Valley, 2025). Rocky Pointe Natural Park is designated “Residential Medium Density” (RM), and the RV park and mobile home development to the north and west, respectively, are zoned “Mobile Home” (MH).

5.2.2. Regulatory Setting

5.2.2.1. Federal Regulations

National Ambient Air Quality Standards

An air quality standard defines the maximum amount of a pollutant averaged over a specified period of time that can be present in outdoor air with an adequate margin of safety. NAAQS are established to protect the health of the most sensitive groups in our communities (referred to as "sensitive receptors"). These standards identify levels of air quality for six “criteria” pollutants: O₃, CO, NO₂, SO₂, particulate matter (both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and lead (Pb). The standards are considered to be the maximum concentration of ambient (background) air pollutants determined safe (within an adequate margin of safety) to protect the public health and welfare.

Clean Air Act

The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and its subsequent amendments form the basis for the nation’s air pollution control effort. The 1990 amendments to the CAA identify specific emission-reduction goals for areas not meeting the NAAQS. These amendments require a demonstration of reasonable further progress toward attainment and incorporation of additional sanctions for failure to attain or meet interim milestones. The CAA mandates that the states submit and implement a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for local areas not meeting those standards. The plans must include pollution control measures that demonstrate how the standards will be met.

Hazardous Air Pollutants

The Control of Hazardous Air Pollutants from Mobile Sources rule is intended to reduce hazardous air pollutants from mobile source air toxics. The rule limits the benzene content of gasoline and reduces emissions from passenger vehicles and gas cans. The USEPA estimates that in 2030, this rule would reduce total emissions of mobile source air toxics by 330,000 tons and ROG emissions (precursors to O₃ and PM_{2.5}) by more than 1 million tons. USEPA has not established NAAQS or provided ambient standards for hazardous air pollutants (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 59, 80, 85, and 86).

United States Environmental Protection Agency

The USEPA is responsible for setting and enforcing the NAAQS for atmospheric pollutants. This agency regulates emission sources that are under the exclusive authority of the federal government, such as aircraft, ships, and certain locomotives. The USEPA also maintains jurisdiction over emissions sources outside State waters (outer continental shelf) and establishes various emissions standards for vehicles sold in states other than California. As part of its enforcement responsibilities, the USEPA requires each state with federal nonattainment areas to prepare and submit a SIP that demonstrates the means to attain the federal standards. The SIP must integrate federal, State, and local plan components and regulations to identify specific measures to reduce pollution, using a combination of performance standards and market-based programs within the timeframe identified in the SIP.

5.2.2.2. State Regulations

California Clean Air Act

In 1988, the State legislature adopted the California Clean Air Act (CCAA), which established a statewide air pollution control program. The CCAA requires that all air districts in the State endeavor to meet the CAAQS by the earliest practical date. Unlike the federal CAA, the CCAA does not set precise attainment deadlines. Instead, the CCAA establishes increasingly stringent requirements for areas that will require more time to achieve the standards. The CAAQS are generally more stringent than the NAAQS and incorporate additional standards for sulfates, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), visibility-reducing particles, and vinyl chloride (California Health and Safety Code [HSC] Section 39600 et seq.).

CARB, a branch of the California Environmental Protection Agency, oversees air quality planning and control throughout California. CARB is primarily responsible for implementation of the CCAA, responding to the federal CAA requirements, and regulating emissions from motor vehicles and consumer products within the State. CARB also sets health-based air quality standards and control measures for toxic air contaminants (TAC). CARB and local air districts bear responsibility for meeting the CAAQS, which are to be achieved through district-level AQMPs incorporated into the SIP. In California, the USEPA has delegated authority to prepare SIPs to CARB, which has in turn delegated that authority to individual air districts.

The CCAA substantially adds to the authority and responsibilities of air districts. The CCAA designates air districts as lead air quality planning agencies, requires air districts to prepare air quality plans, and grants air districts authority to implement transportation control measures. The CCAA also emphasizes the control of indirect and area-wide sources of air pollutant emissions. The CCAA gives local air pollution control districts explicit authority to regulate indirect sources of air pollution and to establish traffic control measures.

In 2020, the EPA and the NHTSA approved the Trump administration's SAFE Vehicles Rule Part One and Two, which revoked California's authority to set its own GHG emissions standards and set ZEV mandates in California, and sought to reduce fuel economy standards. However, in March 2022, EPA reinstated California's authority under the Clean Air Act to implement its own GHG emission standards and ZEV sales mandate. EPA's action concludes its reconsideration of the 2019 SAFE-1 rule by finding that the actions

taken under the previous administration as a part of SAFE-1 were decided in error and are now entirely rescinded.

However, in 2025 the President of the United States signed an executive order, *Unleashing American Energy*, which directed the USEPA to eliminate the social cost of carbon calculation from any federal permitting or regulatory decision and submit recommendations on the legality and continued applicability of the 2009 endangerment finding, among other directives (The White House, 2025). On July 29, 2025, the USEPA released its proposal to rescind the 2009 endangerment finding and repeal all GHG emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines pursuant to CAA section 202(a) (USEPA, 2025). The proposed rule would remove GHG-related provisions from 40 CFR part 600 without affecting provisions related to CAFE standards and fuel economy labeling. (Vol. 90 Federal Register, No. 146, 36288.)

In May 2025, the U.S. Senate approved several bills under the Congressional Review Act which purported to rescind California's Clean Air Act waiver which allows California to regulate fuel economy. (H.J.Res. 87, H.J.Res. 88, H.J.Res. 89.) However, the U.S. Senate Parliamentarian and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded that that the bills were illegal (GAO, 2025; United States Senate, 2025). Consequently, California filed a lawsuit challenging the revocations. (See *State of California et al v. U.S.A et al.* (2025) N.D. Cal Case No. 25-CV-04966 challenging disapproval of California's Clean Air Act waivers which allowed California to set its own vehicular fuel economy standards) (Office of the Attorney General, 2025).

Furthermore, it is legally infeasible for individual cities, counties, and most state agencies to regulate fuel economy standards. 42 U.S.C. Section 7543(a) states: "No state or any political subdivision therefore shall adopt or attempt to enforce any standard relating to the control of emissions from new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle engines subject to this part."

CARB In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation

The regulations for in-use off-road diesel equipment are designed to reduce NO_x and diesel particulate matter (DPM) from existing fleets of equipment, such as those used for cargo handling and construction. Depending on the size of the fleet, the owner would need to ensure that the average emissions performance of the fleet meets certain statewide standards. In lieu of improving the emissions performance of the fleet, electric systems can be installed to replace diesel equipment in the fleet average calculations. Presently, all equipment owners are subject to a five-minute idling restriction in the rule (13 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 10, § 2449).

CARB Off-Road Mobile Sources Emission Reduction Program

The CCAA mandates that CARB achieve the maximum degree of emission reductions from all off-road mobile sources to attain the CAAQS. Off-road mobile sources include cargo handling and construction equipment. The earliest (Tier 1) standards for large compression-ignition engines used in off-road mobile sources became effective in California in 1996. Since then, the Tier 3 standards for large compression-ignition engines used in off-road mobile sources went into effect in California for most engine classes in 2006. In a 2004 rulemaking, the USEPA established a phase-in of Tier 4 standards for certain "nonroad" engines beginning in 2008, and the Tier 4 or Tier 4 Interim (4i) standards apply to all off-road diesel engines model year 2012 or newer. These standards and standards applicable to fleets that are already in-use address emissions of NO_x and PM from diesel combustion.

Toxic Air Containment Identification and Control Act and Hot Spots Act

California regulates TACs (equivalent to the federal hazardous air pollutants) primarily through the TAC Identification and Control Act (California HSC § 39650 et seq.) and the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act of 1987 (Hot Spots Act, California HSC § 44300 et seq.). The Act created California's

program to reduce exposure to air toxics. The Hot Spots Act supplements the TAC Identification and Control Act by requiring a statewide air toxics inventory, notification of people exposed to a significant health risk, and facility plans to reduce these risks. CARB has classified DPM from diesel-fueled engines as a TAC. CARB has adopted regulations to reduce emissions from both on-road and off-road heavy-duty diesel vehicles. These regulations, known as Airborne Toxic Control Measures, reduce the idling of school buses and other commercial vehicles, control DPM, and limit the emissions of ocean-going vessels in California waters. The regulations also include measures to control emissions of air toxics from stationary sources.

5.2.2.3. Regional and Local Regulations

Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for six counties including Ventura County where the project area is located. As the designated MPO, SCAG researches and plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality. Although SCAG is not an air quality management agency, the agency is responsible for several air quality planning issues. Specifically, as the designated MPO for the Southern California region, SCAG is responsible for providing current population, employment, travel, and congestion projections for regional air quality planning efforts. With respect to air quality, SCAG has prepared the 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) as the basis for the transportation components of the VCAPCD AQMP utilized in the preparation of air quality forecasts and the consistency analysis included in the AQMP (SCAG, 2024).

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

In California, regional air pollution control districts have been established to oversee the attainment of air quality standards within air basins, as defined by the State. The districts have permitting authority over all stationary sources of air pollutants within their district boundaries, and act as the primary reviewer of environmental documents associated with air quality issues. The VCAPCD is the local air quality management agency. The local air quality management agency is required to monitor air pollutant levels to ensure that applicable air quality standards are met and, if they are not met, to develop strategies to meet the standards.

The VCAPCD's *Ventura County Air Quality Assessment Guidelines* (VCAPCD Guidelines) (VCAPCD, 2003) provides a framework and standardized methods for assessing air quality impacts of projects, as required by CEQA. Recommended significance criteria are included in the VCAPCD Guidelines for reactive organic compounds (ROC) and NO_x , the precursors to O_3 . The Ventura County Air Pollution Control Board determined that the exceedance of the specified thresholds for these pollutants would individually and cumulatively jeopardize attainment of the federal one-hour O_3 standard and would have a significant adverse impact on air quality in Ventura County. The thresholds include specific levels for the City of Simi Valley (13.7 tons per year of ROCs and NO_x).

2022 Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan

The Ventura County Air Pollution Control Board adopted the 2022 Ventura County AQMP to protect public health and agriculture from the adverse effects of air pollution by identifying air pollution problems and developing a comprehensive program to achieve and maintain State and federal air quality standards. To that end, pursuant to the federal CCA Amendments of 1990, the 2022 AQMP presents the following for Ventura County:

1. Strategy to attain the 2015 federal 8-hour O_3 standard;
2. Attainment demonstration for the federal 8-hour O_3 standard; and
3. Reasonable further progress demonstration for the federal 8-hour O_3 standard.

The AQMP presents Ventura County's strategy (including related mandated elements) to show steady progress toward attaining the 2015 federal 8-hour O₃ standard by that date (VCAPCD, 2022).

Local jurisdictions, such as the County of Ventura and the City of Simi Valley, have the shared responsibility to implement or facilitate some of the control measures of the AQMP. Transportation-related strategies for congestion management, low emission vehicle infrastructure, and transit accessibility and non-transportation-related strategies for energy conservation can be encouraged by policies of local governments.

The VCAPCD has primary responsibility for regulating stationary sources, including some area sources, within Ventura County. Stationary sources are sources of air pollution that do not move, such as power plants, turbines, refineries, oil field facilities, manufacturing facilities, industrial engines, water heaters, furnaces, and gasoline stations. Stationary source control measures provide the framework for VCAPCD rules that reduce harmful air pollutant emissions. VCAPCD rules implement AQMP control measures and apply to many activities including power generation, gasoline storage and dispensing, petroleum storage and processing, paint and solvent use, dry cleaning, printing, asphalt paving, and fuel combustion in industrial engines and turbines.

VCAPCD Regulations and Rules

VCAPCD implements rules and regulations for air pollutant emissions that may be generated by various uses and activities. The rules and regulations detail pollution-reduction measures that must be implemented during project activities in Ventura County. Rules and regulations applicable to the Proposed Project include the following:

- **Rule 50 – Opacity.** This rule prohibits discharge into the atmosphere from any single source of emissions of air contaminants for a period or periods aggregating more than three minutes in any one hour that are darker than a reference chart or that would obscure a person's view to the same level.
- **Rule 51 – Nuisance.** This rule implements the California Health and Safety Code nuisance provisions identified above and prohibits any person from discharging air contaminants or any other material from a source that would cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or the public or that endangers the comfort, health, safety, or repose to any considerable number of persons or the public.
- **Rule 55 – Fugitive Dust.** This rule applies to any operation, disturbed surface area, or man-made condition capable of generating fugitive dust, including bulk material handling, earthmoving, construction, demolition, storage piles, unpaved roads, and track-out. The rule prohibits fugitive dust beyond 50 feet from the property line and opacity that is greater than 20 percent. The rule also includes requirements related to minimizing track-out that extends more than 25 feet offsite unless the identified control measures are implemented. Fugitive dust measures would be implemented during construction of the project components.
- **Rule 55.1 – Paved Roads and Public Unpaved Roads.** Fugitive dust generators are required to begin removal of visible roadway accumulation within 72 hours of any written notification from VCAPCD. The use of blowers is expressly prohibited. This rule also requires controls to limit the amount of dust from any construction activity or any earthmoving activity on a public unpaved road.

Simi Valley Municipal Code

Chapter 9-39 (*Transportation Demand Management*) of the Simi Valley Municipal Code is intended to promote trip reduction and travel demand measures in the City of Simi Valley, which in turn would serve to reduce air quality impacts from new development within the City. Chapter 9-39 sets forth standards

and requirements for new commercial and residential development that would promote alternative transportation methods and other strategies to improve both congestion and air quality.

Simi Valley General Plan

The Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update), Natural Resources Element, identifies goals and policies for improving air quality in Simi Valley and the air basin (City of Simi Valley, 2012). Because air quality goals can be achieved through a variety of land use, housing, and transportation strategies, several air quality-related policies are contained in other elements of the General Plan. The goals and policies are intended to improve local and regional air quality by reducing harmful emissions from both mobile and stationary sources and include such policies as encouraging new development contiguous with existing development, encouraging infill development on the valley floor, reducing vehicle trips through the use of transportation demand management programs, and promoting growth management through the Countywide Planning Program as well as the City's Managed Growth Plan (currently expired, but the principles of the Plan are still relevant).

5.2.3. Impact Analysis

5.2.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from the development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. The Proposed Project consists of the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall, approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank on a 35-foot-tall pad. The tank would provide a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 million gallons. While the Proposed Project would improve the reliability of the existing water supply system, the additional water storage capacity would not result in an increase in the overall supply of water delivered by the Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas).

Construction

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) is a computer model used in California to quantify emissions from land use projects. For the Proposed Project, air pollutant emissions would primarily result during the construction phase. CalEEMod was used to quantify the projected annual emissions that would result from project construction. CalEEMod requires inputs of various project data to quantify air pollutant emissions, including the construction schedule, types of construction equipment used, and various construction activities. Appendix C, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations, includes a summary of equipment and truck trips used to calculate construction emissions. The construction activities and the duration for each activity are also shown in Table 3-1 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*.

During construction, air pollutant emissions would result from the onsite use of various equipment during the 30- to 36-month construction period. Construction equipment could include a backhoe, dozer, loader, skip loader, generator, chainsaw, pump truck, concrete pump, crane, welding machine, scissor lift, sand blasting unit, compressor, dehumidifier unit with compressor, roller compactor, paving machine, concrete curbing machine, dump truck, utility truck, delivery truck (for concrete, rebar, formwork, and other materials), excavator, grader, and water truck. Table 5.8-9 in Chapter 5.8, *Noise*, includes a more detailed list of construction equipment that would be used during each construction phase.

Air pollutant emissions would also result from worker commutes and truck trips traveling to and from the project site, including medium-duty trucks delivering fuel, imported fill, and other materials, as well as occasional heavy trucks hauling tank components and potentially trucks hauling away materials from the earthen berm if not re-used onsite. Regarding worker commutes, an estimated maximum of 21 staff would be onsite during construction for a limited time, with a range of five to 21 staff, depending on the

work being conducted. The approximate truck roundtrips required during construction are shown in Table 3-2, which shows a maximum of 7,040 truck trips if the earthen berm would require offsite disposal. During the construction period, the Proposed Project would require 45 peak day haul truck roundtrips during construction.

For the purposes of this analysis, the construction start date was conservatively assumed to begin in late-2025 and conclude in mid- to late-2027. Depending on the anticipated construction start date, construction could extend to late-2029. Although construction would not begin in 2025, this start date is a conservative assumption and would provide a worst-case scenario of potential impacts, specifically in regard to air quality modeling, given that air quality emissions calculations typically reflect more stringent regulations in the future that would result in reduced emissions with a later construction start date.

Operation

The proposed tank and its associated infrastructure would not include any onsite equipment that would generate operational air pollutant emissions. Operational emissions would be limited to periodic vehicle visits, including a single weekly inspection vehicle, up to 14 vehicles during annual maintenance events, and up to seven vehicles during five-year detailed inspections. Because of the limited operations and maintenance activities required for the Proposed Project, operational impacts were analyzed qualitatively.

Significance Thresholds

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to air quality would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.
2. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment under an applicable Federal or State ambient air quality standard.
3. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.
4. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving all of these thresholds would be potentially significant (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.3, *Air Quality* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis). The following analysis addresses each of the threshold questions.

Threshold 1 Impact Criteria (Implementation of an Air Quality Plan)

This threshold requires an analysis of whether the Proposed Project would conflict with or obstruct implementation of an applicable air quality plan. The applicable air quality plan is the 2022 Ventura County AQMP, as discussed in Section 5.2.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*. The significance thresholds discussed under Threshold 2 below (City of Simi Valley specific VCAPCD annual significance thresholds) are used for determining whether the Proposed Project would delay the timely attainment of air quality standards or result in CAAQS and NAAQS violations.

According to the VCAPCD Guidelines (VCAPCD, 2003), project consistency with the AQMP can also be determined by comparing the actual population growth in the County with the projected growth rates used in the AQMP. A project could be found inconsistent with the applicable AQMP or attainment plan if the project could cause population and/or employment growth or growth in vehicle-miles traveled in excess of the growth forecasts included in the air quality attainment plan. Because the Proposed Project would not result in substantial population or employment growth, this impact is discussed qualitatively.

Threshold 2 Impact Criteria (Cumulatively Considerable Net Increase of Criteria Pollutants)

This threshold requires an analysis of whether the Proposed Project would cause a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment. The SCCAB is currently designated as nonattainment for O₃ and PM₁₀.

Recommended significance criteria are included in the VCAPCD Guidelines for ROCs and NO_x, the precursors to O₃ (VCAPCD, 2003). The Ventura County Air Pollution Control Board determined that the exceedance of the specified thresholds for these pollutants would individually and cumulatively jeopardize attainment of the federal one-hour O₃ standard, and would have a significant adverse impact on air quality in Ventura County.

For the purposes of this analysis, the City of Simi Valley specific VCAPCD annual significance thresholds are used to assess whether the Proposed Project would cause a considerable net increase in O₃. Per the VCAPCD Guidelines, construction-related emissions in the City of Simi Valley would be considered to be significant if estimates of NO_x and ROC emissions from the heavy-duty construction equipment exceed the 13.7 tons per year threshold. Because the VCAPCD Guidelines do not provide thresholds for criteria pollutants other than ROCs and NO_x, project-related PM₁₀ emissions are discussed qualitatively.

Threshold 3 (Exposure of Sensitive Receptors) and Threshold 4 (Other Emissions, Such as Odors) Impact Criteria

Because the Proposed Project would include typical construction activities and limited operational and maintenance activities, as described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, these impacts are assessed qualitatively.

5.2.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Impact AQ-1: The Proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. The project site is located within the SCCAB and is under the jurisdiction of the VCAPCD, which is the local agency responsible for administration and enforcement of air quality regulations for the area. A significant impact would result if the Proposed Project would result in an increase in the frequency or severity of existing air quality violations or cause or contribute to new violations or delay the timely attainment of air quality standards or the interim emissions reductions specified in the 2022 Ventura County AQMP. CAAQS and NAAQS violations would result from the Proposed Project if significance thresholds were exceeded. As evaluated, the Proposed Project would not exceed applicable regional significance thresholds (see Impact AQ-2).

According to the VCAPCD Guidelines (VCAPCD, 2003), project consistency with the AQMP can be also determined by comparing the actual population growth in the County with the projected growth rates used in the AQMP. A project could be found inconsistent with the applicable AQMP or attainment plan if the project could cause population and/or employment growth or growth in vehicle-miles traveled in excess of the growth forecasts included in the air quality attainment plan. During operation, the Proposed Project would not require any in-person staff to remain on the project site, as SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) controls would be used to remotely operate the tank, reducing vehicle trips required for routine maintenance and inspections. The Proposed Project would not require any new permanent full- or part-time staff after construction is complete. All construction activities would comply with applicable VCAPCD rules, regulations, and programs, and the Proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment under an applicable Federal or State ambient air quality standard?

Impact AQ-2: The Proposed Project would not exceed applicable thresholds for criteria pollutants for which the project region is nonattainment and impacts would be less than significant.

Construction

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Construction of the Proposed Project is anticipated to be completed over approximately 30 to 36 months and would involve the elements described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. The construction-related increase in air pollutant emissions would result from the Proposed Project in the regional context of the SCCAB that is currently designated as nonattainment for O₃ and PM₁₀. Construction-phase activities include mobilizing vehicles and equipment for construction, crews, and materials. The site work would include site preparation and minor vegetation clearing, rough and fine grading, including earthwork to construct the elevated pad and over-excavation to build a stabilized soil-cement foundation, constructing the water tank, coating and painting the steel tank, installing the pipeline and utility connections, paving the access road, and restoring and landscaping the site. These activities during construction would generate emissions at the work area and along the roadways used to access the site.

Construction emissions would be caused by exhaust from vehicles and equipment and fugitive dust from ground-disturbing activities. The mobile sources would be a mix of diesel-powered off-road construction equipment types, including cranes, dozers, graders, excavators, loaders, and tractors. On-road mobile sources would include diesel- and gasoline-powered vehicles and trucks for deliveries of concrete, water, and other materials. Appendix C, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations, includes a summary of equipment and truck trips used to calculate construction emissions presented in Table 5.2-2.

Table 5.2-2. Annual Construction Emissions

	ROCs	NO _x	CO	SO _x	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}
Construction Emissions						
Annual Emissions (tons/year)	0.59	4.55	4.70	0.01	5.88	1.60
Threshold (tons/year)	13.7	13.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Exceeds VCAPCD Thresholds?	No	No	NA	NA	NA	NA

ROC = reactive organic compound; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; CO = carbon monoxide; SO_x = sulfur oxides; PM₁₀ = respirable particulate matter; PM_{2.5} = fine particulate matter; tons/year = tons per year; VCAPCD = Ventura County Air Pollution Control District; NA = not applicable

Notes: Per the VCAPCD Air Quality Assessment Guidelines (2003), construction-related emissions in the City of Simi Valley would be considered to be significant if estimates of NO_x and ROC emissions from the heavy-duty construction equipment exceed the 13.7 tons per year threshold. The VCAPCD Air Quality Assessment Guidelines (2003) do not provide thresholds for criteria pollutants other than ROCs and NO_x. Other criteria pollutant emissions are listed for reference and the significance is listed as NA (not applicable).

Table 5.2-2 shows that total project construction emissions would be below the City of Simi Valley specific VCAPCD annual significance thresholds for ROCs and NO_x. Because project construction emissions would not exceed the VCAPCD annual significance thresholds, the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of O₃.

Because the City of Simi Valley-specific VCAPCD annual significance thresholds do not include a threshold for PM₁₀, the Proposed Project’s impacts related to this criteria pollutant are addressed qualitatively. The primary sources of PM₁₀ during construction are fugitive dust and DPM; fugitive dust is generated from soil disturbance and vehicular traffic on paved and unpaved roads, whereas DPM is generated by exhaust from diesel engines powering heavy-duty equipment, machinery, and vehicles. The Proposed Project would comply with VCAPCD Rule 55 (Fugitive Dust) and Rule 55.1 (Paved Roads and Public Unpaved

Roads), discussed in Section 5.2.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*, which would substantially reduce fugitive dust emissions during construction. In addition, construction equipment using diesel fuel would be subject to the CARB In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation (see Section 5.2.2.2, *State Regulations*) and other controls including limitations on idling. As a result, the amount of DPM that would be emitted from project activities would be minimal.

In summary, the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment, which are O₃ and PM₁₀. Impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Operation of the project site would not include any mechanical equipment or stationary sources that would generate emissions. Operational activities at the project site would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Anticipated operational activities that would produce emissions would be limited to periodic vehicle visits, including a single weekly inspection vehicle, up to 14 vehicles during annual maintenance events, and up to seven vehicles during five-year detailed inspections. Operation phase emissions would be minimal and far less than construction phase emissions. The Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant during operation and impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 3: Would the Proposed Project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Impact AQ-3: The Proposed Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. As described previously, the nearest sensitive receptors to the project site include single-family residential areas to the north (approximately 890 feet from the site center); a recreational vehicle (RV) park (Rocky Trailer Village) and multi-family residential areas to the northwest (approximately 860 feet from the site center); single-family residential areas to the east (approximately 680 feet from the site center); and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and a mobile home development to the west and southwest (approximately 850 feet from the site center). Rocky Pointe Natural Park is located approximately 410 feet from the site center and the RV park is located approximately 475 feet from the site center. The nearest sensitive receptor is a residence immediately east of the project site, approximately 680 feet from the site center. TAC emissions, primarily in the form of DPM, would result from the Proposed Project during the short-term construction period and intermittently during the limited operations and maintenance activities required for the Proposed Project.

Construction would temporarily bring construction equipment onto the project site and onto roadways accessing the site. Construction activities, including earthwork, pipeline and utility connections, and construction of the elevated pad, retaining wall, tank, tank appurtenances, and access road, may expose sensitive receptors to air pollution in the form of combustion exhaust and fugitive dust, as well as involve sources of DPM and emissions from welding and coatings/paint that could expose sensitive receptors to increased levels of TACs. These TACs are routinely found in the exhaust of gasoline-powered motor vehicles and of diesel-fueled equipment typically used in the construction industry. Construction emissions would be limited in duration, which would minimize the potential that any receptor would be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The Proposed Project would include pipes, inlets and

outlets, and the storage tank which do not emit air pollution. Therefore, the Project would not involve any permanent or stationary sources of air pollution such as backup generators during operation.

Construction equipment using diesel fuel would be subject to the CARB In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation and other controls including limitations on idling. As a result, the amount of DPM that would be emitted from project activities would be minimal. The potential exposure of sensitive receptors to DPM emissions would be further limited, as these emissions would primarily result from the Proposed Project during the short-term construction period. The Proposed Project's construction and operational TAC emissions would not result in the exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 4: Would the Proposed Project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Impact AQ-4: The Proposed Project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. The Proposed Project would not create objectionable odors during construction, such as those from ammonia, chlorine, and hydrogen sulfide. Diesel equipment exhaust could be a potential source of odor during construction activities, although only for people immediately adjacent to the source. The odor from construction equipment is similar to on-road vehicles and would not be expected to be much different from typical conditions in the area. These odors would not affect a substantial number of people, would only result from the Proposed Project during short periods of time, and would be consistent with general construction activities that are not out of the ordinary.

Land uses generally associated with emissions leading to adverse odors typically include agricultural uses, landfills, composting operations, wastewater treatment plants, and food and chemical processing plants. The Proposed Project does not include any land uses typically associated with objectionable odor emissions. Operational activities involving diesel-powered equipment and vehicles would not be a source of notable odors because of the mandatory use of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. Project-related activities would comply with VCAPCD rules and regulations and would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people. Impacts would be less than significant.

Coccidioidomycosis, often referred to as Valley Fever, is a fungal infection that most commonly affects people who live in hot dry areas with alkaline soil and varies with the season. This disease, which affects both humans and animals, is caused by inhalation of arthroconidia (spores) of the fungus *Coccidioides immitis*. *Coccidioides immitis* spores are found in the top few inches of soil and the existence of the fungus in most soil areas is temporary. The *cocci* fungus lives as a saprophyte (an organism, especially a fungus or bacterium, which grows on and derives its nourishment from dead or decaying organic matter) in dry, alkaline soil. When weather and moisture conditions are favorable, the fungus "blooms" and forms many tiny spores that lie dormant in the soil until they are stirred up by wind, vehicles, excavation, or other ground-disturbing activities and become airborne. Agricultural workers, construction workers, and other people who are outdoors and are exposed to wind, dust, and disturbed topsoil are at an elevated risk of contracting Valley Fever (CDC, 2020). About 60 percent of people who come in contact with the Valley Fever fungus will not get sick, and most people who get Valley Fever fully recover (CDC, 2020).

The Proposed Project is in an area designated as suspected endemic for Valley Fever by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020). Annual case reports for 2016 through 2022 from the California Department of Public Health for Ventura County shows incident rates for Valley Fever ranging from 7.6 to 43.9 cases per year per 100,000 population (CDPH, 2022). The Ventura County Valley Fever incident rates have remained well below the worst-case annual rates for other counties within the State during this period, with the maximum incident rates occurring within the San Luis Obispo, Kern, or Kings

Counties, where during some years these maximum incident rates have been over 300 cases per 100,000 population (CDPH, 2022).

By generating fugitive dust, the Proposed Project could cause exposure to the *Coccidioides immitis* spores if those spores are present in areas being disturbed or in areas where travel occurs on unpaved surfaces. Exposure to the *Coccidioides immitis* spores could cause individuals nearby to contract the disease. The primary way to avoid Valley Fever is to limit exposure to the *Coccidioides immitis* spores. Controlling fugitive dust is an effective strategy for preventing spores from becoming airborne. Standard construction measures incorporated as part of the Proposed Project would reduce fugitive dust generation, which would further minimize the potential risk of infection (see Section 3.4, *Project Construction*, for a list of construction best management practices). Construction of the Proposed Project would not substantially increase the risk to public health above existing background levels and impacts related to Valley Fever would be less than significant.

5.2.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic extent of the cumulative analysis for air quality includes the SCCAB. This geographic scope of analysis is appropriate because the majority of emissions from the Proposed Project, in combination with the cumulative projects' emissions, would be confined to this region. Table 4-3 in Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*, identifies the locations of each cumulative project in the vicinity of the Proposed Project.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

This cumulative impact analysis is applicable to Threshold 1 (implementation of an air quality plan), Threshold 2 (cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants), Threshold 3 (exposure of sensitive receptors), and Threshold 4 (other emissions, such as odors), as provided above in Section 5.2.3.1, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds*.

Impact C-AQ-1: The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant air quality impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. As identified in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), cumulative projects that are within the geographic extent for air quality include Projects #1 through 20. Emissions from cumulative projects would contribute to cumulatively significant air quality impacts when cumulative projects would result in emissions concurrent with those of the Proposed Project and near sensitive receptors. The potential for cumulatively significant air quality impacts would be greatest for any sensitive receptors located in close proximity to two or more work sites that are active at the same time.

The proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3) would be located to the south of the project site across Smith Road. Based on a discussion with the City of Simi Valley Department of Environmental Services (Z. Chaparyan, personal communication, July 10, 2025), the Smith Road Movie Studio Project is currently under planning review and has not yet received discretionary approval. The proposed Movie Studio would be included as part of a Specific Plan that would guide long-term development and is expected to require a separate environmental review process similar to this one. The proposed Movie Studio Project would consist of a 12-acre movie studio campus, including eight new 20,000-square-foot sound stages, supported by an 80,000-square-foot, four-story building for a mill shop, storage areas, and general production offices (City of Simi Valley, 2024).

Three residential parcels to the east of the Smith Road Tank project site would also be converted into a parking lot under the Movie Studio Project (City of Simi Valley, 2024). In April 2024, the applicant for the

Movie Studio Project requested a zone change of those three parcels from Residential Low Density to Light Industrial. The nearest sensitive receptor, a single-family residence to the east of the project site, would no longer be considered a sensitive receptor, as this residence would be occupied by a parking lot if the Movie Studio Project were implemented. For the purposes of this analysis, this residence is considered the nearest sensitive receptor as a worst-case scenario in the event that the land use remains residential.

Given the scope and planning status of the Movie Studio Project, a reasonable assumption is that this Movie Studio Project's approval and implementation could extend over several years. This cumulative analysis incorporates the conservative assumption that the Proposed Project would be constructed at the same time as the Smith Road Movie Studio Project. If the construction of both projects overlap, the Proposed Project's air pollutant emissions, in combination with the Movie Studio Project, could be cumulatively significant, depending on the extent of construction and types of equipment that would be required to construct the Movie Studio Project.

The analyses of Threshold 2 (cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants) and Threshold 3 (exposure of sensitive receptors) are inherently cumulative analyses. The analyses consider the cumulative effects of past projects as contributing to existing nonattainment conditions and address whether the Proposed Project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard.

The SCCAB is currently in nonattainment for O₃ and PM₁₀. The VCAPCD provides project-level thresholds of significance in its CEQA Guidelines for pollutants in which the SCCAB is in nonattainment (VCAPCD, 2003). As discussed under Impact AQ-2, construction emissions from the Proposed Project would not exceed the City of Simi Valley specific VCAPCD thresholds and the incremental contribution of the Proposed Project's construction emissions to cumulatively significant air quality impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Additionally, since construction-related emissions would be below VCAPCD thresholds and would be short-term, the rate of these emissions would not likely cause substantial localized pollutant concentrations for sensitive receptors. Because the duration of exposure at any one sensitive receptor would be limited, the potential for the incremental contribution of emissions from the Proposed Project that any one sensitive receptor would be exposed to would be less than cumulatively considerable.

Since the Proposed Project would comply with all applicable federal, State, and local regulations, and would not include any notable sources of odors, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant air quality impacts under Threshold 1 (implementation of an air quality plan) and Threshold 4 (other emissions, such as odors) would also be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant.

Summary of Significance Findings

Project Impacts. The Proposed Project's air quality impacts would be less than significant.

Cumulative Impacts. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant air quality impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable.

5.3. Biological Resources

This section evaluates the impacts of the Proposed Project on biological resources within the project site and its vicinity. The discussion identifies and describes existing natural habitats; plant and animal species, including any special-status species; and sensitive ecological communities. The analysis considers both direct and indirect effects on these resources, in compliance with applicable federal, State, and local regulations. The goal is to ensure that biological diversity is preserved and that any adverse impacts are appropriately mitigated through avoidance, minimization, or compensatory measures. The environmental setting includes a detailed description of the baseline conditions within the project site and surrounding vicinity. Existing laws and regulations relevant to biological resources are then described, followed by the impact analysis for biological resources.

5.3.1. Environmental Setting

Regional Climate

The project site is in Simi Valley, California, and experiences a Mediterranean climate characterized by hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Average high temperatures during the summer months (June through September) range from 82 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to 87°F, with August typically being the hottest month. Winters, spanning from November to March, are mild, with average highs between 60°F and 68°F and lows around 46°F, with December being the coolest month (Weather Atlas, 2025). Rainfall is concentrated in the winter months, while summers are generally dry. The average annual rainfall in the project site is approximately 12.17 inches (30.9 centimeters). The region also experiences low humidity and occasional Santa Ana winds, particularly in the fall. This climate supports native vegetation, such as chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and oak woodlands, which are adapted to the seasonal patterns of dryness and rainfall.

Ecological Setting

The project vicinity (the area immediately surrounding the project site) is located in the southeast portion of Simi Valley, California within rolling foothills and valley terrain near the Santa Susana Mountains, with a mix of natural and disturbed habitats. Historically, the area supported coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and oak woodland communities, all adapted to the region's Mediterranean climate of hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Although portions of the project site are now disturbed, patches of ruderal vegetation, coast live oak woodland, and proximity to open space areas provide limited ecological value, particularly for resident and migratory wildlife, such as birds, bats, and small mammals. The project site is located outside of designated Essential Habitat Connectivity Areas, but may still function as secondary habitat or a movement corridor for wildlife in the region. The surrounding topography, soil types, and vegetation patterns influence habitat suitability and species presence across the site.

Methodologies

This section outlines the methodologies used to identify biological resources known to occur or with the potential to occur within the Survey Area, which includes the project site and a 50-foot buffer. The 50-foot survey buffer was selected because it provides adequate coverage to detect special-status plants, wildlife, and sensitive vegetation communities that may not occur directly within the project footprint but could move into or be affected by project activities. This buffer ensures that adjacent habitats and mobile species are considered, reducing the risk of incidental impacts.

The assessment incorporated both desktop and field-based approaches. The desktop review included an evaluation of existing online databases and published literature to identify previously documented biological resources. Field investigations were conducted to verify and supplement desktop findings and included vegetation mapping, general botanical surveys, focused wildlife surveys, and habitat assessments.

Literature Review

Special-status biological resources known to occur, or with the potential to occur, within the project site were identified through a comprehensive review of existing literature and data sources. This review included analysis of United States (U.S.) Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps, aerial imagery, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) (CDFW, 2025a). To ensure a thorough assessment, a 10-mile buffer was applied around the project site. This buffer encompassed all or portions of the Piru, Newhall, Simi, Santa Susana, Oat Mountain, Thousand Oaks, Calabasas, and Canoga Park USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles.

The following databases and literature sources were reviewed to identify potential biological resources:

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation Program (IPaC) (USFWS, 2025a)
- CDFW's CNDDDB (CDFW, 2025a)
- State and Federally Listed Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California (CDFW, 2025b)
- State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California (CDFW, 2025c)
- CDFW Special Animals List (CDFW, 2025d)
- CDFW Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List (CDFW, 2025e)
- CDFW Sensitive Natural Communities (CDFW, 2025f)
- California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CNPS, 2025)
- Ventura County 2024-2025 Locally Important Species Final Plant List (County of Ventura, 2025b)
- Ventura County 2024-2025 Locally Important Species Final Animal List (County of Ventura, 2025a)
- Consortium of California Herbaria (CCH, 2025)
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird Hotspot Database (eBird, 2025)
- Citizen science inventory, iNaturalist (iNaturalist, 2025)

The CNDDDB results and the IPaC Resource List are provided as Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases. Several special-status species identified during the literature review only occur in specialized native habitats absent from the project site or occur at higher or lower elevations. These plants and animals are listed in Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases, but are not addressed further in this section.

Field Surveys

A field survey was conducted on August 29, 2024, by Aspen Environmental Group biologist Brady Daniels. The survey covered the 4-acre project site using loose transects spaced approximately 33 feet (10 meters) apart to ensure thorough coverage of the area. Mr. Daniels used binoculars to assist in the detection and identification of avian and other wildlife species.

All plant and animal species observed during the survey were recorded in field notes, and the locations of any special-status species were documented using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit and tablet. The survey was conducted under suitable weather conditions and followed standard biological assessment protocols to evaluate the presence or potential for the occurrence of special-status species and sensitive habitats.

Vegetation Mapping

Mapping was conducted to identify vegetation communities within the Survey Area. Vegetation maps were prepared by drawing tentative vegetation type boundaries onto high-resolution aerial images in the field on tablets using a sub-meter Arrow GPS unit and an iPad with the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) Field Maps application. Vegetation descriptions and names are based on nomenclature used in *A Manual of California Vegetation* (MCV) (Sawyer et al., 2009). Some areas, such as locations dominated by disturbed habitat or locations that support little to no vegetation, do not fall within

communities described under the MCV. The minimum mapping unit used for the Proposed Project was 0.01 acre.

Botanical Surveys

Botanical surveys were performed to ensure adequate blooming periods for most plant species occurring in the Survey Area. Surveys were largely conducted according to the most recent CDFW survey protocols (CDFW, 2018) and were: (a) floristic in nature; (b) consistent with conservation ethics; (c) inclusive of all habitat types within the Survey Area; and (d) well-documented by voucher specimens to be deposited at the California Botanic Garden (formerly Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden). Surveys were conducted later in the growing season to ensure adequate detection of target plant species. While some species may not have been in bloom, a qualified botanist capable of identifying non-flowering or desiccated individuals based on vegetative characteristics conducted the survey. Many of the target species are wetland-associated, late-flowering, or otherwise conspicuous, making them detectable during this period.

Annual rainfall in the 2023/2024 water year (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024) was above average and adequate for rare annuals to have germinated and for perennial herbs to have flowered. All accessible areas were surveyed. Surveys were not conducted where the terrain posed a safety risk to the biologist. The Survey Area was inspected by walking loosely spaced parallel transects with particular attention given to areas of suitable habitat for special-status plants. All plant species observed were identified in the field or collected for later identification. Plants were identified using keys, descriptions, and illustrations in Baldwin et al. (2012), the Jepson Flora project (2025), and other regional references.

General Site Observations

Based on observations during the field survey, the project site is highly disturbed and crisscrossed with dirt access roads, bike jumps, an outdoor storage yard, and a large berm near the western and southern edges. The Arroyo Simi channel, a concrete-lined drainage channel owned by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. During the site visit on August 29, 2024, coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) and a small patch of mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) were observed. The coast live oak woodland habitat on the site offers potentially important habitat for local wildlife, and numerous birds were detected (e.g., acorn woodpecker, bushtit, northern mockingbird) as well as tracks and other signs of various mammals (e.g., coyotes, opossum, skunks) during the site visit. The project site supports large populations of California ground squirrels and numerous animals and burrows. A variety of bird species could nest within the project site.

Vegetation Communities

Vegetation mapping was completed for the project site in August 2024. Vegetation was mapped according to names and descriptions in *A Manual of California Vegetation* (Sawyer et al., 2009) and the CDFW sensitivity ranking is also noted below. A total of three vegetation communities were identified in the Survey Area. One additional “other cover type,” disturbed/developed, was also mapped. Vegetation types present in the project site are described below and are also summarized in Table 5.3-1 and shown on Figure 5.3-1. No sensitive vegetation communities occur within or adjacent to the project site.

Table 5.3-1. Vegetation and Land Cover within the Project Area

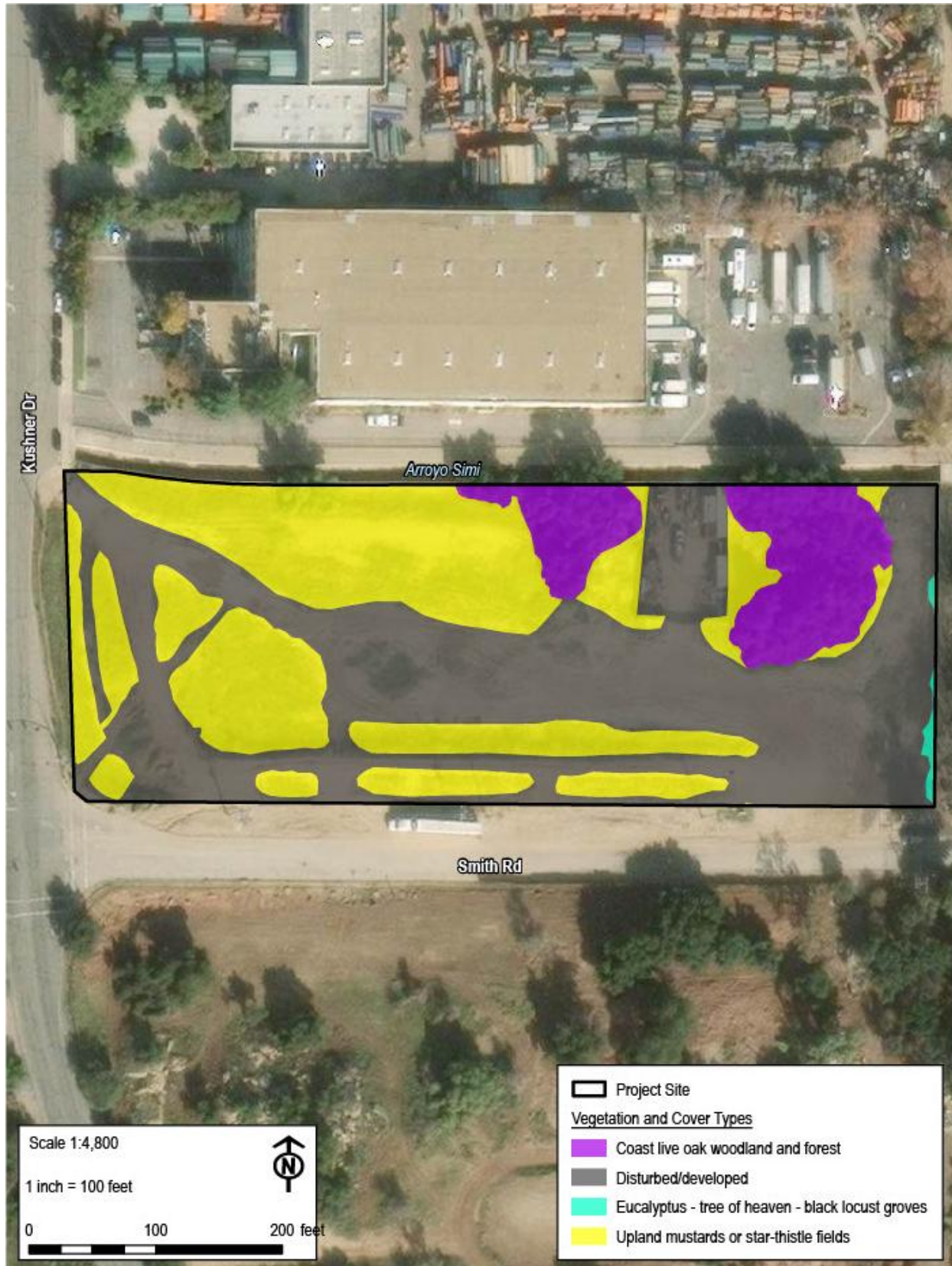
Cover Type	Area (Acres)
Vegetation Communities	
Coast live oak woodland and forest (<i>Quercus agrifolia</i> Forest & Woodland Alliance)	0.46
Upland mustards or star-thistle fields (<i>Brassica nigra</i> - <i>Centaurea (solstitialis, melitensis)</i> Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance)	1.50
Eucalyptus - tree of heaven - black locust groves (<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp. - <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> - <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> Woodland Semi-Natural Alliance)	0.02
Other Land Cover Types	
Disturbed/Developed	2.00
Total:	3.98

Coast live oak woodland and forest (*Quercus agrifolia* Forest & Woodland Alliance). Coast live oak woodland and forest typically occurs along canyon bottoms, slopes, and flats, where soils are deep, sandy or loamy, and rich in organic matter. This community is generally found at elevations up to 3,900 feet. Within the Survey Area, coast live oak woodland and forest is present along the north side of the project site, adjacent to the concrete-lined Arroyo Simi channel (see Figure 5.3-1). This community is dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), with an understory primarily composed of leaf litter and non-native annual grasses. According to the CDFW, this vegetation community has a State rank of S4 (apparently secure, meaning the community is considered uncommon but not rare in the State) and is not recognized as a sensitive natural community (CDFW, 2025f).

Upland mustards or star-thistle fields (*Brassica nigra* - *Centaurea [solstitialis, melitensis]* Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance). Upland mustard or star-thistle fields typically occur in fallow fields, rangelands, grasslands, roadsides, levee slopes, disturbed coastal scrub, riparian areas, cleared roadsides, and waste places. This community is generally found on clay to sandy loam soils and can occur at elevations up to 9,200 feet. Within the project site, this is the dominant vegetation community, occurring in scattered patches throughout the site. Vegetation in this community is primarily dominated by shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and red brome (*Bromus rubens*). Other species present include fountain grass (*Cenchrus setaceus*), Spanish clover (*Acmispon americanus*), and flax-leaved horseweed (*Erigeron bonariensis*). Scattered shrubs and trees are also present, including tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), and Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*). This vegetation community has no State rank and is not recognized as a sensitive natural community by the CDFW (CDFW, 2025f).

Eucalyptus - tree of heaven - black locust groves (*Eucalyptus* spp. - *Ailanthus altissima* - *Robinia pseudoacacia* Woodland Semi-Natural Alliance). Eucalyptus - tree of heaven - black locust groves are typically planted as groves and windbreaks; naturalized on uplands or bottomlands and adjacent to stream courses, lakes, or levees. Areas mapped as this cover type are typically associated with human development, agriculture, and landscaping. This community is generally found at elevations up to 6,200 feet. Within the Survey Area, this community is dominated by tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and is located along the eastern boundary near an adjacent residence. These trees extend over the property line and partially overhang into the project site. Eucalyptus - tree of heaven - black locust groves is not assigned a State rank and is not recognized as a sensitive natural community by the CDFW (CDFW, 2025f).

Figure 5.3-1. Project Site Vegetation Community and Land Cover Types



Other Cover Types

Developed. This land cover type was used to map all developed and disturbed areas within the project site. These areas include dirt access roads, bike jumps, and a small outdoor storage yard (approximately 100 feet by 70 feet) located in the northeastern portion of the site and enclosed by a chain-link fence. Vegetation in these areas is either absent or limited to a few scattered ruderal species, such as brome grasses (*Bromus* spp.), shortpod mustard, and redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). Developed and disturbed areas have no State rank and are not recognized as sensitive natural communities by the CDFW (CDFW, 2025f).

Common Wildlife

This section describes common terrestrial wildlife species that were either documented during field surveys or are expected to occur within the project site based on habitat suitability. The project site is highly disturbed, offering limited patches of developed or ruderal habitats. Despite the degraded condition of these habitats, they still contribute to regional biodiversity by supporting permanent and migratory wildlife through opportunities for residency, foraging, and breeding. The extent and quality of wildlife use are significantly affected by ongoing human activity within and around the project site, which limits the availability of undisturbed habitat and reduces overall wildlife presence.

Invertebrates

As in all ecological systems, invertebrates play a vital role in supporting ecosystem function and biodiversity. They serve as primary and secondary food sources for a wide range of vertebrate species, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Invertebrates also contribute to pollination, pest control, and nutrient cycling by consuming detritus and enriching soil health. These ecological services are essential for maintaining the structure and productivity of natural communities.

The vegetation communities within the project site provide a variety of habitat and microhabitat conditions that support a diverse assemblage of invertebrates, including insects and mollusks. Invertebrates expected to occur within the project site include the California gall wasp (*Andricus quercuscalifornicus*), western honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), seven-spotted lady beetle (*Coccinella septempunctata*), fiery skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*), white-lined sphinx moth (*Hyles lineata*), acmon blue (*Icaricia acmon*), large milkweed bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*), and checkered white (*Pontia protodice*) (iNaturalist, 2025). Documented gastropods in the vicinity include the garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*) and Draparnaud's glass snail (*Oxychilus draparnaudi*) (iNaturalist, 2025).

Fishes

No fish species occur within the project site or within the adjacent portion of the Arroyo Simi channel, as this section lacks suitable aquatic habitat, such as perennial flow, adequate depth, or water quality, to support fish populations. Downstream of the project site, where water conditions may be more stable or influenced by urban runoff and impoundments, several non-native warm-water fish species have been documented. These include channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), and largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) (iNaturalist, 2025). These species are commonly found in urbanized Southern California waterways where conditions support warm, slow-moving water.

Amphibians

Amphibians are highly dependent on aquatic environments to complete their life cycles. Breeding typically occurs in water bodies, such as streams, creeks, and pools, where larval and juvenile stages also develop. While some species remain in or near these aquatic habitats throughout their lives, others migrate to upland areas during non-breeding seasons. These upland habitats provide critical refugia, including underground burrows, logs, rock piles, and leaf litter, which offer protection and moisture. Certain amphibians

are known to undertake extensive dispersal movements to locate new breeding sites, highlighting the importance of maintaining habitat connectivity between aquatic and upland areas.

Amphibian species commonly observed in the region include western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*), black-bellied slender salamander (*Batrachoseps nigriventris*), and Pacific chorus frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) (iNaturalist, 2025).

Reptiles

The presence and diversity of reptile species in the project site are influenced by a combination of biotic and abiotic factors, including plant community composition, soil type, substrate, and the availability of refugia, such as rock piles, boulders, and natural debris. These elements are critical for the survival, thermoregulation, and reproductive success of many reptile species. While most reptiles are associated with upland habitats, several aquatic and semi-aquatic species also inhabit riparian zones, including areas adjacent to streams, creeks, and other water features. These species may utilize upland areas for hibernation, foraging, or dispersal between aquatic habitats.

Common reptile species documented in the region include southern alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*), California kingsnake (*Lampropeltis californiae*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), common side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), and western skink (*Plestiodon skiltonianus*) (iNaturalist, 2025).

Birds

Bird species utilize the habitats within the project site for a variety of activities, including breeding, foraging, and migration. Despite the disturbed condition of portions of the landscape, the area supports a diversity of nesting, roosting, and foraging opportunities for both resident and migratory birds.

More than 50 bird species have been documented in the vicinity of the project site (eBird, 2025). Commonly observed species include California scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), California towhee (*Melospiza crissalis*), bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), and white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) (eBird, 2025).

Mammals

The distribution of mammals within the project site is influenced by several environmental factors, including access to water, topographic variation, and structural habitat features, such as rock piles, vegetation, and stream terraces. Upland habitats, such as oak woodlands, offer important shelter and burrowing opportunities for both arboreal and fossorial mammals.

Common small mammals observed or expected in the vicinity include the California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*), and desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*). Medium-sized mammals include striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), while larger species such as coyote (*Canis latrans*) have also been documented in the area (iNaturalist, 2025). Several bat species, including the canyon bat (*Parastrellus hesperus*) and big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), are known to occur in the general region and may roost in existing structures or nearby natural habitats (iNaturalist, 2022).

Special-Status Species, Vegetation, and Habitat

This section summarizes the findings of the literature review and field surveys conducted within the defined Survey Area. Based on the results of these efforts, no sensitive vegetation communities were

identified within the Survey Area. Additionally, no special-status plant or wildlife species were observed or otherwise detected during the field surveys, and the project site lacks suitable habitat.

Tables 5.3-2 and 5.3-3 provide an overview of the known and potential occurrences of special-status plant and wildlife species documented in the region. Special-status species that were evaluated but determined to be unlikely to occur within the project site are listed in Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases.

Sensitive Natural Communities

CDFW defines sensitive vegetation communities as “communities that are of limited distribution state-wide or within a county or region and are often vulnerable to environmental effects of projects” (CDFW, 2018). CDFW identifies that “Natural Communities with ranks of S1-S3 are considered Sensitive Natural Communities to be addressed in the environmental review processes of CEQA and its equivalents.” S4 communities are defined as apparently secure, uncommon, but not rare in the State, with some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.

A review of the CNDDDB identified 12 sensitive natural communities within the vicinity of the project site (CDFW, 2025a). These communities represent ecologically significant habitats that may support a variety of native plant and wildlife species. The identified communities include California Walnut Woodland, Mainland Cherry Forest, Riversidian Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub, Southern California Threespine Stickleback Stream, Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, Southern Cottonwood Willow Riparian Forest, Southern Mixed Riparian Forest, Southern Riparian Scrub, Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland, Southern Willow Scrub, Valley Needlegrass Grassland, and Valley Oak Woodland. None of these sensitive natural communities were observed within the project site during field surveys or desktop analysis. No sensitive vegetation communities were identified within the project site during field surveys.

Special-Status Plants

All special-status plants known to occur in the region and associated with habitats similar to those found within the project site are addressed in Table 5.3-2. The table includes brief descriptions of each species’ habitat preferences, distribution, conservation status, and an assessment of their potential to occur on-site. Special-status plants that were evaluated but determined to be unlikely to occur within the project site are listed in Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases.

Table 5.3-2. Known and Potential Occurrence of Special-Status Plants within the Project Area

Scientific Name Common Name	Natural History & Habitat	Blooming Period	Status	Potential for Occurrence
<i>Astragalus pomonensis</i> Pomona locoweed	Perennial herb; shrubby, grassy, or disturbed areas below 3,900 feet elevation. Endemic to California and Baja California.	March to May	LIS	Low: Marginal habitat present. A recent iNaturalist record is located 5.7 miles east of the project site.
<i>Cardionema ramosissimum</i> Sand mat	Perennial herb; sandy beaches, hills, dunes, and bluff habitats below 1,300 feet elevation. Occurs in coastal areas from Washington to Mexico.	April to August	LIS	Low: Marginal habitat present. A recent iNaturalist record is located 9.9 miles west of the project site.
<i>Cryptantha sparsiflora</i> Few-flowered forget-me-not	Annual herb; open, dry, rocky sites within sparse grassland, chaparral, foothill woodland habitats about 1,000 to 4,300 feet elevations. Endemic to California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado.	April to May	LIS	Low: Marginal habitat present. A recent iNaturalist record is located 1.8 miles west of the project site.

Scientific Name Common Name	Natural History & Habitat	Blooming Period	Status	Potential for Occurrence
<i>Cucurbita palmata</i> Coyote melon	Perennial herb; sandy areas within coastal sage scrub, creosote bush scrub, and valley grassland habitats below 4,300 feet elevation. Occurs in California south to Arizona and northern Mexico.	April to September	LIS	Low: Marginal habitat present. A recent iNaturalist record is located 5.6 miles northwest of the project site.
<i>Deinandra minthornii</i> Santa Susana tarplant	Perennial shrub; rocky areas within chaparral and coastal scrub habitat about 920 to 2,495 feet elevation. Endemic to Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.	July to November	SR, 1B.2	Low: Marginal habitat present. A recent CNDDDB record is located 100 feet west of the project site.
<i>Horkelia cuneata</i> var. <i>puberula</i> Mesa horkelia	Perennial herb; gravelly or sandy areas within chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub habitats about 230 to 2,660 feet elevation. Endemic to southern California from San Luis Obispo to San Diego County.	February to July (September) ¹	1B.1	Low: Marginal habitat present. A historic CNDDDB record is located 7.6 miles south of the project site.
<i>Juglans californica</i> Southern California black walnut	Perennial tree; alluvial soils within chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, and riparian woodland habitats about 165 to 2,955 feet elevation. Endemic to central and southern California.	March to August	4.2	Low: Not observed during surveys. Multiple recent iNaturalist records are located within 1 mile of the project site.
<i>Lupinus paynei</i> Payne's bush lupine	Perennial shrub; sandy areas within coastal scrub, riparian scrub, and valley and foothill grassland habitats about 720 to 1,380 feet elevation. Endemic to Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.	March to April (May to July) ¹	1B.1	Low: Marginal habitat present. Multiple recent iNaturalist records are located within 3 miles of the project site.

1 – The months in parentheses indicate a secondary or occasional blooming period that takes place less consistently or under specific conditions (e.g., favorable weather, irrigation, or microclimate).

CNDDDB = California Natural Diversity Database

Source: CDFW, 2025a; CNPS, 2025

CONSERVATION STATUS:

State Designations (California Endangered Species Act, California Department of Fish and Wildlife):

SR – California Rare Species

California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) Designations:

According to the California Native Plant Society (<http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/ranking.php>), plants ranked as CRPR 1A, 1B, and 2 meet definitions as threatened or endangered and are eligible for State listing. That interpretation of the California Endangered Species Act is not in general use.

CRPR 1B = Rare or endangered in California and elsewhere

CRPR 4 = Limited Distribution (Watch List)

0.1 = Seriously threatened in California (over 80 percent of occurrences threatened / high degree and immediacy of threat)

0.2 = Fairly threatened in California (20 to 80 percent occurrences threatened)

Ventura County:

LIS = Ventura County Locally Important Species.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR DEFINITIONS:

Present: Taxon was observed within the project site during recent botanical surveys or population has been documented by CDFW, USFWS, or local experts.

High: Both a documented recent record (within 10 years) exists of the taxon within the project site or immediate vicinity (approximately 5 miles) and the environmental conditions (including soil type) associated with presence of the taxon occur within the project site.

Moderate: Both a documented recent record (within 10 years) exists of the taxon within the project site or the immediate vicinity (within approximately 10 miles) and the environmental conditions associated with taxa presence are marginal and/or

limited within the project site, or the project site is located within the known current distribution of the taxon and the environmental conditions (including soil type) associated with presence of the taxon occur within the project site.

Low: A historical record (over 10 years old) exists of the taxon within the project site or general vicinity (within approximately 10 miles) and the environmental conditions (including soil type) associated with the presence of the taxon are marginal and/or limited within the project site.

Not likely to occur: Typically or occasionally suitable habitat is not present and/or the project site is outside of the known geographic and/or elevation ranges of the species; no known records located within 10 miles of project site.

Listed Threatened or Endangered Plants

This section summarizes plant species reported from the region that are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and that are either known to occur or have potential to occur within the project site. Based on a review of relevant databases and the results of field surveys, no federally or State-listed threatened or endangered plant species are expected to occur within the project site. One plant species designated as State Rare under the California Native Plant Protection Act, Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), has been recently recorded within 100 feet of the project site in Rocky Pointe Natural Park. The project site lacks rock outcrops and chaparral and coastal scrub habitats in which the species typically occurs. The survey was conducted during Santa Susana tarplant's blooming period, and the species was not detected. Because the project site lacks suitable habitat, Santa Susana tarplant has a low potential to occur.

California Rare Plant Rank Plants

In addition to the federally and State-listed species regulations described above, the CDFW and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) maintain lists of plant species considered to be of conservation concern. These species are compiled in CDFW's "Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List" (CDFW, 2025b), commonly referred to as the "Special Plants List." This list includes species ranked by both CDFW and CNPS based on rarity, endemism, and threat levels.

Based on a review of relevant databases and the results of field surveys, no special-status plants are expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site.

Ventura County Locally Important Species

Ventura County recognizes certain plants as locally important due to their ecological, cultural, or conservation significance within the region, even if they are not formally listed under the federal or State endangered species acts. These plants may be rare, endemic to specific habitats, or play a critical role in supporting local biodiversity. Four Ventura County Locally Important plants are known from documented occurrences in the vicinity of the project site and were determined to have low potential to occur. These species include Pomona locoweed (*Astragalus pomonensis*), sand mat (*Cardionema ramosissimum*), few-flowered forget-me-not (*Cryptantha sparsiflora*), and coyote melon (*Cucurbita palmata*).

Special-Status Wildlife

All special-status wildlife occurring in the region in habitats like those found on the project site are addressed in Table 5.3-3, with brief descriptions of habitat and distribution, conservation status, and probability of occurrence on the site. Special-status species that were considered but were determined to be unlikely to occur in the project site are provided in Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases.

Table 5.3-3. Known and Potential Occurrence of Special-Status Wildlife within the Project Area

Scientific Name Common Name	Habitat	Status	Potential to Occur
Invertebrates			
<i>Bombus crotchii</i> Crotch's bumble bee	Occurs in open grassland and scrub habitats. This species is a ground nesting species. Food plant genera include Antirrhinum, Phacelia, Clarkia, Dendromecon, Eschscholzia, and Eriogonum. Occurs in coastal California east to the Sierra-Cascade crest and south into Mexico.	SCE	Moderate: Suitable habitat and floral resources are present within the project site. A recent iNaturalist record is located 2.7 miles west of the project site.
<i>Danaus plexippus</i> pop. 1 Monarch butterfly - California overwintering population	Roosts located in wind-protected tree groves (eucalyptus, Monterey pine, cypress), with nectar and water sources nearby. Closed-cone coniferous forest.	FPT	Overwintering Low: No suitable overwintering habitat is present. The nearest known site is located 8.7 miles east of the project site. Foraging Moderate: No milkweed observed in the project site. Milkweed is present 500 feet southwest of the project site. An individual monarch was observed 150 feet west of the project site.
Reptiles			
<i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i> Coast horned lizard	Species requires loose, fine soils with a high sand fraction, abundance of native ants or other insects, open areas with limited overstory for basking and areas with low, dense shrubs for refuge. Range is Pacific coast to the deserts and the Sierra Nevada, north to the Bay Area, and south into Baja California.	SSC	Low: Marginal habitat is present in the project site. Harvester ants have been identified within the project site. Recent iNaturalist records are present in the project vicinity.
Birds			
<i>Astur cooperii</i> Cooper's hawk	Species is most common in forests and woodland habitats but can be found nesting and hunting in suburban parks and neighborhoods; will nest in dense patches of large pines, oaks, or Douglas-firs.	WL	High: Suitable nesting habitat is present. Multiple recent eBird records are within 0.5 miles of the project site.
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Golden eagle	Nests in remote trees and cliffs, but will also use transmission line towers. Forages over shrublands and grasslands; breeds throughout western North America; and winters in the east coast.	FP, WL, BGPEA, BCC	Nesting Not Likely to Occur: No suitable nesting habitat is present. Foraging Low: Marginal foraging habitat is present. Multiple eBird records are within the project vicinity of individuals flying over.
<i>Athene cunicularia</i> Burrowing owl	Nests mainly in wildlife burrows, usually in open grassland or shrubland communities; forages in open habitats. Occurs in California through western United States and Mexico.	BCC, SCE, SSC	Low: Marginal habitat is present. Suitable burrows are present. Multiple recent eBird records are located 2.8 miles southeast of the project site.

Scientific Name	Habitat	Status	Potential to Occur
Mammals			
<i>Antrozous pallidus</i> Pallid bat	Desert, grassland, shrubland, woodland, forest; most common in open, dry habitats with rocky areas for roosting; very sensitive to disturbance of roosting sites.	SSC	Roosting Low: Marginal habitat is present for roosting. Foraging High: Suitable foraging habitat is present. A recent iNaturalist record is located 1.4 miles east of the project site.
<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i> Western mastiff bat	Lowlands (rare exceptions); central and southern California, southern Arizona, New Mexico, southwest Texas, northern Mexico; roost in deep rock crevices; forage over wide area.	SSC	Roosting Not Likely to Occur: No suitable habitat is present for roosting. Foraging Low: Suitable foraging habitat is present. An historic CNDDDB record is located 1.5 miles east of the project site.
<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i> Western small-footed myotis	Wide range of habitats but mostly arid wooded and brushy uplands near water; roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices; widespread distribution throughout California; feeds on a variety of flying insects.	SA	Roosting Not Likely to Occur: No suitable habitat is present for roosting. Foraging Low: Suitable foraging habitat is present. Historic records are located 8 miles south of the project site.

Sources: CDFW, 2025; iNaturalist, 2025; NatureServe, 2025; and eBird, 2025

STATUS DESIGNATIONS:

ESA (Federal Endangered Species Act):

- BCC = Birds of Conservation Concern
- FE = Federally endangered
- FT = Federally threatened
- FPT = Federally proposed as threatened
- DEL = Delisted

CESA (California Endangered Species Act):

- SE = State endangered
- ST = State threatened
- SC = State candidate for listing
- DEL = Delisted

USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service):

BGEPA = Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

CDFW (California Department of Fish and Wildlife):

- FP = Fully protected species
- SSC = Species of special concern
- SA = Special animal

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR DEFINITIONS:

The definitions provided below are general parameters used to establish a baseline potential for each species to occur. These may be slightly altered due to survey results, professional experience, and/or coordination with the applicable resource agencies.

Present: Observed within or near project site during 2023 and/or 2024 surveys.

High: Typically suitable habitat is present; project site is within known geographic and elevation ranges of species; and recent (within 10 years) record(s) located within 10 miles of project site.

Moderate: Occasionally suitable habitat is present; project site is within known geographic and elevation ranges of species; and recent (within 10 years) record(s) located within 10 miles of project site OR typically suitable habitat is present; project site is within geographic and elevation ranges of species; and somewhat recent (within 20 years) record(s) located within 10 miles of project site.

Low: Typically or occasionally suitable habitat is present; project site is outside of known geographic and/or elevation ranges; and recent (within 10 years) record(s) located within 10 miles of project site OR typically or occasionally suitable habitat is present; project site is within known geographic and elevation ranges; and recent (within 10 years) or somewhat recent (within 20 years) located within 10 miles of project site.

Not Likely to Occur: Typically or occasionally suitable habitat is not present and/or the project site is outside of the known geographic and/or elevation ranges of the species; no known records located within 10 miles of project site.

Listed Threatened or Endangered Wildlife

This section summarizes wildlife species reported from the region that are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA or the CESA and have potential to occur within the project site. Based on the results of the database review and field surveys, three species that are proposed for listing under the ESA and the CESA were identified as having potential to occur within the project site. These species are summarized below.

Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*). Crotch's bumble bee is currently a candidate for listing under the CESA. Crotch's bumble bee is a widespread secretive species known from more than two hundred locations over a broad geographic range (CDFW, 2025a). The species is typically found in openings in grassland and scrub habitats where the species burrows into the ground and lives in colonies. The species feeds on native plants, including milkweed, pincushion, lupine, phacelia, sage, snapdragon, clarkia, bush poppy, and buckwheat. Many of these food plants are present in the project site and in the surrounding habitats.

Although the project site is heavily developed, potentially suitable floral resources are present that may support foraging or nesting habitat for Crotch's bumble bee. A recent iNaturalist observation of this species was recorded approximately 2.7 miles west of the project site in Simi Valley. Based on the proximity to known occurrences and the presence of suitable habitat, Crotch's bumble bee is considered to have a moderate potential to occur within the project site.

Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus* pop. 1). The monarch butterfly is a federal Candidate for listing under the ESA and is a CDFW Special Animal. This taxon is not State-listed as threatened or endangered. The monarch butterfly requires roosting habitat in wind-protected tree groves (eucalyptus, Monterey pine, cypress), with nearby nectar and water sources. Winter roost sites extend along the coast from northern Mendocino to Baja California, Mexico. The larval host plants are milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.). In the western U.S., the widely distributed narrow-leaved milkweed (*A. fascicularis*) and showy milkweed (*A. speciosa*) are commonly used. Spring and summer breeding areas are found throughout most of California (except for the northwest), where milkweed and nectar plants are available. In southern California, breeding is generally in more coastal locations, but records exist in all non-desert areas.

No suitable habitat, including floral resources or overwintering sites, was observed within the project site for the monarch butterfly. The nearest known overwintering site is located approximately 8.7 miles east of the project site in O'Melveny Park. Monarch butterflies have been documented 150 feet west of the project site in Rocky Pointe Natural Park. Given the proximity to known occurrences and the species' migratory behavior, the monarch butterfly is considered to have a moderate potential to be present within the project site. The site is considered unlikely to support overwintering habitat for this species due to the absence of appropriate shelter and microclimatic conditions.

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Burrowing owl is a CDFW Species of Special Concern and is a USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern. As of October 2024, the western burrowing owl has been officially designated as a candidate species for listing under CESA by the California Fish and Game Commission. The species inhabits arid lands throughout much of the western U.S. and southern interior of western Canada (Poulin et al., 2020). In this portion of its range, some owls are migratory, while some are year-round residents. Burrowing owls prefer flat, open annual or perennial grassland or gentle slopes and sparse shrub or tree cover. They are routinely found in desert shrub communities, including those that are present along the pipeline route and in the surrounding area. Burrowing owls are unique among the North American owls in that they nest and roost in abandoned burrows, especially those created by ground squirrels and other wildlife. Burrowing owls have a strong affinity for previously occupied nesting and wintering habitats. Burrowing owls often return to burrows used in previous years, especially if they were successful at reproducing there in previous years (Gervais et al., 2008). The breeding season in southern California is generally from February to August with peak breeding activity from April through July (Poulin et al., 2020).

No burrowing owls or active burrows were observed during field surveys. The project site is highly disturbed and provides only marginal habitat for this species due to limited foraging opportunities, high levels of human disturbance, and increased predation risks from domestic animals and urban-associated predators. Suitable burrow sites are present throughout the area, which could potentially be used for nesting or roosting. While some suitable burrow sites for nesting and wintering are present in the area, these conditions greatly reduce the likelihood of nesting or roosting by burrowing owls. Multiple recent eBird records document burrowing owl observations approximately 2.8 miles southeast of the project site in the Chatsworth Nature Reserve. Although suitable burrow habitat is present on the project site and there are nearby records, the burrowing owl is considered to have a low potential to occur within the project site due to the disturbed and marginal habitat.

Species Protected Under the Federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) (16 United States Code [USC] 668 to 668d) prohibits take of bald eagles and golden eagles. The BGEPA defines “take” to include “pursuing, shooting, shooting at, poisoning, wounding, killing, capturing, trapping, collecting, molesting, and disturbing.” The USFWS further defines *disturb* as “to agitate or bother a bald eagle or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, (1) injury to an eagle, (2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or (3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior.” These species are further described in the following sections.

Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Golden eagle is federally protected under the BGEPA, a fully protected species in California, and a USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC). Golden eagles are year-round residents throughout most of their range in the western U.S. In the southwest, they are more common during winter when eagles that nest in Canada migrate south into the region. They breed from late January through August, mainly during late winter and early spring in the California deserts. In the desert, they generally nest in steep, rugged terrain, often on sites with overhanging ledges, cliffs, or large trees that are used as cover. Golden eagles are wide-ranging predators, especially outside of the nesting season, when they have no need to return daily to tend eggs or young at their nests. Foraging habitat consists of open terrain including grasslands, deserts, savanna, and early successional forest and shrubland habitats. They prey primarily on rabbits and rodents, but will take other mammals, birds, reptiles, and some carrion.

Golden eagle home ranges in the Mojave Desert range from 1.7 to 1,369 square miles, and average 119 square miles (Braham et al., 2015). In any given year, golden eagles may initiate nesting behavior at one nest, without any activity at the other nests. Eagles may complete breeding by laying eggs and raising chicks or may abandon the nest without successfully raising young. In any given year, all or most nests in a territory may be inactive, but eagles may return in future years to nest at previously inactive sites.

Golden eagles are known to occur throughout the region, with numerous documented occurrences within the vicinity of the project site. Although the project site lacks suitable nesting habitat and provides only marginal foraging habitat, golden eagles have been documented flying near the project site. Given the absence of suitable nesting habitat and limited foraging habitat, golden eagles are considered unlikely to nest within the project site. There is a low potential for the species to use the site for foraging.

CDFW Special-Status Wildlife

In addition to species listed or proposed for listing under the federal ESA or the CESA, the State of California recognizes additional non-listed special-status wildlife designations. These include species classified as CDFW Fully Protected species, Species of Special Concern, Watch List, and Special Animals. Two species were determined to have at least a moderate potential to occur based on habitat suitability and known regional occurrences. Descriptions of these species, including their status, habitat preferences, and potential for occurrence within the project site, are provided below.

Cooper's hawk (*Astur cooperii*). The Cooper's hawk is a CDFW watch list species. It is a medium-sized raptor and a year-round resident throughout much of California, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. The species primarily inhabits wooded habitats, such as riparian corridors, oak woodlands, and mixed coniferous forests, but has also adapted to urban parks and residential areas with mature trees. Nesting typically occurs in dense tree stands, often in riparian woodlands or second-growth forests, where nests are built 20 to 50 feet above ground in the main crotch of deciduous or coniferous trees. The breeding season in California extends from March through August, with peak activity between May and July.

Within the project site, large coast live oaks and trees of heaven provide suitable nesting habitat and the open area provides suitable foraging habitat. Multiple recent eBird observations have documented Cooper's hawks within 0.5 mile of the project site, indicating regular activity in the vicinity. Based on the presence of suitable nesting and foraging habitat, as well as the proximity to recent regional observations, Cooper's hawk has a high potential to occur within the project site, particularly during the breeding season.

Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*). The pallid bat is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. They occur in a variety of arid and semi-arid habitats, including deserts, grasslands, shrublands, and open woodlands (Barbour and Davis, 1969). The species is commonly associated with rocky outcrops, cliffs, and canyon walls that provide roosting sites, as well as human-made structures such as barns, bridges, and abandoned buildings. Roosts are typically located in dark, sheltered areas with minimal disturbance. This species primarily forages in open areas with sparse vegetation and appears to prefer the edges of woodlands and open areas. Roosting sites include rock crevices, mines, caves, tree hollows, buildings, bridges, and culverts (Hermanson and O'Shea, 1983). Proximity to water sources and low levels of human disturbance are important factors influencing habitat suitability.

No live pallid bats or active roost sites were observed during field surveys conducted within the project site. The site is highly disturbed, and the lack of natural features, such as rock crevices, large snags, or mature trees with cavities, makes roosting unlikely. The project site provides suitable foraging habitat, including open areas and insect-rich environments. A recent iNaturalist record of pallid bats was documented approximately 1.4 miles east of the project site in the Santa Susana Pass, indicating regional presence. Based on the availability of foraging habitat, proximity to known occurrences, and the limited potential for roosting features, the pallid bat is considered to have a low potential to roost and a high potential to forage within the project site.

USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern

A total of 17 birds identified as BCCs were identified in the USFWS IPaC search (Appendix D, Biological Resources Databases) and include Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*), Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*), Bullock's oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), California gull (*Larus californicus*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), Cassin's finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*), common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas sinuosa*), golden eagle, Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*), northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*), Nuttall's woodpecker (*Dryobates nuttallii*), oak titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*), Santa Barbara song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia graminea*), tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*), western gull (*Larus occidentalis*), western screech-owl (*Megascops kennicotti cardonensis*), and wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*).

Most native bird species, including their nests and eggs, are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 USC 703) and the California Fish and Game Code. Specifically, Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibit the take, possession, or destruction of birds, their nests, or eggs. These protections apply broadly, even to species that do not have additional special-status designations.

Within the vicinity of the project site, eBird data indicates that 48 bird species have been recorded. The site provides limited but suitable foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of protected bird species, as well as stopover habitat for migratory songbirds during seasonal movements. Habitat features that support avian use include coast live oak woodland and forest, ornamental vegetation, and open areas with scattered shrubs and perches, which offer foraging and nesting opportunities.

Designated Critical Habitat and Special Habitat Designations

No designated or proposed critical habitat for listed species occurs in the project site. Critical habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher is located 0.7 miles northeast of the project site.

Wildlife Corridors and Special Linkages

The ability for wildlife to move freely among populations and habitat areas is important to long-term genetic variation and demography. Fragmentation and isolation of natural habitat may cause loss of native species diversity in fragmented habitats. In the short term, wildlife movement may also be important to individual animals' abilities to occupy their home ranges, if their ranges extend across a potential movement barrier. These considerations are especially important for rare, threatened, or endangered species, and for wide-ranging species, such as large mammals, which exist in low population densities.

The California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project was commissioned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and CDFW to create a statewide assessment of essential habitat connectivity to be used for conservation and infrastructure planning (Caltrans and CDFW, 2010). One of its goals was to create the Essential Connectivity Map, which depicts large, relatively natural habitat blocks that support native biodiversity (natural landscape blocks) and areas essential for ecological connectivity between them (essential connectivity areas). This map does not reflect the needs of individual species but is based on overall biological connectivity and ecological integrity. A more detailed analysis is required to assess local and regional needs for connectivity and develop linkage designs based on the requirements of individual species (Caltrans and CDFW, 2010).

The Essential Connectivity Map (Caltrans and CDFW, 2010; CDFW, 2025g) identifies several natural landscape blocks within the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills that are important for maintaining regional wildlife movement and ecological connectivity. These landscape blocks are located outside the project site. Additionally, the project site lies beyond the boundaries of the broader California Essential Habitat Connectivity corridor, which facilitates terrestrial wildlife movement through the region (CDFW, 2025g).

Jurisdictional Features

No State or federally protected wetlands are present within the project site. The Arroyo Simi channel, located immediately north of the project site, is a concrete-lined flood control channel that lacks riparian vegetation and does not support wetland functions. Additionally, no natural water bodies or aquatic features are present within the boundaries of the project site.

5.3.2. Regulatory Setting

5.3.2.1. Federal Regulations

Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973

The federal ESA and implementing regulations, 16 USC 1531, et seq. and 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 17.1, et seq., impose regulations for protecting and managing federally listed Threatened or Endangered plants and animals and their designated critical habitats. The ESA defines an "Endangered species" as "any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range"

and a “Threatened species” as “any species which is likely to become an Endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.” The ESA also provides the framework for protection of “Candidate species,” species for which there is sufficient supporting scientific information for listing. The ESA identifies two classes of candidate species. The first class is composed of species that have been proposed for listing. The second class is composed of species with sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to list, but the listing process has not begun or is in a preliminary stage.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has regulatory authority over federally listed species. NMFS jurisdiction under the ESA is limited to the protection of marine mammals, fish, and anadromous fish; all other species are within USFWS jurisdiction. Under the ESA, a permit to “take” a listed species is required for any action that may harm an individual of that species. “Take” is defined as “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct” (16 USC 1532, 50 CFR 17.3). Under federal regulations, “take” is further defined to include habitat modification or degradation that would be expected to result in death or injury to listed wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Take of federally listed species may be authorized under Section 10(a) or Section 7 of the ESA. Section 10(a) allows USFWS or NMFS to permit the incidental take of listed species if the applicant submits a habitat conservation plan that meets statutory requirements including components to minimize and mitigate impacts associated with the take. The permit is known as an incidental take permit. Section 7 of the ESA requires all federal agencies to ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The MBTA (16 USC 703 to 711) protects migratory birds, including prohibiting the nonpermitted take of migratory birds, under the authority of the USFWS and CDFW. Over 800 species, including geese, ducks, shorebirds, raptors, songbirds, and many common species, are protected under the MBTA. The BGEPA (16 USC 668) prohibits the take or commerce of any part of these species. The USFWS administers both Acts and reviews federal agency actions that may affect species protected by the Acts.

5.3.2.2. State Regulations

California Endangered Species Act of 1984

The CESA and implementing regulations in California Fish and Game Code (CFG) Section 2050, et seq. declare that deserving plant or animal species be given protection by the State because they are of ecological, educational, historic, recreational, aesthetic, economic, and scientific value to the people of the State. CESA establishes that it is State policy to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance endangered species and their habitats. CESA includes regulations for the protection and management of plant and animal species listed as endangered or threatened or designated as candidates for such listing. Plants of California declared to be Endangered, Threatened, or Rare are listed within 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) 670.2. Animals of California declared to be Endangered or Threatened are listed at 14 CCR 670.5. 14 CCR 15000, et seq. describes the types and extent of information required to evaluate the effects of a project on biological resources of a project site.

Section 2081(b) and (c) of the CESA allows CDFW to issue an incidental take permit for a State-listed threatened and endangered species only if specific criteria are met. These criteria can be found in Title 14 CCR 783.4(a) and (b). No Section 2081(b) permit may authorize the take of “fully protected” species and “specified birds.” If a project is planned in an area where a species or specified bird occurs, an applicant must design the project to avoid all take; the CDFW cannot provide take authorization under CESA.

California Fish and Game Code

The CFGC provides specific protection and listing for several types of biological resources. The Legislature has designated a number of “fully protected species” (refer to CFGC § 3511 [birds], 4700 [mammals], 5050 [reptiles and amphibians], and 5515 [fish]). Fully protected species, or parts thereof, may not be taken or possessed at any time, and no provision of the CFGC or any other law may be construed to authorize the issuance of permits or licenses to take any fully protected species. No such permits or licenses heretofore issued may have any force or effect for any such purpose, except that the California Fish and Game Commission may authorize the collecting of such species for necessary scientific research. Legally imported and fully protected species or parts thereof may be possessed under a permit issued by CDFW. However, pursuant to Senate Bill 147, CDFW may issue incidental take permits under the CESA for fully protected species for qualifying infrastructure projects such as transportation, water resources, and wind and solar transmission, with the requirement to comply with standard CESA conditions including minimization, mitigation, and conservation standards.

CFGC Section 1602 requires a Streambed Alteration Agreement for any activity that may alter the bed and/or bank of a stream, river, or channel. Typical activities that require a Streambed Alteration Agreement include excavation or fill placed within a channel, vegetation clearing, structures for diversion of water, installation of culverts and bridge supports, cofferdams for construction dewatering, and bank reinforcement. CFGC Sections 1930 to 1940 designate Significant Natural Areas. These areas include refuges, natural sloughs, riparian areas, and vernal pools and significant wildlife habitats. An inventory of Significant Natural Areas is maintained by the CDFW Natural Heritage Division and is part of the CNDDDB. CFGC Section 2081(b) and (c) allow CDFW to issue an incidental take permit for a State-listed Threatened and Endangered species only if specific criteria are met. These criteria can be found in 14 CCR 783.4(a) and (b). CFGC Section 2081(b) permit may authorize the take of “fully protected” species and “specified birds.” If a project is planned in an area where a species or specified bird occurs, an applicant must design the project to avoid all take; the CDFW cannot provide take authorization under this act. CFGC Section 3503 prohibits taking, possessing, or needlessly destroying the nest of any bird, except as otherwise provided by applicable law. Additionally, CFGC Section 3503.5 makes it unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey); or to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest of any such bird, except as otherwise allowed by applicable law.

Native Plant Protection Act of 1977

The 1977 Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) is codified in CFGC Section 1900, et seq., and designates rare and endangered native plants and provides specific protection measures for identified populations. The NPPA directs CDFW to “preserve, protect, and enhance rare and endangered plants in this State.” The NPPA gives CDFW the power to designate native plants as Endangered or Rare, and to require permits for collecting, transporting, or selling such plants. In 1984, the CESA expanded on the original NPPA and enhanced legal protection for plants by creating the categories of Threatened and Endangered species. Plants that were listed as Endangered under the NPPA are protected as Endangered species under the CESA, but the CESA does not provide protection for species listed as Rare under the NPPA. Currently, 64 species, subspecies, and varieties of plants are protected and designated as Rare under the NPPA. A native plant is Rare when “although not presently threatened with extinction, it is in such small numbers throughout its range that it may become endangered if its present environment worsens.” The NPPA prohibits take of plants that are protected as Endangered or Rare, but includes some exceptions for agricultural and nursery operations, emergencies, changes in land use; and, after properly notifying CDFW, for vegetation removal from canals, roads, and other sites.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, “waters of the state” fall under the jurisdiction of the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The RWQCB must prepare and periodically update water quality control plans (basin plans). Each basin plan sets forth water quality standards for surface water and groundwater, as well as actions to control nonpoint and point sources of pollution to achieve and maintain these standards (California Water Code, Section 13000 to 16104). Projects that discharge waste to wetlands or waters of the State must meet waste discharge requirements of the RWQCB, which may be issued in addition to a water quality certification or waiver under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

Species of Special Concern

“Species of Special Concern” are broadly defined as animals not listed under the ESA or CESA, but which are nonetheless of concern to the CDFW because they are declining at a rate that could result in listing or historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist. This designation is intended to result in special consideration for these animals by the CDFW, land managers, consulting biologists, and others; and is intended to focus attention on the species to help avert the need for costly listing under the ESA and CESA and cumbersome recovery efforts that might ultimately be required. This designation is also intended to stimulate collection of additional information on the biology, distribution, and status of poorly known at-risk species, and focus research and management attention on them. Although these species generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under CEQA during project review (CEQA Guidelines, § 15063 and 15380).

Sensitive Vegetation Communities

Sensitive vegetation communities are natural communities and habitats that are either unique, of relatively limited distribution in the region, or of particularly high value to wildlife. These resources have been defined by federal, State, and local conservation plans, policies, and regulations. The CDFW ranks sensitive communities and has tracked the occurrences of some sensitive communities in its CNDDDB. Sensitive vegetation communities are also identified by the CDFW on its California Natural Communities List. Impacts on sensitive natural communities and habitats identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by federally or State agencies must be evaluated (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G).

5.3.2.3. Regional and Local Regulations

Simi Valley Urban Restriction Boundary

On November 3, 1998, the voters of Simi Valley adopted a City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) as part of Measure B, also known as the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) program. As it relates to biological resources, the CURB is intended to provide for the protection of existing agricultural, open-space, viewshed, and watershed lands surrounding the City, as well as the preservation of the unique character of the City and quality of life of City residents as it relates to the protection of a substantial amount of open-space, rural, and agricultural lands particularly outside of the City limits. The protection of such lands not only ensures the continued viability of agriculture but also protects the available water supply and contributes to flood control and the protection of wildlife, environmentally sensitive areas, and irreplaceable natural resources. Generally, the CURB line prevents urban-density development outside of its boundary line. Changes to the location of the CURB line require City voter approval (SOAR, 2018). The project site is not located in an area outside the CURB line and is not protected from urban-density development (the CURB line is located approximately 0.15 mile to the south of the project site).

Simi Valley Municipal Code

Chapter 9-32 (*Hillside Performance Standards*) of the Simi Valley Municipal Code implements the provisions of the City's General Plan as they relate to development in hillside areas for the protection of ridgelines, maintenance of open space, and retention of the scenic and recreational resources of the City. Section 9-32.110 (Grading Standards), Section 9-32.160 (Landscaping Standards), and Section 9-32.170 (Utilities and Sewer Facilities) include development standards that provide protections for biological resources. These standards promote the maintenance of undisturbed and sensitive habitats as open space, thereby reducing impacts on native vegetation and wildlife.

5.3.3. Impact Analysis

5.3.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. The Proposed Project's impacts are assessed based on how project activities would affect existing biological resources at the project site, which are described in Section 5.3.1, *Environmental Setting*.

Significance Thresholds

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to biological resources would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. 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 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
2. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in the City or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
3. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
4. 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.
5. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
6. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving Thresholds 2, 3, and 6 would not result from the Proposed Project (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.4, *Biological Resources* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis) The following analysis solely focuses on the remaining threshold questions.

5.3.3.2. Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project 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 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Impact BIO-1: The Proposed Project's impacts on special-status plants and wildlife that were determined to occur within the project site would be significant without mitigation but can be reduced so as not to cause substantial adverse effects on these species. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Special-status plants and wildlife that have potential to occur within the project site are listed in Tables 5.3-2 and 5.3-3 in Section 5.3.1, *Environmental Setting*. If present, special-status plants would be directly affected if the Proposed Project results in degradation of local soil conditions from increased erosion or if individual plants are destroyed or damaged from exposure to hazardous materials or excess dust. Indirect impacts would result from the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds that degrade habitat or result in the displacement of special-status plants.

The project site provides suitable refuge, foraging, breeding, and dispersal habitat for a variety of special-status wildlife. Although not documented at the project site, monarch butterfly has the potential to fly through the project site, but is not expected to forage or otherwise use the site due to lack of suitable habitat. Vegetation communities at the project site provide suitable foraging habitat for Crotch's bumble bee and special-status birds, such as Cooper's hawk. Native, nonnative, and disturbed habitat within and immediately adjacent (i.e., within 150 meters, consistent with the CDFW *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*) to the project site provide marginal habitat for breeding or overwintering burrowing owls (CDFW, 2012).

Operation of the Proposed Project would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would result in impacts on biological resources.

Direct impacts on special-status wildlife would result from project construction if individual animals are injured or killed from crushing, trampling, or entrapment or if eggs, nests, burrows, dens, or roosting sites are destroyed. Smaller, less mobile animals could also be trampled by foot traffic if present in work areas. Use of temporary site lighting would result in direct impacts if birds abandon or avoid nesting sites or suitable breeding territories due to excess illumination. Artificial light can change birds' perceptions of habitat quality, resulting in selection or avoidance of illuminated areas. Artificial light can reduce access to foraging areas for special-status bats.

Burrowing owls utilize small to mid-sized burrows for refuge, cover, nesting, and rearing of young. While these features may be present within the project site, the site provides marginal habitat for burrowing owls, and the species has a low potential to occur. Consequently, the project is unlikely to result in direct impacts on burrowing owls. Burrows or middens could potentially be used as nest sites for Crotch's bumble bee. Direct impacts could result from the proposed project if burrows or middens used by Crotch's bumblebee are destroyed or removed, resulting in the mortality of individuals or loss of nests, if present.

Construction and operational activities could generate elevated noise levels that result in direct and indirect impacts on wildlife. Direct impacts include temporary disturbance or displacement of sensitive species from project areas, interference with communication, and disruption of foraging or breeding activities caused by heavy equipment, vehicle operations, and other loud activities. Indirect impacts may

include long-term behavioral changes, such as avoidance of noisy areas, which can reduce habitat suitability and connectivity. These effects could be significant for species that rely on quiet, undisturbed conditions during critical life stages.

Improperly stored or used hazardous materials, such as petroleum products and concrete waste, would result in direct impacts on special-status wildlife if exposure results in injury or death, the degradation of adjacent aquatic habitat, or the abandonment of microsites, burrows, dens, or other habitat features.

The impacts described above, which include the loss of habitat, injury, mortality, disturbance, and the destruction of nests, eggs, burrows, and dens, would be considered substantial adverse effects on special-status plants and wildlife, which would be a significant impact without mitigation. The implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3 would lessen the impacts by requiring construction worker training, pre-construction surveys for special-status plants and wildlife within the project site, and measures to avoid and minimize impacts on wildlife species. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts on special-status plants and wildlife would be reduced or avoided so as not to cause substantial adverse effects on these species. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-1 Biological and Environmental Awareness Training (BEAT) Program. A project-specific BEAT program will be prepared to educate project personnel about the Proposed Project's sensitive biological resources. The BEAT must be completed prior to commencing work activities within any portion of the project site. The BEAT program shall consist of a training presentation with supporting written materials provided to all project personnel. The BEAT training shall include, at a minimum:

- An overview of the sensitive biological resources that are known or have the potential to occur in the project site and surrounding habitat. This shall include nesting birds, special-status plants and wildlife, and sensitive habitats.
- An overview of project plans, mitigation measures, and regulatory permit conditions and the consequences of non-compliance with these requirements.
- An overview of the federal and California Endangered Species Acts, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, pertinent Fish and Game Code sections, and other applicable regulatory requirements and the consequences of non-compliance with these requirements.
- Clear points of contact for biological monitors and construction personnel to ensure compliance with environmental documents and permit conditions. Workers with questions or concerns shall contact the qualified biologist, Calleguas Construction Inspector(s), or the Calleguas Project Manager. Contact information for these individuals shall be provided during the pre-construction meeting and posted at the construction site in a location accessible to all personnel.
- Project restrictions, such as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs) and setbacks from sensitive biological resources.
- Information on compliance with control of litter and micro trash, smoking restrictions, spill containment and clean up, and the implementation of Best Management Practices, including those required under the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).
- Explanation that wildlife must not be harmed or harassed, including procedures for abiding by project speed limits, covering pipes, and securing excavations as feasible.

- An overview of guidelines for dealing with injured or entrapped wildlife found on or near the project site (as specified in Mitigation Measure BIO-3).

All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer documenting they have attended the BEAT Program sensitivity training and understand the information presented to them. If new construction personnel are added to the project, the contractor shall confirm that new personnel received the BEAT Program sensitivity training before starting work. The subsequent training of personnel shall include a video recording of the initial training and/or the use of written materials rather than in-person training by a biologist.

The BEAT Program sensitivity training may be provided jointly with the Cultural and Archeological Resources Education (CARE) Program, if required for this project. If provided as a joint BEAT/CARE sensitivity training session, all requirements of both programs will be explicitly addressed.

BIO-2 Pre-Construction Surveys for Special-Status Plants and Wildlife. Within seven days prior to initial clearing and grubbing of vegetation, a qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction survey for special-status plants and wildlife species within the project site. If any special-status species are observed, they will be avoided or relocated by a qualified biologist to suitable habitat outside of the impact area prior to the start of ground disturbing activities. The biological monitor will remain on-site during initial vegetation clearing and grading to relocate any special-status species from the impact area.

BIO-3 Wildlife Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures. The following measures shall be implemented during all project construction and applicable operations activities to avoid or minimize impacts on wildlife resources:

- No project-related pedestrian, vehicle, and equipment traffic shall be permitted outside of defined work area boundaries.
- Night lighting, when in use, shall be designed, installed, and maintained to prevent side casting of light towards surrounding wildlife habitat, as feasible.
- Any soil bonding and weighting agents used for dust suppression on unpaved surfaces shall be non-toxic to plants and wildlife.
- To minimize disturbance to wildlife in surrounding habitats, unnecessary noise (e.g., loud radios, vehicle horns) shall be avoided when possible. All equipment shall be maintained in good working order with functional mufflers and noise suppression devices. Where feasible, temporary or permanent noise barriers such as sound-absorbing materials or earthen berms shall be installed to reduce noise propagation into adjacent habitats. A noise monitoring program shall be implemented to ensure compliance with established thresholds and to allow operational adjustments if special-status species are nesting or breeding within the Project site or immediate vicinity.
- Potable and non-potable water sources, such as water buffalos and water truck tanks, shall be covered or otherwise secured to prevent animals (including birds) from entering. Water applied for dust abatement shall use the minimal amount needed to meet safety and air quality standards. Water sources (e.g., hydrants, J-stands) shall be checked periodically by biological monitors to ensure they are not creating open water sources due to leaking or consistently overfilling trucks.
- All trash, micro trash, and food-related waste shall be contained in vehicles or covered trash containers and removed from the site regularly.

- Workers shall not feed wildlife.
- Project-related excavations shall be secured to prevent wildlife entry and entrapment. Holes and trenches shall be backfilled, securely covered, or fenced. Excavations that cannot be fully secured shall be inspected by the Calleguas Construction Inspector(s) for trapped wildlife at the beginning of each work day, routinely throughout the day, and at the end of each workday.
- All pipes or other construction materials or supplies will be covered or capped in storage or laydown areas. No pipes or tubing will be left open either temporarily or permanently, except during use or installation. Any construction pipe, culvert, or other hollow materials will be inspected for wildlife before the materials are moved, buried, or capped.
- Dead animals of non-special-status species found within the project site shall be reported to the appropriate local animal control agency within 24 hours. An on-call biologist will be available to confirm whether the species has special status, if necessary. Construction personnel shall safely move the carcass out of the road or work areas as needed. Dead animals of special-status species found in the project site shall be reported to CDFW and/or United States Fish and Wildlife Service within 24 hours and the carcass handled as directed by the regulatory authority.
- If any injured or trapped wildlife is encountered during construction or maintenance activities, the contractor shall immediately notify the Calleguas Construction Inspector(s). An on-call biologist shall be available to provide guidance or assistance as needed. The biologist will relocate uninjured animals as needed. If the animal appears injured, the biologist will assess the animal's condition and, if viable for rehabilitation, coordinate with an appropriate wildlife rehabilitation center or veterinarian approved by CDFW. All incidents shall be recorded and included in the compliance report submitted to the lead agency and CDFW. If an animal is entrapped or entangled, a qualified biologist shall attempt to free the animal, or work with construction personnel to free the animal. If the qualified biologist cannot free the animal or if the animal is too large or dangerous to handle, Calleguas shall promptly contact and coordinate with local animal control, CDFW, or other qualified parties to obtain assistance as soon as possible.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3, which include specific pre-construction surveys for special-status wildlife, including Crotch's bumble bee, monarch, burrowing owl, Cooper's hawk, and special-status bats, and implementation of general wildlife protection measures, among other requirements, impacts on special-status species would be avoided or minimized so as not to cause substantial adverse effects on these species. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Threshold 4: Would the Proposed Project 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?

Impact BIO-2: The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact to wildlife movement without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not restrict wildlife movement between larger, contiguous natural areas and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. No known established wildlife migratory corridors or nursery sites would be directly affected by the Proposed Project. The project site is located outside of Essential Habitat Connectivity areas and natural landscape blocks, as defined by regional conservation planning efforts. Based on this information, the Proposed Project is not expected to affect local or migratory wildlife movement between larger, contiguous natural areas.

While project activities may temporarily limit local wildlife movement within the immediate work area, the project site is already heavily disturbed and routinely subject to human activity. The site is also isolated from larger, contiguous patches of open space that could support sustained wildlife use or function as regional movement corridors.

Resident or transient wildlife may experience temporary displacement during active construction periods, but such species are expected to avoid active work areas and reoccupy the site following completion of construction, consistent with conditions typical of urban and disturbed environments.

Although the Proposed Project would include perimeter fencing and temporary construction activity, implementation of the Proposed Project would not preclude wildlife movement through the site or surrounding area. The Proposed Project would not create a physical barrier to regional wildlife movement, nor would it eliminate habitat connections at the landscape scale. Any effects on wildlife movement would be localized, temporary, and behavioral in nature, rather than permanent or restrictive.

Construction and operational noise can disturb migrating wildlife using nearby movement corridors. Impacts to migrating wildlife include temporary displacement and interference with communication and orientation. These impacts may result in avoidance of noisy areas and increased energy expenditure, reducing migration success. Additional lighting can intensify urban light pollution, leading to disorientation of nocturnal migrants, and increase collision risk with structures. Artificial lighting may alter migratory routes, disrupt roosting or feeding, and fragment stopover habitats.

As described above under Impact BIO-1, operation of the Proposed Project would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance activities. These activities would occur within the existing project footprint and would not introduce new barriers or disturbances that could impede wildlife movement. Because operation and maintenance would not require activities beyond these limited tasks, no impacts on wildlife corridors or movement patterns are anticipated during the operational phase. Potential impacts to wildlife movement would be limited to the construction period, when temporary increases in noise, human presence, and equipment use could occur. These impacts would be short-term and would cease upon completion of construction. The project site provides suitable nesting habitat for resident and migratory bird species. Although no bird nests were observed during the surveys conducted in support of the Proposed Project, suitable nest sites are present in the project site and nearby open space, and many common bird species are expected to nest there. Movement, nesting, and foraging may be affected during construction, which would be a significant impact without mitigation. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-3 and BIO-4, which include avoidance and minimization measures for wildlife and birds, the Proposed Project would not interfere substantially with wildlife movement between larger, contiguous natural areas. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-3 **Wildlife Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-1.

BIO-4 **Nesting Bird Avoidance.** Removal of vegetation between March 1 and September 15 will be avoided to the extent feasible. Should vegetation removal be required on the project site between March 1 and September 15, a qualified biologist will conduct nesting bird surveys no more than seven days prior to vegetation removal.

If no nesting birds are observed during pre-construction surveys, no further actions are necessary. If nests are found, an appropriate avoidance buffer ranging in size from 25 to 300 feet for passerines, and up to 500 feet for raptors depending upon the species and the proposed work activity, shall be determined and demarcated by a qualified biologist with bright orange construction fencing or other suitable material and/or via a digital mapping medium. Modifications to the buffer size shall occur only in consultation with the qualified biologist. Active nests shall be monitored by a qualified biologist at a minimum of once per week while construction is occurring until it has been determined the young have fledged the nest. No ground disturbance or vegetation removal shall occur within this buffer until the qualified biologist confirms breeding/nesting has ended and the young are no longer dependent on the nest. Encroachment into the buffer shall occur only at the discretion of the qualified biologist and any encroachment shall be monitored by the biologist for the duration of the activities within the buffer.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-3 and BIO-4, impacts on wildlife movement, nursery sites, and nesting birds would be reduced to the extent feasible. Given the limited extent of the project site and the absence of wildlife corridors, implementation of mitigation measures would reduce impacts on the movement of any native resident wildlife species so as not interfere substantially with wildlife movement between larger, contiguous natural areas. Impacts on nesting birds would be avoided through pre-construction nesting surveys and avoidance buffers around active nests (Mitigation Measure BIO-4). Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Threshold 5: Would the Proposed Project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Impact BIO-3: The Proposed Project would require the removal of mature coast live oak trees located in the northern portion of the project site that would result in a significant impact without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, project activities would comply with the City of Simi Valley's Mature Tree Preservation Ordinance and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. The Proposed Project is not subject to City zoning and building codes, pursuant to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, because it involves water storage and conveyance facilities. Nevertheless, the project's consistency with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources is considered for informational purposes. The Proposed Project would require the removal of eight mature coast live oak trees located in the northern portion of the project site. This action would conflict with the City of Simi Valley's Mature Tree Preservation Ordinance, which protects native oak trees of a certain size and condition (see Section 5.3.2.3, *Regional and Local Regulations*).

To minimize impacts on mature native oak trees on site, Mitigation Measure BIO-5 would be implemented during construction. The Proposed Project would not result in any additional inconsistencies with other

local policies or ordinances related to biological resources or habitat protection. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-5, the Proposed Project would maintain consistency with the requirements of the City's Mature Tree Preservation Ordinance to the extent feasible by requiring measures to protect trees that would be avoided during construction. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-5 **Oak Tree Protection.** Project construction is anticipated to impact eight oak trees. Prior to construction, an Arborist Report shall be prepared to address tree protection measures during construction and mitigation requirements for those protected trees impacted by the project. The report shall be prepared by an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) or a related professional, such as a landscape architect, with qualifying education, knowledge, and experience. The report shall meet the specific content requirements for Arborist Reports as outlined in the Chapter 9-38 (Tree Preservation, Cutting, and Removal) of the City of Simi Valley Municipal Code. The Arborist Report shall include, at minimum, the following:

- An inventory of all trees containing a canopy drip line within 20 feet of the project footprint, without trespassing on private lands. Inventory data should record, at minimum: diameter at breast height (DBH), height, canopy cover information/mapping, health and vigor rating
- Representative photographs of each regulated tree which would be removed or encroached upon
- Description of proposed site development activities including, but not limited to, excavation and fill, necessary tree removals, any tree trimming for access, and construction access routes
- Requirements for protective tree fencing, and designated tree protection zones (identifying an area sufficiently large enough to protect the tree and its roots from disturbance), and measures for addressing roots and limbs that are cut during trenching
- Description of activities prohibited/permitted within the tree protection zone, encroachment boundaries

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-5, the Proposed Project would be consistent with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

5.3.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The area of cumulative effects for biological resources varies by a species' life history, mobility, distribution, and specific range in the project site and the vicinity. The geographic scope of the analysis of cumulative impacts on biological resources refers to the area within which cumulative impacts are likely to result from the Proposed Project, in combination with past, current, and probable future projects.

For the Proposed Project, the majority of the cumulative effects analysis makes a broad, regional evaluation of the impacts of existing and reasonably foreseeable future projects that threaten plant communities and wildlife within 2 miles of the project site. This scope is appropriate because the biological resources within this area are expected to be similar to those found on the project site, due to comparable

environmental conditions, habitat types, and land-use patterns. The proximity and ecological similarity of surrounding areas support the assumption that cumulative impacts on biological resources would be shared across this landscape.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

This cumulative impact analysis is applicable to Threshold 1 (substantial adverse effect on special-status species), Threshold 4 (substantial interference with wildlife movement), and Threshold 5 (conflicts with policies or ordinances protecting biological resources), as provided above in Section 5.3.3.1, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds*.

Impact C-BIO-1: The Proposed Project would result in a cumulatively significant contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on biological resources without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on biological resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.

Cumulative Projects. Both large- and small-scale land conversion within the Calleguas Creek Watershed, coupled with the cumulative projects list in Table 4.3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), were considered in the evaluation of cumulative impacts for the Proposed Project.

Several of the projects listed in Table 4-3, particularly those located within the defined 2-mile cumulative impact area, are permanent development projects that have the potential to result in adverse impacts on terrestrial biological resources. These impacts may include the loss or degradation of native vegetation communities, disturbance to nesting birds and raptors, and impacts on special-status plant and wildlife species. In Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, special-status species and nesting birds have already been subject to extensive disturbance due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and direct mortality associated with ongoing urban development. Continued development within the geographic extent would contribute incrementally to these cumulatively significant effects by further reducing or altering available habitat.

Proposed Project's Contribution. As discussed above, the Proposed Project's individual impacts are considered less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures, which include avoidance of nesting bird disturbance during the breeding season and consistency with local tree protection ordinances. Cumulatively significant impacts on biological resources would result if other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects within 2 miles of the project site, when considered in conjunction with the Proposed Project, would result in combined effects on biological resources that are collectively significant, even if individual project impacts are not. A two-mile buffer was chosen to encompass nearby projects and resources that could interact with the Proposed Project's impacts. This distance provides a reasonable scope for identifying sensitive habitats and wildlife corridors in Simi Valley.

Although the project site itself does not support sensitive natural communities or listed species, its development contributes to the incremental reduction of open space and ecological function in the region. This analysis considers the potential for such overlapping effects on habitat quality, species movement, and ecological function.

The Proposed Project is located in a developed area of Simi Valley, adjacent to the concrete-lined Arroyo Simi channel and surrounded by a mix of residential, recreational, and disturbed open space land uses. Cumulative impacts on biological resources in the region may result from the combined effects of urban development, infrastructure expansion, recreational use, loss of native vegetation communities, and invasive species spread. These activities have led to the fragmentation and degradation of native habitats, including coast live oak woodland, riparian corridors, and grasslands, which support a variety of native and migratory species.

The Proposed Project has the potential to result in adverse impacts on terrestrial biological resources. These impacts may include the loss or degradation of native vegetation communities, disturbance to nesting birds and raptors, and impacts on special-status plant and wildlife species. In Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, special-status species and nesting birds have already been subject to extensive disturbance due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and direct mortality associated with ongoing urban development. Continued development within the geographic extent, including the Proposed Project, would contribute incrementally to these cumulatively significant effects by further reducing or altering available habitat.

Although the Proposed Project itself may have limited direct impacts on biological resources, project activities would contribute incrementally to broader regional cumulative impacts on native habitats and wildlife. Species such as Crotch's bumble bee, monarch butterfly, Cooper's hawk, nesting birds, and special-status bats may be affected during project implementation. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulative impacts on these species would be reduced through the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4, which include pre-construction surveys and implementation of general wildlife protection measures. Additionally, within the project site, coast live oaks, which are protected under the City of Simi Valley's Mature Tree Preservation Ordinance, would be removed. These impacts would be mitigated through the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-5, which includes tree preservation strategies.

Cumulative impacts to special-status species and nesting birds from past, present and probable future projects in the region are cumulatively significant, primarily due to habitat loss, fragmentation and direct mortality. Without mitigation, the Proposed Project would incrementally contribute to these impacts by further reducing or altering available habitat, which would be considered cumulatively considerable. However, with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this EIR, the Proposed Project's contribution would be reduced to a level that is less than cumulatively considerable, and cumulative impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

- BIO-1** **Biological and Environmental Awareness Training (BEAT) Program.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-1.
- BIO-2** **Pre-Construction Surveys for Special-Status Plants and Wildlife.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-1.
- BIO-3** **Wildlife Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-1.
- BIO-4** **Nesting Bird Avoidance.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-2.
- BIO-5** **Oak Tree Protection.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact BIO-3.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-5, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on biological resources would be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Summary of Significance Findings

Project Impacts. Impacts on biological resources would be reduced or avoided with the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-5. The Proposed Project's impacts on biological resources would be less than significant with mitigation.

Cumulative Impacts. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant biological resources impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable with the implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-5. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

5.4. Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment

This section characterizes the environmental and cultural setting of the Proposed Project, including applicable regulations associated with cultural resources, and discusses the impacts on archaeology and built environment cultural resources resulting from project construction and operation. Mitigation measures that would reduce impacts are also included. A discussion of Tribal Cultural Resources is included in Section 5.5, *Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources*.

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) provided comments during project scoping recommending Tribal consultation, a California Historical Research Information System (CHRIS) records search, and a Sacred Lands File search. Based on the results of consultation and records searches, the NAHC also recommended completion of an archaeological inventory survey and the preparation of a professional report. The results of the records searches and the pedestrian survey are included in this section. The results of Tribal consultation are included in Section 5.5, *Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources*.

5.4.1. Environmental Setting

The project area is located at the southeastern edge of Simi Valley at an elevation of approximately 1,065 to 1,140 feet above mean sea level in the Southern California Coastal ecological subregion (Duran and Rotella, 2022). Soils in the project area are primarily Anacapa sandy loam, with Riverwash to the north and Gaviota rocky sandy loam to the south and west, overlying sandstone of the Chatsworth formation. The project area is located on an alluvial fan, with Arroyo Simi, a 19-mile westwards-running drainage that is channelized in the project vicinity, located just north of the project area. Vegetation in the project area is primarily annual grassland, bordered on the east by oak woodland (AGOL, 2024).

5.4.1.1. Pre-Contact Setting

Archaeologists have established a detailed cultural chronology based upon excavations and site surveys across Ventura County and the nearby Channel Islands, especially Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands. Three kinds of cultural resources, classified by their origins, are considered in this assessment: prehistoric, ethnographic, and historic. Prehistoric archaeological resources are associated with the human occupation and use of the region prior to prolonged European contact. Broadly speaking, the pre-contact period in Southern California began close to 13,000+ years ago and extended until 1769, when the first Europeans settled in California.

The following background sections are summarized from the confidential technical report, *Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment for the State Highway 118 Road Widening Project*, prepared by Aspen Environmental Group for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (DeOliveira and Allen, 2020) unless otherwise cited. This report is appropriate to reference for background information because the project site for the Proposed Project is located approximately 4 miles southeast of the State Highway 118 Road Widening Project and the cultural setting for these two projects are expected to be similar given their proximity to each other.

Terminal Pleistocene/Holocene Transition (13,000 to 10,000 cal BP)¹

While the evidence for mainland occupation during the earliest portion of this period is sparse, the Northern Channel Islands have produced evidence of humans in the region dating as early as 13,000 cal BP. Several sites have been identified on San Miguel and Santa Rosa Islands that date between 10,000 and 12,000 cal BP and show evidence of varied stone tools made of Santa Rosa Island Chert. Though deposits

¹ The time periods addressed in this section are discussed in terms of calibrated years before present, or cal BP, which is a way to express dates in archaeology. The "present" in this context is defined as the year 1950. The term, cal BP, is used to indicate the number of calendar years before 1950 that an event occurred.

dating to the Pleistocene/Holocene Transition on the islands are limited, these sites document human activity in the region during this period.

Fluted bifaces, the hallmark of the Clovis culture, may confirm early habitation elsewhere in the United States, but in California, sites containing these points often post-date the Clovis habitation. The earliest widespread evidence for occupation on the California mainland occurs at approximately 10,500 cal BP. Though fluted points indicative of the earlier Clovis culture (13,200 to 12,800 cal BP) have been found scattered across California (e.g., Mojave Desert, San Joaquin Valley, and North Coast Ranges), none have been found in a datable context.

Within the Santa Barbara Channel region and coastal Ventura County region, earlier evidence for Terminal Pleistocene occupation may have been destroyed by the relatively rapid sea level rise that occurred during the Pleistocene/Holocene transition. Late Quaternary glaciation diminished the volume of global oceans between 17,000 and 13,000 cal BP, producing sea levels about 100 to 50 meters lower than observed today. Subsequently, sea level rose rapidly until approximately 7,000 years ago, which resulted in the loss of 20,000 square kilometers of land along the mainland California coast. The Northern Channel Islands experienced an even greater change in landmass. With seas at lowered levels, the Northern Channel Islands formed one large landmass known as Santarosae. Though a land bridge from this landmass to mainland California did not exist during the Quaternary, the channel separating the eastern end of Santarosae from the mainland was approximately seven kilometers wide, compared to the roughly 20 kilometers that separate the island from the mainland today.

Millingstone Horizon (approximately 9,500 to 5,000 cal BP)

The next well-defined period in California prehistory is the Millingstone Horizon. Large milling stones presumably used for processing seeds, shellfish, and deer bone (to extract marrow) dominate Millingstone Period coastal site assemblages. The traditional view of gatherers and hunters during this period is one of high mobility, use of mainland coastal and coastal highland areas, and a focus on abundant grass seeds, nuts, rabbit, deer, and other terrestrial, marine, and freshwater resources. Food collection strategies represented by these sites show a heavy reliance on seeds and shellfish. While many attributes of the site assemblages located on the mainland are identical to island sites, the major point of departure for this time period is the abundance of milling implements on the mainland, with relative absence of these tools at island sites. Recent research focused on the types of foods ground with milling tools indicates an abundance of geophyte resources such as bulbs from the *Brodiaea* plant that did not require much processing. Technology identified at the island sites also includes fishing tools, including bone gorges that may represent the oldest fishhooks in North America.

The early Millingstone Horizon sites on the mainland, which are identifiable by the presence of numerous manos and metates, may represent a reduction of mobility in early mainland populations. Alternatively, some researchers have focused on the portability of smaller manos and metates, suggesting that this technology was used by more mobile populations. Additionally, the variety of sites that appear during this latter part of the Early Holocene (approximately 8,000 cal BP) indicate more movement, and the larger deep deposits present at some of the Early Holocene mainland sites accumulated over time due to frequent reuse of popular locations. Evidence from the Cross Creek site (SLO-1797), a mainland peri coastal site with well-developed midden and an estuary with rich shellfish resources, may also support the idea that mobility between interior and coastal habitats occurred early in prehistory.

Early Period (6,300 to 2,700 cal BP)

Although sites categorized as part of the Millingstone Horizon persist into the Early Period, this time period has been differentiated due to the cultural and environmental changes that started in the early Holocene. Rising sea surface temperatures caused rapid sea level rise during the Early Holocene. Sea levels

stabilized around 6,000 years ago. As sea level rise slowed, numerous beaches began to appear on the California coast. This transformation also allowed for the development of embayments and estuary habitats that the mainland people exploited. Many of these paleo-estuaries have since been buried with alluvial sediments.

During this time period, populations began to increase in the Santa Barbara Channel region, and technological changes began to emerge in the archaeological record. Mortars and pestles appeared for the first time along with side-notched points, suggesting either a shift in how food was processed or in the types of food. Early mortars and pestles signaled an important shift in subsistence towards acorn exploitation. While mortars and pestles may indicate a change in subsistence, they were possibly used for processing starchy roots and tubers such as bulrush (*Scirpus* sp.) and cattail (*Typha* sp.), rather than acorns.

Subsistence during this time period began to reflect an intensification of hunting for both terrestrial and marine animals. Dolphin remains began to appear in the archaeological record with some frequency, as do species of pelagic fish. This shift from almost strictly near-shore species found in sites earlier in time to those caught in the open ocean may reflect technological advances in the development of watercraft. Adding to the evidence for more advanced watercraft is the appearance of more consistent island-mainland trade. More and more deer bones were found in island sites, and shell beads began to emerge with consistency in mainland sites. While the frequent use of sea-worthy craft in this region has been identified only as early as approximately 1,300 years ago, during the Early Period, groups may have first begun to invest more energy into developing sturdier transportation across the ocean.

Middle Period (3150 to 3050 cal BP)

Significant changes in technology, society, and the economy took place during this Middle Period. These changes led to increased social and political complexity and set the stage for the cultural developments seen during the Late Period and into the Historic Period. Changes in the design of fishhooks, development of the harpoon, and wider use of the plank canoe all fostered exploitation of a greater variety of marine resources. Many researchers have argued that these technological changes played a vital role in the onset of social hierarchies and the development of cultural complexity within the region.

Much discourse has taken place on the timeframe during which the plank canoe, or *tomol*, became an important economic tool for groups living in the vicinity of the project area and the greater Santa Barbara Channel region. The earliest recorded date for a piece of wood with asphaltum that may have been part of a plank canoe is about 2,300 cal BP. If this wood plank were part of a *tomol*, this date would suggest that the plank canoe was used over 2,000 years ago. Solid evidence for use of the *tomol* for hunting large pelagic fish and for trade with the mainland Chumash has been narrowed to 1,300 to 900 cal BP.

Other fishing-related technologies integral to the economy of prehistoric groups were widespread during the Late Holocene. The single-piece shell fishhook appeared throughout Southern California by around 2,500 years ago. The size and form of these hooks developed over time, with the greatest variety appearing in assemblages dating between 1,500 to 1,100 cal BP. The harpoon was also developed during this time period, making larger pelagic fish more easily attainable. Researchers have noted that along with these technological developments, various site assemblages around the Santa Barbara Channel region have shown a rapid increase in the ratio of fish to shellfish and an increase in pelagic fish, such as tuna and swordfish.

Middle to Late Transition Period (800 to 650 cal BP)

The Middle to Late Transition (MLT) Period is defined by environmental factors occurring in the Channel region. Although disagreement exists about the severity of sea surface temperature fluctuations, and the effect on ancient human populations is not fully understood yet, Piasias (1978) and Hendy and Kennett (2000) demonstrate a general cooling of sea surface temperature and reduced productivity of marine food

resources during this time. On the mainland, including the project area, the impact of environmental changes included a rise in temperatures, potentially increased frequency of wildfires and insect pest populations, and fluctuations in the availability of terrestrial mammal and nut/seed food resources. These changes may have influenced social, economic, and possibly spiritual practices.

Sites in this time period reflect sudden changes in trade/exchange networks, observed in reductions or absence of obsidian stone tools where they had been abundant in prior periods, and were present again following the MLT Period. Sites during the MLT Period also demonstrate the increased use of storage areas and more varied uses of space within settlement areas. Projectile points made of local chert material rose in abundance, as well as bifacial flake tools that exhibited little to no use-wear.

Late Period (after 850 cal BP)

During the Late Period, both coastal and inland regions experienced growth in population and cultural sophistication (Glassow et al., 2007). This rise in population is reflected not only in the increased quantity of material remains but also in the greater variety of objects and a notable expansion in non-utilitarian items. The proliferation of such non-essential artifacts suggests a degree of craft specialization, which typically occurs in larger, more settled communities.

Artifacts that define this era include Desert side-notched points, Cottonwood points, bifacial bead drills, bedrock mortars, hopper mortars, and steatite disk beads. Sites from the Late Period are more commonly found inland and are often distinguished by midden accumulations paired with bedrock mortars (Glassow et al., 2007). In the Los Angeles Basin, cremation became the predominant burial practice, accompanied by elaborate funerary rituals featuring numerous grave offerings.

Other hallmark characteristics of the Late Period are the widespread adoption of the bow and arrow, the use of steatite containers, circular shell fishhooks, asphaltum as an adhesive, bone tools, and an array of personal adornments crafted from bone, shell, and stone (Bean and Smith 1978; Moratto, 1984).

5.4.1.2. Ethnographic Context

Simi Valley and the project area are situated in a region historically inhabited by several Native American groups, including the Chumash, Fernandeano, Gabrieleño, and Tataviam (Lawson et al., 2017). These groups are primarily distinguished by linguistic differences, as Indigenous communities in the area were more closely tied to specific villages and family lineages than to large Tribal entities. The Fernandeano and Gabrieleño languages are closely related, and many present-day Native Americans in the region identify with multiple groups. The original territorial boundaries of these groups were often fluid and may have shifted over time (Lawson et al., 2017).

Following the secularization of the missions, the Fernandeano and Tataviam, once distinct linguistic groups, merged through intermarriage and shared experiences, forming the Fernandeano Tataviam community. Notable villages in the vicinity included El Escorpión and Momonga (Lawson et al., 2017). El Escorpión was one of the larger settlements in the San Fernando Valley and is recorded in the Mission San Fernando registers. Seventy-five individuals from this village were baptized at the mission, many bearing names characteristic of the Chumash language. By the late 1700s, mission records indicate strong familial and marital connections between El Escorpión and several Chumash-speaking villages. There were also ties, though fewer, to Fernandeano-speaking villages. These connections suggest that the villages in the Simi Hills may have had bilingual populations (Lawson et al., 2017).

In 1891, John Wesley Powell used the term "Chumash" to refer to several coastal and island groups who spoke related languages. These languages were distinct from neighboring ones such as Fernandeano, Gabrieleño, Kitanemuk, Tataviam, and Yokuts (Lawson et al., 2017).

The Fernandeano language is part of the Takic sub-family within the Uto-Aztecan language stock. Despite linguistic similarities with the Gabrieleño, the Fernandeano referred to them as "shivaviatam," meaning "people of the San Gabriel and Santa Ana Rivers," indicating a perceived distinction. While some researchers noted differences between the two languages, others observed that they were quite similar (Lawson et al., 2017).

The Gabrieleño, named after Mission San Gabriel, also spoke a Takic language. Some Tribal members prefer the name Tongva, while others use Kizh, an older term. Principal villages associated with this group often had names ending in "gna" or "na," and village chiefs used names ending in "ic" (Lawson et al., 2017).

Less is known about the Tataviam language. Early records included words labeled as Alliklik Chumash, which were initially thought to resemble the Ventureño Chumash dialect (Lawson et al., 2017). Later research identified Tataviam as part of the Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan family, closely related to the Serrano language. The Tataviam, who refer to themselves as "People Who Face the Sun," may have migrated into the Santa Clara River area around 1,500 years ago, possibly as an offshoot of the Serrano. Historical accounts from Mission San Fernando in 1811 mention three languages spoken there: Serrano, Gabrieleño, and possibly Chumash, likely reflecting the modern groups still present in the region (Lawson et al., 2017).

5.4.1.3. Historic Setting

The project area's regional and local history can be organized into three significant cultural themes: the Spanish Era (1769 to 1821), the Mexican Period (1821 to 1847), and the American Period (1847 to present).

Mission Period (1769 to 1821)

The Spanish exploration of the California coast began in 1542, with the expedition of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, whose crew first came ashore at the present-day harbor of San Diego. Cabrillo's expedition then sailed north and visited Santa Catalina Island and made contact with the native inhabitants. Cabrillo arrived in Ventura at the Chumash village of *Shisholop* on October 10, 1542. In 1602, a Spanish expedition led by Sebastián Vizcaino also encountered the natives of Santa Catalina Island. Although these early Spanish expeditions resulted in initial contact with the region's Native Americans, Spanish colonization of California did not commence until 1769 with the founding of the City of San Diego. That same year, a land expedition led by Gaspár de Portolá was the first to pass through Chumash territory.

These expeditions preceded Spanish missionization efforts in California, which eventually resulted in the establishment of 21 missions. The plan was to convert native peoples to Catholicism, teach them to be "good" and "worthy" Spanish citizens, and then to return to their lands when they were ready. To this end, the first Franciscan mission in Chumash territory was built in San Luis Obispo in 1772. Four additional missions were built in Chumash territory: San Buenaventura (1782), Santa Barbara (1786), La Purisima Concepción (1787), and Santa Ynez (1804). Mission San Fernando (1797) was just east of Eastern Coastal Chumash territory, in the San Fernando Valley, but about 25 percent of its population was (Eastern) Chumash. The Spanish used the Native Americans to work at the missions, and on farms and ranches that were established to support the new missions, presidios, and pueblos. At the time of the Spanish arrival, the number of California Indians is estimated to have been approximately 300,000. The combined effects of poor hygiene due to overcrowding, European-introduced diseases, excessive manual labor demands, corporal punishment, and generally poor nutrition resulted in the deaths of approximately one-third of the native population in the half-century of Spanish rule.

Mexican Period (1822 to 1847)

Mexico became independent from Spain in 1821. At first, little changed for California’s Native Americans. The Franciscan missions continued to utilize forced unpaid labor provided by Native Americans, despite the Mexican Republic’s 1824 Constitution that declared Indians to be Mexican citizens. During this period, numerous land-grants were established in the Ventura coastal area. The economy continued to be largely focused on the cattle industry, and cattle hides continued to be a primary Southern California export, providing a commodity to trade for goods from Mexico, the United States, and other parts of the world. Independence from Spain also ended the ban on foreign trade in California. This brought many merchants, farmers, and other immigrants to California. After the secularization of church lands that began in 1833, privately-owned ranchos replaced the missions as California’s primary land institutions. The Mexican government allowed the Catholic church to retain the mission churches themselves. The ownership of California officially passed from Mexico to the United States with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hildago in 1848, although American military forces had occupied all of California by January 1847.

American Period (1848 to present)

Locally, the American Period began on January 4, 1847, when the California Battalion, led by Lieutenant-Colonel John C. Fremont, occupied the City of Ventura while the Mexican-American War still raged elsewhere. The Battalion was an assembly of mounted troops that included United States Army, Navy, and Marine personnel, as well as mountain men, trappers, newly arrived settlers from several countries, and pro-American Californios. A diverse array of Native Americans were also members of the Battalion, including Delaware, Walla Walla, and California Indians (a few Chumash and Yokuts). The Battalion spent only one night in the area and then departed. Fremont and his troop of just over 400 men would accept the Mexican capitulation at Cahuenga, in the San Fernando Valley.

The Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 ended Mexico’s control of Alta California. Tens of thousands of gold miners arrived in California in 1849 and 1850. The population increase was so rapid that California became the 31st state in 1850, without ever becoming a territory. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1876 marked the beginning of a period of mass migration and development in Southern California. Townsites, agricultural warehouses, and packinghouses were constructed along the newly established railroad routes throughout Ventura County during this period.

In 1795, the Spanish Crown granted Rancho San José de Nuestra Señora de Altagracia y Simí – a sprawling 113,000-acre estate – to Santiago Pico, marking the beginning of formal land tenure in the area. The original spelling, “Simí,” highlights the Chumash pronunciation, with an emphasis on the second syllable (City of Simi Valley, n.d.).

Simi Valley remained under ranching and agricultural use through the Spanish, Mexican, and early American periods. The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad and other infrastructure in the early 20th century spurred incremental growth, transitioning the valley from a largely rural landscape to small communities and farmsteads.

On October 10, 1969, Simi Valley officially became the third-largest city in Ventura County through incorporation. The City, spread across approximately 42 square miles, 37 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, has since developed under a council–manager form of government (City of Simi Valley, n.d.).

5.4.1.4. Cultural Data Collection – Methods and Results

The data collection methods in the following sections are based on the 2022 Cultural Resources Technical Memorandum (technical memo) produced by Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) (Duran and Rotella, 2022). The technical memo includes the results of a CHRIS cultural resources records search, archival and background research, and an archaeological inventory survey. Rincon also supported Tribal consultation

between Calleguas and local Native Californian individuals and groups, which is discussed in Section 5.5, *Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources*. Aspen Environmental Group (Aspen) requested and reviewed a Sacred Lands File (SLF) from the NAHC.

CHRIS Records Search

As discussed in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, in 2018, Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and then elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site, referred to as Sites 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR.

To evaluate Site 7 and its surrounding 0.5-mile radius, Rincon utilized the CHRIS records search results that were previously obtained for a nearby site, Site 1 (considered as an alternative project site in Chapter 6, *Alternatives Analysis*), from the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) on September 4, 2020. Since the records search for Site 1 already includes the area encompassing Site 7, a new search was not required. The main objective of the records search was to identify any prior cultural resource studies and any previously documented cultural resources located within or near Site 7. The SCCIC records search identified 30 previous cultural resource studies and 16 previously recorded cultural resources within a 0.5-mile radius of the project area. Within the project area, two archaeological resource studies and zero previously-recorded cultural resources were identified. The two prior archaeological resource studies were negative for cultural resources within the project area.

Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File Search

On February 21, 2025, Aspen requested an SLF record search and a Native American contact list from the NAHC. On February 24, 2025, Aspen received notification from the NAHC that the results of the SLF search were negative for sacred lands in the vicinity of the project site.

Archival and Background Research

Archival and background research was undertaken to evaluate the development history of the project site and to determine whether any built environment resources over 45 years of age and potentially qualifying as historical resources under CEQA were present. A range of primary and secondary sources, CHRIS record search, online and local databases, were consulted, including historical topographic maps, aerial imagery, and historic archives. Review of historical topographic maps and aerial photographs revealed no built environment resources within the project site. The project site has undergone significant disturbance. Between 1947 and 1959, the site was used as an orchard; subsequently, the site has been graded repeatedly, and fill dirt has been brought to the site. Archival research identified no historical resources near the project site.

Results of Archaeological Inventory Survey

On November 10, 2021, a Rincon archaeologist conducted a pedestrian survey of the project area utilizing 10-meter transects. Evidence of disturbance was observed throughout the project area, including modern trash and construction debris, animal burrows, a mixture of imported and local gravels, push-piles of fill soils, and a large berm along the western and southern edges of the project area. The archaeologist identified a possible lithic scatter, two possible pre-contact isolates (flakes), and one historic-era isolate (ceramic sherd) in disturbed contexts within the project area.

Due to the disturbed nature of the project area, the likelihood of encountering subsurface deposits is low, and inadvertent discoveries would likely be isolated or in a secondary context. The potential lithic scatter is recommended ineligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) due to the disturbed context in which it was observed, the lack of a diverse assemblage, and the low density of potentially

cultural materials observed. This resource is not considered a historical or unique archaeological resource under CEQA.

5.4.2. Regulatory Setting

5.4.2.1. Federal Regulations

National Historic Preservation Act

Authorized by Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation’s official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Although the Proposed Project does not have a federal nexus, properties which are listed in or have been formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP are automatically listed in the CRHR, described below under “State Regulations.”

5.4.2.2. State Regulations

California Office of Historic Preservation

The California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), a division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, implements the policies of the NHPA on a statewide level. The OHP also carries out the duties as set forth in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) and maintains the California Historical Resources Inventory and CRHR. The State Historic Preservation Officer is an appointed official who implements historic preservation programs within the State.

California Register of Historical Resources

Assembly Bill 2881 created the CRHR in 1992. The CRHR is “an authoritative listing and guide to be used by State and local agencies, private groups, and citizens in identifying the existing historical resources of the State and to indicate which resources deserve to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change.” Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(a). Eligibility criteria for the CRHR are based upon NRHP criteria. The CRHR consists of automatically listed resources and those that must be nominated through an application and public hearing process. The CRHR automatically includes the following:

1. California properties listed on the NRHP and those formally Determined Eligible for the NRHP;
2. California Registered Historical Landmarks from No. 770 onward; and
3. Those California Points of Historical Interest that have been evaluated by the OHP and have been recommended to the State Historical Resources Commission for inclusion on the CRHR.

Resources that may be nominated to the CRHR include:

1. Individual historical resources;
2. Historical resources contributing to historic districts;
3. Historical resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys with significance ratings of Category 1 through 5 as defined on the California Department of Parks and Recreation’s Form 523; and
4. Historical resources designated or listed as local landmarks, or designated under any local ordinance, such as a historic preservation overlay zone.

To be eligible for the CRHR, a historical resource must be significant at the local, State, or national level under one or more of the following four criteria:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California’s history and cultural heritage;
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Additionally, a historical resource eligible for listing in the CRHR must also retain its integrity. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of characteristics such as location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires a lead agency to analyze whether historical resources may be adversely affected by a project. As defined in the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5, the term “historical resources” includes the following:

“A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the California Register. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k) or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements in Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(g), is presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat such resources as significant for purposes of CEQA unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.

Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency’s determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be ‘historically significant’ if the resource meets one of the criteria for listing on the [CRHR].”

The fact that a resource is not listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC § 5020.1[k]), or identified in a historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC § 5024.1[g]) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be a historical resource as defined in PRC Sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5, defines a “[s]ubstantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource” to mean “physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of a historical resource would be materially impaired.” Material impairment occurs when a project materially alters or demolishes in an adverse manner “those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion” in the CRHR or a local historic registry or that justify its eligibility for inclusion.

PRC Section 21083.2(g) defines “a unique archaeological resource” to be an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

1. Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information;
2. Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type; or
3. Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

CEQA requires the lead agency to consider whether a project would have a significant effect on unique archaeological resources or resources eligible for listing in the CRHR, and to avoid these resources when feasible or to mitigate any effects to less-than-significant levels (PRC § 21083.2 and 21084.1).

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5(c)(4), notes that, if an archaeological resource is neither a unique archaeological resource nor a historical resource, the effects of a project on those resources shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment.

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5(e), provides procedures to be followed in the event of the accidental discovery of human remains. If remains are discovered, the County Coroner examines the remains to determine the nature of the remains and cause of death. If the remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the County Coroner contacts the NAHC, which identifies the person or persons it believes to be the most likely descendant(s) of the deceased Native American. The most likely descendant may make recommendations for the excavation work and for means of treating or disposing of, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods. Under certain conditions, the landowner or their authorized representative may rebury the human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further disturbance. Native American burials in California are protected by PRC Sections 5097.9-5097.991 and Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 7050.

California Health and Safety Code

Section 7050.5 of the HSC states that, in the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the Coroner of the county in which the remains are discovered has determined if the remains are subject to the Coroner’s authority. If the human remains are of Native American origin, the Coroner must notify the NAHC within 24 hours of this identification.

5.4.2.3. Regional and Local Regulations

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (County of Ventura, 2021) preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources of historical interest. The ordinance established a Cultural Heritage Board that updates and maintains a list of heritage sites eligible for Cultural Heritage designation.

City of Simi Valley General Plan

The City of Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update), Community Development Element, provides goals and policies for the protection of historic and archaeological resources, including

protections that apply to new development or grading and excavation activities (City of Simi Valley, 2021). The following policies are applicable to the Proposed Project:

- **HR-2.1 New Development Activities.** Require that new development protect and preserve paleontological and archaeological resources from destruction and avoid and mitigate impacts to such resources. Through planning policies and permit conditions, ensure the preservation of significant archeological and paleontological resources and require that the impact caused by any development be mitigated.
- **HR-2.2 Grading and Excavation Activities.** Maintain sources of information regarding paleontological and archeological sites and the names and addresses of responsible organizations and qualified individuals who can analyze, classify, record, and preserve paleontological or archeological findings. Require a qualified paleontologist/archeologist to monitor all grading and/or excavation where there is a potential to affect cultural, archeological, or paleontological resources. If these resources are found, Calleguas shall implement the recommendations of the paleontologist/archeologist, subject to the approval of the City.
- **HR-2.3 Cultural Organizations.** Notify cultural organizations, including Native American organizations, of proposed developments that have the potential to adversely impact cultural resources. Allow representatives of such groups to monitor grading and/or excavation of development sites.
- **HR-2.4 Paleontological or Archaeological Materials.** Require new development to donate scientifically valuable paleontological or archaeological materials to a responsible public or private institution with a suitable repository, located within Simi Valley or the County of Ventura, whenever possible.

Simi Valley Cultural Heritage Ordinance

The Simi Valley Cultural Heritage Ordinance (Simi Valley, 2009) establishes the City’s framework for the identification, designation, protection, and management of cultural and historic resources. The ordinance is implemented through the Simi Valley Municipal Code and administered by the Cultural Heritage Board, which serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council.

Under the ordinance, historic resources may be formally designated as local landmarks or contributors to historic districts based on established significance criteria, which generally consider associations with important historical events or persons, distinctive architectural characteristics, or the potential to yield important historical or cultural information. Once designated, these resources are subject to specific protections and review requirements.

The ordinance requires that any proposed alteration, rehabilitation, relocation, or demolition of a designated historic resource be reviewed by the Cultural Heritage Board through a formal permit or approval process (e.g., a Certificate of Appropriateness or equivalent entitlement). Project applicants must demonstrate that proposed work is consistent with preservation standards and will not materially impair the resource’s historical significance. The Board evaluates whether the proposed activity would adversely affect the defining characteristics of the resource and may impose conditions to ensure compatibility with the resource’s historic integrity.

For projects involving demolition or substantial modification, the ordinance requires a higher level of scrutiny. Alternatives to demolition, such as preservation, adaptive reuse, or relocation, must be considered. Where demolition is approved, the City may require documentation of the resource (e.g., photographic recordation or historic documentation) and, in some cases, mitigation measures to offset the loss of the resource.

The ordinance also provides that newly identified resources, including those not previously recorded or designated, may be evaluated for eligibility during the project review process. If a resource is determined

to meet local designation criteria, the City may initiate designation proceedings, which can result in the application of the ordinance’s protections prior to or concurrent with project approval.

In addition, the ordinance authorizes the City to maintain an inventory of cultural and historic resources, which is used to inform planning decisions and environmental review. Projects located within or adjacent to identified resources or districts may be subject to additional design review and compatibility requirements to ensure that new development does not adversely affect the setting or significance of historic properties.

5.4.3. Impact Analysis

5.4.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. As discussed in Section 5.4.1, *Environmental Setting*, no built environment resources are located on the project site. This analysis focuses on the Proposed Project’s impacts on buried cultural resources.

Project construction would involve ground-disturbing activities that could affect buried cultural resources. Project operation would not require any ground-disturbing activities and would not have any potential to affect buried resources. This analysis specifically addresses the Proposed Project’s impacts on cultural resources during project construction.

Significance Thresholds

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to cultural resources would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.
2. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.
3. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving all of these thresholds would be potentially significant (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.5, *Cultural Resources* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis). The following analysis addresses each of the threshold questions.

5.4.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

Impact CUL-1: The Proposed Project could result in a significant impact to the significance of a historical resource without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. As described in Section 5.4.1.4, *Cultural Data Collection – Methods and Results*, no cultural resources meeting the definition of a historical resource were identified within

the project area. The Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a known historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5. As with all projects involving ground-disturbing activities, unknown buried resources could be encountered that meet the definition of a historical resource during construction activities involving ground disturbance.

Due to prior disturbances within the project site, as described in Section 5.4.1.4, *Cultural Data Collection – Methods and Results* (under “Archival and Background Research”), the potential for encountering intact, buried cultural resources is low, and any unanticipated finds are expected to be isolated or in a secondary context. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant. Nevertheless, ground-disturbing activities associated with the Proposed Project could result in the inadvertent discovery of previously unknown cultural resources that may exist at or beneath the ground surface. Such disturbances would be considered a significant impact without mitigation. In the unlikely event that unanticipated archaeological resources are encountered, Calleguas shall comply with Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, which would ensure that impacts remain less than significant by providing worker education and protocols in the event of a discovery. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, the disturbance of unknown buried resources would be avoided or minimized. Potential impacts on historical resources would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

CUL-1 Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program. An archaeologist shall be retained to conduct a Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program training on archaeological sensitivity prior to the commencement of any ground-disturbing activities. This training shall occur under the direction of a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards for archaeology (National Park Service, 1983).

The CARE Program will also address Tribal Cultural Resources. Qualified representatives provided by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California shall be retained to train construction personnel on the Tribal Cultural Resources that may be encountered.

The initial archaeological sensitivity training shall be given to all construction personnel, including, but not limited to, Calleguas personnel (including the assigned inspectors), contractors, and subcontractors, prior to their involvement in any ground-disturbing activities. Additional personnel who subsequently become involved in the Proposed Project shall also receive the training prior to their involvement in any ground-disturbing activities. This can be accomplished by additional in-person training sessions, viewing a recording of the initial training session, or through the distribution of hardcopy or electronic training materials. The CARE Program shall include a description of the types of cultural material that may be encountered, cultural sensitivity issues, the regulatory environment, safety procedures when working with monitors, specific procedures to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery, proper protocol for treatment of cultural materials in the event of a find, notification procedures for Tribal Cultural Resources, and consequences in the event of non-compliance.

CUL-2 Unanticipated Discovery of Cultural Resources. In the event previously unidentified cultural resources are encountered during construction activities, all work within the immediate vicinity (60-foot buffer) of the discovery shall be halted and redirected away from the find. A qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology (National Park Service, 1983) shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the resource. If the resource is determined by the

qualified archaeologist or by an archaeologist working under their direction to be Native American in origin, then an appropriate Native American monitor shall also be contacted to participate in the evaluation of the resource consistent with Mitigation Measure TCR-2. The archaeologist shall assess the eligibility of the resource for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and, if the resource is determined to be historically significant pursuant to CEQA (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5[a]), shall identify appropriate measures to mitigate potential impacts, if avoidance is not feasible.

Significance Conclusion

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, ground-disturbing activities would be redirected from the immediate vicinity to avoid or minimize any disturbance to previously unknown historical resources until the resources are appropriately evaluated and addressed, ensuring that no substantial adverse change in the significance of the resources would result from the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Threshold 2: Would the Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

Impact CUL-2: The Proposed Project could result in a significant impact to the significance of an archaeological resource. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. As described in Section 5.4.1.4, *Cultural Data Collection – Methods and Results*, no unique archaeological resources were identified within the project area. Based on the review of historic photographs, the project area is highly disturbed. Historic aerial photographs show that the project site was an orchard between 1947 and 1959 and was subsequently graded repeatedly. The results of the archaeological survey also indicate that the project site has been disturbed; push-piles, berms, imported gravels, modern trash, and construction debris are all present.

Due to prior disturbances within the project site, the potential for encountering intact, buried cultural resources is low, and any unanticipated finds are expected to be isolated or in a secondary context. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant. Nevertheless, in the unlikely event that unanticipated archaeological resources are encountered, resulting in a substantial adverse change, impacts would be considered significant without mitigation. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, impacts remain less than significant by providing protocols, including all work stopping in a 60 foot buffer until evaluated by a qualified archaeologist, in the event of a discovery. Impacts on archaeological resources would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

- CUL-1** **Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact CUL-1.
- CUL-2** **Unanticipated Discovery of Cultural Resources.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact CUL-1.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, ground-disturbing activities would be halted to avoid or minimize any disturbance to previously unknown archaeological resources, ensuring

that no substantial adverse change in the significance of the resources would result from the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Threshold 3: Would the Proposed Project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Impact CUL-3: With adherence to existing regulations, the Proposed Project would not disturb any human remains. Impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Although no human burials are known to be located in the project area based on the results of the background research, record searches, and pedestrian survey, ground-disturbing activities associated with the Proposed Project have the potential to damage or destroy previously undiscovered human remains. Calleguas and its contractors would comply with State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and PRC Section 5097.98, which state if human remains are discovered during any construction activities, potentially damaging ground-disturbing activities in the area of the remains and a 100-foot-buffer area shall be halted immediately, and the District shall notify the Los Angeles County Coroner and the NAHC immediately. If the remains are determined by the NAHC to be Native American, NAHC guidelines on the treatment and disposition of the remains shall be followed. Following the Coroner’s findings, the District will consult with the NAHC-designated most likely descendant to determine the ultimate treatment and disposition of the remains and take appropriate steps to ensure that additional human interments are not disturbed. impacts on human remains would be less than significant.

5.4.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic extent of this analysis is approximately 2 miles from the project site. This geographic scope is appropriate because the cultural resources within this area are expected to be similar to those that occur on the project site. Their proximity and similarity in environments would result in similar land use and site types. Cumulative impacts could result if other projects, in conjunction with the Proposed Project, would have impacts on cultural resources that, when considered together, would be significant.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

This cumulative impact analysis is applicable to Threshold 1 (historical resources), Threshold 2 (archaeological resources), and Threshold 3 (human remains), as provided in Section 5.4.3.1, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds*.

Impact C-CUL-1: The Proposed Project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project’s contribution to cumulatively significant cultural resources impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Cumulative Projects. As identified in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), cumulative projects that are within the geographic extent for cultural resources include Projects #1 through 20. These projects all likely involve ground-disturbing activities to some degree that have the potential to affect buried cultural resources. While each project is assumed to require implementation of similar inadvertent discovery mitigation measures to reduce impacts on buried unknown resources, as well as compliance with existing regulations related to unanticipated discovery of human remains (State of California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and PRC § 5097.98), these cumulative projects are assumed to result in cumulatively significant cultural resources impacts in the absence of mitigation.

Proposed Project’s Contribution. The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact to cultural resources without mitigation. Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 would lessen the Proposed Project’s overall impact on unknown buried cultural resources and human remains such that the Proposed Project’s contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on historical resources, archaeological resources, and human remains would be less than cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

CUL-1 **Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact CUL-1.

CUL-2 **Unanticipated Discovery of Cultural Resources.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact CUL-1.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 and compliance with existing regulations, the Proposed Project’s contribution to cumulatively significant cultural resources impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Summary of Significance Findings

Project Impacts. The disturbance of buried unknown cultural resources would be avoided or minimized with the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2. The Proposed Project’s impacts on cultural resources would be less than significant with mitigation.

Cumulative Impacts. The Proposed Project’s contribution to cumulatively significant cultural resources impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable with the implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

5.5. Cultural Resources - Tribal Cultural Resources

This section provides information on Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs), a defined class of resources under State law (Public Resources Code § 21074). TCRs include sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, and sacred places or objects that have cultural value or significance to a California Native American Tribe. To qualify as a TCR, the resource must either: (1) be listed on, or be eligible for listing on, the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or other local historic register as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1 subdivision (k); or (2) be a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1. Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area can provide lead agencies with expert knowledge of TCRs.

This section of the EIR also describes the Assembly Bill (AB) 52 consultation process, the results of that process, and potential impacts of the Proposed Project related to TCRs. Any necessary mitigation measures that would reduce potential impacts are also included. AB 52 (Gatto) requires that the CEQA Lead Agency send a formal notice and invitation to consult about a proposed project to all California Native American tribes who have requested such notice and are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of a proposed project. The purpose of this consultation is to obtain Tribal information and direction related to the potential significant effects on TCRs that may result from a project (Public Resources Code PRC § 21080.3.1(d)). Consultation must include discussion of specific topics or concerns identified by tribes.

The scoping effort conducted by the Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) resulted in several public comments and concerns relating to TCRs, which include the following and were considered in the analysis in this section:

- Provide a Notice of Completion of an application/decision to undertake the Proposed Project to a Tribal representative of California Native American tribes that have requested notice.
- Begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving a request for consultation from a California Native American tribe.
- Consult with the appropriate tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) by requesting a Tribal Consultation List.
- Include a discussion of mandatory topics of consultation if requested by a tribe.
- Recommend discussion of discretionary topics of consultation.
- Require confidentiality of information submitted by a tribe during the environmental review process.
- Discuss impacts on TCRs in the environmental document.
- Conclude consultation with a tribe when parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect, or a party acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached.
- Recommend mitigation measures agreed upon in consultation.
- Recommend feasible mitigation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21084.3(b).
- Recommend mitigation measures that may be considered to avoid or minimize significant adverse impacts on TCRs.
- Meet prerequisites for certifying an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration/Negative Declaration with a significant impact on a TCR.

The above comments are addressed through the AB 52 and Tribal consultation process, which is described in more detail in Section 5.5.1, *Environmental Setting*.

5.5.1. Environmental Setting

Section 5.4, *Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment*, includes details about the Pre-Contact Setting, Ethnographic Context, and Historic Setting for the Proposed Project.

The data collection methods in the following sections are based on the 2022 Cultural Resources Technical Memorandum (technical memo) produced by Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) (Duran and Rotella, 2022). The technical memo includes the results of a CHRIS cultural resources records search, archival and background research, and an archaeological inventory survey. Rincon also supported Tribal consultation between Calleguas and local Native Californian individuals and groups, which is discussed below. Aspen Environmental Group (Aspen) requested and reviewed a Sacred Lands File (SLF) from the NAHC.

CHRIS Records Search

As discussed in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, in 2018, Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and then elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site, referred to as Sites 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR in consultation with tribes.

To evaluate Site 7 and its surrounding 0.5-mile radius, Rincon utilized the CHRIS records search results that were previously obtained for a nearby site, Site 1 (considered as an alternative project site in Chapter 6, *Alternatives Analysis*), from the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) on September 4, 2020. Since the records search for Site 1 already includes the area encompassing Site 7, a new search was not required. The main objective of the records search was to identify any prior cultural resource studies and any previously documented cultural resources located within or near Site 7. The SCCIC records search identified 30 previous cultural resource studies and 16 previously recorded cultural resources within a 0.5-mile radius of the project area. Within the project area, two archaeological resource studies and zero previously recorded cultural resources were identified. The two prior archaeological resource studies were negative for cultural resources within the project area.

Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File Search

On February 21, 2025, Aspen requested an SLF record search and an AB 52 Native American contact list from the NAHC. On February 24, 2025, Aspen received notification from the NAHC that the results of the records search were negative for sacred lands in the vicinity of the project site. Additionally, the NAHC provided a list of Tribal contacts which included individuals for the following 11 tribes:

- Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians
- Chumash Council of Bakersfield
- Coastal Band of The Chumash Nation
- Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation
- Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council
- Gabrieliño/Tongva Nation
- Gabrieliño-Tongva Tribe
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

AB 52 Consultation

Calleguas sent consultation letters via certified mail and email on April 25, 2020, to the contacts provided by the NAHC.

Responses were received from Jairo Avila, Tribal Historic and Cultural Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI), on April 28, 2020, and Christina Conley of the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California (GTIOC) Tribal Council on April 27, 2020 requesting consultation. Calleguas also received responses from the Northern Chumash Tribal Council and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians stating that they would defer to local Tribes.

The below summaries of consultation are high-level to ensure confidentiality consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15120(d).

Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

Calleguas consulted with representatives of the FTBMI from April 2020 to August 2025 and considered their input throughout the site selection and environmental review processes. On April 2, 2025, Calleguas informed the THPO that the Notice of Preparation (NOP) would be published in the next few months. Calleguas emailed the NOP to the THPO at the start of the public scoping period, which began on May 6, 2025. Calleguas emailed the THPO again on July 25, 2025 requesting a review of draft mitigation measures. Miguel Luna, Chief Administration Officer, requested revisions to the draft mitigation measures on July 30, 2025 and August 1, 2025. Calleguas submitted revisions to the draft measures on July 31, 2025 and August 4, 2025. Consultation formally concluded on August 4, 2025 with mutual agreement on the relevant mitigation measures, MM TCR-1, Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, and MM TCR-2 Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources.

Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California

Calleguas consulted with representatives of the GTIOC from April 2020 to August 2025 and considered their input throughout the site selection and environmental review processes. On April 2, 2025, Calleguas informed the GTIOC that the NOP would be published in the next few months. Calleguas emailed the NOP to the GTIOC at the start of the public scoping period, which began on May 6, 2025. Calleguas emailed the THPO again on July 25, 2025 requesting a review of draft mitigation measures and stating that consultation would formally conclude if a response was not received by August 15, 2025. Consultation formally concluded on August 15, 2025, with no response received by that date.

5.5.2. Regulatory Setting

National Historic Preservation Act

Authorized by Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Although the Proposed Project does not have a federal nexus, properties which are listed in or have been formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP are automatically listed in the CRHR, described below under "State Regulations."

5.5.2.1. State Regulations

California Office of Historic Preservation

The California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), a division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, implements the policies of the NHPA on a statewide level. The OHP also carries out the duties as set forth in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) and maintains the California Historical Resources

Inventory and CRHR. The State Historic Preservation Officer is an appointed official who implements historic preservation programs within the State.

California Register of Historical Resources

AB 2881 created the CRHR in 1992. The CRHR is “an authoritative listing and guide to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens in identifying the existing historical resources of the state and to indicate which resources deserve to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change” as defined by PRC Section 5024.1(a). Eligibility criteria for the CRHR are based upon NRHP criteria. The CRHR consists of automatically listed resources and those that must be nominated through an application and public hearing process. The CRHR automatically includes the following:

1. California properties listed on the NRHP and those formally Determined Eligible for the NRHP;
2. California Registered Historical Landmarks from No. 770 onward; and
3. Those California Points of Historical Interest that have been evaluated by the OHP and have been recommended to the State Historical Resources Commission for inclusion on the CRHR.

Resources that may be nominated to the CRHR include:

1. Individual historical resources;
2. Historical resources contributing to historic districts;
3. Historical resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys with significance ratings of Category 1 through 5 as defined on the California Department of Parks and Recreation’s Form 523; and
4. Historical resources designated or listed as local landmarks, or designated under any local ordinance, such as a historic preservation overlay zone.

To be eligible for the CRHR, a historical resource must be significant at the local, State, or national level under one or more of the following four criteria:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California’s history and cultural heritage;
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Additionally, a historical resource eligible for listing in the CRHR must also retain its integrity. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of characteristics such as location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires a lead agency to analyze whether historical resources may be adversely affected by a project. As defined in the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5, the term “historical resources” includes the following:

“A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the California Register. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k) or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements in Public Resources

Code Section 5024.1(g), is presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat such resources as significant for purposes of CEQA unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.

Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be 'historically significant' if the resource meets one of the criteria for listing on the [CRHR]."

The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC § 5020.1[k]), or identified in a historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC Section 5024.1[g]) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be a historical resource as defined in PRC Sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5, defines a "[s]ubstantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource" to mean "physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of a historical resource would be materially impaired." Material impairment occurs when a project materially alters or demolishes in an adverse manner "those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion" in the CRHR or a local historic registry or that justify its eligibility for inclusion.

PRC Section 21083.2(g) defines "a unique archaeological resource" to be an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

1. Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information;
2. Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type; or
3. Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

CEQA requires the lead agency to consider whether a project would have a significant effect on unique archaeological resources or resources eligible for listing in the CRHR, and to avoid these resources when feasible or to mitigate any effects to less-than-significant levels (PRC § 21083.2 and 21084.1).

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5(c)(4), notes that, if an archaeological resource is neither a unique archaeological resource nor a historical resource, the effects of a project on those resources shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment.

The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5(e), provides procedures to be followed in the event of the accidental discovery of human remains. If remains are discovered, the County Coroner examines the remains to determine the nature of the remains and cause of death. If the remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the County Coroner contacts the NAHC, which identifies the person or persons it believes to be the most likely descendant(s) of the deceased Native American. The most likely descendant may make recommendations for the excavation work and for means of treating or disposing of, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods. Under certain conditions, the landowner or their authorized representative may rebury the human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further disturbance. Native American burials in California are protected by PRC Sections 5097.9-5097.991 and Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 7050.

California Health and Safety Code

Section 7050.5 of the HSC states that, in the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the Coroner of the county in which the remains are discovered has determined if the remains are subject to the Coroner's authority. If the human remains are of Native American origin, the Coroner must notify the NAHC within 24 hours of this identification.

Assembly Bill 52

The primary intent of AB 52 is to include California Native American tribes early in the environmental review process. To this end, the Bill established a new category of resources related to Native Americans, known as Tribal Cultural Resources, that require consideration under CEQA. PRC Sections 21074(a)(1) and (2) define Tribal Cultural Resources as either:

1. Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American Tribe that are either included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR or included in a local register of historical resources, or
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in PRC Section 5024.1(c).

AB 52 led to an update of CEQA Appendix G (Initial Study Checklist) to include questions related to impacts to TCRs.

Consultation is further discussed in AB 52, Section 21080.3:

“(a) The Legislature finds and declares that California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area may have expertise concerning their tribal cultural resources.

(b) Prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report for a project, the lead agency shall begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project if: (1) the California Native American tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed by the lead agency through formal notification of proposed projects in the geographic area that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the tribe, and (2) the California Native American tribe responds, in writing, within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification, and requests the consultation. When responding to the lead agency, the California Native American tribe shall designate a lead contact person. If the California Native American tribe does not designate a lead contact person, or designates multiple lead contact people, the lead agency shall defer to the individual listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission for the purposes of Chapter 905 of the Statutes of 2004. For purposes of this section and Section 21080.3.2, "consultation" shall have the same meaning as provided in Section 65352.4 of the Government Code.

(c) To expedite the requirements of this section, the Native American Heritage Commission shall assist the lead agency in identifying the California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area.

(d) Within 14 days of determining that an application for a project is complete or a decision by a public agency to undertake a project, the lead agency shall provide formal notification to the designated contact of, or a tribal representative of, traditionally and culturally

affiliated California Native American tribes that have requested notice, which shall be accomplished by means of at least one written notification that includes a brief description of the proposed project and its location, the lead agency contact information, and a notification that the California Native American tribe has 30 days to request consultation pursuant to this section.

(e) The lead agency shall begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving a California Native American tribe's request for consultation."

5.5.2.2. Regional and Local Regulations

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (County of Ventura, 2021) preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources of historical interest. The ordinance established a Cultural Heritage Board that updates and maintains a list of heritage sites that are eligible for Cultural Heritage designation.

City of Simi Valley General Plan

The City of Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update), Community Development Element, provides goals and policies for the protection of historic and archaeological resources, including protections that apply to new development or grading and excavation activities (City of Simi Valley, 2021).

Simi Valley Cultural Heritage Ordinance

The purpose of the City of Simi Valley Cultural Heritage Ordinance is to preserve landmarks, historic districts, sites of merit, and points of interest (City of Simi Valley, 2009). In 2009, the ordinance was updated in coordination with the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board to better protect designated sites and align with OHP requirements.

5.5.3. Impact Analysis

5.5.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, as well as the cultural data collection efforts described in Section 5.5.1.

Significance Thresholds

An impact related to Tribal Cultural Resources would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

1. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

5.5.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k)?

Impact TCR-1: Prior to mitigation, the Proposed Project would have a significant impact on Tribal Cultural Resources that are listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. To date, no TCRs have been identified within the project area through formal AB 52 consultation (see Section 5.5.1, *Environmental Setting*). The Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a known TCR. As with all projects involving ground-disturbing activities, unknown buried cultural resources could be encountered that could be considered TCRs. The potential to encounter buried cultural resources is considered moderate based on Tribal input described above in Section 5.5.1.1, and impacts on unknown resources are considered significant without proper procedures in place through mitigation.

During Tribal consultation, the GTIOC and FTBMI recommended Mitigation Measure TCR-1, Native American Monitoring Program, Mitigation Measure TCR-2, Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources, and MM CUL-1, Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program. Calleguas concurs with this recommended mitigation. In addition, the FTBMI reviewed and requested revisions to the mitigation measures which Calleguas incorporated. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1 and TCR-2 and adherence to existing regulations (State of California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and PRC § 5097.98), the disturbance of any unknown buried resources would be avoided or minimized and potential impacts on TCRs would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

TCR-1 Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan. Prior to ground-disturbing activities, Tribal monitors shall be retained from the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI) and the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California (GTIOC). Calleguas, in coordination with the FTBMI and GTIOC monitors, will prepare a Cultural Resources Monitoring and Mitigation Plan prior to the commencement of any ground-disturbing activity. This plan shall describe the procedures for cultural resource treatment, Tribal coordination, and reporting responsibilities. The Plan shall include avoidance of the resource or, if avoidance of the resource is not feasible, the plan shall outline appropriate treatment of the resource in coordination with the consulting Tribes and, if applicable, a qualified archaeologist. Examples of appropriate mitigation for Tribal Cultural Resources include, but are not limited to, protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resources, protecting traditional use of the resources, protecting the confidentiality of the resources, and heritage recovery.

Monitoring shall continue through the initial pass of ground disturbance. If Tribal Cultural Resources are identified, monitoring shall continue for all remaining ground disturbance. FTBMI and GTIOC Tribal monitors will have the authority to halt and redirect work should

any archaeological or Tribal Cultural Resources be identified during monitoring. If archaeological or Tribal Cultural Resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work within 60 feet of the find must halt and the find must be evaluated for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and National Register of Historic Places. Monitoring may be reduced or halted at the discretion of the FTBMI and GTIOC monitors, in consultation with Calleguas, as warranted by conditions such as encountering bedrock, sediments being excavated are fill, and negative findings during the first 50 percent of the entire area of ground disturbance. If monitoring is reduced to spot checking, spot checking shall occur when ground-disturbing activities move to a new location within the project site and/or when ground disturbance will extend to depths not previously reached (unless those depths are within bedrock).

TCR-2 **Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources.** A Treatment and Disposition Plan shall be developed in coordination with the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI) and the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California (GTIOC) prior to any ground-disturbing activity. This plan shall include in-field treatment protocols and final disposition procedures for any inadvertently discovered non-funerary resources. All archaeological reports prepared for the Smith Road Tank—including, but not limited to, isolate records, survey reports, testing reports, and monitoring reports—shall be shared with the FTBMI and GTIOC.

If cultural resources of Native American origin are identified during grading or excavation of the Proposed Project, all ground-disturbing activities within 60 feet shall cease until an archaeologist has evaluated the nature and significance of the find as a cultural resource and representatives from the FTBMI and the GTIOC are consulted by Calleguas. If Calleguas, in consultation with the consulting Tribes, determines that the resource is a Tribal Cultural Resource and significant under CEQA and/or is significant according to the Tribe(s), Calleguas shall implement the Treatment and Disposition Plan and the appropriate mitigation requirements in the Cultural Resources Monitoring and Mitigation Plan prepared pursuant to Mitigation Measure TCR-1.

CUL-1 **Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program.** An archaeologist shall be retained to conduct a Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program training on archaeological sensitivity prior to the commencement of any ground-disturbing activities. This training shall occur under the direction of a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for archaeology (National Park Service, 1983).

The CARE Program will also address Tribal Cultural Resources. Qualified representatives provided by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrieliño Tongva Indians of California shall be retained to train construction personnel on the Tribal Cultural Resources that may be encountered.

The initial archaeological sensitivity training shall be given to all construction personnel, including, but not limited to, Calleguas personnel (including the assigned inspectors), contractors, and subcontractors, prior to their involvement in any ground-disturbing activities. Additional personnel who subsequently become involved in the Proposed Project shall also receive the training prior to their involvement in any ground-disturbing activities. This can be accomplished by additional in-person training sessions, viewing a recording of the initial training session, or through the distribution of hardcopy or electronic training materials. The CARE Program shall include a description of the types of cultural material that may be encountered, cultural sensitivity issues, the regulatory

environment, safety procedures when working with monitors, specific procedures to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery, proper protocol for treatment of cultural materials in the event of a find, notification procedures for Tribal Cultural Resources, and consequences in the event of non-compliance.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1, TCR-2, and MM CUL-1, a Cultural Resources Monitoring and Mitigation Plan as well as a Treatment and Disposition Plan would be implemented to avoid or minimize any disturbance to previously unknown TCRs, ensuring that no substantial adverse change in the significance of the resources would result from the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Impact TCR-2: Prior to mitigation, the Proposed Project would result in a significant impact to the significance of Tribal Cultural Resource. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource that was determined to be significant by the lead agency. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. To date, no TCRs have been identified within the project area through formal AB 52 consultation (see Section 5.5.1.1, *Cultural Data Collection – Methods and Results*). The Proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a known TCR. As with all projects involving ground-disturbing activities, unknown buried cultural resources could be encountered that could be considered TCRs. The potential to encounter buried cultural resources is considered moderate based on Tribal input as described above in Section 5.5.1.1, and impacts on unknown resources could be considered significant without proper procedures in place through mitigation.

During Tribal consultation, the GTIOC recommended Mitigation Measure TCR-1, Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, and Mitigation Measure TCR-2, Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources. Calleguas concurs with this recommended mitigation. In addition, the FTBML reviewed and requested revisions to the mitigation measures which Calleguas incorporated. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1 and TCR-2 and adherence to existing regulations (State of California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and PRC § 5097.98), which provide guidelines for the treatment of previously undiscovered resources, including human remains, the disturbance of unknown buried resources would be avoided or minimized and potential impacts on TCRs would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

TCR-1 **Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1.

TCR-2 **Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1.

CUL-1 **Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1 and TCR-2, a Monitoring and Mitigation Plan and Treatment and Disposition Plan would be implemented to avoid or minimize any disturbance to previously unknown TCRs, ensuring that no substantial adverse change in the significance of the resources would result from the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

5.5.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic extent of this analysis is approximately 2 miles from the project site. This geographic scope is appropriate because the cultural resources within this area are expected to be similar to those that could occur on the project site. Their proximity and similarity in environments would result in similar land use and site types. Cumulative impacts could result if other projects, in conjunction with the Proposed Project, would have impacts on cultural resources that, when considered together, would be significant.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

This cumulative impact analysis is applicable to Threshold 1 (TCR that is listed or eligible for listing in the CRHR or a local register of historical resources) and Threshold 2 (TCR that was determined to be significant by the lead agency), as provided above in Section 5.5.3.1, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds*.

Impact C-TCR-1: The Proposed Project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on Tribal Cultural Resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Cumulative Projects. As identified in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), cumulative projects that are within the geographic extent for cultural resources include Projects #1 through 20. These projects all likely involve ground-disturbing activities to some degree that have the potential to affect buried TCRs. While each project is assumed to require implementation of similar inadvertent discovery mitigation measures to reduce impacts on buried unknown resources, these cumulative projects are assumed to result in cumulatively significant impacts on TCRs in the absence of mitigation.

Proposed Project's Contribution. As discussed in the project level analyses above, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulative Impacts TCR-1 and TCR-2 would be cumulatively considerable. The Proposed Project includes implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1, TCR-2, and CUL-1 which would lessen the Proposed Project's overall impact on unknown buried TCRs. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on TCRs would be less than cumulatively considerable given that significant impacts of this project have been reduced to less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

TCR-1 **Native American Monitoring and Mitigation Plan.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1.

TCR-2 **Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1.

CUL-1 **Cultural and Archaeological Resources Education (CARE) Program.** See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact TCR-1

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1, TCR-2, and CUL-1, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts on TCRs would be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

5.6. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This section discusses greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with project construction, operation, and maintenance. GHG emissions were calculated and reported in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) for carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and methane (CH₄) emissions from on-road vehicles and off-road equipment.

The scoping effort conducted resulted in no public comments relating to GHG emissions.

5.6.1. Environmental Setting

GHGs are inherently a cumulative global concern, in contrast with criteria air pollutants or toxic air contaminants, which are of regional and local concern. Scientific research indicates that observed climate change is most likely a result of increased GHG emissions associated with human activity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023). Global climate change describes a collection of phenomena, such as increasing temperatures and rising sea levels, that has been observed across the globe. GHGs contribute to climate change by allowing ultraviolet radiation to enter the atmosphere and warm the Earth's surface by preventing some infrared radiation from the Earth from escaping back into space. Anthropogenic GHG emissions are largely caused by the combustion of fossil fuels, which results in CO₂ emissions.

GHGs are defined as any gas that absorbs infrared radiation in the atmosphere. GHGs include, but are not limited to, CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆), and nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃). These GHGs lead to the trapping and buildup of heat in the atmosphere near the Earth's surface, commonly known as the greenhouse effect. Overwhelming scientific consensus has been reached among actively publishing climate scientists (i.e., scientists that study the Earth's climate system, focusing on long-term weather patterns, climate variability, and the impacts of climate change) that human-related emissions of GHGs above natural levels have contributed significantly to global climate change by increasing the concentrations of the gases responsible for the greenhouse effect, which causes atmospheric warming above natural conditions.

Because GHG emissions are known to increase atmospheric concentrations of GHGs, and increased GHG concentrations in the atmosphere exacerbate global warming, a project that adds to the atmospheric load of GHGs adds to the problem. To avoid disruptive and potentially catastrophic climate change, annual GHG emissions must be substantially reduced. The impact on climate change due to the increase in ambient concentrations of GHGs differs from criteria pollutants (see Section 5.2, *Air Quality*), in that GHG emissions from a specific project do not cause direct adverse localized human health effects. Rather, the direct environmental effect of GHG emissions is the cumulative effect of an overall increase in global temperatures, which in turn has numerous indirect effects on the environment and humans.

The IPCC completed a Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) in 2023 that contains information on the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge about climate change. The AR6 includes working group reports on the basics of the science, potential impacts and vulnerability, and mitigation strategies. Global climate change has caused physical, social, and economic impacts in California, such as land surface and ocean warming; decreasing snow and ice; rising sea levels; increased frequency and intensity of droughts, storms, and floods; and increased rates of coastal erosion (IPCC, 2023).

The potential of a gas or aerosol to trap heat in the atmosphere is called global warming potential (GWP). The GWP of different GHGs varies because they absorb different amounts of heat. CO₂, the most abundant GHG, is used to relate the amount of heat absorbed to the amount of the gas emissions; this is referred to as CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e). CO₂e is the amount of GHG emitted multiplied by the GWP. The GWP of CO₂, as the reference GHG, is 1. Methane has a GWP of 25, with 1 pound of methane equal to 25 pounds of CO₂e.

California regulates GHGs, including CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF₆. California is a substantial contributor to global GHG emissions. In 2022, the annual California statewide GHG emissions were 371.1 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (MMTCO₂e). The transportation sector accounts for approximately 39 percent of statewide GHG emissions. The industrial and electric power sectors account for approximately 22 percent and 16 percent, respectively, of the total statewide GHG emissions. The dominant GHG emitted is CO₂, primarily from fossil fuel combustion (CARB, 2024).

Potential Effects of Climate Change

The 2009 CEQA Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action in Implementing SB 97, explained that “[S]ome comments submitted to OPR during its public workshops indicated that the [CEQA] Guidelines should be addressed to ‘Climate Change’ rather than just the effects of GHG emissions. The focus in the Guidelines on GHG emissions is appropriate” (California Natural Resources Agency, 2009). Nevertheless, this section provides an overview of the consequences of GHG emissions.

In California, climate change impacts have the potential to affect sea-level rise, agriculture, snowpack and water supply, forestry, wildfire risk, public health, and electricity demand and supply. The primary effect of global climate change has been a rise in average global tropospheric temperature. Reflecting the long-term warming trend since pre-industrial times, observed mean surface temperature for the decade 2006–2015 was approximately 0.87°C (33.6°F) higher than the average over the 1850–1900 period (IPCC 2018). Scientific modeling predicts that continued emissions of GHGs at or above current rates would induce more extreme climate changes during the twenty-first century than were observed during the twentieth century. Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C (1.8°F) of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C (1.4°F to 2.2°F) (IPCC 2018). Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C (2.7°F) between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate (IPCC, 2018).

Although climate change is driven by global atmospheric conditions, climate change impacts are felt locally. A scientific consensus confirms that climate change is already affecting California. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment identified various indicators of climate change in California, which are scientifically based measurements that track trends in various aspects of climate change. Many indicators reveal discernible evidence that climate change is occurring in California. Changes in the state’s climate have been observed, including an increase in annual average air temperature, more frequent extreme heat events, more extreme drought, a decline in winter chill, an increase in cooling degree days and a decrease in heating degree days,¹ and an increase in variability of statewide precipitation (OEHHA, 2022).

Warming temperatures and changing precipitation patterns have altered California’s physical systems—the ocean, lakes, rivers, and snowpack—upon which the state depends. Winter snowpack and spring snowmelt runoff from the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascade Mountains provide approximately one-third of the state’s annual water supply. Impacts of climate on physical systems have been observed, such as high variability of snow-water content (i.e., amount of water stored in snowpack), decrease in snowmelt runoff, glacier change (loss in area), rise in sea levels, increase in average lake water temperature and coastal ocean temperature, and a decrease in dissolved oxygen in coastal waters (OEHHA, 2022).

Impacts of climate change on biological systems, including humans, wildlife, and vegetation, have also been observed, including climate change impacts on terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems. As with global observations, species responses include those consistent with warming: elevational or latitudinal shifts in range, changes in the timing of key plant and animal life cycle events, and changes in the abundance of species and in community composition. Humans are better able to adapt to a changing

¹ “Degree days” measure the difference between the average daily temperature and the reference temperature of 65°F. “Cooling” degree days refers to temperatures higher than 65°F (days when cooling devices may be necessary), and “heating” degree days refers to temperatures lower than 65°F (days when heating devices may be necessary) (OEHHA, 2022).

climate than plants and animals in natural ecosystems. Nevertheless, climate change poses a threat to public health because warming temperatures and changes in precipitation can affect vector-borne pathogen transmission and disease patterns in California, as well as the variability of heat-related deaths and illnesses. In addition, since 1950, the area burned by wildfires each year has been increasing (CNRA, 2018a).

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) has released four California Climate Change Assessments (2006, 2009, 2012, and 2018), which have addressed acceleration of warming across the state; more intense and frequent heat waves; greater riverine flows; accelerating sea-level rise; more intense and frequent drought; more severe and frequent wildfires; more severe storms and extreme weather events; shrinking snowpack and less overall precipitation; and ocean acidification, hypoxia (i.e., low oxygen availability), and warming.

5.6.2. Regulatory Setting

Multiple state regulations and regulatory agencies are in place to govern GHG emissions, including the California Air Resources Board, Advanced Clean Cars Program, California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 11, Senate Bill (SB) 350, SB 100, SB 32, Assembly Bill (AB) 32, and Executive Order (EO)s S-3-05, S-1-07, B-30-15, and B-55-18. Regional and local GHG emission regulatory frameworks include the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD), and Simi Valley Climate Action Plan.

Energy Independence and Security Act

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-140), among other key measures, included the following measures to aid in the reduction of national GHG emissions:

- Increase the supply of alternative fuel sources by setting a mandatory Renewable Fuel Standard requiring fuel producers to use at least 36 billion gallons of biofuel in 2022.
- Set a target of 35 miles per gallon for the combined fleet of cars and light trucks by model year 2020, and directs National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to establish a fuel economy program for medium- and heavy-duty trucks and create a separate fuel economy standard for work trucks.
- Prescribe or revise standards affecting regional efficiency for heating and cooling products and procedures for new or amended standards, energy conservation, energy-efficiency labeling for consumer electronic products, residential boiler efficiency, electric motor efficiency, and home appliances.

President Trump's EO 14154 may also impact the EISA. This order declared a national energy emergency and directed federal agencies to expedite the permitting and production of domestic energy resources. This emphasis on increasing fossil fuel production and reducing regulatory barriers may undermine the EISA's objectives of enhancing energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy sources.

Federal Vehicle Standards

In response to the Massachusetts v. EPA U.S. Supreme Court ruling discussed above, the Bush Administration issued EO 13432 in 2007 directing the EPA, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Energy to establish regulations that reduce GHG emissions from motor vehicles, non-road vehicles, and non-road engines by 2008. In 2009, NHTSA issued a final rule regulating fuel efficiency and GHG emissions from cars and light-duty trucks for model year 2011; and, in 2010, the EPA and NHTSA issued a final rule regulating cars and light-duty trucks for model years 2012–2016 (75 FR 25324–25728). In March 2022, NHTSA established new fuel economy standards that would require an industry-wide fleet average of approximately 49 miles per gallon for passenger cars and light trucks in model year 2026 by

increasing fuel efficiency by 8% annually for model years 2024 and 2025, and 10% annually for model year 2026.

On March 12, 2025, in response to President Trump's EO 14154, EPA stated that it would reconsider its 2024 rules that would cut passenger vehicle fleetwide tailpipe emissions by nearly 50% by 2032 compared with 2027 projected levels. The EPA said it is also reconsidering a 2022 regulation that aims to drastically cut smog- and soot-forming emissions from heavy-duty trucks, saying the rule makes trucks more expensive.

In January 2025, President Trump's Transportation Secretary moved to rescind fuel economy standards issued under President Biden that aimed to reduce fuel use for cars and trucks. He has also frozen funding to states for EV charging. The NHTSA in June 2024 said it would hike Corporate Average Fuel Economy requirements to about 50.4 miles per gallon (4.67 liters per 100 kilometers) by 2031 from 39.1 miles per gallon currently for light-duty vehicles. NHTSA said in June 2024 the rule for passenger cars and trucks would reduce gasoline consumption by 64 billion gallons through 2050 and cut emissions by 659 million metric tons. It said while some vehicles would be more expensive to buy, consumers would save on fuel costs and estimated net benefits of \$35.2 billion.

Trump's Transportation Secretary also directed NHTSA to reconsider rules for heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans through 2035.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

The Inflation Reduction Act was signed into law by President Biden in August 2022. The bill provides for specific investment in energy and climate reform, and is projected to reduce GHG emissions within the United States by 40% compared to 2005 levels by 2030. The bill allocates funds to boost renewable energy infrastructure (e.g., solar panels and wind turbines), includes tax credits for the purchase of electric vehicles, and includes measures that will make homes more energy efficient.

The IRA authorized the EPA to implement the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund program, which is a historic, \$27 billion investment to mobilize financing and private capital to combat the climate crisis and ensure American economic competitiveness. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will be designed to achieve the following program objectives: reduce GHG emissions and other air pollutants; deliver the benefits of GHG- and air-pollution-reducing projects to American communities, particularly low-income and disadvantaged communities; and mobilize financing and private capital to stimulate additional deployment of GHG- and air-pollution-reducing projects (USEPA, 2025a).

The IRA confirms that reduction of GHGs is a core goal of the Clean Air Act and that the funding provided should allow the EPA to increase the scope of its Clean Air Act rulemakings. The Act also confirms applicability of the IRA to GHGs in three specific areas: (1) California's ability to regulate GHG emissions from vehicles; (2) the EPA's authority to regulate CH₄ emissions from oil and gas facilities; and (3) the EPA's authority to regulate GHG emissions from power plants.

On July 4, 2025, President Trump enacted the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), which reduces the scope of the IRA and accelerates the phase-out of multiple IRA clean-energy incentives, such as residential energy and electric vehicle credits. The OBBBA also rescinds substantial federal funding for clean energy, environmental justice, and climate resilience programs, including the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Furthermore, on July 7, 2025, President Trump signed the EO 14315, which reinforces the changes made under the OBBBA, further hindering clean energy programs by eliminating taxpayer subsidies for wind, solar, and other clean energy sources.

State

The statewide GHG emissions regulatory framework is summarized below by category: state climate change targets, building energy, renewable energy and energy procurement, mobile sources, solid waste, water, and other state regulations and goals. The following text describes EOs, legislation, regulations, and other plans and policies that would directly or indirectly reduce GHG emissions and/or address climate change issues.

Executive Order S-3-05

EO S-3-05 (June 2005) established the following statewide goals: GHG emissions should be reduced to 2000 levels by 2010, to 1990 levels by 2020, and to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

Assembly Bill 32

In furtherance of the goals identified in EO S-3-05, the Legislature enacted AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (California Health and Safety Code § 38500–38599). AB 32 provided initial direction on creating a comprehensive multiyear program to limit California’s GHG emissions at 1990 levels by 2020, and initiate the transformations required to achieve the state’s long-range climate objectives. In 2016, the State of California achieved its 2020 GHG emission reduction targets as annual emissions fell below 431 MMT of CO₂e.

Executive Order B-30-15

EO B-30-15 (April 2015) identified an interim GHG reduction target in support of targets previously identified under EO S-3-05 and AB 32. EO B-30-15 set an interim target goal of reducing statewide GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 to keep California on its trajectory toward meeting or exceeding the long-term goal of reducing statewide GHG emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, as set forth in EO S-3-05. These orders are only applicable to “state agencies with jurisdiction over sources of greenhouse gas emissions” (Order 4-29-2015 § 2). Imperial County does not fall within the definition of a State agency.

Senate Bill 32 and Assembly Bill 197

SB 32 and AB 197 (enacted in 2016) are companion bills that set new statewide statutory GHG reduction targets, made changes to CARB’s membership, increased legislative oversight of CARB’s climate change–based activities, and expanded dissemination of GHG and other air-quality-related emissions data to enhance transparency and accountability. More specifically, SB 32 codified the 2030 emissions reduction goal of EO B-30-15 by requiring CARB to ensure that statewide GHG emissions are reduced to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. AB 197 established the Joint Legislative Committee on Climate Change Policies, consisting of at least three members of the senate and three members of the assembly, to provide ongoing oversight over implementation of the state’s climate policies. AB 197 also added two members of the legislature to CARB as nonvoting members, required CARB to make available and update (at least annually through its website) emissions data for GHGs, criteria air pollutants, and TACs from reporting facilities and required CARB to identify specific information for GHG emissions-reduction measures when updating the Scoping Plan.

Senate Bill 605 and Senate Bill 1383

SB 605 (2014) required CARB to complete a comprehensive strategy to reduce emissions of SLCPs in the state; SB 1383 (2016) required CARB to approve and implement the SLCP Reduction Strategy. SB 1383 also established specific targets for the reduction of SLCPs (40% below 2013 levels by 2030 for CH₄ and HFCs and 50% below 2013 levels by 2030 for anthropogenic black carbon) and provided direction for reductions from dairy and livestock operations and landfills. Accordingly, and as mentioned above, CARB adopted its

SLCP Reduction Strategy in March 2017, which established a framework for the statewide reduction of emissions of black carbon, CH₄, and fluorinated gases.

Executive Order B-55-18

EO B-55-18 (September 2018) established a new statewide goal “to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and no later than 2045, and achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter.” This EO directed CARB to “work with relevant state agencies to ensure future Scoping Plans identify and recommend measures to achieve the carbon neutrality goal.”

Assembly Bill 1279

AB 1279 (2022) establishes that it is the policy of the state to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, but no later than 2045; to maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter; and, to ensure that, by 2045, statewide anthropogenic GHG emissions are reduced to at least 85% below 1990 levels.

California Air Resources Board’s Climate Change Scoping Plan

One specific requirement of AB 32 is for CARB to prepare a “Scoping Plan” for achieving the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG emission reductions by 2020 (California Health and Safety Code § 38561[a]), and to update the plan at least once every five years. In 2008, CARB approved the first Scoping Plan: The Climate Change Proposed Scoping Plan: A Framework for Change (Scoping Plan). The Scoping Plan included a mix of recommended strategies that combined direct regulations, market-based approaches, voluntary measures, policies, and other emission-reduction programs calculated to meet the 2020 statewide GHG emission limit and initiate the transformations needed to achieve the state’s long-range climate objectives.

In 2014, CARB approved the first update to the Scoping Plan. The First Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan: Building on the Framework (First Update) defined the state’s GHG emission reduction priorities for the next five years and laid the groundwork to start the transition to the post-2020 goals set forth in EO S-3-05 and EO B-16-2012 (CARB 2014). The First Update concluded that California was on track to meet the 2020 target, but recommended a 2030 mid-term GHG reduction target be established to ensure a continuum of action to reduce emissions. The First Update recommended a mix of technologies in key economic sectors to reduce emissions through 2050, including energy demand reduction through efficiency and activity changes; large-scale electrification of on-road vehicles, buildings, and industrial machinery; decarbonizing electricity and fuel supplies; and the rapid market penetration of efficient and clean energy technologies.

In December 2017, CARB released the 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update (Second Update) for public review and comment (CARB 2017a). The Second Update built on the successful framework established in the initial Scoping Plan and First Update, while identifying new technologically feasible and cost-effective strategies that served as the framework to achieve the 2030 GHG target and define the state’s climate change priorities to 2030 and beyond. The strategies’ “known commitments” included implementing renewable energy and energy efficiency (including the mandates of SB 350), increased stringency of the Low-Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS), measures identified in the Mobile Source and Freight Strategies, measures identified in the proposed Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Plan, and increased stringency of SB 375 targets. To fill the gap in additional reductions needed to achieve the 2030 target, the Second Update recommended continuing the Cap-and-Trade Program and a measure to reduce GHGs from refineries by 20%. The Second Update was approved by CARB’s Governing Board on December 14, 2017.

In December 2022 CARB approved the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality which outlines the state’s plan to reduce anthropogenic emissions to 85% below 1990 levels by 2045, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 or earlier. The 2022 Scoping Plan also assesses the progress the state is making toward

reducing GHG emissions by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, as is required by SB 32 and laid out in the Second Update. The carbon neutrality goal requires CARB to expand proposed actions from only the reduction of anthropogenic sources of GHG emissions to also include those that capture and store carbon (e.g., through natural and working lands, or mechanical technologies). The carbon reduction programs build on and accelerate those currently in place, including moving to zero-emission transportation; phasing out use of fossil gas use for heating homes and buildings; reducing use of chemicals and refrigerants with high GWP; providing communities with sustainable options for walking, biking, and public transit; displacement of fossil-fuel-fired electrical generation through use of renewable energy alternatives (e.g., solar arrays and wind turbines); and scaling up new options, such as green hydrogen.²

California Air Resources Board’s Regulations for the Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

CARB’s Regulation for the Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (17 CCR 95100–95157) incorporated by reference certain requirements that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) promulgated in its Final Rule on Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gases (40 CFR 98). Specifically, § 95100(c) of the Mandatory Reporting Regulation incorporated those requirements that USEPA promulgated in the Federal Register on October 30, 2009; July 12, 2010; September 22, 2010; October 28, 2010; November 30, 2010; December 17, 2010; and April 25, 2011. In general, entities subject to the Mandatory Reporting Regulation that emit more than 10,000 MT CO₂e per year are required to report annual GHGs through the California Electronic GHG Reporting Tool. Certain sectors, such as refineries and cement plants, are required to report regardless of emission levels. Entities that emit more than the 25,000 MT CO₂e per year threshold are required to have their GHG emissions report verified by a CARB-accredited third party.

Senate Bill 605 and Senate Bill 1383

SB 605 (2014) requires CARB to complete a comprehensive strategy to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants in the state (California Health and Safety Code § 39730), and SB 1383 (2016) requires CARB to approve and implement that strategy by January 1, 2018 (California Public Resources Code [PRC] § 42652–43654). SB 1383 also establishes specific targets for the reduction of short-lived climate pollutants (40% below 2013 levels by 2030 for CH₄ and HFCs, and 50% below 2013 levels by 2030 for anthropogenic black carbon), and provides direction for reductions from dairy and livestock operations and landfills. Accordingly, CARB adopted its Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy in March 2017. The Reduction Strategy establishes a framework for the statewide reduction of emissions of black carbon, CH₄, and fluorinated gases (CARB, 2017b).

Assembly Bill 1279

The Legislature enacted AB 1279, the California Climate Crisis Act, in September 2022. The bill declares the policy of the state to achieve net zero GHG emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2045, and achieve and maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter.

Although AB 1279 establishes an overall policy to achieve net zero GHG emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2045, recognizing the need to implement CO₂ removal and carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies, the Legislature established a specific target of 85% below 1990 levels by 2045 for anthropogenic GHG emissions. Therefore, the net zero target does not directly apply to development

² Green hydrogen refers to hydrogen that is generated by renewable energy or from low-carbon power, and has significantly lower associated carbon emissions than grey hydrogen, which is produced using natural gas and makes up the majority of hydrogen production. For the purposes of the Draft 2022 Scoping Plan, the term “green hydrogen” is not limited to only electrolytic hydrogen produced from renewables.

projects, but the 2045 target of 85% below 1990 levels represents the reductions required to accomplish the state’s overall net zero policy.

Building Energy

Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations requires California homes and businesses to meet strong energy efficiency measures, thereby lowering their energy use. Title 24 contains numerous subparts, including Part 1 (Administrative Code), Part 2 (Building Code), Part 3 (Electrical Code), Part 4 (Mechanical Code), Part 5 (Plumbing Code), Part 6 (Energy Code), Part 8 (Historical Building Code), Part 9 (Fire Code), Part 10 (Existing Building Code), Part 11 (Green Building Standards Code), Part 12 (Referenced Standards Code). The California Building Code is applicable to all development in California. (Health and Safety Code § 17950 and 18938(b).)

California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 6 (Energy Code)

The California Building Standards Code was established in 1978 and serves to enhance and regulate California’s building standards. Part 6 of Title 24 specifically established Building Energy Efficiency Standards that are designed to ensure that new and existing buildings in California achieve energy efficiency and preserve outdoor and indoor environmental quality. These energy efficiency standards are reviewed every few years by the Building Standards Commission and the California Energy Commission (CEC), and revised if necessary (PRC § 25402[b][1]). The regulations receive input from members of industry and the public to “reduce the wasteful, uneconomic, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy” (PRC § 25402). Every three years, these regulations are carefully scrutinized and analyzed for technological and economic feasibility (PRC § 25402[d]) and cost effectiveness (PRC § 25402[b][2–3]). As a result, these standards save energy, increase electricity supply reliability, increase indoor comfort, avoid the need to construct new power plants, and help preserve the environment.

The 2022 standards improved upon the 2019 standards for new construction of, and additions and alterations to, residential and nonresidential buildings. The CEC updates the Title 24 Energy Code every three years. The CEC adopted the 2022 Title 24 Energy Code in August 2021, and the California Building Standards Commission approved incorporating the updated code into the California Building Standards Code in December 2021. The 2025 Building Code becomes effective for all development applications issued after January 1, 2026. Under the 2019 standards, nonresidential buildings will be 30 percent more energy efficient compared to the 2016 standards, and residential homes will be 7 percent more energy efficient. When accounting for the electricity generated by the solar photovoltaic system, residences constructed under the 2019 standards would use 53 percent less energy compared to homes built to the 2016 standards.

Starting in 2020, the California Energy Code was revised to require solar, and the 2022 Code required “All single-family residential buildings shall have a newly installed photovoltaic (PV) system or newly installed PV modules meeting the minimum qualification requirements specified in Joint Appendix JA11.” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, Part 6, § 150.1(c)(14).) The California Energy Code was further updated in 2022 to require solar for multifamily buildings, and energy storage for structures greater than three habitable stories. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, Part 6, § 170.2(f), (g), (h).) Similarly, solar photovoltaics and energy storage are now required for grocery stores, offices, financial institutions, unleased tenant space, retail, schools, warehouses, auditoriums, convention centers, hotels/motels, libraries, medical office buildings/clinics, restaurants, theaters, and mixed-use buildings where one or more of these building types constitute at least 80 percent of the floor area. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, Part 6, § 140.10(a).)

The 2025 amendments include measures that will further reduce energy use in single-family, multi-family, and non-residential buildings through the following strategies (CEC, 2025):

- For homes, use heat pumps for both space heating and water heating, expanding on the single heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- For nonresidential building types, expanding on the single zone heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- For low-rise multifamily buildings with individual water heaters in dwelling units, use heat pump water heater baselines, expanding on the space heating heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- Encouraging electric-ready buildings to set up owners to use cleaner electric water heating and cooking when they are ready to invest in those technologies.
- Updating photovoltaic and battery energy storage system standards for high-rise multifamily and nonresidential buildings to achieve cost effective installations in consideration of revised net billing and virtual net billing rules.
- Updating space conditioning system control standards for nonresidential buildings.
- Updating ventilation requirements in multifamily buildings to improve indoor air quality.

California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 11

In addition to the CEC’s efforts, in 2008, the California Building Standards Commission adopted the nation’s first green building standards. The California Green Building Standards Code (Part 11 of Title 24) is commonly referred to as California’s Green Building Standards (CALGreen), and establishes minimum mandatory standards and voluntary standards pertaining to the planning and design of sustainable site development, energy efficiency (in excess of the California Energy Code requirements), water conservation, material conservation, and interior air quality. CALGreen took effect in January 2011 and instituted mandatory minimum environmental performance standards for all ground-up, new construction of commercial, low-rise residential and state-owned buildings and schools and hospitals. The 2025 CALGreen standards are the current applicable standards. For nonresidential projects, some of the key mandatory CALGreen 2025 standards involve requirements related to bicycle parking, designated parking for clean air vehicles, electric vehicle charging stations, shade trees, water conserving plumbing fixtures and fittings, outdoor potable water use in landscaped areas, recycled water supply systems, construction waste management, and excavated soil and land clearing debris management (24 CCR 11).

California Code of Regulations, Title 20

Title 20 of the California Code of Regulations requires manufacturers of appliances to meet state and federal standards for energy and water efficiency (20 CCR 1401–1410 et seq.). The CEC certifies an appliance based on a manufacturer’s demonstration that the appliance meets the standards. New appliances regulated under Title 20 include refrigerators, refrigerator-freezers, and freezers; room air conditioners and room air-conditioning heat pumps; central air conditioners; spot air conditioners; vented gas space heaters; gas pool heaters; plumbing fittings and plumbing fixtures; fluorescent lamp ballasts; lamps; emergency lighting; traffic signal modules; dishwaters; clothes washers and dryers; cooking products; electric motors; low-voltage dry-type distribution transformers; power supplies; televisions and consumer audio and video equipment; and battery charger systems. Title 20 presents protocols for testing each type of appliance covered under the regulations, and appliances must meet the standards for energy performance, energy design, water performance, and water design. Title 20 contains three types of standards for appliances: federal and state standards for federally regulated appliances, state standards for federally regulated appliances, and state standards for non-federally regulated appliances.

Renewable Energy and Energy Procurement

SB 1078, EO-14-08, SBX1-2, SB 350, SB 100, SB 1020

SB 1078 (Sher) (September 2002) established the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) program, which required an annual increase in renewable generation by the utilities equivalent to at least 1% of sales, with an aggregate goal of 20% by 2017. EO S-14-08 (November 2008) required that all retail suppliers of electricity in California serve 33% of their load with renewable energy by 2020. SB X1 2 expanded the RPS by establishing a renewable energy target of 20% of the total electricity sold to retail customers in California per year by December 31, 2013, and 33% by December 31, 2020, and in subsequent years. SB 350 (October 2015) further expanded the RPS by establishing a goal of 50% of the total electricity sold to retail customers in California per year by December 31, 2030. SB 100 (2018) increased the standards set forth in SB 350, establishing that 44% of the total electricity sold to retail customers in California per year by December 31, 2024, 52% by December 31, 2027, and 60% by December 31, 2030, be secured from qualifying renewable energy sources. SB 100 states that it is the policy of the state that eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources supply 100% of the retail sales of electricity to California. SB 1020 (September 2022) revises the standards from SB 100, requiring the following percentage of retail sales of electricity to California end-use customers to come from eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources: 90% by December 31, 2035; 95% by December 31, 2040; and 100% by December 31, 2045.

Mobile Sources

State Vehicle Standards (Assembly Bill 1493 and Executive Order B-16-12)

AB 1493 (July 2002) was enacted in response to the transportation sector accounting for more than half of California's CO₂ emissions. AB 1493 required CARB to set GHG emission standards for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, and other vehicles determined by the State Board to be vehicles that are primarily used for noncommercial, personal transportation in the state. The bill required that CARB set GHG emission standards for motor vehicles manufactured in 2009 and all subsequent model years. CARB adopted the standards in September 2004. EO B-16-12 (March 2012) required that state entities under the governor's direction and control support and facilitate the rapid commercialization of zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs). It ordered CARB, the CEC, the California Public Utilities Commission, and other relevant agencies to work with the Plug-in Electric Vehicle Collaborative and the California Fuel Cell Partnership to establish benchmarks to help achieve goals established for 2015, 2020, and 2025. On a statewide basis, EO B-16-12 established a target reduction of GHG emissions from the transportation sector equaling 80% less than 1990 levels by 2050. This directive did not apply to vehicles that have special performance requirements necessary for the protection of the public safety and welfare. Furthermore, individual cities and counties lack the ability to regulate fuel economy standards. 42 U.S.C. Section 7543(a) states: "No state or any political subdivision therefore shall adopt or attempt to enforce any standard relating to the control of emissions from new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle engines subject to this part."

In 2020, the USEPA and the NHTSA approved the Trump administration's SAFE Vehicles Rule Part One and Two, which revoked California's authority to set its own GHG emissions standards and set ZEV mandates in California, and sought to reduce fuel economy standards. However, in March 2022, USEPA reinstated California's authority under the Clean Air Act to implement its own GHG emission standards and ZEV sales mandate. USEPA's action concludes its reconsideration of the 2019 SAFE-1 rule by finding that the actions taken under the previous administration as a part of SAFE-1 were decided in error and are now entirely rescinded.

However, the President of the United States signed an EO, *Unleashing American Energy*, which directed the USEPA to eliminate the social cost of carbon calculation from any federal permitting or regulatory decision and submit recommendations on the legality and continued applicability of the 2009

endangerment finding, among other directives (The White House, 2025). On July 29, 2025, the USEPA released its proposal to rescind the 2009 endangerment finding and repeal all GHG emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines pursuant to CAA Section 202(a) (USEPA, 2025b). The proposed rule would remove GHG-related provisions from 40 CFR part 600 without affecting provisions related to CAFE standards and fuel economy labeling. (Vol. 90 Federal Register, No. 146, 36288.)

In May 2025, the U.S. Senate approved several bills under the Congressional Review Act which purported to rescind California's Clean Air Act waiver which allows California to regulate fuel economy. (H.J.Res. 87, H.J.Res. 88, H.J.Res. 89.) However, the U.S. Senate Parliamentarian and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded that the bills were illegal (GAO, 2025; United States Senate, 2025). Consequently, California filed a lawsuit challenging the revocations. (See *State of California et al v. U.S.A et al.* (2025) N.D. Cal Case No. 25-CV-04966 challenging disapproval of California's Clean Air Act waivers which allowed California to set its own vehicular fuel economy standards) (Office of the Attorney General, 2025).

Furthermore, it is legally infeasible for individual cities, counties, and most state agencies to regulate fuel economy standards. 42 U.S.C. Section 7543(a) states: "No state or any political subdivision therefore shall adopt or attempt to enforce any standard relating to the control of emissions from new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle engines subject to this part."

Heavy-Duty Diesel

CARB adopted the final Heavy-Duty Truck and Bus Regulation on December 31, 2014, to reduce DPM, a major source of black carbon, and NOx emissions from heavy-duty diesel vehicles (13 CCR 2025). The rule requires DPM filters be applied to newer heavier trucks and buses by January 1, 2012, with older vehicles required to comply by January 1, 2015. The rule required nearly all diesel trucks and buses to be compliant with the 2010 model year engine requirement by January 1, 2023. CARB also adopted an Airborne Toxic Control Measure on December 12, 2013, to limit idling of diesel-fueled commercial vehicles. This rule requires diesel-fueled vehicles with gross vehicle weights greater than 10,000 pounds to idle no more than five minutes at any location (13 CCR 2485).

Senate Bill 375

SB 375 (California Government Code § 65080 amendment, 2008) addresses GHG emissions associated with the transportation sector through regional transportation and sustainability plans. SB 375 requires CARB to adopt regional GHG-reduction targets for the automobile and light-truck sector for 2020 and 2035, and to update those targets every eight years. SB 375 requires the state's 18 regional metropolitan planning organizations to prepare an SCS as part of their RTP that will achieve the GHG-reduction targets set by CARB. If a metropolitan planning organization is unable to devise an SCS to achieve the GHG-reduction target, the metropolitan planning organization must prepare an Alternative Planning Strategy demonstrating how the GHG-reduction target would be achieved through alternative development patterns, infrastructure, or additional transportation measures or policies.

A SCS does not (i) regulate the use of land; (ii) supersede the land use authority of cities and counties; or (iii) require that a city's or county's land use policies and regulations, including those in a General Plan, be consistent with it (California Government Code § 65080[b][2][K]). Nonetheless, SB 375 makes regional and local planning agencies responsible for developing those strategies as part of the federally required metropolitan transportation planning process and the state-mandated Housing Element process. In April 2024, SCAG approved its most recent RTP/SCS, Connect SoCal, which included updated targets of an 8% per-capita reduction below 2005 levels by 2020 and a 19% per-capita reduction by 2035 (SCAG, 2024).

Advanced Clean Cars Program and Zero-Emissions Vehicle Program

The Advanced Clean Cars (ACC) I program (January 2012) is an emissions-control program for model years 2015 through 2025. The program combines the control of smog- and soot-causing pollutants and GHG emissions into a single coordinated package of regulations: the Low-Emission Vehicle regulation for criteria air pollutant and GHG emissions, and a technology-forcing regulation for ZEVs that contributes to both types of emission reductions (CARB 2025b). The package includes elements to reduce smog-forming pollution, reduce GHG emissions, promote clean cars, and provide the fuels for clean cars. To improve air quality, CARB has implemented new emission standards to reduce smog-forming emissions beginning with 2015 model year vehicles. It is estimated that by 2025, cars will emit 75% less smog-forming pollution than the average new car sold in 2015. The ZEV program will act as the focused technology of the ACC I program by requiring manufacturers to produce increasing numbers of ZEVs and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles in the 2018 to 2025 model years.

The ACC II program, which was adopted in August 2022, established the next set of low-emission vehicle and ZEV requirements for model years after 2025 to contribute to meeting federal ambient air quality O3 standards and California’s carbon neutrality standards (CARB 2025b). The main objectives of ACC II are as follows:

- Maximize criteria and GHG emission reductions through increased stringency and real-world reductions.
- Accelerate the transition to ZEVs through both increased stringency of requirements and associated actions to support wide-scale adoption and use.

The ACC II rulemaking package also considers technological feasibility, environmental impacts, equity, economic impacts, and consumer impacts.

Executive Order N-79-20

EO N-79-20 (September 2020) requires CARB to develop regulations as follows: (1) passenger vehicle and truck regulations requiring increasing volumes of new ZEVs sold in the state toward the target of 100% of in-state sales by 2035; (2) medium- and heavy-duty vehicle regulations requiring increasing volumes of new zero-emission trucks and buses sold and operated in the state toward the target of 100% of the fleet transitioning to ZEVs by 2045 everywhere feasible and for all drayage trucks to be zero emission by 2035; and (3) strategies, in coordination with other state agencies, the USEPA, and local air districts, to achieve 100% zero-emission from off-road vehicles and equipment operations in the state by 2035. EO N-79-20 called for the development of a Zero-Emissions Vehicle Market Development Strategy, which was released February 2021, to be updated every three years, that ensures coordination and implementation of the EO and outlines actions to support new and used ZEV markets. In addition, the EO specifies identification of near-term actions and investment strategies to improve clean transportation, sustainable freight, and transit options, and calls for development of strategies, recommendations, and actions by July 15, 2021, to manage and expedite the responsible closure and remediation of former oil extraction sites as the state transitions to a carbon-neutral economy.

Advanced Clean Trucks Regulation

The Advanced Clean Trucks Regulation was approved by CARB in 2020. The purpose of the Advanced Clean Trucks Regulation is to accelerate the market for ZEVs in the medium- and heavy-duty truck sector, and to reduce air pollutant emissions generated from on-road mobile sources (CARB 2025c). The regulation has two components: (1) a manufacturer sales requirement and (2) a reporting requirement, as follows:

- **Zero-emission truck sales:** Manufacturers who certify Class 2b–8 chassis or complete vehicles with combustion engines will be required to sell zero-emission trucks as an increasing percentage of their

annual California sales from 2024 to 2035. By 2035, zero-emission truck/chassis sales would need to be 55% of Class 2b–3 truck sales, 75% of Class 4–8 straight truck sales, and 40% of truck tractor sales.

- **Company and fleet reporting:** Large employers, including retailers, manufacturers, brokers, and others, will be required to report information about shipments and shuttle services. Fleet owners with 50 or more trucks will be required to report about their existing fleet operations. This information will help identify future strategies to ensure that fleets purchase available zero-emission trucks and place them in service where suitable to meet their needs.

Solid Waste

Assembly Bill 939, Assembly Bill 341, Assembly Bill 1826, and Senate Bill 1383

In 1989, AB 939, known as the Integrated Waste Management Act (PRC § 40000 et seq.), was passed because of the increase in waste stream and the decrease in landfill capacity. The statute established the California Integrated Waste Management Board (replaced in 2010 by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, or CalRecycle), which oversees a disposal reporting system. AB 939 required jurisdictions to meet diversion goals of all solid waste through source reduction, recycling, and composting activities of 25% by 1995 and 50% by 2000.

AB 341 (2011) amended the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 to include a provision declaring that it is the policy goal of the state that not less than 75% of solid waste generated be source-reduced, recycled, or composted by 2020, and annually thereafter. In addition, AB 341 required CalRecycle to develop strategies to achieve the state’s policy goal. CalRecycle conducted multiple workshops and published documents that identified priority strategies that it believed would assist the state in reaching the 75% goal by 2020.

Other State Actions

Senate Bill 97

SB 97 (2007) directed the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research and CNRA to develop guidelines under CEQA for the mitigation of GHG emissions. CNRA adopted the CEQA Guidelines amendments in December 2009, which became effective in March 2010.

Under the amended CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency has the discretion to determine whether to use a quantitative or qualitative analysis or apply performance standards to determine the significance of GHG emissions resulting from a particular project (14 CCR 15064.4[a]). The CEQA Guidelines require a lead agency to consider the extent to which the project complies with regulations or requirements adopted to implement a statewide, regional, or local plan for the reduction or mitigation of GHG emissions (14 CCR 15064.4[b]). The CEQA Guidelines also allow a lead agency to consider feasible means of mitigating the significant effects of GHG emissions, including reductions in emissions through the implementation of project features or off-site measures (14 CCR 15126.4[c]). The adopted amendments do not establish a GHG emission threshold, instead allowing a lead agency to develop, adopt, and apply its own thresholds of significance or those developed by other agencies or experts. CNRA also acknowledged that a lead agency could consider compliance with regulations or requirements implementing AB 32 in determining the significance of a project’s GHG emissions (CNRA 2009).

With respect to GHG emissions, CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.4(a), as subsequently amended in 2018, states that lead agencies “shall make a good-faith effort, based to the extent possible on scientific and factual data, to describe, calculate or estimate” GHG emissions. The CEQA Guidelines now note that an agency “shall have discretion to determine, in the context of a particular project, whether to (1) Quantify greenhouse gas emissions resulting from a project; and/or (2) Rely on a qualitative analysis or performance-based standards” (14 CCR 15064.4[a]). Section 15064.4(b) states that the lead agency should

consider the following when assessing the significance of impacts from GHG emissions on the environment: (1) the extent to which a project may increase or reduce GHG emissions as compared to the existing environmental setting; (2) whether project emissions exceed a threshold of significance that the lead agency determines applies to the project; and (3) the extent to which the project complies with regulations or requirements adopted to implement a statewide, regional, or local plan for the reduction or mitigation of GHG emissions (14 CCR 15064.4[b]).

Executive Order S-13-08

EO S-13-08 (November 2008) is intended to hasten California’s response to the impacts of global climate change, particularly sea-level rise. Therefore, the EO directs state agencies to take specified actions to assess and plan for such impacts. The final 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy report was issued in December 2009, and an update, *Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk*, followed in July 2014 (CNRA 2014). To assess the state’s vulnerability, the report summarizes key climate change impacts to the state for the following areas: agriculture, biodiversity and habitat, emergency management, energy, forestry, ocean and coastal ecosystems and resources, public health, transportation, and water. Issuance of the *Safeguarding California: Implementation Action Plans* followed in March 2016. In January 2018, the CNRA released the *Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update*, which communicates current and needed actions that state government should take to build climate change resiliency (CNRA, 2018b).

Southern California Association of Governments

As noted above, California’s 18 MPOs have been tasked with creating SCSs in an effort to reduce the region’s vehicle miles traveled in order to help meet AB 32 targets through integrated transportation, land use, housing, and environmental planning. Pursuant to SB 375, CARB set per-capita GHG emission reduction targets from passenger vehicles for each of the state’s 18 MPOs. For SCAG, the state’s initial mandated reductions were set at 8% by 2020 and 13% by 2035. In March 2018, CARB updated the SB 375 targets for SCAG to require 8% reduction by 2020 and a 19% reduction by 2035 in per-capita passenger vehicle GHG emissions.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(B), the SCS must “set forth forecasted development pattern for the region which when integrated with the transportation network, and other transportation measures and policies, will reduce the GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks to achieve the GHG reduction targets.” To that end, SCAG has developed *Connect SoCal*, the 2024–2050 RTP/SCS, which complies with CARB’s updated emissions reduction targets and meets the requirements of SB 375 by achieving per-capita GHG emission reductions relative to 2005 of 8% by 2020 and 19% by 2035 (SCAG 2024). The 2024–2050 RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals, and charts a path toward a more mobile, sustainable and prosperous region by making connections between transportation networks, between planning strategies, and between the people whose collaboration can improve the quality of life for Southern Californians. *Connect SoCal* embodies a collective vision for the region’s future and is developed with input from local governments, county transportation commissions, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and local stakeholders within the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura.

5.6.3. Impact Analysis

5.6.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. All construction- and operation-related emissions are quantified based on

the best available forecast of activities. The Proposed Project consists of the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall, approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank on a 35-foot-tall, elevated pad. The tank would provide a storage capacity of approximately 3.5 million gallons. While the Proposed Project would improve the reliability of the existing water supply system, the additional water storage capacity would not result in an increase in the overall supply of water delivered by the Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas).

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) is a computer model used in California to quantify emissions from land use projects. Additional details for CalEEMod are available in the User Guide and appendices available online at: <https://www.caleemod.com/user-guide>. CalEEMod requires inputs of various project data to quantify GHG emissions, including the construction schedule, types of construction equipment used, and various construction activities. Appendix C, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations, includes a summary of equipment and truck trips used to calculate construction emissions. The construction activities and the duration for each activity are also shown in Table 3-1 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. During construction, GHG emissions would result from onsite construction activities due to the use of various equipment during the 30- to 36-month construction period. GHG emissions would also result from worker commutes and truck trips traveling to and from the project site, including medium-duty trucks delivering fuel, imported fill, and other materials, as well as occasional heavy trucks hauling tank components and potentially trucks hauling away materials from the earthen berm if not re-used onsite. Operational emissions would be limited to periodic vehicle visits, including a single weekly inspection vehicle, up to 14 vehicles during annual maintenance events, and up to seven vehicles during five-year detailed inspections.

Significance Thresholds

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to GHG emissions would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.
2. Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Threshold 1 Impact Criteria (Generation of GHG Emissions)

This threshold provides an analysis of whether the Proposed Project would generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. The VCAPCD has not adopted a mass emissions threshold for GHGs. Other air districts, such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and several other air districts, have adopted a threshold of 10,000 metric tons (MT) of CO₂e per year as the significance criteria for industrial facilities (SCAQMD, 2008), which the VCAPCD has accepted in adopted and/or certified CEQA documents. The threshold of 10,000 MT per year is used to determine the significance of GHG emissions resulting from the construction and operation of the Proposed Project.

Threshold 2 Impact Criteria (Conflict With Plans, Policies, or Regulations)

Because the Proposed Project would include typical construction activities and limited operational and maintenance activities, as described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, this impact is assessed qualitatively. A project is considered consistent with Plans, Policies, or Regulations if it meets the general intent in reducing emissions and does not impede attainment of those goals. A given project need not be in perfect conformity with each and every planning policy or goals to be consistent. A project would be consistent with plans, policies, and regulations if it would further their objectives and not obstruct their attainment.

5.6.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Impact GHG-1: The Proposed Project would not generate GHG emissions in excess of applicable thresholds and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Construction-phase activities include mobilizing vehicles and equipment for construction, crews, and materials. The site work would include site preparation, grading, and tank construction. These activities during construction would cause GHG emissions due to fuels used by the construction vehicles and equipment. Diesel- and gasoline-powered construction equipment would include trucks for materials and crews and the following types of equipment: cranes, dozers, graders, excavators, loaders, and tractors. Equipment and motor vehicles would directly emit CO₂, CH₄, and N₂O due to fuel use and combustion. Motor vehicle fuel combustion emissions in terms of CO₂e would consist of approximately 95 percent CO₂, and CH₄ and N₂O emissions would be at rates of less than one percent of the mass of combustion emissions.

The VCAPCD has not adopted a mass emissions threshold for GHGs. Other air districts, such as the SCAQMD and several other air districts, have adopted a threshold of 10,000 MT of CO₂e per year as the significance criteria for industrial facilities (SCAQMD, 2023), which the VCAPCD has accepted in adopted and/or certified CEQA documents.

Using project assumptions, GHG emissions were calculated for construction and operation of the Proposed Project using the CalEEMod 2022.1 emissions estimator model (CAPCOA, 2022). The estimated total GHG emissions associated with construction of the Proposed Project as shown in the CalEEMod output files provided in Appendix C, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations, would be approximately 1,234 MTCO₂e. Since construction emissions would be for a limited period of a Proposed Project's lifetime, as a standard practice, GHG emissions from construction are amortized over a presumed project lifetime. VCAPCD often assumes a typical project life to be a standard 30 years, however, the Proposed Project's lifetime is estimated to be 75 years of operation, therefore, construction phase GHG emissions were amortized over 75 years. The Proposed Project's amortized construction-related emissions would be 16.5 MTCO₂e per year, and annual operation and maintenance phase GHG emissions would be 396 MTCO₂e, for a total yearly emission rate of 412.5 MTCO₂e per year. If a conservative 30 year estimate were used, the Proposed Project's amortized construction-related emissions would be 41.1 MTCO₂e, and annual operation and maintenance phase GHG emissions would be 396 MTCO₂e, for a total yearly emission rate of 437.1 MTCO₂e per year, which would still be below the significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO₂e per year. The GHG emissions for the Proposed Project would be below the significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO₂e per year. Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Impact GHG-2: The Proposed Project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. GHG emissions for the Proposed Project would be generated from off-road equipment uses and on-road vehicle trips during construction and, as noted above, would be minimal. Operational GHG emissions would be generated from vehicle trips for maintenance and would also be minimal. Estimated GHG emissions of the Proposed Project would be well below the threshold of the State

mandatory reporting regulation. The Proposed Project's GHG emissions would not trigger regulatory action under the State Cap-and-Trade regulations, as discussed in Section 5.6.2.1, *State Regulations*.

The majority of construction emissions would be from mobile sources, including the off-road equipment and on-road motor vehicles, that would not be directly subject to GHG controls but would be users of transportation fuels from refiners and suppliers that are required to comply with CARB Cap-and-Trade and Low Carbon Fuel Standard regulations to reduce GHG emissions. The short-term construction-phase GHG emissions would not interfere with the long-term goal of SB 32 to reduce GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 because of the low level of temporary emissions. Additionally, as described in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*, compliance with applicable airborne toxic control measures would ensure offroad construction equipment and on-road vehicles would be operated and maintained in an efficient manner, which would reduce GHG emissions consistent with the City's CAP's goals.

As discussed in the project description, the tank has been designed so that the water level within the tank would be at the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). The Project's operations would be powered by electricity. Some electricity would be used for security lighting and site monitoring. The Project's electricity would be sourced from Southern California Edison (SCE). In 2023 SCE sourced 41 percent of its electricity from renewable resources. (CPUC, 2024) California's Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") (Pub. Util. Code, § 399.11), requires that all electricity sales be sourced from 50% renewable electricity by 2026, carbon free by 2045. The Proposed Project would benefit from increased renewables with each progressing year. The Proposed Project would not obstruct attainment of these goals.

The Proposed Project would not conflict with plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions, and impacts would be less than significant.

5.6.4. Cumulative Impacts

Because the direct environmental effect of GHG emissions is considered to be the influence of these emissions on global climate change, GHG emissions are by nature inherently a cumulative concern with a cumulatively global scope. The geographic extent of the Proposed Project's cumulative area of impact would be worldwide. As such, the above impact statements address the Proposed Project's cumulative impact, which would be less than cumulatively considerable and would therefore be less than significant.

5.7. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

This section describes the existing environmental setting related to hazards and hazardous materials at the project site, applicable regulations, impacts that would result from the Proposed Project, and any necessary mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts.

5.7.1. Environmental Setting

The approximately 4-acre project site is located at the northeast corner of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road in the eastern portion of the City of Simi Valley. The site is undeveloped and unoccupied, with ruderal vegetation and several mature trees in the northern and northeastern portions of the site. The topography is uneven and includes a 6- to 7-foot-high, 60-foot-wide earthen berm composed of non-engineered fill in the southern and western portions of the site. The site is bounded by a Ventura County Watershed Protection District concrete-lined drainage channel to the north (the Arroyo Simi channel), with commercial offices and warehouses, a small strip mall, and residential uses beyond; single-family residential parcels to the east; and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and residential neighborhoods to the west and southwest across Kuehner Drive. A movie studio occupies the properties to the south and southeast across Smith Road, with the Union Pacific Railroad corridor located south of the studio (see Figure 3-1 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*).

Site visits were conducted on September 13, 15, and 23, 2024. During the site visit on September 13, scattered small pieces of concrete and construction debris were noted throughout the site with several larger piles of concrete and construction debris in the northern part of the site near the trees. Piles of landscaping debris were also noted, primarily in the northern half of the site. Scattered trash, consisting of paper, wrappers, and two shopping carts, was found along and near the berm. Several open and spilled buckets of paint were noted in the northeastern part of the site, east of a fenced storage yard. No other obvious evidence of spills or leaks were seen in the surface soils of the project site.

During the site visit, a portion of the site had been fenced off with a chain link fence and was being used as an outdoor storage yard (approximately 100 feet by 70 feet); materials being stored within the fenced area included several large storage containers, work trucks, miscellaneous equipment and tools, and numerous drums and buckets of varying chemicals, sealants, and paints. The fenced storage yard was locked and the fence covered with screening fabric. Observations were made from outside the fenced-in areas where portions of the site were visible. Most of the drums and buckets observed were stacked and stored on the bare ground with no secondary containment for leaks or spills, with many of the drums and buckets leaning and precariously balanced on other drums and buckets.

5.7.2. Regulatory Setting

5.7.2.1. Federal Regulations

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act and its associated regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 122.26) mandate that most construction sites disturbing one acre or more, and certain industrial activities, must obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Toxic Substances Control Act

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976 provides the United States Environmental Protection Agency with authority to require reporting, record keeping, and testing requirements, and restrictions

relating to chemical substances and/or mixtures. TSCA addresses the production, import, use, and disposal of specific chemicals including polychlorinated biphenyls, asbestos, radon, and lead-based paint.

Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) contains requirements, as set forth in 29 CFR Section 1910, designed to promote worker safety, worker training, and a worker's right to know. 29 CFR Section 1926 specifically applies during construction. OSHA requirements would be in effect during construction and operation of the Proposed Project to ensure the safety of workers.

Hazardous Materials Transport

The United States Department of Transportation, the California Highway Patrol, and the California Department of Transportation regulate the transportation of hazardous materials. Together, these agencies determine the appropriate container types that are required to be used, and license hazardous waste haulers for transportation of hazardous waste on public roads. 49 CFR Section 172 et. seq. requires that every individual or bulk carrier who transports hazardous materials adhere to minimum safety requirements pertaining to the transport of hazardous materials, including: training to recognize and identify hazardous materials and become familiar with hazardous materials requirements, the preparation and implementation of safety and security plans, and marking and labeling hazardous materials sufficiently for safe transport and handling.

5.7.2.2. State Regulations

California Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control and Regional Water Quality Control Boards

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) has broad jurisdiction over hazardous materials management in the State. Within CalEPA, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has primary regulatory responsibility for hazardous waste management and cleanup. Enforcement of regulations is delegated to local jurisdictions that enter into agreements with DTSC for the generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials under the authority of the Hazardous Waste Control Law. Along with DTSC, Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB) are responsible for implementing regulations pertaining to management of soil and groundwater investigation and cleanup. RWQCB regulations are contained in the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 27. Additional State regulations applicable to hazardous materials are contained in CCR Title 22. CCR Title 26 is a compilation of those sections or titles of the CCR that are applicable to hazardous materials.

State Water Resources Control Board

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Proposed Project would be required to obtain coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board NPDES Construction General Permit. Construction activities disturbing one acre or more, or those that are part of a larger common plan disturbing one or more acres, require coverage under the Construction General Permit. This permit mandates the preparation and implementation of a SWPPP to manage stormwater discharges from construction sites. The SWPPP must identify potential sources of pollutants and outline best management practices (BMPs) to prevent dry-weather runoff and reduce pollutants in stormwater discharges. As part of the SWPPP, visual monitoring is required to assess the effectiveness of the implemented BMPs.

Hazardous Materials Management Plans

In January 1996, CalEPA adopted regulations implementing a "Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program" (Unified Program). The six program elements of the Unified

Program are hazardous waste generators and hazardous waste on-site treatment, underground storage tanks, above-ground storage tanks, hazardous material release response plans and inventories, risk management and prevention programs, and Uniform Fire Code hazardous materials management plans and inventories. The program is implemented at the local level by the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). The CUPA is responsible for consolidating the administration of the six program elements within its jurisdiction.

State and federal laws require detailed planning to ensure that hazardous materials are properly handled, used, stored, and disposed of, and, in the event that such materials are accidentally released, to prevent or to mitigate injury to health or the environment. California's Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventory Law, sometimes called the "Business Plan Act," aims to minimize the potential for accidents involving hazardous materials and to facilitate an appropriate response to possible hazardous materials emergencies. The law requires businesses that use hazardous materials to provide inventories of those materials to designated emergency response agencies, to illustrate on a diagram where the materials are stored on site, to prepare an emergency response plan, and to train employees to use the materials safely.

Worker and Workplace Hazardous Materials Safety

Occupational safety standards exist in federal and State laws to minimize worker safety risks from both physical and chemical hazards in the workplace. The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CalOSHA) is responsible for developing and enforcing workplace safety standards and assuring worker safety in the handling and use of hazardous materials. Among other requirements, CalOSHA obligates many businesses to prepare Injury and Illness Prevention Plans and Chemical Hygiene Plans. The Hazard Communication Standard requires that workers be informed of the hazards associated with the materials they handle. For example, manufacturers must appropriately label containers, Safety Data Sheets must be available in the workplace, and employers must properly train workers.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code is 24 CCR Part 9, also referred to as the California Building Standards Code (CBSC). The California Fire Code incorporates the Uniform Fire Code with necessary California amendments. This Code prescribes regulations consistent with nationally recognized good practice for the safeguarding to a reasonable degree of life and property from the hazards of fire explosion, and dangerous conditions arising from the storage, handling, and use of hazardous materials and devices, and from conditions hazardous to life or property in the use or occupancy of buildings or premises and provisions to assist emergency response personnel.

California Health and Safety Code

State fire regulations, as set forth in California Health and Safety Code Sections 13000 et seq., include regulations for building standards (as also set forth in the CBC), fire protection and notification systems, fire protection devices, such as extinguishers and smoke alarms, high-rise building and childcare facility standards, and fire suppression training.

5.7.2.3. Regional and Local Regulations

Ventura County Resource Management Agency

The Ventura County Resource Management Agency (VCRMA) serves as the CUPA for Ventura County. The VCRMA provides regulatory oversight for six statewide environmental programs, including: Hazardous Waste Program, Hazardous Materials Business Plan, California Accidental Release Prevention Program, Underground Hazardous Material Storage Tanks, Aboveground Petroleum Storage tanks/Spill Prevention

Control and Countermeasure Plan, and the Onsite Hazardous Waste Treatment/Tiered Permit. For implementation of these programs, the VCRMA implements various State and federal laws and regulations, County Code, and local policies.

City of Simi Valley Municipal Code

The Simi Valley Municipal Code is a collection of codes – laws, ordinances, and regulations – that are codified according to the activities they regulate (traffic, income taxes, fire prevention, etc.). This collection forms the City's overall legal code. Title 5 (*Public Welfare*), Title 6 (*Sanitation and Health*), and Title 9 (*Development Code*) contain laws, ordinances, and regulations applicable to this section. Relevant sections include the following:

- **5-36.105(d) - Maintenance requirements for multi-residential, commercial, and industrial property.** Property shall be free of trash, litter, debris, packing boxes, solid waste, lumber, construction material, and salvage materials (except where otherwise permitted by this Code), any furniture (except for furniture specifically designed for outdoor use), broken or inoperative furniture, appliances, machinery and equipment, and any other personal property causing an unsightly appearance or nuisance.
- **6-6.03(a) - Nuisances: Notices to abate.** Whenever a nuisance endangering the public health shall, in the opinion of the Health Officer, be ascertained to exist on any premises or in any dwelling or other place, the Health Officer shall notify in writing the owner of such premises or dwelling, or his agent or the person having the control of such premises, dwelling, or other place, to abate or remove such nuisance.
- **6-10.02 - Liability for unauthorized disposal releases.** If the City takes any corrective action which, in the judgment of either the City Manager or the District Manager of any special district governed by the Council, or their designees, is reasonably necessary to remedy or prevent substantial danger to the public health, domestic livestock, wildlife, or the environment arising out of any unauthorized disposal or release of any hazardous waste or substance, the following described persons shall be jointly and severally liable to the City for the cost incurred by it in taking any such corrective action:
 - (a) The person whose negligent and/or willful act or omission proximately caused any such disposal or release;
 - (b) The person who owned or had custody or control of the hazardous waste or substance at the time of such disposal or release, without regard to fault or proximate cause; and
 - (c) The person who owned or had custody or control of the container which held such hazardous waste or substance at the time of, or immediately prior to, such disposal or release, without regard to fault or proximate cause.
- **9-4.010(b) - Declarations.** All agencies of the City government which regulate private and public projects which may have an effect on the quality of the environment shall regulate such projects so that consideration is given to preventing environmental damages.

City of Simi Valley General Plan

The City of Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update) includes goals and objectives related to hazards mitigation, emergency response, and disaster recovery, as well as a framework for implementation to carry out these policies. Goals related to hazards can be found in the Safety and Noise Element

(City of Simi Valley, 2021) of the General Plan. Goals and policies relevant to this analysis include the following:

- **Policy S-12.7 Phase I Site Assessment.** Require Phase I site assessments for new development proposed on land that may be contaminated with hazardous materials or waste, including commercial shopping centers where residential development is allowed.
- **Policy S-12.9 Water Supply and Air Protection.** Work with public agencies and private organizations to prevent the introduction and spread of hazardous materials in the air and the water supply.

5.7.3. Impact Analysis

5.7.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, as well as a site visit conducted by Aspen Environmental Group in September 2024.

Significance Thresholds

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to hazards and hazardous materials would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.
2. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.
3. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.
4. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.
5. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.
6. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
7. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving Thresholds 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 would either be less than significant or would not result from the Proposed Project (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis). The following analysis solely focuses on Threshold 2.

5.7.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Impact HAZ-1 Prior to mitigation, the Proposed Project could result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment. With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Operation of the Proposed Project would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not involve the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials that could cause a release into the environment. Potential impacts would be limited to the construction period.

The following sections include a discussion of impacts related to accidental releases during project construction, which could result during the use of hazardous materials or the accidental disturbance of potentially contaminated soil.

Hazardous Materials Use. Construction of the Proposed Project would temporarily increase the transport and use of hazardous materials. Such substances include diesel fuel, oil, solvents, coatings, paint, and other similar materials brought onto the site for use and storage during the construction period. The presence of hazardous materials during project construction activities could result in accidental upset or release of hazardous materials if they are not properly stored and secured.

Hazardous materials used during project construction would be disposed of offsite in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, such as the Toxic Substances Control Act, 49 CFR Section 172 et. seq., and City of Simi Valley Municipal Code Section 6-10.02. Additionally, the Proposed Project would adhere to BMPs required by the SWPPP, which include hazardous material management measures. The SWPPP is part of the Proposed Project and the contractor would be required to comply with the associated BMP requirements BMPs would include, but are not limited to:

- **Proper Storage:** Storing materials in watertight containers, covered areas, and with secondary containment.
- **Minimizing Exposure:** Avoiding stockpiling granular materials near storm drains and covering them during wet weather.
- **Good Housekeeping:** Implementing procedures for handling spills, disposing of hazardous waste, and maintaining a clean work site.

The SWPPP would also include a plan for preventing and responding to spills of hazardous materials, detailing:

- Procedures for containing spills and leaks.
- Response actions and responsible personnel.
- Procedures for notifying authorities in case of a spill.

The SWPPP would also require training for employees on proper material handling, spill response, and SWPPP implementation and maintenance. Regular inspections and monitoring of the site would be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of BMPs and ensure compliance with the SWPPP. The SWPPP

itself would need to be kept on-site and updated as necessary to reflect any changes in site activities or hazardous materials used. With the implementation of the SWPPP, accidental releases involving the use, storage, or transportation of hazardous materials used during project construction would be avoided and would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.

Potentially Contaminated Soil. Based upon review of the following sources, no known active hazardous material sites or contaminated soils are present within or in the vicinity of the project site.

- WRCB GeoTracker database (SWRCB, 2022)
- DTSC EnviroStor database (DTSC, 2022)
- EDR Report (EDR, 2026)

During a site visit in September 2024, trash and debris were noted throughout the site, as discussed above in Section 5.7.1. A portion of the site had been fenced off with a chain link fence and was being used as an outdoor storage yard (approximately 100 feet by 70 feet). In this storage yard, most of the drums and buckets observed were stacked and stored on the bare ground with no secondary containment for leaks or spills, with many of the drums and buckets leaning and precariously balanced on other drums and buckets. As a result, there is potential for contamination of the underlying soil.

Project construction would require the excavation and transport of soils that could be contaminated. All soils removed during construction would be transported and disposed of in accordance with applicable codes and regulations, such as the Clean Water Act and associated SWPPP, Toxic Substances Control Act, and 49 CFR Section 172 et. seq. (see Section 5.7.1, *Regulatory Setting*, for details), to minimize potential hazards to construction workers and the surrounding community. Ground-disturbing activities associated with the Proposed Project would inadvertently create a significant hazard to the public or the environment if contaminated soils are not properly handled and contained, which would be a significant impact without mitigation. The implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 would lessen impacts by requiring procedures for containing and disposing of potentially contaminated soil to prevent an accidental release. With the implementation of this mitigation measure, accidental releases would be avoided so as not to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Impacts related to accidental releases would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

HAZ-1 Soil Management Procedures. Construction workers shall notify Calleguas if any evidence of soil contamination is observed at the project site. Calleguas would implement procedures and protocols for safe storage, stockpiling, and disposal of any contaminated soils if encountered during construction.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1, contaminated soil would be contained and disposed of to prevent an accidental release that could create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

5.7.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic extent of this analysis is within approximately 2 miles from the project site. This geographic scope is appropriate because potential accidental releases of contaminated soils would not be expected to travel beyond this area, since contaminated soil tends to stay localized due to the contaminants binding with soil particles with their movement primarily relying on physical displacement (unlike contaminated water, which is a fluid and easily carries dissolved pollutants over vast distances via natural flow dynamics).

Past, present and probable future projects within the geographic extent, collectively, could result in a cumulatively significant hazard resulting primarily due to accidental releases. The analysis below further evaluates whether the Proposed Project's incremental contribution to this cumulatively significant impact would be considered cumulatively considerable.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Impact C-HAZ-1: With the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts related to accidental releases would not be cumulatively considerable.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Cumulative Projects. As identified in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*), cumulative projects that are within the geographic extent for hazards and hazardous materials include Projects #1 through 20. These projects all likely involve ground-disturbing activities to some degree that have the potential to affect potentially contaminated soils. While each project is typically required to implement similar mitigation measures to that of Proposed Project as well as comply with regulations to prevent accidental releases depending on each of the site's conditions, these projects are assumed to result in cumulatively significant impacts related to hazards to the public or environment in the absence of mitigation.

Proposed Project's Contribution. The Proposed Project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts related to accidental releases without mitigation. However, the Proposed Project would implement Mitigation Measure HAZ-1, which would require construction workers to notify Calleguas of any evidence of soil contamination and require Calleguas to implement procedures and protocols for safe storage, stockpiling, and disposal of any contaminated soils, such that the Proposed Project's overall impact related to the accidental release of contaminated soils would be reduced. With the implementation of this mitigation measure, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts related to accidental releases would be less than cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mitigation Measures

HAZ-1 Soil Management Procedures. See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact HAZ-1.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts related to accidental releases would be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Summary of Significance Findings

Project Impacts. The accidental release of potentially contaminated soils would be avoided or minimized with the implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1. The Proposed Project's impacts related to accidental releases would be less than significant with mitigation.

Cumulative Impacts. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant impacts related to accidental releases would be less than cumulatively considerable with the implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-1.

5.8. Noise

This section describes the fundamentals of noise, the existing environmental setting for noise, applicable regulations associated with noise, thresholds for significant noise impacts, the sound levels that may result in short-term construction-related impacts, as well as future buildout conditions, and any necessary mitigation measures that would reduce these impacts. The project site is located in the City of Simi Valley.

Noise Fundamentals

Technical acoustical terms used in this section are defined in Table 5.8-1. Sound is defined as any variation in air pressure that can be detected by the human ear. Noise is typically described as unwanted sound and is often considered objectionable due to being disturbing or annoying. The objectionable qualities of sound are generally related to its pitch or loudness. Pitch refers to the frequency of the vibrations that produce sound; generally, intermediate-pitched sounds are perceived as louder by the human ear than sounds of lower or higher frequencies. Loudness is determined by the amplitude or intensity of sound waves, combined with the ear’s sensitivity to those waves; in general, higher amplitudes correspond to louder perceived sounds.

Table 5.8-1. Definitions of Acoustical Terms

Acoustical Term	Definition
Sound	A vibratory disturbance created by a vibrating object, which when transmitted by pressure waves through a medium such as air, is capable of being detected by a receiving mechanism such as the human ear or a microphone.
Noise	Typically defined as sound that is undesirable.
Sound Pressure Level	The quantity that is measured directly by a sound level meter. Noise sources are often described using a sound pressure level in dBA at a specified distance.
Decibel (dB)	A unit describing the amplitude of sound equal to 20 times the logarithm to base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to a reference pressure. The reference pressure for air is 20 micropascals (mPa).
Frequency, Hertz (Hz)	The number of complete pressure fluctuations per second above and below atmospheric pressure.
A-Weighted Sound Level (dBA)	The sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes the very low- and very high-frequency components of the sound in a manner similar to the frequency response of the human ear and correlates well with subjective reactions to noise.
Equivalent-Continuous Sound Level (Leq)	The energy-averaged A-weighted noise level during the measurement period. The hourly Leq is used for this report.
Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL)	The energy-averaged A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, which is obtained by adding 5 dB to sound levels in the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and 10 dB to sound levels between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
Day/Night Sound Level (Ldn)	The energy-averaged A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, which is obtained by adding 10 dB to sound levels measured at night between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

The fundamental model of acoustics consists of three components: a sound (i.e., noise) source, a receptor, and the propagation path between them. The loudness of the source, along with any obstructions or atmospheric conditions affecting the propagation path, determines the sound level and the characteristics of the noise perceived by the receptor.

The amplitude of pressure waves generated by a noise source determines the perceived loudness. Although sound pressure amplitude is measured in micropascals (mPa), the wide range of pressure values

encountered (from less than 100 to over 100,000,000 mPa) necessitates the use of a logarithmic scale. Consequently, sound pressure levels are typically expressed in decibels (dB).

The dB scale alone does not fully characterize how humans perceive noise. To approximate the sensitivity of the human ear, sound levels across individual frequency bands are weighted based on human auditory response. The most common metric is the A-weighted sound level (dBA), which approximates the response of the average young ear to most ordinary sounds. People's judgments regarding the relative loudness or annoyance of a sound generally correlate well with A-weighted sound levels.

Because decibels are logarithmic units, sound pressure levels cannot be combined or subtracted through simple arithmetic. On the dB scale, a doubling of sound energy results in an increase of approximately 3 dB, so when two identical sound sources are producing the same energy, their combined sound level at a given location would be 3 dB higher than the level from a single source. For example, if one excavator produces a sound pressure level of 80 dBA at a specific location, two excavators operating simultaneously at the same location would produce a combined level of approximately 83 dBA – not 160 dBA. The cumulative sound level from multiple sources, such as several pieces of construction equipment, can be determined using logarithmic decibel addition. Where ambient noise levels are high in comparison to a new noise source, there will be a small change in noise levels. For example, when an ambient noise level of 70 dBA is combined with a noise source generating 60 dBA, the resulting noise level equals 70.4 dBA. Typical environmental noise levels are presented in Table 5.8-2.

Table 5.8-2. Typical Noise Levels in the Environment

Common Outdoor Noise Source	Noise Level (dBA)	Common Indoor Noise Source
	120 dBA	
Jet fly-over at 984 feet		Rock concert
	110 dBA	
Pile driver at 100 feet	100 dBA	
		Night club with live music
	90 dBA	
Large truck passes by at 50 feet		
	80 dBA	Noisy restaurant
		Garbage disposal at 3 feet
Gas lawn mower at 100 feet	70 dBA	Vacuum cleaner at 10 feet
Commercial/Urban area daytime		Normal speech at 3 feet
Suburban expressway at 300 feet	60 dBA	
Suburban daytime		Active office environment
	50 dBA	
Urban area nighttime		
	40 dBA	
Suburban nighttime		
Quiet rural areas	30 dBA	Library
		Quiet bedroom at night
Wilderness area	20 dBA	
	10 dBA	Quiet recording studio
Threshold of human hearing	0 dBA	Threshold of human hearing

dBA = A-weighted decibels
 Source: Caltrans, 2013

Environmental sounds are often described using an average sound level that represents the same acoustical energy as the total of all time-varying events. This average level is known as the equivalent continuous sound level, or Leq. Although a common averaging period is one hour, the Leq can describe noise levels over any specified duration. In addition to the Leq, two other noise metrics – Ldn (Day-Night Average Sound Level) and CNEL (Community Noise Equivalent Level) – are used in this report. Definitions for Leq, Ldn, and CNEL are provided in Table 5.8-1.

Noise Attenuation

When noise propagates over a distance, the noise level decreases, or attenuates, depending on the type of noise source and the characteristics of the propagation path. Noise from a localized source (i.e., a point source) spreads uniformly outward in a spherical pattern, a phenomenon referred to as spherical spreading. For a point source – such as mechanical or electrical equipment (e.g., a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning [HVAC] unit) or an idling vehicle (e.g., a tractor or semi-truck) – sound levels typically decrease at a rate of approximately 6 dBA per doubling of distance over acoustically soft sites, which are sites with absorptive ground surfaces, such as vegetation or loose soil. Acoustically hard sites, by contrast, consist of reflective surfaces such as asphalt, concrete, or smooth bodies of water.

At hard sites, no excess ground attenuation is assumed; the reduction in noise levels is limited to geometric spreading, with an excess ground attenuation adjustment of approximately 1.5 dBA per doubling of distance typically applied where appropriate. For example, an outdoor condenser fan producing a sound level of 60 dBA at 50 feet over a hard site would attenuate to approximately 54 dBA at 100 feet and 48 dBA at 200 feet from the source.

Natural topography (such as hills, ravines, or berms) and constructed barriers (such as buildings or sound walls) that obstruct the line-of-sight between a noise source and a receptor can further reduce noise levels when the receptor is located within the "shadow zone" of the obstruction. This reduction is known as barrier insertion loss. If a receptor is positioned behind a barrier but retains partial visibility of the noise source, insertion loss still results but to a lesser extent. Noise barriers can provide reductions in noise levels ranging from approximately 5 dBA (when the barrier just breaks the line-of-sight) to as much as 20 dBA with a sufficiently large and properly designed barrier (Caltrans, 2013). Sound waves diffract (i.e., bend and spread) over and around barriers; therefore, barrier effectiveness improves as the barrier is placed closer to either the noise source or the receiver. Thus, barriers should extend above the height of either the source or the receiver, depending on placement (i.e., adjacent to the source versus adjacent to the receptor), with greater attenuation achieved when barriers are installed at both the source and receptor locations.

Human Responses to Noise

The human response to environmental noise is subjective and varies considerably among individuals. While community noise is not typically associated with direct physiological harm, such as hearing impairment at normal exposure levels, noise is often cited as a health concern due to its effects on general well-being, stress levels, and overall quality of life. The health impacts of community noise primarily arise from its interference with critical human activities, including sleep, speech, recreation, and tasks requiring concentration or coordination.

Hearing loss can result from the highest intensity levels of noise exposure. In most community settings, the primary concern is the contribution of noise to stress, disruption of daily activities, and increased public annoyance with the noise source. These effects form the basis for land use planning policies aimed at minimizing exposure to excessive community noise levels and protecting public health and welfare.

No completely satisfactory method is available for measuring the subjective effects of noise or the corresponding reactions of annoyance and dissatisfaction. This difficulty arises primarily from the wide variation in individual thresholds of annoyance and differences in habituation based on personal experiences with noise. An important method for evaluating a person's subjective response to a new noise source is to compare the new noise source to the existing environment to which individuals have already adapted – the so-called ambient environment.

In general, the greater the increase of a new noise above the existing ambient noise level, the less acceptable the new noise is likely to be perceived. With regard to increases in A-weighted noise levels, an understanding of the following general relationships is helpful in interpreting this analysis:

- Except in carefully controlled laboratory experiments, a change of 1 dB cannot be perceived by humans.
- Outside of the laboratory, a 3-dB change is considered a just-perceivable difference.
- A change in a level of at least 5 dB is required before any noticeable change in community response would be expected. An increase of 5 dB is typically considered substantial.
- A 10-dB change is subjectively heard as an approximate doubling in loudness and would almost certainly cause an adverse change in community response.

Sensitive Receptors

Noise exposure goals for various types of land uses reflect the varying noise sensitivities associated with those uses. Noise-sensitive land uses are generally considered to include residences, schools, hospitals and care facilities, recreation and open space areas, hotels and motels, and places of worship. Vibration-sensitive receptors, which are similar to noise-sensitive receptors, include residences and institutional uses, such as schools, churches, and hospitals.

Effects of Noise on Human Activities

The extent to which environmental noise causes increased levels of annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption varies greatly among individuals and depends on several factors, including the loudness or suddenness of the noise, the perceived information value of the noise (e.g., aircraft overflights, a child crying, fire alarms), and an individual's sleep state and sleep habits. Over time, individuals may also adapt to recurring noise events and elevated ambient noise levels.

Speech Communication

For most noise-sensitive land uses, an interior noise level of 45 dBA Leq is generally identified as necessary to protect speech communication and ensure 100 percent intelligibility of speech sounds. Assuming an average outdoor-to-indoor sound reduction of approximately 20 dB (a typical level of attenuation with windows closed), this interior standard corresponds to an exterior noise level of approximately 65 dBA Leq.

For outdoor voice communication, an exterior noise level of 60 dBA Leq typically allows for normal conversation at distances up to 2 meters with approximately 95 percent sentence intelligibility. Based on these thresholds, speech interference generally begins to result when steady noise levels reach approximately 60 to 65 dBA.

Annoyance and Sleep Disruption

Land use compatibility determinations related to potential increases in annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption are typically based on cumulative noise exposure metrics, such as CNEL or Ldn. One of the most comprehensive and widely accepted evaluations of the relationship between noise exposure and community annoyance was developed by Theodore J. Schultz in 1978 (Schultz, 1978). Schultz's

research provided the foundational support for the use of Ldn as a standard descriptor for environmental noise impacts.

Schultz's work identified a correlation between cumulative noise exposure and the percentage of individuals who reported being highly annoyed by transportation noise. This relationship, when expressed graphically, is referred to as the Schultz curve and continues to serve as a basis for noise standards. According to the Schultz curve, approximately 13 percent of the population is highly annoyed at a noise exposure level of 65 dBA Ldn. The curve also shows that the percentage of individuals describing themselves as highly annoyed increases steadily between 55 and 70 dBA Ldn, with 65 dBA Ldn often cited as a key threshold separating lower and higher rates of reported annoyance.

Allowing for an average exterior-to-interior noise reduction of approximately 20 dB, an exterior noise level of 65 dBA CNEL/Ldn would correspond to an interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL/Ldn. An interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL/Ldn is generally considered sufficient to protect against activity interference at most noise-sensitive land uses, including residential dwellings, and is also adequate to prevent sleep disruption.

Within California, the California Building Code establishes 45 dBA CNEL as the maximum acceptable interior noise level for residential uses, excluding detached single-family dwellings. The use of the 45 dBA CNEL/Ldn threshold is further supported by the State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research's (OPR, renamed to Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation in July 2024) General Plan Guidelines, which recommend 45 dBA CNEL/Ldn as the maximum allowable interior noise level to permit normal residential activities (OPR, 2017).

Numerous studies have linked excessive noise exposure to adverse health effects, including hearing impairment and sleep disturbance (Hassan, 2024). These potential health impacts may result from both short-term exposure to very high noise levels and long-term exposure to lower, chronic noise levels. Acute exposure to sound levels greater than 120 dBA – such as those experienced at a rock concert – can cause mechanical damage to the ear and result in hearing impairment (Natarajan et al., 2023).

According to the World Health Organization (Berglund et al., 1999) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA, 1974), a daily average noise exposure of 70 dBA Leq is identified as a maximum limit that will prevent any measurable hearing loss over a lifetime.

Even at this level, disturbances to sleep and concentration may result, and potential links to chronic health effects, such as hypertension and heart disease, have been identified (UTHealth School of Public Health, 2019). Research into these chronic health impacts remains ongoing and information to evaluate the specific public health impacts of an individual project is currently insufficient.

Accordingly, this summary acknowledges that such health effects could potentially result. A definitive evaluation of public health impacts related to noise exposure from the Proposed Project cannot be provided.

Groundborne Vibration

Groundborne vibration is the oscillatory motion of soil relative to its equilibrium position. Like sound, vibration frequencies are measured in hertz (Hz). The amplitude of vibration is typically described either as peak particle velocity (PPV), in units of inches per second (in/sec), or as vibration velocity in decibels (VdB).

Vibration can be a serious concern for nearby land uses when activities cause buildings to shake or produce rumbling sounds. Vibration from sources such as buses and trucks traveling on smooth roads is rarely perceptible, even at nearby locations. Most perceptible indoor vibration is caused by sources within buildings, such as operating equipment, people moving, or doors slamming. Common outdoor sources include heavy construction equipment and activities (such as blasting and pile driving), steel-wheeled trains, and heavy trucks on rough roads.

Table 5.8-3 summarizes common sources of groundborne vibration velocity levels (measured in decibel units [VdB]) and the typical human response to vibration for a person at rest in quiet surroundings. Tolerance to vibration increases considerably during physical activity. Human response is also influenced by the duration and frequency of vibration events, with increased exposure generally resulting in decreased tolerance. Typical background vibration levels in residential areas are usually 50 VdB or lower, well below the approximate human perception threshold of 65 VdB.

Table 5.8-3. Typical Levels of Groundborne Vibration

Human or Structural Response	Vibration Velocity (VdB)	Typical Sources
Threshold for minor cosmetic damage to fragile buildings	100	Blasting, pile driving, vibratory compaction equipment
Difficulty with tasks such as reading a video or computer screen	90	Heavy tracked vehicles (bulldozers, cranes, drill rigs) Freight rail, typical; Commuter rail, upper range
Threshold for residential annoyance for infrequent events (e.g., commuter rail)	80	Rapid transit, upper range Commuter rail, typical
Approximate threshold for residential annoyance for frequent events (e.g., rapid transit)	70	Bus or truck over bump or on rough roads Rapid transit, typical
Approximate threshold for human perception of vibration	60	Typical bus or truck on public road
Below perceptibility	50	Typical background vibration in residential areas

VdB = vibration velocity in decibels
 Source: FTA, 2018

Groundborne Noise

Groundborne noise is a secondary effect of groundborne vibration. The vibration of a building or structure can cause noise to radiate into the interior space from the rattling of windows, doors, dishes, or other objects. Low-frequency vibration can also produce groundborne noise perceived as a low rumble. Groundborne noise is quantified by the A-weighted sound level (dBA; see Table 5.8-1) inside the building and is generally 25 to 40 dBA lower than the corresponding vibration velocity level measured in VdB. For example, a groundborne vibration level of 65 VdB can produce groundborne noise levels up to 40 dBA, which may disturb sleep. A vibration level of 85 VdB can produce groundborne noise levels up to 60 dBA, which can be disruptive to daytime noise-sensitive land uses, such as schools (FTA, 2018).

Groundborne vibration is not a common environmental concern, as sources of any notable levels of vibration are relatively limited and attenuate rapidly with distance. For example, construction vibration from a vibratory roller producing 0.210 inches per second (in/sec) PPV at 25 feet would diminish to approximately 0.07 in/sec (roughly 97 VdB) with a doubling of distance.

5.8.1. Environmental Setting

Existing Noise Environment

The approximately 4-acre project site is located at the northeast corner of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road in the eastern portion of the City of Simi Valley. The site is undeveloped and unoccupied, with ruderal vegetation and several mature trees in the northern and northeastern portions of the site. The topography is uneven and includes a 6- to 7-foot-high, 60-foot-wide earthen berm composed of non-engineered fill in the southern portion of the site. The project site is bounded by a Ventura County Watershed Protection District concrete-lined drainage channel to the north (the Arroyo Simi channel), with commercial offices and warehouses, a small strip mall, and residential uses beyond; single-family residential parcels to the

east; and Rocky Pointe Natural Park and residential neighborhoods to the west and southwest across Kuehner Drive. A movie studio occupies the properties to the south and southeast across Smith Road, with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor located beyond the studio (see Figure 3-1 in Chapter 3, *Project Description*).

The surrounding land uses are comprised of a mix of residential, commercial, recreational, and transportation-related uses, all of which contribute to the existing noise environment. Dominant noise sources in the area include local and regional traffic on Kuehner Drive and Smith Road, intermittent train activity along the UPRR corridor 700 feet to the south, and typical residential and commercial operations. Ambient sound levels in such settings are generally influenced by proximity to these sources and tend to remain relatively stable over time unless surrounding land uses substantially change. For example, a doubling of traffic volume with a similar vehicle mix would result in a 3-dBA increase, which is generally considered the threshold of perceptibility to the average listener. Accordingly, in the absence of major land use or infrastructure changes, ambient noise levels at the project site when project construction would be completed are expected to be consistent with current conditions.

Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptors to the Project Site

Nearby noise sensitive receptors include single-family residential areas to the north; a recreational vehicle (RV) park (Rocky Trailer Village) and multi-family residential areas to the northwest; single-family residential areas to the east; and Rocky Pointe Natural Park to the west, with a mobile home development to the west and southwest along Rockingham Drive, beyond Rocky Pointe Natural Park. For the purposes of this noise impact analysis, the study area includes the nearest sensitive noise receptors that could be affected by construction noise, onsite operational noise, or traffic generated by the Proposed Project or an alternative. These receptors include a single-family residence immediately east of the site, tenants at the RV park (Rocky Trailer Village) northwest of the site beyond Kuehner Drive, the single-family residence to the northwest and at the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Katherine Road, visitors to Rocky Pointe Natural Park located west of the site across Kuehner Drive, and the mobile home development west and southwest of the park along Rockingham Drive (Table 5.8-4 below).

Table 5.8-4. Project Nearby Noise-Sensitive Receptors

Receptor	Description	Distance to Site Boundary	Distance to Center of Site
R1	Single-family residence to the east	Adjacent	360
R2	Rocky Pointe Natural Park to the west	50	410
R3	RV park located to the northwest	115	475
R4	Single-family residence to the northwest	250	580
R5	Mobile home development to the west	430	830

As shown in Table 5.8-4, the closest sensitive receptor, the single-family residence to the east, is approximately 360 feet from the center of the Project site (see Figure 5.8-1); Rocky Pointe Natural Park is located approximately 410 feet from the site center; and the RV park is located approximately 475 feet away. The single-family residence at the southwest intersection of Kuehner Drive and Katherine Road is located approximately 580 feet from the site center, while the mobile home development located west of Rocky Pointe Natural Park is located approximately 830 feet from the center of the project site. All other receptors are located at greater distances from the project site and would benefit from intervening structures that provide partial shielding of construction noise; therefore, they are not expected to experience substantial ambient noise level increases from project activities.

The single-family residence immediately east of the project site is within an area zoned “Residential Low Density” (RL) under the City of Simi Valley General Plan (City of Simi Valley, 2025b). Rocky Pointe Natural

Park is designated “Residential Medium Density” (RM), and the RV park and mobile home development to the north and west, respectively, are zoned “Mobile Home” (MH).

Baseline Noise Measurements

Short-term noise measurements were conducted to characterize existing ambient conditions using the equivalent continuous sound level (Leq), which represents the energy-averaged sound level over the measurement period. Three 15-minute measurements were collected at locations representative of the nearest sensitive receptors and the general ambient environment of the project site, and are considered representative of the areas affected by the project. Measurements were taken on September 13, 2024, by Aspen Environmental Group using a Type 2 3M Sound Examiner meter, field-calibrated immediately prior to use (Aspen Environmental Group, 2024). Nighttime Leq values were estimated by applying a conservative adjustment to the measured daytime levels, consistent with standard industry practice and published literature (FTA, 2018; Caltrans, 2020).

Table 5.8-5 summarizes the daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) Leq levels taken at the three short-term noise measurement sites (ST-1, ST-2, and ST-3), which are shown on Figure 5.8-1. The primary noise sources at ST-1 and ST-2 were a train passing by on the nearby UPRR tracks, a plane flying overhead, and cars traveling along Kuehner Drive. Out of the three short-term measurement sites, the site with the highest maximum noise level (Lmax) was ST-1 at the northwest project corner, at approximately 82 dB, which can be primarily attributed to noise from vehicle traffic along Kuehner Drive. The second highest Lmax level of 71 dB was measured at ST-3, in the southeastern corner of the project site, which can be primarily attributed to noise from the mechanical operation of a City of Simi Valley water pump station (Ventura County Waterworks District No. 8) to the southeast of the project site, across Smith Road.

Table 5.8-5. 15-Minute Ambient Noise Level Measurements

Location	Description	Leq	Lmax	Lmin	Nearest Receptor
ST-1	Located at the northwest corner of the project site near the intersection of Kuehner Drive and the Arroyo Simi channel	65.0	82.2	42.2	Rocky Pointe Natural Park and RV Park (Rocky Trailer Village)
ST-2	Located halfway along the northern boundary near the warehouse building to the north	48.9	61.2	33.6	Commercial Warehouse ¹
ST-3	Located at the southeast corner of the site near Smith Road	56.9	71.7	51.1	Single-Family Residence

ST-# = short-term noise measurement sites shown on Figure 5.8-1; Leq = equivalent continuous sound level; Lmax = maximum sound level; Lmin = minimum sound level; RV = recreational vehicle

1 - While the commercial warehouse is labeled as the nearest receptor, commercial land uses are typically not considered a sensitive noise receptor for the purposes of CEQA noise analyses.

Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Figure 5.8.1. Short-Term Noise Measurement Sites



Source: Aspen Environmental Group, 2024

Based on field observations, the only source of groundborne vibration in the project vicinity is vehicular travel on local roadways and the Union Pacific Railroad located approximately 700 feet south of the project site. According to an FTA technical study, typical road traffic induced vibration levels are unlikely to be perceptible by people, and the distance and intervening terrain reduce vibration levels from passing trains to imperceptible levels. Typical background vibration levels in such areas is usually 50 Vdb or lower, or below the threshold of perception for humans. (FTA, 2006.)

5.8.2. Regulatory Setting

5.8.2.1. Federal Regulations

Noise

Federal Interagency Committee on Noise

The Federal Interagency Committee on Noise (FICON) established guidance in its 1992 report, *Federal Agency Review of Selected Airport Noise Analysis Issues*, for evaluating the significance of increases in

environmental noise levels. While originally developed for assessing aircraft-related noise impacts, the FICON thresholds are broadly applied in environmental noise assessments for various project types. The guidance identifies three levels of noise increase – 5 dBA (readily perceptible), 3 dBA (barely perceptible), and 1.5 dBA (not perceptible or just noticeable) – depending on existing ambient conditions and land use sensitivity. These thresholds are widely used to evaluate whether a permanent increase in baseline noise constitutes a significant impact. The FICON guidance does not constitute a regulatory standard but serves as a commonly accepted reference for assessing noise level changes under CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act and aligns with methodologies recommended by agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Groundborne Vibration

Federal Transit Administration

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has adopted vibration criteria for assessment of vibrations from construction and operational activities, both for human perception and damage to structures (FTA, 2018). The criteria are summarized in Table 5.8-6 and Table 5.8-7. Vibration levels that are higher than these limits would result in annoyance or interference with vibration-sensitive activities due to construction activities and would require mitigation to reduce a project’s vibration levels.

Table 5.8-6. Construction Vibration Damage Criteria

Building Category/Structural Category	PPV, in/sec	Approximate LV (VdB re 1 μin/sec rms)
I. Reinforced concrete, steel or timber (no plaster)	0.5	102
II. Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3	98
III. Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2	94
IV. Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12	90

PPV = peak particle velocity; in/sec = inches per second; LV = vibration level; VdB re 1 μin/sec rms = Vibration decibels referenced to one micro-inch per second root mean square
 Source: FTA, 2018

Table 5.8-7. Indoor Ground-Borne Vibration Impact Criteria for General Vibration Assessment

Land Use Category	Ground-Borne Vibration Impact Levels (VdB re 1 μin/sec rms)		
	Frequent Events¹	Occasional Events²	Infrequent Events³
Category 1: Buildings where vibration would interfere with interior operations	65 VdB ⁴	65 VdB ⁴	65 VdB ⁴
Category 2: Residences and buildings where people normally sleep	72 VdB	75 VdB	80 VdB
Category 3: Institutional land uses with primarily daytime use	75 VdB	78 VdB	83 VdB

VdB re 1 μin/sec rms = Vibration decibels referenced to one micro-inch per second root mean square
 1 - More than 70 events per day
 2 - 30 to 70 events per day
 3 - Fewer than 30 events per day
 4 - This criterion limit is based on levels that are acceptable for most moderately sensitive equipment such as optical microscopes.
 Source: FTA, 2018

5.8.2.2. State Regulations

Noise

California Government Code

California Government Code Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, section 65302, encourages each local government entity to implement a noise element as part of its general plan. In addition, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation has developed guidelines for preparing noise elements, which include recommendations for evaluating the compatibility of various land uses as a function of community noise exposure. According to these recommendations, an exterior noise environment up to 60 dBA CNEL and 65 dBA CNEL is "normally acceptable" for single- and multi-family residential uses, respectively, without special noise insulation requirements. In addition, noise levels up to 75 dBA CNEL are "conditionally acceptable" with special noise insulation requirements, while noise levels at 75 dBA CNEL and above are "clearly unacceptable" for residential uses. These guidelines apply to noise sources such as vehicular traffic, aircraft, and rail movements. The City of Simi Valley has developed land use compatibility guidelines that are described under local regulations.

California Building Code

The California Code of Regulations, Title 24 establishes the California Building Code (CBC). The most recent building standard adopted by the legislature that will be used throughout the State is the 2025 version, which takes effect on January 1, 2026. The State of California's noise insulation standards are codified in the CBC. These noise standards are for new construction in California for the purposes of interior compatibility with exterior noise sources. The regulations specify that acoustical studies must be prepared when noise-sensitive structures, such as residences, schools, or hospitals, are near major transportation noises, and where such noise sources create an exterior noise level of 60 dBA CNEL, or higher. Acoustical studies that accompany building plans must demonstrate that the structure has been designed to limit interior noise in habitable rooms to acceptable noise levels. For new residential buildings, schools, and hospitals, the acceptable interior noise limit for new construction is 45 dBA CNEL. More specifically, Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations codifies Sound Transmission Control requirements establishing uniform minimum noise insulation performance standards for development of hotels, motels, dormitories, apartment houses, and dwellings. Specifically, Section 1206.2 in Title 24 states that interior noise levels attributable to exterior noise sources shall not exceed 45 dBA CNEL in any habitable room of a new building. These noise levels are accomplished through various noise attenuation features, including insulation.

Groundborne Vibration

Caltrans

Caltrans has developed vibration criteria based on potential structural damage risks and human annoyance. Caltrans-recommended criteria for the evaluation of groundborne vibration levels, with regard to structural damage and human annoyance, are summarized in Table 5.8-8. The criteria apply to continuous vibration sources, which include vehicle traffic and most construction activities. All damage criteria for buildings are in terms of ground motion at the buildings' foundations. No allowance is included for the amplifying effects of structural components (Caltrans, 2020). As shown in Table 5.8-8, the criteria for structural damage commonly applied to construction activities is a PPV of 0.25 in/sec for historic structures, 0.3 in/sec PPV for older residential structures, and 0.5 in/sec PPV for newer structures. Groundborne vibration levels of 0.2 in/sec PPV may result in increased levels of annoyance for people in buildings (Caltrans, 2020).

Table 5.8-8. Summary of Groundborne Vibration Levels and Potential Effects Associated with Typical Construction Activities

Potential Impact	Maximum Groundborne Vibration Level (in/sec PPV)
Structural Damage Risk	
Extremely fragile historic buildings, ruins, ancient monuments	0.08
Fragile buildings	0.1
Historic and some old buildings	0.25
Older residential structures	0.3
New residential structures	0.5
Modern industrial/commercial buildings	0.5
Human Response	
Barely perceptible	0.01
Distinctly perceptible	0.04
Strongly perceptible - Level may begin to annoy people in outdoor areas	0.1
Level may begin to annoy people in buildings	0.2
Severe	0.4

in/sec = inches per second; PPV = peak particle velocity

Note: The vibration levels are based on peak particle velocity in the vertical direction for continuous vibration sources, which includes most construction activities.

Source: Caltrans, 2020

5.8.2.3. Local Regulations

The Proposed Project is not subject to City zoning and building codes, pursuant to Section 53091 of the California Government Code, because it involves water storage and conveyance facilities. In addition, pursuant to California Public Utilities Code Section 10001 and the sections that follow, as well as case law including Southern California Gas Company versus (v.) City of Vernon (1995) and City of Lafayette v. East Bay Municipal Utility District (1993), essential service providers such as water districts may be exempt from local land use or noise ordinances where adherence would materially interfere with the agency’s ability to perform its core public service obligations. In this case, temporary nighttime construction is required to avoid service interruptions during water system shutoffs, a necessity for maintaining uninterrupted access to potable water.

Noise

City of Simi Valley Municipal Code

The City’s Noise Ordinance governs noise from non-transportation sources and does not specify maximum noise levels, but identifies various noise generators, such as construction equipment, amplification, and mechanical devices, and provides certain restrictions on these generators. To control noise impacts associated with construction, the City has established limits to the hours of construction activities in Section 5-16.02[i] of the City’s Municipal Code. Per Section 5-16.02[i], construction activities are permitted within the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (City of Simi Valley, 2025a). Additionally, the City’s Municipal Code prohibits the use of any pile driver, steam shovel, pneumatic hammer, derrick, hoist, or other appliance during the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (Section 5-16.02[h]).

City of Simi Valley General Plan

The Simi Valley General Plan (2030 General Plan Update), Safety and Noise Element, includes goals and policies that aim to minimize adverse noise impacts and preserve a high quality of life for City residents

(City of Simi Valley, 2021). The noise criteria identified in Table N-1 of the General Plan are guidelines to evaluate the land use compatibility of community-related noise. These compatibility criteria provide the City with a planning tool to gauge the compatibility of land uses relative to existing and future exterior noise levels. The Land Use Compatibility Matrix indicates that the maximum operational exterior noise level standard for industrial land uses, such as the Proposed Project, is 70 dBA CNEL. Table N-2 of the General Plan provides exterior operational noise standards that are considered acceptable based on noise levels generated by adjacent mobile sources, such as automobiles, trucks, and trains. The exterior noise standard for residential land uses is 63 dBA CNEL (Ldn).

Groundborne Vibration

The City of Simi Valley does not have any specific regulations solely focused on vibration from construction activities. The City's Noise Ordinance addresses potential disturbances from construction, which can include vibration, through the timing restrictions discussed above for noise. These restrictions can also address vibration levels from construction.

5.8.3. Impact Analysis

5.8.3.1. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts from development of the Proposed Project were assessed based on information provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. The ambient noise levels measured during field monitoring in September 2024 (Table 5.8-5) were used to evaluate construction and operational noise impacts.

The Proposed Project consists of the construction and operation of a 43-foot-tall, approximately 125-foot-diameter above-ground steel water storage tank. The proposed tank and its associated infrastructure would not include any onsite equipment that generates operational noise. As discussed in the project description, the tank has been designed so that the water level within the tank would be at the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). Anticipated operational noise would be limited to periodic vehicle visits, including a single weekly inspection vehicle, up to 14 vehicles during annual maintenance events, and up to seven vehicles during five-year detailed inspections. Because of the limited operational activities required for the Proposed Project, this analysis focuses primarily on noise impacts related to the temporary construction period.

Construction noise calculations provide an estimate of the potential noise that construction activities may have on the surrounding environment. Each piece of equipment is assigned an Leq, which represents the typical average noise level that would be expected at a specified distance (e.g., 100 feet) from the construction site due to the operation of that equipment. The average noise generated by each piece of construction equipment is based on both the maximum noise generated by the equipment while in operation, as well as the percentage of time during the construction period that the equipment would be expected to be operating. This method is consistent with the FHWA's Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM) Version 1.1. The RCNM is a state-of-the-art computer program that enables the prediction of construction noise levels for a variety of construction operations based on a compilation of empirical data and the application of acoustical propagation formulas. The program enables the calculation of construction noise levels in more detail than manual methods while avoiding the need to collect extensive amounts of project-specific input data (FHWA, 2017).

The noise level at the nearest sensitive receptors during the construction of each component was determined by calculating the combined noise levels from construction equipment on the project site, assuming a reference distance of 50 feet. Distances from construction locations to sensitive receptors were measured and input into the RCNM formula as the basis for calculating noise attenuation with distance at sensitive receptor locations. During construction, the use of construction equipment at each construction area within the project site would vary throughout the workday, with middle ranges more likely. Potential noise sources during construction of the Proposed Project would be from construction vehicles, operation of construction machinery that could result in noise levels above applicable standards, and installation of a 35-foot-deep rammed aggregate pier system (see the description of this system under Impact NOI-1 in Section 5.8.3, *Impact Analysis*). No pile driving activities are proposed during the construction period.

Construction is typically completed in distinct phases, each requiring specific equipment types, quantities, and operational intensities. These variations influence how the equipment affects the surrounding noise environment in the project area. The impact of construction noise depends on the activities performed on a given day, the noise levels generated, the distance to sensitive noise receptors, and the ambient noise conditions already present at those receptors. For the purpose of the analysis, all construction equipment associated with each phase of the Proposed Project was assumed to be operating at one time. This represents a worst-case analysis. The types of equipment used in the analysis and the results of the modeling can be found in Appendix E, Noise Calculations.

Offsite construction traffic noise impacts and operational noise impacts are evaluated qualitatively as construction traffic are not anticipated to be a significant increase over existing conditions and the Proposed Project would not introduce identifiable operational noise sources that would result in a noticeable permanent increase in ambient noise levels onsite.

Significance Thresholds

An impact related to noise would be significant if the Proposed Project would:

1. Result in the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project.
2. Result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.
3. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

The Initial Study completed for the Proposed Project (Appendix A) determined that impacts involving Threshold 3 would not result from the Proposed Project. Therefore, analysis of this threshold is included in the Initial Study consistent with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15063(c)(3)(A) and 15128 (see the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, Section 3.3.13, *Noise* [Appendix A], or Table 4-2 in Section 4.3 of this EIR, *Issues Analyzed in Brief*, for a summary of this analysis). The following analysis solely focuses on the remaining threshold questions.

Threshold 1 Impact Criteria (Substantial Temporary Noise Level Increase)

No single level of increase is inherently significant, as individual responses to noise can vary widely based on tolerance and prior exposure. In general, larger increases above ambient levels are more likely to be perceived as intrusive or objectionable. A key consideration is how the new noise compares to the established acoustic environment to which individuals have become accustomed. Ambient noise refers to the composite sound level from all ongoing sources – excluding the specific noise under evaluation – and represents the typical background noise conditions at a particular location during a given time period.

To assess noise impacts from construction activities, temporary increases above existing ambient conditions were evaluated under CEQA Significance Threshold 1. For this threshold, the following quantitative thresholds were used in the analysis:

- **Temporary Daytime Noise Level.** While the City of Simi Valley regulates permissible hours for construction activity, neither the General Plan nor Municipal Code establishes numeric noise limits for construction noise at nearby receptors during those allowed hours. This analysis applies a quantitative threshold based on guidance from the FTA's *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual* to assess potential construction noise impacts. The FTA notes that local noise ordinances are often limited in their utility for evaluating construction noise impacts, as these ordinances typically address nuisance or permissible hours of operation rather than providing context-sensitive numerical thresholds. According to the FTA, appropriate construction noise criteria must consider the existing ambient noise environment, the absolute levels generated during construction, the duration of those activities, and the sensitivity of adjacent land uses. In the absence of applicable local quantitative standards, the FTA identifies an exterior daytime threshold of 80 dBA Leq at a sensitive residential use as a reasonable criterion for evaluating temporary construction noise impacts at residential land uses (FTA, 2018).
- **Temporary Nighttime Noise Increase.** For the purposes of this analysis, a substantial temporary noise increase is defined as a project-generated noise level that exceeds the existing ambient level by 12 dBA or more (Caltrans, 2025). This 12-dBA threshold is rooted in long-established precedent and is based on the principle that a 10-dBA increase is generally perceived by the human ear as a doubling of loudness. Accordingly, if project construction activities result in a temporary noise level increase of 12 dBA Leq or more above the ambient condition, the impact is considered significant under CEQA. This threshold was used when determining whether the Proposed Project's impacts would be significant during nighttime construction.

Threshold 2 Impact Criteria (Excessive Groundborne Vibration and Noise)

Construction activity can result in varying degrees of groundborne vibration and noise, depending on the equipment and methods used, distance to the affected structures, and soil type. Construction vibration is generally associated with pile driving and rock blasting. Other construction equipment, such as air compressors, light trucks, and hydraulic loaders, generate little or no groundborne vibration.

To evaluate potential vibration impacts associated with construction and operation of the Smith Road Tank, vibration-generating activities are typically assessed against standards set forth in a local jurisdiction's municipal code, if available. The City of Simi Valley does not specify quantitative vibration level thresholds, so this analysis relies on guidance from Caltrans' *Transportation and Construction Vibration Guidance Manual* (2020), specifically Table 19 on page 38, which outlines vibration damage thresholds for various building types. Based on this guidance, the nearest vibration-sensitive receptors – characterized as older residential structures – are subject to a maximum acceptable continuous vibration threshold of 0.3 in/sec PPV. This threshold is used to assess the potential for construction-related vibration damage at adjacent properties.

5.8.3.2. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project result in the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project?

Impact NOI-1: With the implementation of mitigation measures, onsite construction noise associated with the Proposed Project would result in a significant impact without mitigation, but would be reduced to less than significant with MM NOI-1. Offsite traffic noise and operational activities would not exceed applicable thresholds and impacts would be less than significant.

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project is anticipated to be completed over approximately 30 to 36 months and would involve the elements described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. Potential noise sources during construction of the Proposed Project would be associated with construction vehicles, operation of construction machinery that could result in noise levels above applicable standards, and installation of a 35-foot-deep rammed aggregate pier system. No pile driving activities are proposed. While the installation of the rammed aggregate piers and pile driving are different activities, both of these activities require the use of impact pile driving equipment.

A rammed aggregate pier (RAP) system is a ground improvement technique used when the existing soil at the site requires stabilization. The purpose of the piers is to enhance the load-bearing capacity of the soil and reduce the potential for settlement (the downward movement or sinking of the ground surface). For the Proposed Project, a hole or cavity, typically 20 to 36 inches in diameter, would be drilled to the design depth of 35 feet. Lifts, or layers, of graded crushed stone, gravel, or recycled concrete (i.e., aggregate) would be added to the cavity. Each lift would then be compacted, or rammed, using a heavy rammer, often attached to a hydraulic excavator (typically referred to as a drop hammer). This repeated process of placing and ramming aggregate creates a stiff, dense aggregate column within the ground.

The use of RAPs would produce noise and vibration during the ramming process, but noise and vibration levels would typically be comparable to other construction activities and would be below those generated during pile driving. RAP installation involves intermittent ramming to compact aggregate within a borehole, which produces temporary noise and vibration similar to vibratory compaction equipment. Published measurements indicate PPVs typically less than 0.1 in/sec at 25 feet (Geopier, n.d.) and considerably lower than those generated by impact or vibratory pile driving. Field measurements further show that RAP vibration levels are comparable to or lower than standard earthwork equipment and attenuate rapidly with distance due to the granular backfill and confined installation method (Thompson & Withiam, 2007), resulting in levels well below those associated with structural damage or substantial human annoyance. Pile driving typically involves heavy impact hammers that produce lower-frequency, higher-amplitude vibrations, which are more readily perceived as noise and vibration at a distance. The higher-frequency vibrations generated during RAP installation tend to experience greater dampening (reduction in intensity) as they travel through the ground, particularly in the reinforced soils near the installation site. This natural damping effect contributes to a quicker reduction in noise and vibration levels with increasing distance from the construction area (Geopier, 2016).

Construction activities would typically be completed five days per week (Monday through Friday) during daylight hours between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Nighttime work would be required for the connections to existing Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) Conduit North Branch (CCNB) and Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) pipelines, as the construction of these connections would require the shutdown of CCNB and CCSB and work would need to be performed continuously. Nighttime work would be completed over a maximum of two weeks. The majority of construction is not expected on weekends, but some construction could occur on weekends due to the need to minimize traffic congestion and to

work continuously to limit the duration of shutdowns of existing water facilities. Weekend work would be required during the 2-week shutdown period for the CCNB and CCSB connections.

Onsite and offsite construction impacts are discussed in the following sections.

Onsite Construction Noise

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Overall average site construction noise levels would vary with the numbers and types of equipment operating on site at once, as well as the proximity of the equipment to sensitive noise receptors. Table 5.8-9 provides a list of all construction equipment to be used during each of the construction phases, along with the Lmax at 50 feet from the noise source and the acoustical usage factor, which represents the percentage of time a piece of equipment operates at its maximum noise-emitting capacity and accounts for the intermittent nature of noise from construction equipment.

Table 5.8-9. Construction Equipment Maximum Noise Emission Levels

Equipment Type	Lmax at 50 Feet from Source	Acoustical Usage Factor (Percent)
Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	84	40
Dump Truck	84	40
Utility Truck	85	40
Water Truck	85	40
Excavator	85	40
Grader	85	40
Dozer	85	40
Loader	80	40
Front End Loader (Skiploader)	85	40
Generator	82	40
Concrete Mixer Truck	85	40
Concrete Pump Truck (Surveyor)	82	20
Flatbed Truck	84	40
Crane	85	16
Welding Machine	73	40
Man Lift (Scissor Lift)	85	20
Sand Blasting Unit	85	20
Dehumidifier with Compressor	80	40
Compressor	80	40
Roller Compactor	85	20
Paver	85	50
Concrete Curbing Machine	80	50
Drop Hammer (RAP System)	80	20
Bottom-Feed Vibrator (Vibroflot)	85	50
Auger Rig	85	20
All Other Equipment > 5hp (Madrel)	85	50
All Other Equipment > 5hp (Slurry Recycling Unit)	85	50

Lmax = maximum noise level; hp = horsepower
 Source: FHWA, 2006; FTA, 2018; BVEM, 2025

To estimate construction noise levels at the nearest sensitive noise receptors, construction equipment noise was modeled using worst-case conditions – assuming all equipment operates simultaneously – through the FHWA’s RCNM. As stated in Section 5.8.3.1, daytime construction noise would be considered

significant if noise levels would exceed the FTA's recommended threshold of 80 dBA Leq (8-hour) at noise-sensitive residential receptors (FTA, 2018). While construction equipment typically operates at varying locations across a site, the FTA recommends modeling equipment from the center of the construction site to conservatively represent potential impacts. For the Proposed Project, the site center is approximately 360 feet from the nearest sensitive receptor (residence directly east of the site). Modeled peak-hour daytime construction noise levels are presented in Table 5.8-10. The nearest sensitive receptor is considered to be the single-family residence to the east of the project site (see Table 5.8-5 and Figure 5.8-1).

Temporary Daytime Noise Level. As shown in Table 5.8-10, daytime peak-hour construction noise levels (Leq 8-hour) between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., would not exceed the FTA's recommended significance threshold (80 dBA Leq) at all of the nearby sensitive noise receptors including the single-family residence to the east, the Rocky Point National Park to the west, nor at the RV park to the northwest. As indicated above in Table 5.8-10, the major source of noise emissions occur during the Existing Ground Improvement Using Rammed Aggregate Piers phases (both the Displacement and Pre-augured phase) of construction would emanate from the proposed impact pile driving equipment used for ramming activities (as stated previously, ramming and pile driving are different activities, but both require the use of impact pile driving equipment). Most of the project construction would be completed between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Temporary Nighttime Noise Increase/Sleep Disturbance. As mentioned previously, the Proposed Project would require approximately two weeks of nighttime construction to complete connections to the CCNB and CCSB pipelines, located within Smith Road. According to the FTA *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual* (FTA, 2018) and the Caltrans *Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol* (Caltrans, 2020), the nighttime period (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) is characterized by lower ambient noise conditions, typically 5 to 10 dBA below daytime levels. Baseline noise levels measured at the southeast corner of the site – adjacent to the nearest sensitive receptor (a residence east of the site fronting Smith Road) – were recorded at 56.9 dBA Leq. Nighttime ambient noise levels in this area are conservatively estimated to be 51.9 dBA Leq or lower.

Nighttime construction activities would be required during the Pipeline Inlet and Outlet phase, which as shown in Table 5.8-10, would result in noise levels of approximately 68.2 dBA Leq at the receptor (construction equipment was modeled from the center of the area in which the nighttime work would be completed, which was 330 feet instead of the 360 feet from the center of the entire project site). These levels would be an approximately 16-dBA increase from nighttime ambient noise levels. Nighttime construction noise during the Pipeline Inlet and Outlet would exceed the 12-dBA threshold for substantial temporary noise increases (Threshold 1 Impact Criteria), resulting in a significant impact without mitigation, including sleep disturbance. This impact would be temporary and cease upon completion of the 2-week phase to complete the CCNB and CCSB pipelines. To reduce potential nighttime construction noise impacts associated with CCNB and CCSB connections, Mitigation Measure NOI-1 (also included at the end of this section) is proposed. Mitigation Measure NOI-1 includes nighttime noise reduction measures such as barriers or blankets.

The Proposed Project would not result in the generation of a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project site in excess of applicable standards due to onsite construction activities. Onsite construction impacts would be less than significant with approval of Mitigation Measure NOI-1.

Table 5.8-10. Construction Reference Noise Levels

Construction Phase	Reference Construction Equipment	Reference Noise Level at 50 Feet (dBA Leq)	Composite Reference Noise Level at Receptor (dBA Leq)				
			Single-Family Residence to the East	Rocky Pointe Natural Park	RV Park	Single-Family Residence to the Northwest	Mobile Home Development to the West
Clear and Grub	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Dump Truck	80					
	Utility Truck	81	69.4	68.3	67.0	65.3	62.2
	Water Truck	81					
Earthwork - Excavation and Over-excavation	Excavator	81					
	Grader	81					
	Dozer	81					
	Loader	76					
	Dump Truck	80	71.4	70.3	69.0	67.3	64.2
	Dump Truck	80					
	Water Truck	80					
Existing Ground Improvement Using Rammed Aggregate Piers – <i>Displacement Method</i>	Utility Truck	51					
	Crawler Crane	77					
	Crawler Crane	77					
	Drop Hammer (RAP)	73					
	Drop Hammer (RAP)	73					
	All Other Equipment > 5hp (Madrel)	82					
	All Other Equipment > 5hp (Madrel)	82					
	Bottom-Feed Vibrator	82	73.0	71.9	70.6	68.9	65.8
	Bottom-Feed Vibrator	82					
	Loader	76					
	Dump truck	80					
Water truck	80						
Utility Truck	51						
Concrete Pump Truck (Surveyor)	75						

Construction Phase	Reference Construction Equipment	Reference Noise Level at 50 Feet (dBA Leq)	Composite Reference Noise Level at Receptor (dBA Leq)				
			Single-Family Residence to the East	Rocky Pointe Natural Park	RV Park	Single-Family Residence to the Northwest	Mobile Home Development to the West
Existing Ground Improvement Using Rammed Aggregate Piers – Pre-Augured Method	Auger Rig	78					
	Auger Rig	78					
	Drop Hammer (Impact Pile Driver)	73					
	Drop Hammer (Impact Pile Driver)	73					
	All Other Equipment > 5hp (Slurry Recycling Unit)	82					
	All Other Equipment > 5hp (Slurry Recycling Unit)	82	71.6	70.5	69.2	67.5	64.4
	Loader	76					
	Dump truck	80					
	Water truck	80					
	Utility Truck	51					
Concrete Pump Truck (Surveyor)	75						
Retaining Walls	Skiploader	81					
	Generator	78					
	Utility Truck	81	70.5	69.3	68.0	66.3	63.2
	Concrete Mixer Truck	81					
	Concrete Pump Truck	75					
	Flatbed Truck	80					
Earthwork - Fill	Grader	81					
	Grader	81					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80	71.8	70.7	69.4	67.7	64.6
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Utility Truck	51					
	Concrete Pump Truck	75					
Water Truck	80						

Construction Phase	Reference Construction Equipment	Reference Noise Level at 50 Feet (dBA Leq)	Composite Reference Noise Level at Receptor (dBA Leq)				
			Single-Family Residence to the East	Rocky Pointe Natural Park	RV Park	Single-Family Residence to the Northwest	Mobile Home Development to the West
Pipeline - Inlet and Outlet ¹	Excavator	81					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Utility Truck	51	68.2	65.7	64.5	63.3	60.2
	Generator	78					
Pipeline - Overflow and Drain Structures	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Excavator	81					
	Utility Truck	51					
	Flatbed Truck	80					
	Flatbed Truck	80	70.8	69.7	68.4	66.7	63.5
	Flatbed Truck	80					
	Concrete Pump Truck	75					
Tank - Foundation	Generator	78					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Concrete Pump Truck	75					
	Utility Truck	51					
	Flatbed Truck	80	69.2	68.1	66.8	65.1	62.0
	Flatbed Truck	80					
Tank - Roof, Shell, and Floor Construction	Water Truck	80					
	Crane	77					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Welding Machine	69					
	Welding Machine	69					
	Generator	78	68.8	67.7	66.4	64.7	61.6
	Utility Truck	51					
	Scissor Lift	78					
Flatbed Truck	80						

Construction Phase	Reference Construction Equipment	Reference Noise Level at 50 Feet (dBA Leq)	Composite Reference Noise Level at Receptor (dBA Leq)				
			Single-Family Residence to the East	Rocky Pointe Natural Park	RV Park	Single-Family Residence to the Northwest	Mobile Home Development to the West
Tank - Interior Appurtenances (overflow, ladder and cage, outlets, etc.)	Crane	77					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Welding Machine	69					
	Generator	78	68.7	67.6	66.3	64.6	61.5
	Utility Truck	51					
	Scissor Lift	78					
	Flatbed Truck	80					
Tank - Exterior Appurtenances (exterior stairway, manhole, access hatch, etc.)	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Welding Machine	69					
	Crane	77					
	Generator	78					
	Utility Truck	51					
	Scissor Lift	78					
	Scissor Lift	78	72.2	71.0	69.7	68.0	64.9
	Flatbed Truck	80					
	Flatbed Truck	80					
	Flatbed Truck	80					
Tank - Exterior Coating	Flatbed Truck	80					
	Generator	78					
	Sand Blasting Unit	78					
	Utility Truck	51	66.5	65.3	64.1	62.3	59.2
	Scissor Lift	78					
Tank - Interior Coating	Compressor	76					
	Generator	78					
	Sand Blasting Unit	78	67.2	66.0	64.8	63.0	59.9
	Dehumidifier with Compressor	76					

Construction Phase	Reference Construction Equipment	Reference Noise Level at 50 Feet (dBA Leq)	Composite Reference Noise Level at Receptor (dBA Leq)				
			Single-Family Residence to the East	Rocky Pointe Natural Park	RV Park	Single-Family Residence to the Northwest	Mobile Home Development to the West
Tank - Interior Coating (continued)	Generator	78					
	Sand Blasting Unit	78					
	Dehumidifier with Compressor	76	67.2	66.0	64.8	63.0	59.9
	Compressor	76					
	Utility Truck	51					
	Scissor Lift	78					
Access and Perimeter Roads - Grading, Paving, Curb, Gutter, Fence, Gate, Slabs	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Skiploader	81					
	Roller Compactor	78					
	Paver	82	69.8	68.7	67.4	65.7	62.6
	Concrete Curbing Machine	73					
	Concrete Pump Truck	75					
Electrical and Instruments	Utility Truck	51					
	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80	62.9	61.7	60.5	58.7	55.6
Landscaping and Irrigation System	Tractor/Loader/Backhoe	80					
	Utility Truck	51	65.9	64.8	63.5	61.7	58.6
	Water Truck	80					

dBA = A-weighted decibels; Leq = equivalent-continuous sound level; Composite Reference Noise Level = the combined noise level for all equipment assuming they operate at the same time; hp = horsepower

¹ The Pipeline Inlet and Outlet Phase was modeled from the approximate center of the construction activity area associated with the proposed nighttime work required to connect to the existing CCNB and CCSB pipelines, located approximately 330 feet from the nearest residence to the east.

Source: FHWA, 2006

Offsite Traffic Noise

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Offsite noise sources associated with the Proposed Project would include medium-duty trucks delivering fuel, imported fill, and other materials, as well as occasional heavy-duty trucks hauling tank components and potentially trucks hauling away materials from the earthen berm if not re-used onsite. Trucks would likely access the project site via State Route 118 (SR-118) and exit at Kuehner Drive before turning onto Smith Road. Given the consistently high traffic volumes on SR-118, any incremental truck noise from project construction along these corridors is expected to be negligible. Kuehner Drive, which serves as the primary local access route, traverses a densely developed residential area with sensitive noise receptors on both sides of the roadway. The roadway is classified as a secondary arterial under the City of Simi Valley General Plan, Mobility and Infrastructure Element (City of Simi Valley, 2012). According to FHWA functional classification guidance, urban secondary arterials typically accommodate between 4,000 and 15,000 average daily trips (ADT), with most carrying volumes below 15,000. In the absence of project-specific traffic count data, an estimated range of 12,000 to 15,000 ADT is considered a reasonable and conservative assumption for use in noise impact analysis. No sensitive noise receptors are located along the short segment of Smith Road that would be used to access the site.

As described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, construction activities would temporarily increase traffic volumes in the vicinity of the project site. During the Retaining Wall construction phase (see Table 5.8-10), construction is estimated to generate up to 152 daily one-way trips, including approximately 90 haul truck trips; for the remaining construction phases, daily one-way trips would range from 82 to 122 trips. According to the Caltrans Technical Noise Supplement to the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol (Caltrans, 2013), a doubling of traffic volume is typically required to produce a 3-dBA increase in noise levels – considered the minimum perceptible change under real-world conditions. Even if haul trucks were to pass the site entrance on Smith Road to execute turnarounds, the resulting traffic volume would not be expected to double existing traffic levels. Smith Road currently serves the movie studio to the south of the project site across Smith Road, which likely generates a substantial amount of daily traffic, including deliveries by both light- and heavy-duty trucks. The addition of project-related construction trips would not result in a perceptible increase in traffic noise along Smith Road or surrounding roadways.

The Proposed Project would not result in the generation of a substantial increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project site in excess of applicable standards due to offsite construction activities. Offsite construction impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. The project site would not include any mechanical equipment or stationary sources generating continuous or intermittent noise. As discussed in the project description, the tank has been designed so that the water level within the tank would be at the correct elevation to allow the tank to operate by gravity with a hydraulic grade line instead of a pump. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008).

Operational activities at the project site would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every 5 years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. Routine maintenance activities would be completed during standard working hours and are not expected to exceed typical residential or commercial noise environments.

Anticipated operational noise would be limited to periodic vehicle visits, including a single weekly inspection vehicle, up to 14 vehicles during annual maintenance events, and up to seven vehicles during

five-year detailed inspections. Operational vehicle trips would be minimal and infrequent, with no potential to perceptibly increase ambient noise levels along local roadways.

The Proposed Project would not result in the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project site in excess of applicable standards due to operational activities. Operational impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

NOI-1 **Nighttime Construction Noise Reductions.** Project construction occurring during the evening and nighttime hours of 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shall implement a Night Operations Noise Impact Reduction Program composed of measures such as the following.

- Installation of temporary sound barriers (e.g., acoustic blankets or portable walls) of sufficient height to break the line-of-sight between construction equipment and nearby noise-sensitive receptors. Barriers shall extend from ground level above the height of the noise source or receptor, as appropriate based on placement, and shall be positioned as close as feasible to either the equipment or the receptor. Barriers shall be continuous with no gaps. Barrier height and placement shall be designed to reduce construction noise levels such that increases do not exceed 12 dBA Leq above ambient conditions at nearby receptors during nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). Temporary sound barriers shall consist of acoustic blankets, portable barriers, or other equivalent noise control treatments placed near adjacent noise-sensitive receptors or noise sources. Barriers shall be constructed of materials with a minimum surface density and/or sound transmission loss sufficient to effectively reduce construction noise and shall be designed and installed in accordance with manufacturer specifications. Acceptable materials may include those tested in accordance with ASTM standards such as ASTM E90/E413 or equivalent.
- To the extent consistent with applicable safety regulations, operation of vehicles requiring use of back-up beepers shall be avoided and/or the staging area may be arranged in a way that avoids the need for any reverse motions of large trucks.
- Where nighttime operations are necessary and occur in the vicinity of nearby residences or other sensitive receptors, advance notice shall be provided to occupants within 1,000 feet of the work area at least 72 hours prior to the start of nighttime activities. A sign shall also be posted at the job site, clearly visible to the public, that includes the telephone number of Calleguas' authorized representative assigned to respond to noise complaints. The authorized representative shall be available during nighttime construction hours and shall respond to complaints within 30 minutes. Upon receipt of a complaint, the authorized representative shall have the authority to implement corrective actions, including but not limited to adjusting equipment operations, relocating equipment, or installing additional noise control measures, as necessary to ensure compliance with this mitigation measure. All complaints and subsequent actions taken shall be logged and documented, including the time of complaint, nature of the complaint, response time, and corrective measures implemented.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1, construction noise resulting from onsite construction activities during nighttime work required for CCNB and CCSB connections for Smith Road Tank would be 10 dBA Leq below the anticipated noise levels modeled for the Pipeline Inlet and Outlet phase, or around 58.2 dBA Leq; this level represents an approximately 6-dBA increase in nighttime

ambient noise levels, which is below the 12-dBA threshold that would be considered a substantial temporary noise increase. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Impact NOI-2: The Proposed Project would not result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Impacts from construction and operation would be less than significant.

Construction

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Construction activity can result in varying degrees of groundborne vibration, depending on the equipment and methods employed, distance to the affected structures, and soil type. Construction vibration is generally associated with pile driving and rock blasting. No pile driving or rock blasting activities are planned for the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project includes the installation of a 35-foot-deep RAP system. The use of RAPs would produce noise and vibration during the ramming process. Noise and vibration levels would typically be comparable to other construction activities and would be below those generated during typical impact pile driving, as discussed under Impact NOI-1.

Groundborne vibration from project construction activities is expected to cause only intermittent, localized generation of vibration. The operation of construction equipment causes groundborne vibration that spreads through the ground and diminishes in strength with distance. Groundborne vibration levels associated with various types of construction equipment are summarized on Table 5.8-11. Based on the representative vibration levels presented for various construction equipment types, the potential for building damage can be estimated using the following vibration assessment methods defined by the FTA. To describe the vibration impacts, the FTA provides the following equation:

$$PPV_{equip} = PPV_{ref} \times (25/D)^{1.5}$$

PPV_{equip} represents the calculated peak particle velocity caused by the construction equipment at a specific distance. PPV_{ref} is the reference vibration level for the specific type of heavy construction equipment. D signifies the distance in feet from the construction equipment to the point of interest (e.g., a nearby structure). The value of 25 represents the fixed reference distance in feet where the PPV_{ref} is typically measured. The exponent of 1.5 reflects the combined effects of vibration propagation and attenuation through the ground.

Table 5.8-11. Project Construction Groundborne Vibration Levels

Equipment	PPV (in/sec) at 25 feet	PPV (in/sec) at 75 feet to Nearest Residence East of Project Site
Small bulldozer	0.003	0.001
Jackhammer	0.035	0.007
Loaded Trucks	0.076	0.015
Large bulldozer	0.089	0.017
Vibratory Roller	0.210	0.040

PPV = peak particle velocity; in/sec = inches per second

Note: Groundborne vibration generated by construction equipment often is evaluated by the maximum rate – or velocity – of particle movement, commonly referred to as the peak particle velocity or PPV, typically measured in in/sec.

Source: FTA, 2018

At a distance of approximately 75 feet, corresponding to the separation between the project site's eastern boundary and the nearest residential structure to the east, construction vibration levels associated with operation of the compact roller for driveway compaction are estimated to range from approximately 0.001 to 0.040 in/sec PPV when operating in vibratory mode. If the compact roller is operated without a vibratory component, vibration levels would be substantially lower. Based on a maximum acceptable continuous vibration threshold of 0.3 in/sec PPV, typical project construction vibration levels would fall below the building damage risk thresholds (as stated above in Table 5.8-8) at all the noise-sensitive receptor locations. Moreover, the vibration levels reported at the sensitive receptor locations are unlikely to be sustained during the entire construction period but rather would be limited to times that heavy construction equipment is operating adjacent to the project site perimeter. The proposed water storage tank would be located in the central portion of the project site. Most of the construction activities would be expected to be concentrated away from the site perimeter and within the specific tank location.

The Proposed Project would not exceed applicable vibration thresholds and would not result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Project-related vibration impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

NO IMPACT. Operational activities at the project site would be limited to routine inspection and maintenance, which would include weekly routine inspections; annual maintenance to exercise valves and calibrate or inspect instrumentation and electrical components; and detailed inspections every five years of the interior and exterior coating, interior structural elements, and miscellaneous components. The Proposed Project would not involve the use of equipment or activities capable of generating perceptible levels of groundborne vibration or noise at nearby sensitive receptors. No operational impacts related to groundborne vibration and noise would result from the Proposed Project.

5.8.4. Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

As discussed in Sections 5.8 (see *Noise Fundamentals*) and 5.8.1, *Environmental Setting*, average sound levels in an area are directly determined by the proximity to the various noise-generating activities. Unless such activities in the area change dramatically, average sound levels also do not change appreciably over time. For example, a doubling of noise-generating activity of the same or similar type (e.g., traffic with the same or similar distribution of vehicular types) resulting in a 3-dBA increase in noise levels would be considered barely detectable to most people. Ambient sound level measurements tend to be reasonably consistent over time provided there has been no substantial change in noise-generating activity.

The project site, and the general surrounding vicinity of the site and of similar projects in the area, are characterized by industrial facilities, visitor-serving commercial areas, limited residential, and open space and recreational areas. For the purposes of cumulative noise impacts as a result of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, the study area includes those sensitive receptors closest to the project site at the nearby RV park (Rocky Trailer Village), the park to the west beyond Kuehner Drive (Rocky Pointe Natural Park), the mobile home development west and southwest of the park, and the single-family residence directly east of the site that might be cumulatively affected by construction noise, operational noise, or noise associated with traffic generated by the Proposed Project, or an alternative, and those projects in the vicinity that would considerably contribute to cumulative effects. The acoustical environment at the project site and vicinity is dominated by the transportation-related noise associated with surface streets, reflecting typical ambient conditions for a mixed residential and open space setting. While regional and local planning documents, such as the City of Simi Valley General Plan Land Use Element, anticipate incremental growth over time that could result in minor increases in roadway traffic

volumes, such growth is expected to occur gradually and within the capacity of the existing roadway network. As a result, any corresponding increases in ambient traffic noise levels would be incremental and would not substantially alter the existing cumulative noise environment.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Threshold 1: Would the Proposed Project result in the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project?

Impact C-NOI-1: Project construction would contribute to a significant cumulative impact without mitigation. With the implementation of mitigation, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant construction noise impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Operational impacts associated with the Proposed Project would not exceed applicable thresholds and would not be cumulatively considerable.

Onsite Construction Noise

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION. Cumulative impacts from the Proposed Project's onsite construction noise are considered significant without mitigation and less than significant with implementation of mitigation, as discussed below.

Cumulative Projects. The cumulative projects list in Table 4-3 (see Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*) was reviewed to determine if any projects in the vicinity of the sensitive receptors described above would be under construction at the same time as the Proposed Project; in such a case, construction activities could, in combination, cause a cumulatively significant construction noise impact on sensitive receptors. The proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3) would be located to the south of the project site across Smith Road.

Based on a discussion with the City of Simi Valley Department of Environmental Services (Z. Chaparyan, personal communication, July 10, 2025), the Smith Road Movie Studio Project is currently under planning review and has not yet received discretionary approval. The proposed Movie Studio would be included as part of a Specific Plan that would guide long-term development and is expected to require a separate environmental review process similar to this one. The proposed Movie Studio Project would consist of a 12-acre movie studio campus, including eight new 20,000-square-foot sound stages, supported by an 80,000-square-foot, four-story building for a mill shop, storage areas, and general production offices (City of Simi Valley, 2024).

Three residential parcels to the east of the Smith Road Tank project site would also be converted into a parking lot under the Movie Studio Project (City of Simi Valley, 2024). In April 2024, the applicant for the Movie Studio Project requested a zone change of those three parcels from Residential Low Density to Light Industrial. The nearest sensitive receptor, a single-family residence to the east of the project site (see ST-3 in Table 5.8-5 and on Figure 5.8-1), would no longer be considered a sensitive receptor, as this residence would be occupied by a parking lot if the Movie Studio Project were implemented. For the purposes of this analysis, ST-3 is considered the nearest sensitive receptor as a worst-case scenario in the event that the land use remains residential.

Given the scope and planning status of the Movie Studio Project, a reasonable assumption is that the Movie Studio Project's approval and implementation could extend over several years. As a conservative approach, this cumulative analysis incorporates the assumption that the Proposed Project would be constructed at the same time as the Smith Road Movie Studio Project. Noise levels from the Movie Studio Project would be expected to have a cumulatively significant impact.

Proposed Project's Contribution. Construction of the Proposed Project is anticipated to be completed over approximately 30 to 36 months. Due to uncertainties about the anticipated timing of land acquisition, duration of permitting and design, and other considerations, a planned start date has not currently been identified for the Proposed Project. For the purposes of this analysis, the construction start date was assumed to begin in early-2027 and conclude in late-2029 to early-2030. Depending on the anticipated construction start date, construction could extend to late-2030. Although construction would not begin in 2026, this start date is a conservative assumption and would provide a worst-case scenario of potential impacts. Because this timeframe was used for air quality modeling, this noise analysis also includes the same construction schedule assumption.

As discussed under Impact NOI-1, construction noise generated by the Proposed Project would range from 62.9 to 73.0 dBA Leq at the nearest sensitive receptor (see Table 5.8-10), which would be an increase above the baseline noise levels of 56.8 at this nearest receptor (see ST-3 in Table 5.8-5). Therefore, Proposed Project's noise levels, in combination with Movie Studio Project, would have a cumulatively significant impact, and the project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution without mitigation.

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulative noise impacts would be reduced through the use nighttime noise reduction measures during the CCNB and CCSB connections. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant noise impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Offsite Traffic Noise

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Cumulative impacts from offsite traffic noise are considered less than significant as discussed below.

Cumulative Projects. Construction traffic associated with the other projects in the vicinity would be temporary and would only occur for the limited duration of construction activities (ceasing upon completion of the projects), intermittent, and primarily limited to daytime hours consistent with local City of Simi Valley Noise Ordinance requirements (§ 5-16.02[i] of the City's Municipal Code). Offsite noise levels associated with the cumulative projects would be expected to have a less-than-significant cumulative impact.

Proposed Project's Contribution. The Proposed Project, when considered in combination with the proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3), has the potential to result in a doubling of traffic along Smith Road. A doubling of traffic volume corresponds to an approximately 3-dBA increase in traffic noise, which is considered a just-perceptible and potentially significant cumulative impact under CEQA. The cumulative offsite traffic noise associated with both projects could be considered cumulatively significant if the construction phases overlap. However, construction traffic associated with the Proposed Project and other projects in the vicinity would be temporary and would only occur for the limited duration of construction activities (ceasing upon completion of the Proposed Project), intermittent, and primarily limited to daytime hours consistent with local City of Simi Valley Noise Ordinance requirements (§ 5-16.02[i] of the City's Municipal Code). Therefore, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant noise impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. Cumulative impacts from the Proposed Project's operational noise are considered less than significant, as discussed below.

Cumulative Projects. The proposed Smith Road Movie Studio Project (listed as Project #4 in Table 4-3), could result in cumulatively significant operational noise impacts given the potential that the Movie Studio Project could generate substantial operational traffic noise.

Proposed Project's Contribution. The operational noise levels associated with the Proposed Project are not expected to exceed any applicable exterior noise level thresholds at nearby sensitive receptors, nor would the Proposed Project result in a perceptible increase in ambient noise levels along local roadways. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant operational noise impacts would not be cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

NOI-1 Nighttime Construction Noise Reductions. See the full text of this mitigation measure under Impact NOI-1.

Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulatively significant construction noise impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Threshold 2: Would the Proposed Project result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Impact C-NOI-2: The Proposed Project would not contribute to cumulatively significant groundborne vibration or noise impacts.
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Construction

NO IMPACT. No cumulative impacts from construction groundborne vibration and noise are anticipated, as discussed below.

Cumulative Projects. The Smith Road Movie Studio Project would likely not require pile driving activities or result in associated construction vibration levels that would exceed recommended thresholds established by the FTA. No cumulative impacts related to groundborne vibration and noise are expected from construction of the Smith Road Movie Studio Project.

Proposed Project's Contribution. Because the Proposed Project would not require pile driving activities, the construction vibration levels associated with the Proposed Project are not expected to generate groundborne vibration in exceedance of the recommended thresholds established by the FTA during the construction phase. In addition, because the Proposed Project's groundborne vibration levels would be low, and would attenuate rapidly offsite, the Proposed Project would not have the potential to combine with the Smith Road Movie Studio Project to create a cumulatively considerable impact. No cumulative impacts related to groundborne vibration and noise would result from project construction.

Operation

NO IMPACT. No cumulative impacts from operational groundborne vibration and noise are anticipated, as discussed below.

Cumulative Projects. The Smith Road Movie Studio Project would likely not require the use of equipment or activities capable of generating perceptible levels of groundborne vibration at nearby sensitive receptors. No cumulative impacts related to groundborne vibration and noise are expected from operation of the Smith Road Movie Studio Project.

Proposed Project's Contribution. The Proposed Project would not involve the use of equipment or activities capable of generating perceptible levels of groundborne vibration at nearby sensitive receptors. No cumulative impacts related to groundborne vibration and noise would result from project operation.

6. ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

As required by Section 15126.6 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) examines a range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Project that would attain most of the basic project objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Introduction*, the objectives for the Proposed Project are to:

- Meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region during short-term imported water supply outage conditions.
- Provide operational benefits and flexibility during normal and high demand conditions.
- Provide a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.
- Help maintain consistent water pressure throughout the distribution system.
- In case of emergencies, such as fires, provide an immediate source of water for firefighting and other critical needs.

Five alternatives are analyzed, including the CEQA-required “no project” alternative. Figure 6-1 identifies the sites of the analyzed alternatives as well as those considered but rejected. These alternatives involve changes to the Proposed Project that may reduce the significant project-related environmental impacts as identified in this EIR. Alternatives have been developed to provide a reasonable range of options for consideration to help decisionmakers and the public understand the general implications of modifying or eliminating certain components of the Proposed Project.

The following alternatives are evaluated in this EIR:

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative
- Alternative 3: Distant Hill Alternative
- Alternative 4: Site 1 Alternative
- Alternative 5: Site 5 Alternative

Figure 6.1-1. Alternative Sites



6.1. Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

6.1.1. Description

Under the No Project Alternative, a new water storage tank would not be constructed or operated on the project site or at any other location. The Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) would not acquire the project site for the development of water storage infrastructure, which would allow the primarily vacant site to remain available for other development activities in accordance with the City of Simi Valley's zoning designation of Commercial Recreation (City of Simi Valley, 2022).

6.1.2. Impacts Analysis

Under this alternative, no project-related construction activities would take place, which would avoid temporary impacts associated with building a new water storage tank. No permanent impacts on the aesthetics of the site from the development of a new water storage tank would result from this alternative. Without the proposed water storage tank, none of the project objectives would be met, and this alternative would not result in the Proposed Project's beneficial impacts of improving the safety and reliability of the existing water supply. Under this alternative, the project site may or may not remain vacant. Other development activities that could be implemented on the project site would require a separate environmental review process to analyze potential impacts from those activities.

6.2. Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative

6.2.1. Description

Under this alternative, a new underground water storage tank would be constructed and operated at the project site. While similar construction and operational activities would be required under this alternative as with the Proposed Project, the underground tank would require substantially more excavation during construction to at least 43 feet below ground. Following construction, the underground tank would not be visible from surrounding roadways and recreational areas. Because the tank would be located underground and at low elevation, the movement of water from the tank into Calleguas Conduit North Branch (CCNB) and Calleguas Conduit South Branch (CCSB) connections would not be feasible by gravity. A pump station within a pump building would be required on the project site, which would require the use of electricity for operation.

For operational reliability during a power outage, a standby generator would also be required. Because the project site is located in a very high fire hazard area, the standby generator may need to be operated relatively frequently, since utility power is typically shut off by Southern California Edison during weather conditions that can create a high risk of wildfires (e.g., high winds and low humidity). The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of water storage (AWWA, 2008). Without compliance with AWWA design requirements, an underground tank may not fully meet the project objective of providing a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters.

6.2.2. Impacts Analysis

- **Aesthetics.** Because the tank would be underground, impacts on the aesthetics of the project site from the proposed water storage tank would generally be avoided. While Alternative 2 would require a pump station within a pump building, the implementation of mitigation measures, such as coordination with the City of Simi Valley on the building design and directing lighting away from nearby properties, would

reduce impacts to less than significant. This impact conclusion of less than significant with mitigation would be a reduction from the significant and unavoidable impacts caused by the Proposed Project.

- **Air Quality.** The construction of the underground tank would result in air quality emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project due to the substantial amount of excavation and hauling away of soils to install the underground tank. The standby generator would operate using diesel and would result in air quality emissions during operation. The standby generator may need to operate relatively frequently, since the high fire hazard conditions in the area typically require that utility power be shut off during weather conditions that can create a high risk of wildfires (e.g., high winds and low humidity). Calleguas would be required to obtain a permit for the diesel backup generator. This would impose limits on the generator's non-emergency use, including testing limits. The generator would be required to be compliant with US EPA Tier 4 Standards and would only be allowed to run during emergency situations, and for brief testing periods as outlined by the air district. Events deemed as emergency use have no hourly operational limit during those emergencies, however, the operator would be required to keep a record of the hours of emergency use and the event type (Public Safety Power Shutoff or other). Since there would be emissions associated with intermittent testing, impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project. However, as there would only be a single backup generator, and it would be subject to the rules, regulations, and permit conditions imposed by the air district, air quality impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Biological Resources.** Because the disturbance area under this alternative would be similar to the Proposed Project, the construction of the underground tank would result in similar impacts on biological resources as the Proposed Project, which would be less than significant with mitigation.
- **Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment.** The substantial amount of excavation in previously undisturbed soils would increase the potential to encounter cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts from this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project, compliance with standard requirements (California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and Public Resources Code § 5097.98) would result in impacts that would be less than significant for this alternative, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources.** The substantial amount of excavation in previously undisturbed soils would increase the potential to encounter buried tribal cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of Mitigation Measures TCR-1 and TCR-2 would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** The construction of the underground tank would result in greenhouse gas emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project due to the substantial amount of excavation and hauling away of soils to install the underground tank. The standby generator would operate using diesel and would result in greenhouse emissions during operation. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, construction and operational impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, as associated GHG emissions be below the significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO₂e per year, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Compared to the Proposed Project, the construction of the underground tank would increase the potential to encounter potentially contaminated soils due to the substantial amount of excavation required to install the tank. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures, such as procedures to contain and properly dispose of potentially contaminated soils if encountered at the site, would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.

- **Noise.** The construction of the underground tank would result in noise emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project due to the substantial amount of excavation and hauling away of soils to install the underground tank. While construction noise impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures during construction, which would include noise reduction measures, would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project. During operation, the pump station and standby generator would also generate noise. Enclosures for this equipment would be designed to shield noise from being emitted into the surrounding area, minimizing increases in ambient noise levels for nearby sensitive receptors. While operational noise impacts would also be greater than the Proposed Project, impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Other Impacts Analyzed in the Initial Study.** For other impacts analyzed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), this alternative would result in similar impacts, except for energy, geology and soils, and hydrology and water quality, which would be greater than the Proposed Project because of the higher level of excavation required to install an underground tank, resulting in additional energy usage and soil erosion impacts. While these impacts would be greater under this alternative compared to the Proposed Project, impacts would likely be less than significant with the implementation of best management practices (BMP) and compliance with standard regulations during construction, similar to the Proposed Project.

6.3. Alternative 3: Distant Hill Alternative

6.3.1. Description

Under this alternative, the proposed water storage tank would be constructed on a distant hill, which would allow the tank to be located further away from residential areas compared to the Proposed Project. Hillside areas that are primarily undeveloped are located within 0.5 mile in all directions surrounding the project area and could serve as potential locations for the water storage tank. In several locations identified in Figure 5.1-5, the areas located immediately in front of the hillsides where the topography flattens out are developed with residential areas, which the pipelines would need to cross under to reach existing CCNB and CCSB pipelines along Smith Road or along the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks located further away from the hillsides.

Because the tank would be located away from developed areas, the project footprint would increase substantially by requiring the construction of a pipeline that would need to cross a much longer distance beneath natural open space areas, narrow roadways within residential areas, and possibly beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks if the tank was located in the southern hills, in order to connect to CCNB and CCSB. Substantial disturbance of these open space areas and disruption of vehicle traffic along roadways would be required during construction activities for the pipeline connections. An access road to the tank would also need to be constructed within natural open space areas.

To achieve optimum water pressure and functioning of the system hydraulics, the high water level of the tank would need to be at an elevation of 1,136 feet above mean sea level (AMSL), and the bottom of the tank would need to be at an elevation of 1,096 to 1,112 feet AMSL. Based on the topography of the hillsides within the project area, which are about 1,200 feet AMSL, a substantial amount of blasting and earth removal would be required to achieve the necessary elevation for the tank to operate. An assessment of various potential hillside locations was performed during the site selection process (see Section 6.6, *Alternatives Considered but Rejected*), and all of the potential locations would require a substantial amount of earthwork to achieve the required elevation. A foundation pad would also need to be constructed, requiring engineered slopes below the tank foundation.

6.3.2. Impacts Analysis

- **Aesthetics.** While this alternative would be further removed from residential areas, the proposed water storage tank would be placed on the ridge of a hillside, which would be highly noticeable from surrounding areas. If the tank is sited further away and hidden from view of surrounding areas, an even longer distance would be required to construct a pipeline connection from the tank to CCNB and CCSB, and a longer access road would be required, which would result in greater aesthetic impacts during construction and operation compared to the Proposed Project. While aesthetics impacts from this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project, the impact conclusion for this alternative would be significant and unavoidable, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Air Quality.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would result in a greater level of air quality emissions. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, air quality emissions from this alternative may still not exceed applicable Ventura County Air Pollution Control District thresholds (see Section 5.2, *Air Quality*), similar to the Proposed Project. Because an alternative site in the hillsides would be located within 0.5 mile of CCNB and CCSB and this alternative would include implementation of standard air quality protection measures, impacts from this alternative are estimated to be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Biological Resources.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, as well as construction within previously undisturbed areas, this alternative would result in a greater level of disturbance to biological resources. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, impacts from this alternative could be reduced to less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project. Conversely, because of the uncertainty of the presence of sensitive resources, another possibility is that impacts may not be reduced to less than significant with mitigation if highly sensitive resources would be adversely affected, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts which is an increase in the impact conclusion compared to the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, as well as construction within previously undisturbed areas, this alternative would increase the potential to encounter cultural resources during ground-disturbing activities. While impacts from this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project, compliance with standard requirements (California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and Public Resources Code § 5097.98) could result in impacts that would be less than significant for this alternative, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project. Conversely, because of the uncertainty of the presence of sensitive resources, another possibility is that impacts may not be reduced to less than significant with mitigation if highly sensitive resources would be adversely affected, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts which is an increase in the impact conclusion compared to the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, as well as construction within previously undisturbed areas, this alternative would increase the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources during ground-disturbing activities. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures could reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project, pending input from Native American tribes on whether the surrounding hillsides would be a cultural landscape of value to the tribes or if they identify additional tribal cultural resources in the area. Because of the uncertainty of the presence of sensitive resources, another possibility is that impacts may not be reduced to less than

significant with mitigation if highly sensitive resources would be adversely affected, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts which is an increase in the impact conclusion compared to the Proposed Project.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would result in a greater level of greenhouse gas emissions. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, as associated GHG emissions be below the significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO₂e per year, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would increase the potential to encounter potentially contaminated soils. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures, such as procedures to contain and properly dispose of potentially contaminated soils if encountered at the site, would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Noise.** Given the substantially larger disturbance area required during construction compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would result in a greater level of noise emissions. The implementation of mitigation during construction involving noise reduction measures would not reduce impacts to less than significant because substantially more construction activities with a longer duration would be required directly adjacent to and beneath sensitive noise receptors in residential areas. Construction noise impacts would be significant and unavoidable, which is an increase in the impact conclusion for the Proposed Project of less than significant with mitigation.
- **Other Impacts Analyzed in the Initial Study.** For other impacts analyzed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), this alternative would result in similar impacts, except for energy, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, transportation, and wildfire, which would be greater than the Proposed Project because of the higher degree of ground disturbance in natural open space and residential areas compared to the Proposed Project, resulting in additional energy usage and soil erosion impacts; in addition to potential interruptions in vehicle access (disrupting emergency access and evacuation in a very high fire hazard area) that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath roadways, resulting in greater transportation and wildfire evacuation impacts. These impacts may be reduced to less than significant with mitigation, which is an increase in the impact conclusion for the Proposed Project of either no impacts or less-than-significant impacts with no mitigation required.

6.4. Alternative 4: Site 1 Alternative

6.4.1. Description

Site 1 is located southeast of the City of Simi Valley limits in an unincorporated area of Ventura County between Santa Susana Pass Road, located to the south of the site, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, located to the north of the site. A church is located adjacent to and west of the site, and single-family residences are located adjacent to and east of the site.

The proposed tank would be surrounded by cut slopes on all sides, except the north side; these cut slopes would partially hide the tank from surrounding areas, except from the north. The views of the north side of the tank would include a 20-foot-high cut slope and a 20-foot-high fill slope. The new fill slope required for the tank would encroach into a portion of a natural drainage course on the east side of the property. The drainage course would need to be diverted around the new fill slope, requiring widening and slope protection. The site is also covered with vegetation, including grass, bushes, and many mature trees, specifically along the existing natural drainage course on the east side. Many of these trees are believed

to be oak trees based on preliminary site observations. Several mature trees would need to be removed to enable the construction of the water storage tank.

The closest segment of CCNB and CCSB runs along Smith Road in this area, which is located north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a private property developed with an existing movie ranch. The pipeline connections would need to cross under the tracks, as well as through the existing movie ranch, to connect to CCNB and CCSB beneath Smith Road. The pipeline connections would be installed using trenchless technology beneath the railroad tracks to avoid interruptions in rail operations. Easements within the movie ranch would be required.

6.4.2. Impacts Analysis

- **Aesthetics.** While this alternative would be located closer to nearby open space areas and hillsides compared to the Proposed Project, the proposed tank would be surrounded by cut slopes on all sides, except on the north side; these cut slopes would partially hide the tank from surrounding areas, with the tank only visible from the north. The views of the north side of the tank would include a 20-foot-high cut slope and a 20-foot-high fill slope. These slopes would likely only affect views from the movie ranch to the north of this site. No public views from nearby roadways, such as Santa Susana Pass Road, would be adversely affected, as the tank would be minimally visible from this roadway due to the cut slopes. The trees that would need to be removed to construct the tank would be replaced with additional trees on the site. With the implementation of mitigation measures, such as preparation of a Landscaping and Site Fencing Plan g, impacts would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation; this is a reduction in the impact conclusion for the Proposed Project of significant and unavoidable.
- **Air Quality.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a movie ranch to the north of this site, construction of this alternative would result in air quality emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Biological Resources.** Construction at this site would require the removal of additional trees compared to the Proposed Project, as well as the diversion of a natural drainage course, which would increase construction impacts on biological resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, impacts from this alternative would likely be reduced to less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment.** The additional excavation in previously undisturbed soils that may be required for the pipeline connections would increase the potential to encounter cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts from this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project, compliance with standard requirements (California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and Public Resources Code § 5097.98) would result in impacts that would be less than significant for this alternative, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources.** The additional excavation in previously undisturbed soils that may be required for the pipeline connections would increase the potential to encounter buried tribal cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures could possibly reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project. Conversely, because of the uncertainty of the presence of sensitive resources, another possibility is that impacts may not be reduced to less than significant with mitigation if highly sensitive resources would be adversely affected, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts which is an increase in the impact conclusion compared to the Proposed Project.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a movie ranch to the north of this site, construction of this alternative would result in greenhouse gas emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would increase the potential to encounter potentially contaminated soils due to the additional excavation required for the pipeline connections. Common contaminants that can be found in soils beneath railroad tracks include creosote (a chemical used to treat wooden railroad ties to prevent rotting), heavy metals (e.g., lead, arsenic, cadmium, zinc, and nickel found in coal ash, cinder, ballast rock, and metal components of the tracks and trains), petroleum products (oil, gasoline, and other substances that can leak from locomotives and railcars), herbicides used for weed control, asbestos (found in older train cars, roofing shingles, and potentially in ballast rock and soil), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from fossil fuel combustion that can accumulate in soil, or volatile organic compounds or semi-volatile organic compounds from spills or industrial activity near the tracks. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures, such as procedures to contain and properly dispose of potentially contaminated soils if encountered at the site, would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project. For this alternative, a Soil Management Plan may be required because of the higher potential for contaminated soils. A Soil Management Plan is a document outlining procedures for handling soil, particularly at sites with potential or existing contamination, to ensure worker safety and environmental protection.
- **Noise.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and the movie ranch to the north of this site, construction of this alternative would result in noise emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation, including noise reduction measures, such as barriers and blankets that would also be implemented for the Proposed Project, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Other Impacts Analyzed in the Initial Study.** For other impacts analyzed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), this alternative would result in similar impacts, except for energy, geology and soils, and hydrology and water quality, which would be expected to be greater than the Proposed Project because of the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a movie ranch to the north of this site, resulting in additional energy usage and soil erosion impacts. While these impacts would be greater under this alternative compared to the Proposed Project, impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of BMPs and compliance with standard regulations during construction, similar to the Proposed Project.

6.5. Alternative 5: Site 5 Alternative

6.5.1. Description

Site 5 is located to the west of Katherine Road and south of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Residential neighborhoods are located to the north (beyond the railroad tracks), south, and west of the site, with commercial and recreational uses to the east. Under this alternative, the tank would be surrounded on all sides by cut slopes, except the north and northwest sides, causing both the tank and 100-foot-high cut slopes to be visible from the north side of the site where residential neighborhoods are located. The site would require the construction of a 2,000-foot-long access road to reach the water storage tank, which would be difficult to construct due to the site's steep topography. An approximately 85-foot-long retaining wall would be required on the site to stabilize the cut slopes. This alternative location was chosen to be

analyzed because its surrounding land uses differ from the Proposed Project and other alternatives by including residential uses rather than open space or recreational uses.

The closest segment of CCNB and CCSB runs along the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, so the pipeline connections would need to cross under the tracks. The pipeline connections would be installed using trenchless technology beneath the railroad tracks to avoid interruptions in rail operations.

6.5.2. Impacts Analysis

- **Aesthetics.** Under this alternative, cut slopes would not surround the tank on the north and northwest sides, causing both the tank and 100-foot-high cut slopes to be most visible from residential neighborhoods to the north of the site. Given the larger number of sensitive receptors that surround this site and that would be permanently affected by aesthetics impacts compared to the Proposed Project, the aesthetics impacts under this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project. This alternative would have the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project of significant and unavoidable.
- **Air Quality.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the north of this site, as well as construction of the longer access road and retaining wall, this alternative would result in air quality emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Biological Resources.** Unlike the Proposed Project, no tree removals would be required for this alternative, although mitigation measures would still likely be required to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and other special-status wildlife or plants during construction activities, which is similar to the Proposed Project. While impacts from this alternative would be slightly less than the Proposed Project, impacts from this alternative would be less than significant with mitigation, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Archaeology and Built Environment.** The additional excavation in previously undisturbed soils that may be required for the pipeline connections would increase the potential to encounter cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. While impacts from this alternative would be greater than the Proposed Project, compliance with standard requirements (California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5 and Public Resources Code § 5097.98) would result in impacts that would be less than significant for this alternative, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Cultural Resources – Tribal Cultural Resources.** The additional excavation in previously undisturbed soils that may be required for the pipeline connections would increase the potential to encounter buried tribal cultural resources compared to the Proposed Project. Because of the uncertainty of the presence of sensitive resources, impacts may not be reduced to less than significant with mitigation if highly sensitive resources would be adversely affected, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts which is an increase in the impact conclusion compared to the Proposed Project.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the north of this site, as well as construction of the longer access road and retaining wall, this alternative would result in greenhouse gas emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be less than significant, as associated GHG emissions be below the significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO_{2e} per year, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.

- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative would increase the potential to encounter potentially contaminated soils due to the additional excavation required for the pipeline connections. Common contaminants that can be found in soils beneath railroad tracks include creosote (a chemical used to treat wooden railroad ties to prevent rotting), heavy metals (e.g., lead, arsenic, cadmium, zinc, and nickel found in coal ash, cinder, ballast rock, and metal components of the tracks and trains), petroleum products (oil, gasoline, and other substances that can leak from locomotives and railcars), herbicides used for weed control, asbestos (found in older train cars, roofing shingles, and potentially in ballast rock and soil), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from fossil fuel combustion that can accumulate in soil, or volatile organic compounds or semi-volatile organic compounds from spills or industrial activity near the tracks. While impacts would be greater than the Proposed Project, the implementation of mitigation measures, such as procedures to contain and properly dispose of potentially contaminated soils if encountered at the site, would reduce impacts from this alternative to less than significant, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Noise.** Due to the higher level of excavation required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the north of this site, as well as construction of the longer access road and retaining wall, this alternative would result in noise emissions that would be greater than the Proposed Project. Impacts would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation, including noise reduction measures, which is the same impact conclusion as the Proposed Project.
- **Other Impacts Analyzed in the Initial Study.** For other impacts analyzed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), this alternative would result in similar impacts, except for energy, geology and soils, and hydrology and water quality, which would be expected to be greater than the Proposed Project because of the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, resulting in additional energy usage and soil erosion impacts. While these impacts would be greater under this alternative compared to the Proposed Project, impacts would likely be less than significant with the implementation of BMPs and compliance with standard regulations during construction, similar to the Proposed Project.

6.6. Alternatives Considered but Rejected

In 2018, Calleguas initially assessed six potential sites for the Proposed Project and then elected to further evaluate four of the six potential sites plus an additional site, referred to as Sites 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. A variety of factors were evaluated, including, but not limited to, proximity to existing CCNB and CCSB pipelines, existing easements, general site features and topography, geophysical and geotechnical features, surrounding land uses, existing electrical power supply, environmental impact on the surrounding community, construction costs, site accessibility, and environmental sensitivity. The site topography was an important factor since the tank must be constructed so that the water level is at the correct elevation to allow the tank to deliver water by gravity without pumping.

As a result of the site selection process, Site 7 was chosen as the project site that is analyzed in this EIR. Sites 1 and 5 are analyzed as project alternatives and are discussed in Sections 6.4 and 6.5, respectively. Two sites, Sites 2 and 4, were considered but rejected from further consideration for the following reasons:

- **Site 2.** This site is located approximately 1,000 feet east of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road. Construction of the water storage tank at this site would require a large amount of earthwork, as the entire storage tank would be constructed on fill slope with a large amount of imported material and/or soil-cement to provide the minimum required elevation. Because this alternative site is located to the southeast of the project site (Site 7) across Smith Road, the construction and operation of the proposed water storage tank on Site 2 would not reduce any of the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts of the Proposed Project. For these reasons, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.

- **Site 4.** This site, located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Kuehner Drive and Smith Road, was not selected due to the presence of sensitive resources. In addition, because this alternative site is located to the south of the project site (Site 7) across Smith Road, the construction and operation of the proposed water storage tank on Site 4 would not reduce any of the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts of the Proposed Project. For these reasons, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.

6.7. Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA requires the identification of an environmentally superior alternative in the Draft EIR. CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(2), states that if the “no project” is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR shall also identify the environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

An environmentally superior alternative is the project alternative that would result in the least amount of adverse environmental impacts. The core principle is to select the alternative that minimizes environmental harm, considering factors like air quality, biological resources, noise, traffic, and other relevant impacts. While minimizing environmental harm is crucial, the chosen alternative must also be feasible, meaning the alternative must be reasonably attainable considering economic, legal, social, and technological factors. An alternative must also still be able to achieve most of the basic objectives of the Proposed Project, even if the alternative involves some modification. While CEQA mandates the identification of the environmentally superior alternative, CEQA does not require a lead agency to choose that alternative for project approval.

Table 6-1 indicates whether each alternative’s environmental impact is greater than, less than, or similar to that of the Proposed Project for each of the issue areas studied. Based on the alternatives analysis provided above, the following alternatives would either not meet the project objectives or would result in an increased level of impact compared to the Proposed Project:

- **Alternative 1 (No Project Alternative).** The No Project Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative as this alternative would eliminate all significant and unavoidable impacts of the Proposed Project. This alternative would not meet the project objectives because a water storage tank would not be constructed to meet the need identified in Calleguas’s 2017 Potable Water Master Plan to improve water reliability in the eastern Simi Valley area.
- **Alternative 2 (Underground Tank Alternative).** While this alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project, this alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation required to install an underground tank. In addition, the underground tank would require a pump station, which would result in operational noise that would be emitted when the water is being pumped out of the tank. Furthermore, because an underground tank would require an electricity source, a standby generator would be required in the event of an electricity outage; the generator would also produce operational air quality emissions and noise. The standby generator may be required relatively frequently, since the high fire hazard conditions in the area typically require that utility power be shut off during weather conditions that can create a high risk of wildfires (e.g., high winds and low humidity). The AWWA Manual, *M31 Distribution Requirements for Fire Protection*, recommends the delivery of water by gravity as the most reliable form of storage (AWWA, 2008). Without compliance with AWWA design requirements, an underground tank may not fully meet the project objective of providing a reserve of water that can be used during supply interruptions, such as maintenance work, power outages, or natural disasters. Because Alternative 2 would result in an increased level of construction and operational impacts compared to the Proposed Project, this alternative is not the environmentally superior alternative.

- **Alternative 3 (Distant Hill Alternative).** This alternative would not eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts that would result from the Proposed Project. In addition, this alternative would require a substantially larger project footprint to construct a much longer pipeline to connect to the CCNB and CCSB, as well as an access road to the tank; and would necessitate blasting and earth removal of the hillside to attain the necessary tank elevation. As a result, this alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, transportation, tribal cultural resources, and wildfire. These higher-level impacts would be due to the greater degree of ground disturbance in natural open space and residential areas compared to the Proposed Project, as well as potential interruptions in vehicle access (disrupting emergency access and evacuation in a very high fire hazard area) that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath roadways. Because Alternative 3 would result in an increased level of construction impacts compared to the Proposed Project and not reduce operational impacts, this alternative is not the environmentally superior alternative.
- **Alternative 4 (Site 1 Alternative).** While this alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project, this alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a movie ranch to the north of this site. Construction at this site would also require the removal of additional trees compared to the Proposed Project, as well as the diversion of a natural drainage course, which would increase construction impacts on biological resources compared to the Proposed Project. Because Alternative 4 would result in an increased level of construction impacts compared to the Proposed Project and not reduce operational impacts, this alternative is not the environmentally superior alternative.
- **Alternative 5 (Site 5 Alternative).** This alternative would not eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts that would result from the Proposed Project. In addition, this alternative would increase the level of construction impacts related to air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and tribal cultural resources due to the higher level of excavation that would be required to install pipeline connections beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Because Alternative 5 would result in an increased level of construction impacts compared to the Proposed Project and not reduce operational impacts, this alternative is not the environmentally superior alternative.

In summary, the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, but this alternative would not meet the project objectives. None of the action alternatives would be environmentally superior to the Proposed Project because they would require substantially more ground disturbance during construction and/or would result in operational air quality and noise impacts. For these reasons, the Proposed Project is the environmentally superior alternative. However, there are different tradeoffs for each alternative (e.g. local versus regional/global impacts), which are dependent upon the specific resource areas (e.g. aesthetics versus noise, air quality and GHG). Individuals and decision-makers may weigh these resource areas differently.

Table 6-1. Impact Comparison of Alternatives

Issue Area	Proposed Project Impact Classification	Alternative 1: No Project Alternative	Alternative 2: Underground Tank Alternative	Alternative 3: Distant Hill Alternative	Alternative 4: Site 1 Alternative	Alternative 5: Site 5 Alternative
Aesthetics	Significant and Unavoidable	+	+	-	+	-
Agriculture and Forestry Resources	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Air Quality	Less Than Significant	+	-	-	-	-
Biological Resources	Less Than Significant With Mitigation	+	=	-	-	+
Cultural Resources	Less Than Significant With Mitigation	+	-	-	-	-
Energy	Less Than Significant	+	-	-	-	-
Geology and Soils	Less Than Significant	+	-	-	-	-
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Less Than Significant	+	-	-	-	-
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Less Than Significant With Mitigation	+	-	-	-	-
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less Than Significant	+	-	-	-	-
Land Use and Planning	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Mineral Resources	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Noise	Less Than Significant With Mitigation	+	-	-	-	=
Population and Housing	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Public Services	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Recreation	No Impact	=	=	=	=	=
Transportation	Less Than Significant	+	=	-	-	-
Tribal Cultural Resources	Less Than Significant With Mitigation	+	-	-	-	-
Utilities and Service Systems	Less Than Significant	+	=	=	=	=
Wildfire	Less Than Significant	+	=	-	=	=

+ Superior to the Proposed Project (reduced level of impact)

- Inferior to the Proposed Project (increased level of impact)

= Similar level of impact to the Proposed Project

7. OTHER CEQA REQUIRED DISCUSSIONS

As required by Section 15123 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this section includes a discussion of areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by other agencies and the public, and issues to be resolved. This section also includes a discussion of other issues for which CEQA requires analysis in addition to the specific issue areas discussed in Chapter 5, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. These additional issues, which are required under Section 15126 of the CEQA Guidelines, include: (1) significant unavoidable environmental impacts; (2) significant irreversible environmental changes; and (3) growth-inducing impacts.

7.1. Areas of Known Controversy and Unresolved Issues

Section 15123 of the CEQA Guidelines requires a Draft EIR to identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by other agencies and the public, and issues to be resolved.

Comments were received from public agencies and interested parties in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see Table 4-1 in Chapter 4, *EIR Scope and Content*). The Calleguas Municipal Water District (Calleguas) distributed the NOP of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a 30-day agency and public review period starting on Wednesday, April 30, 2025 and ending on Friday, May 30, 2025. In addition, Calleguas held an in-person public scoping meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, and a virtual public scoping meeting on Thursday, May 8, 2025. The NOP for the Proposed Project is presented in Appendix A of this EIR; scoping comment letters received are presented in Appendix B.

The following environmental topics of potential controversy were identified during the scoping meetings and/or NOP process:

- The protection of unknown buried cultural resources during project construction.
- Potential damage to scenic vistas and degradation of the visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Noise from nighttime construction that could exceed applicable noise standards.

The major issues to be resolved by Calleguas, as the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project, include the following:

- The adoption or modification of recommended mitigation measures.
- The consideration of additional mitigation measures that could be applied to the Proposed Project.
- The approval of the Proposed Project or an alternative.

7.2. Significant Unavoidable Impacts

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126(b), requires that an EIR identify those significant impacts that cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the application of mitigation measures. As discussed in Chapter 5, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, the following significant and unavoidable impacts would result from the Proposed Project:

- **Impact AES-1:** The Proposed Project's impacts on scenic vistas would be reduced to the extent feasible with the implementation of mitigation. Even with the implementation of mitigation, the Proposed Project would still have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable.
- **Impact AES-2:** The Proposed Project would degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views and its surroundings, as well as conflict with the City of Simi Valley's regulations that govern

scenic quality. Implementation of mitigation would reduce aesthetics impacts to the extent feasible. Even with the implementation of mitigation, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation has been applied to the Proposed Project's aesthetics impacts, including a landscaping and site fencing plan. Even with mitigation, the Proposed Project would still result in significant and unavoidable impacts on scenic vistas and visual character and quality.

As discussed in Chapter 6, *Alternatives Analysis*, Alternative 1 (No Project Alternative), Alternative 2 (Underground Tank Alternative), and Alternative 4 (Site 1 Alternative) would eliminate aesthetics impacts or incorporate mitigation to reduce aesthetics impacts to less than significant. These alternatives would not meet the project objectives or would result in an increased level of impact compared to the Proposed Project for several other issue areas.

7.3. Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126(c), requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes caused by the Proposed Project should it be implemented. Such significant irreversible environmental changes may include the following:

- Use of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a project that would be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or non-use unlikely.
- Primary impacts and particularly secondary impacts (such as highway improvements that provide access to a previously inaccessible area) that generally commit future generations to similar uses.
- Irreversible damage which may result from environmental accidents associated with a project.

Construction of the Proposed Project would require the use of building materials and energy, some of which are non-renewable resources. Consumption of these resources would be required for any development projects in the region and are not unique to the Proposed Project. Although steel production required for the tank would be energy-intensive due to the high temperatures and chemical reactions necessary to extract this material, steel is considered the best material for water storage due to its durability, corrosion resistance, safety, and longevity.

Project operation would irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as petroleum for vehicle fuels used during maintenance activities. The Proposed Project is not anticipated to significantly affect local or regional energy supplies, since operational vehicle traffic would be infrequent. The Initial Study, Section 3.3.6, *Energy*, includes a full analysis of potential impacts related to the use of energy resources during construction and operation of the Proposed Project (see Appendix A). Primary impacts related to the use of non-renewable resources would be less than significant because this use would not be a large commitment of resources.

No secondary impacts would result from the Proposed Project, since the proposed water storage tank would not provide access to a previously inaccessible area. No environmental accidents are anticipated to result from the Proposed Project, as the proposed tank would be constructed in accordance with relevant standards and codes related to seismic resistance and structural integrity.

As discussed above, irreversible environmental changes that would result from the Proposed Project would be less than significant.

7.4. Growth-Inducing Impacts

Section 15126(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of a project's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. Growth itself does not necessarily create significant physical changes to the environment. Depending upon the type,

magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant adverse environmental effects. Generally speaking, a project may be considered growth-inducing if it results in one or more of the five conditions identified below:

1. Induces population growth
2. Induces economic expansion
3. Establishes a precedent-setting action (e.g., an innovation, a radical change in zoning or general plan designation)
4. Results in development or encroachment in an isolated or adjacent area of open space (i.e., being distinct from “infill” development)
5. Removes an obstacle to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service or the provision of new access to an area)

A project's growth-inducing potential is considered significant if project-induced growth could result in significant physical effects in one or more environmental issue areas.

Population Growth

The Proposed Project is a water infrastructure project that would improve the reliability of the existing water supply and provide reserved water in the event of a fire or other emergency. No direct population growth would result from the Proposed Project because it does not include the construction of new homes, businesses, or other land uses that would generate population growth. The project construction period is anticipated to last approximately 30 to 36 months and would not require a substantial number of construction personnel (an estimated 21 personnel at one time at most). No new employees would be needed for operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project. The proposed water storage tank would not accommodate unplanned population growth.

Economic Growth

Construction activities would be completed by skilled and general workers from the existing regional workforce to fill temporary employment opportunities. Because construction workers would be expected to be drawn from the existing regional workforce, construction of the Proposed Project would not be growth-inducing from a temporary employment standpoint. Once construction is complete, Calleguas staff would periodically perform routine maintenance. The Proposed Project is not anticipated to require new permanent employees for operational and maintenance activities. Any increase in job opportunities would be a negligible addition to the amount of long-term employment opportunities currently available in the project area. As a result, the Proposed Project would not induce substantial economic expansion such that direct physical environmental effects would result. Moreover, the environmental effects associated with any future development in or around the project area would be addressed as part of the CEQA environmental review for such development projects.

Precedent-Setting Action

The Proposed Project does not require a general plan amendment or zone change. No precedent-setting actions would be required to implement the Proposed Project.

Development of an Isolated or Adjacent Area of Open Space

The project site is not an isolated area, as commercial office and warehouse buildings are located to the north of the project site across from the Arroyo Simi channel, and a movie ranch is located south of the project site across Smith Road. Open space areas are located further south of the project site beyond Santa Susana Pass Road and the Union Pacific Railroad. The Proposed Project would not include the

development of an isolated or adjacent area of open space, and as a result, would not induce unplanned population growth.

Removal of Obstacles to Growth

Although the construction of a water storage tank is infrastructure development, the Proposed Project would not be accommodating unplanned population growth. Rather, the Proposed Project is intended to meet the peak hourly demands in the Simi Valley region during short-term imported water supply outage conditions and provide operational benefits and flexibility during normal and high demand conditions, which would improve the reliability of the existing water supply but would not increase the overall supply of water. Accordingly, the Proposed Project would not remove existing obstacles to growth.

Summary of Growth-Inducing Impacts

As discussed above, the Proposed Project would not induce unplanned population growth and growth-inducing impacts would be less than significant.

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