CHAPTER 3.0

General Setting and Resource Area Analysis

3.1 General Setting

The Chiquita Canyon Landfill (CCL) is located in the northwestern portion of Los Angeles County within the county's Santa Clarita planning area. It is approximately 3 miles west of the intersection of Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Route 126 (SR-126) (Henry Mayo Drive). The landfill is located approximately 7 miles northwest of the City of Santa Clarita, 33 miles northwest of Downtown Los Angeles, and 18 miles east of the City of Fillmore. Figure 1-1 shows the location of CCL within the region. SR-126 is immediately south of the CCL current and proposed new entry.

CCL is in the northwest portion of the Santa Clarita Valley and can be located on the Val Verde United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5–minute quadrangle map. Topographically, the project site is characterized by steep-sided slopes (approaching 1:1 horizontal: vertical along two principal canyons). Chiquita Canyon, the main canyon, is generally oriented northeast-southwest, and the eastern canyon, where expansion is proposed, is oriented northwest-southeast. Both canyons open into the Santa Clara River Valley, also called the Santa Clarita Valley in the local area.

The Santa Clarita Valley is generally flat with gently rolling hills that have an average elevation of 1,200 feet to 1,400 feet above mean sea level (msl). The project site is located within the Transverse Ranges, within the western section of the San Gabriel Mountains that forms the northern border of the Santa Clara River Valley in the project area. South across the Santa Clara River are the Santa Susana Mountains. To the east are the communities of Valencia and Santa Clarita located in the Santa Clarita River Valley. To the west in Ventura County are the Piru Mountains of the Coast Ranges and the Los Padres National Forest. To the north beyond private holdings in the mountains is the Angeles National Forest. The mountain ranges that surround the Santa Clara River Valley can be viewed at great distances and form the dominant visual feature of the area; they are bisected by north-south trending canyons that are a prominent feature of the region (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, 1999). In the natural areas onsite, ridgelines rise from 300 to 600 feet above the canyon floors. In some areas, previous landfilling has reduced the length of some slopes and has resulted in a more gentle terrain.

The Santa Clarita Valley floor is crossed by several watercourses, the largest being the Santa Clara River. The watercourses in this area are usually dry, maintaining surface flow only during the rainy months. However, the Santa Clara River maintains surface flows year-round. Castaic Creek, a major tributary of the Santa Clara River, passes through the vicinity of CCL, approximately 0.3 miles to the southeast. The confluence of these two drainage courses is located approximately 1 mile to the southeast of the current entry of CCL, but will be 0.3 mile from the new, proposed entry. Castaic Creek generally only flows seasonally or in response to large storm events. Within CCL, the major drainages carry surface water to the Santa Clara River (from the western portion of the landfill) or Castaic Creek (from the eastern portion of the landfill). In the immediate vicinity of CCL, some surface drainage flows to catch basins, where it is channelized into underground culverts. These culverts discharge water into surface drainages that ultimately discharge to the Santa Clara River.

The climate of the Santa Clarita Valley is characterized as Mediterranean, with cool wet winters and hot dry summers. The average annual temperature is 63.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Rainfall averages 14 inches per year, with 90 percent of precipitation occurring from November to April. The average annual precipitation varies between 10 and 40 inches per year (City of Santa Clarita, 1997). The prevailing winds blow from the west, although winds blowing from the east and southwest occur often. Average wind speeds range from 3.6 to 9.0 miles per hour.

In general, current land use patterns in the region reflect a mixture of open space, rural and suburban residential, commercial and industrial land, agricultural land, and vacant land consisting of undeveloped commercial/industrial areas, undeveloped hillsides, or floodplains. Within the immediate vicinity of CCL,

there are open space lands to the north; with existing and planned development in the near vicinity; existing and planned rural residential development to the west and northwest, existing and planned suburban residential areas to the northeast, and industrial/commercial areas to the northeast, east, and southeast. The United States Postal Service has a general mail facility adjacent to the eastern edge of the landfill property. The property immediately west, south, southeast, and east of the landfill is owned by the Newhall Land and Farming Company (NLF) and is currently either vacant or used for agricultural activities. Oil extraction fields and associated storage areas are located less than 1 mile from the landfill to the west and south. Valencia Travel Village, a short- and long-term campground and trailer park, is located approximately 1 mile east of the landfill on the south side of SR-126.

The project site consists of five major vegetation communities: Riversidean sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, non-native grassland, dry wash, and riparian woodland. Riversidean coastal sage scrub is characterized by low-growing, shallowly rooted, soft-woody subshrub species such as California sagebrush, California buckwheat, brittlebush, deerweed, California encelia, and sages. Southern mixed chaparral characteristically supports dense woody vegetation. Common chaparral species include scrub oak, squaw brush, toyon, and mountain mahogany. Non-native grassland communities contain slender wild oat, barley, foxtail chess, soft chess, tocalote, and tree tobacco, in addition to occasionally scattered California sagebrush and California buckwheat. Dry wash vegetation communities are characterized by dense mulefat with scattered Fremont cottonwood; and riparian woodlands include Fremont cottonwood, Goodding's black willow, Mexican elderberry, mulefat, and summer mustard.

The project area is underlain by sedimentary bedrock of the Saugas Formation. This bedrock consists of sandstones, siltstones, and conglomerates. Overlying the bedrock are terrace deposits, alluvium, slopewash, and artificial fills. The Holser and San Gabriel Faults are the closest faults to the project area (County of Los Angeles, 1990).

The Proposed Project is located within the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County. As such, the Proposed Project is subject to the General Plan policies and zoning ordinances of Los Angeles County.

Additional detailed setting information specific to each resource area is provided in Chapters 4.0 through 16.0.

3.2 Resource Area Analysis

3.2.1 Organization of Resource Area Chapters

The environmental review of the Proposed Project by resource area is provided in Chapters 4.0 through 16.0 of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). These chapters present the methodology, regulatory and environmental setting, thresholds of significance, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, significance after mitigation, and potential cumulative impacts. Tables and figures are included within the text of each chapter. The chapters are organized as follows:

- Chapter 4.0, Land Use
- Chapter 5.0, Geology and Hydrogeology
- Chapter 6.0, Surface Water Drainage
- Chapter 7.0, Water Quality
- Chapter 8.0, Biological Resources
- Chapter 9.0, Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Chapter 10.0, Traffic and Transportation
- Chapter 11.0, Air Quality
- Chapter 12.0, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
- Chapter 13.0, Noise
- Chapter 14.0, Public Services and Utilities
- Chapter 15.0, Visual Resources
- Chapter 16.0, Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics

Other CEQA considerations, including unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and effects found not to be significant are presented in Chapter 17.0, Other CEQA Required Sections. Chapter 18.0 includes a discussion of the project alternatives. Chapter 19.0 lists the organizations and persons consulted during preparation of the DEIR, and Chapter 20.0 presents the DEIR preparers and contributors. Finally, references for each environmental resource evaluated are presented in Chapter 21.0, References and Bibliography.

3.2.2 Methodology

This section identifies the methodology used to analyze potential environmental impacts for each resource area. Some evaluations (such as air quality, traffic, and noise) are quantitative, while others, such as visual, are qualitative.

3.2.3 Regulatory Setting

The regulatory setting provides a discussion of federal, state, and local regulations, plans, policies, and/or laws that are directly relevant to the environmental topic being analyzed.

3.2.4 Environmental Setting

The *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines* Section 15125 requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the Proposed Project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published, or if no NOP is published, at the time the environmental analysis commences, from both a local and regional perspective. This section within Chapters 4.0 through 16.0 describes the existing environmental conditions in the Proposed Project vicinity as they exist at the time the NOP was prepared (November 2011). The environmental topics identified in this section include both a regional and local setting. The analyses focus on those aspects of the environmental resource areas that could be adversely affected by implementation of the Proposed Project as determined in the NOP and Initial Study (IS), and not those environmental resource areas determined to have no potential adverse impact from Proposed Project implementation.

3.2.5 Thresholds of Significance

This section identifies the criteria used to determine when physical changes to the environment created as a result of the project approval would be considered significant. The levels of significance for each environmental resource were established by identifying significance criteria. These criteria are based upon those presented in the CEQA environmental checklist.

The significance determination under each impact analysis is made by comparing the Proposed Project impacts with the conditions in the environmental setting and comparing the difference to the significance criteria.

3.2.6 Environmental Impacts

The potential impacts associated with each discipline are either quantitatively analyzed where possible or qualitatively analyzed where data were insufficient to quantify impacts. The impacts are compared to the significance criteria to determine the level of significance.

The impact sections focus on those impacts that are considered potentially significant per the requirements of CEQA or that have been identified as potential significant impacts in public comment. An impact is considered significant if it leads to a “substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.” Impacts from the project fall within one of the following categories:

No Impact: There would be no impact to the identified resource as a result of the project.

Less Than Significant: Some impacts may result from the project; however, they are judged to be less than significant. Impacts are frequently considered less than significant when the changes are minor relative to the size of the available resource base or would not change an existing resource. A “less-than-significant impact” applies where the environmental impact does not exceed the significance threshold.

Potentially Significant But Mitigation Measures Can Reduce Impacts to Less Than Significant: Significant adverse impacts may occur; however, with proper mitigation, the impacts can be reduced to less than significant.

Potentially Significant or Significant Impacts: Adverse impacts may occur that would be significant even after mitigation measures have been applied to minimize their severity. A "potentially significant or significant impact" applies where the environmental impact exceeds the significance threshold, or information was lacking to make a finding of insignificance.

3.2.7 Mitigation Measures

This section describes feasible mitigation measures that could minimize potentially significant or significant impacts that may result from project approval. The *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15370 defines mitigation to include:

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments

In accordance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21081.6), a mitigation and monitoring program would be required to be adopted to demonstrate and monitor compliance with any mitigation measures identified in this DEIR. The program would identify specific mitigation measures to be undertaken, when the measure would be implemented, and the agency responsible for oversight, implementation, and enforcement.

3.2.8 Significance After Mitigation

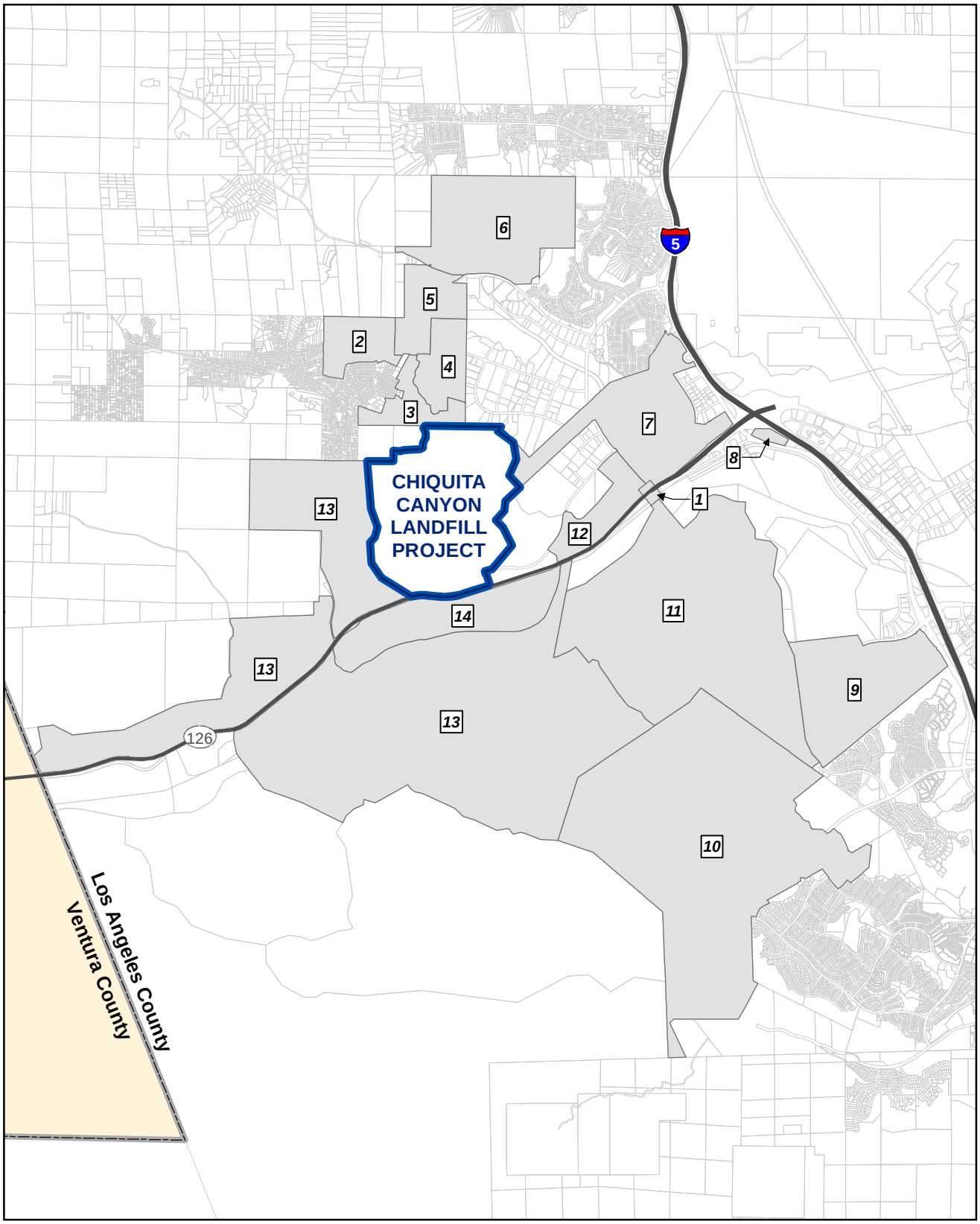
This section identifies the level of significance of the project impacts after mitigation.

3.2.9 Cumulative Impacts

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 defines cumulative impacts as two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of one project when added to other impacts from closely related past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects. Significant cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant impacts taking place over a period of time. As such, this section analyzes the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Project in conjunction with the effects of other development proposals in the project area.

The method of cumulative analysis used for the Proposed Project relies on a list of past, present, and probable future projects. These projects have been proposed by formal public notices (e.g., NOPs), have pending environmental documents, or are in the process of regulatory review and approval. Although any project could be modified, or even abandoned, large-scale development has been occurring in the vicinity of CCL and is planned to continue in the foreseeable future, even if construction or operation timeframes change. Generally, the cumulative impact area of the Proposed Project encompasses development projects in proximity to CCL, within portions of unincorporated Los Angeles (western portion) and Ventura counties (southeastern portion). The projects currently planned or proposed in the cumulative impact area of the Proposed Project were provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (LADRP). The cumulative project information is based on the best information available at the time this DEIR was prepared.

Table 3-1 lists the 14 projects that were identified. The location of these projects in relation to CCL is shown in Figure 3-1.



LEGEND

- Major Road
- Proposed Project Boundary
- X Cumulative Project*
- Approximate Project Limit
- Parcel

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Miles

FIGURE 3-1
Cumulative Projects
Chiquita Canyon Landfill
Master Plan Revision

Note: *See Table 3-1 for project information.

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TABLE 3-1
CCL List of Cumulative Projects

Map Number	County ID	Developer	Project Name	Acres[a]	Units[a]	Status of Permit Application
1	-	Caltrans	SR-126/Commerce Center Drive Interchange Improvements Project	-	Roadway widening, grade-separated interchange at Commerce Center Drive and SR-126	Approved
2	TR060257	Sterling Gateway	Green Valley Ranch	113.66	244 single-family and 109 multi-family residential units, 8 open space lots, and 1 commercial lot	Pending. Project obtained time extension (3/20/14).
3	TR062000	Sterling Gateway	Green Valley Ranch	94.56	19 single-family residential units, 1 open space lot, and 1 public lot	Pending. Project obtained time extension (3/20/14).
4	PM060030	Sterling Gateway	N/A	117.12	37 industrial lots and 5 public lots (1,221,360 square feet)	Approved
5	TR060665	Del Valle Land Co, LLC	N/A	134.22	109 condominium units	Pending. Project obtained time extension (3/14/13).
6	TR52584	Palmer Investments	Hasley Golf Course	429.13	209 single-family residential units, 16 open space lots, and 3 park lots	Approved. Project obtained time extension (10/23/14).
7	PM18108	Newhall Land and Farming Company	N/A	396.01	N/A	Pending. Project obtained time extension (1/14/10).
8	PM060734	Old Road Venture, LLC	N/A	11.54	10 commercial units	Approved
9	TR53295	Newhall Land and Farming Company	Entrada	380.86	480 single-family residential units, 1,232 condominium residential units, 17 commercial lots, 61 open space lots, 1 park lot, 2 trail lots, and 10 public lots	Pending. Project obtained time extension (8/7/13).
10	TR061996	Stevenson Ranch Venture, LLC	Stevenson Ranch	1756.89	1,431 single-family residential units, 2,024 condominium residential units, 8 commercial lots, 371 open space lots, 1 park lot, 59 trail lots, and 76 public lots	Pending. Project obtained time extension (12/18/14).
11	TR061105	Newhall Land and Farming Company	Mission Village	1216.73	382 single-family residential units, 913 multi-family residential units, 2,230 condominium units, 149 open space lots, 3 park lots, 13 commercial lots, and 18 public lots	On hold. Project obtained time extension (6/26/16).
12	PM26363	Newhall Land and Farming Company	N/A	113.02	2 commercial lots, 9 industrial lots, and 5 open space lots	Approved. Project obtained time extension (12/18/14).

TABLE 3-1
CCL List of Cumulative Projects

Map Number	County ID	Developer	Project Name	Acres[a]	Units[a]	Status of Permit Application
13	TR060678	Newhall Land and Farming Company	Homestead Village	2891.77	967 single-family residential units, 4,811 condominium residential units, 259 open space lots, 5 park lots, 16 commercial lots, and 5 public lots	Pending. Project obtained time extension (12/18/14).
14	TR53108	Newhall Land and Farming Company	Landmark Village	292.74	270 single-family residential units, 430 multi-family residential units, 744 condominium residential units, 84 open space lots, 2 park lots, 16 commercial lots, and 4 public lots	On hold

[a] Units, acreage, and square footage were obtained from the Case and Hearing information on the Los Angeles County DRP website.
Notes:
Approved = Permit approved by LADRP, but not yet recorded.
Pending = Permit application currently being processed by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (LCDRP)
ID = identification number
N/A = Information not available

The projects identified in the cumulative impact area are primarily proposed land development for residential, commercial, industrial, and open space uses. The majority of the residential projects include mixed-use development consisting of single- and multi-family homes and condominiums, combined with commercial, park, trail, open space, and parking. These residential mixed-use developments range in size from approximately 95 to 2,892 acres. The greatest density of residential use associated with mixed-use development is proposed on approximately 1,757 acres with 1,431 single-family and 2,024 condominium units, 371 open space lots, 8 commercial lots, 1 park lot, 59 trail lots, and 76 public lots. The lowest density of residential use associated with mixed-use development is proposed on approximately 95 acres with 19 single-family units, which also includes 1 open space lot and 1 public lot. There is 1 residential-only development, which proposes 109 condominium units on approximately 134 acres. There is 1 approved commercial-only project, which allows for retail, shopping center, hotel, warehouse, office building and other similar types of development within approximately 11.5 acres (10 commercial units). There is 1 industrial mixed-use development on approximately 117 acres, which includes 37 industrial lots and 5 public lots. There is 1 commercial/industrial mixed-use development on 113 acres with 2 commercial, 9 industrial, and 5 open space lots.

Given that the majority of the projects in the cumulative impact area are associated with mixed-use development (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.), construction generally would require similar activities and potentially affected resources would be similar, but with varying degrees of quantifiable impacts. With respect to post-construction impacts, it is anticipated that projects involving industrial development may have a greater potential for air quality, noise, and traffic impacts. The potential temporary and long-term impacts of the projects are summarized by resource area in Table 3-2.

TABLE 3-2
Potential Impacts Associated with Projects in the Cumulative Impact Area

Resource	Summary of Potential Cumulative Impacts
Land Use	Temporary and permanent conflicts with existing land uses, physical division of an existing community, and conflicts with applicable land use plans and adopted environmental goals or policies
Geology and Hydrology	Permanent seismic-related hazards including fault rupture, ground shaking, liquefaction, and landslides; reduced availability of known mineral resources (i.e., oil fields[a]); permanent increased demand for water supply
Surface Water Drainage	Temporary and permanent alteration of existing drainage patterns; permanent increase in impervious surface runoff; permanent flood zone hazards
Water Quality	Temporary effects to surface water and/or groundwater quality; waste discharges and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements
Biological Resources	Temporary and permanent impacts to special-status or sensitive species; loss of riparian, wetland, and/or other sensitive habitat; discharges to waters of the United States and/or State; disruption of wildlife movement; conflict with biological protection (tree preservation policy ordinance) and/or habitat conservation plan
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	Inadvertent discovery of historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources during construction
Traffic and Transportation	Temporary and permanent increases in traffic which conflict with circulation system effectiveness and performance or inadequate emergency access; conflict with adopted transportation policies including minimum levels of service, and/or public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities
Air Quality	Temporary construction and permanent operations within an area of non-attainment for ozone (8-hour and 1-hour), PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$
Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change	Temporary construction and permanent operational increase in carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and Nitrous Oxide (N_2O)
Noise	Temporary construction and permanent operations resulting in increased ambient noise levels; temporary increase in groundborne noise or vibration during construction
Public Services and Utilities	Permanent increase in demand for fire, police, schools, parks, and other public facilities such as water/wastewater treatment facilities and landfills
Visual Resources	Permanent change to visual character and quality, including site-specific landform alterations and modifications to surrounding ridgeline views; new source of additional lighting and glare
Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics	Create adverse impacts that disproportionately affect a minority population or a low-income population; directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth; and displace substantial numbers of existing housing or numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing

[a] PM 060030 Santa Clarita Valley has site-specific impacts to an onsite oil field.

Notes:

PM_{10} = particulate matter less than 10 micrometers in aerodynamic diameter

$PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in aerodynamic diameter

Anticipated implementation timeframes for the projects in the cumulative impact area were not available from existing information. Therefore, as a conservative analysis it is assumed that construction and/or operation of these projects could occur concurrent with operation of the Proposed Project. Generally, environmental impacts as presented in Table 3-2 have the potential to contribute to significant cumulative impacts when considered in combination with the impacts of the Proposed Project and are discussed by resource in Chapters 4.0 through 16.0. However, it is noted that several impacts presented in Table 3-2 are either site-specific impacts or legally require project-specific design and/or mitigation to ensure public safety (such as seismic-related, flood zone hazards, and surface water quality and drainage). While these impacts are acknowledged as part of the cumulative impacts discussion presented in Chapters 4.0 through 16.0, they would not be considered to contribute to significant cumulative impacts when evaluated in combination with the Proposed Project.